

Challenges of Business Education Programme in Nigeria

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Abstract

Business education is that type of education that inculcates in its recipients' attitudes, knowledge, skills, values that is required in the business world. Business education, being one of the vocational programmes in Nigeria, is targeted at empowering students with skills for the world of life and creates employment opportunities for them. In recent time, graduates from the nation's tertiary institution of learning most especially the business education graduates have been plagued by the inability to get jobs in corporate industries and companies in Nigeria. Many authors and researchers have related this problem to the quality of training received by these graduates while in school which is devoid of skills required to meet up with the demands of the business world. It is in seeking a solution to this problem that the authors delved through literature to determine the fundamental challenges facing business education in Nigeria. Some of the challenges includes; inadequacies in the curriculum content, non-relevance of the course content, poor implementation of curriculum, time allocation, current issues and debates, qualification and quality of teachers, lack of training facility, poor remuneration of teachers. It was recommended that experts in business education should be drafted into the curriculum, business educators must constantly improve their skill especially in (ICT), the remuneration of teachers should be a priority, adequate facilities provided for effective and efficient learning.

Keywords: Business, Education, Programme, Business Education.

Introduction

Business Education is a conglomerate of courses/subjects that is concerned with the acquisition, development and inculcation of proper value for the survival of the individual and the society, the development of intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate environment; the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community, the acquisition of an objective view of local and external environments (National Policy on Education 2004). The poor implementation and consequent positioning of Business Education worsen the dwindling situation of myriads of problems experienced in Nigeria today. As a result, the poverty and unemployment rates in Nigeria remain on the high side (NEEDS, 2004:6). As noted by Osuala (2000), the success or failure of any economy depends on the functionality of its Business Education system. It is in recognition of the desire to create job-makers out of Nigeria, through Business Education, which makes them acquire employable and saleable skills that this paper intends to stress the urgent need to identify the myriads of challenges facing business education teachers and proffer solutions to same, which if applied to the latter will reposition the Business Education through its implementation.

Concept of Business Education

In order to be able to understand the concept of business education, it would be necessary to look at the definitions of business education in the past and present time. This is because technology has helped to change definitions of certain things. It therefore, implies that business education, as a course of study has to move with time. Popham (1975) said when a group of people were asked what business education is? The reply was as follows: A business executive replied, "Business Education is education to produce goods and services". A radical retorted: It is the avenue to make enormous profit. One teacher responded: Economic concepts necessary for living in a business economy. Another teacher answered: Learning skills to enter a business or distributive job. A person on the street said "Shorthand and typing, that's it". After looking at the different views of business educators, Popham came to a conclusion that: Business education is a course that prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business and it is equally important because it prepares students to handle their own business affairs and to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Nolan, Hayden & Malsbary (1967) defined business education as those business programmes and courses taught ordinarily at the secondary school level. Osuala E.C. (1989) defined Business education as an essential part of the preparation of youths for live and living.

In 2004, Osuala, gave another definition as a programme of instruction which consists of two parts (1) Office education - a vocational programme of office careers through initial, refresher and upgrading education and (2) General business education - a programme to provide students with information and competences which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of the business. Still on the definition of business education, Njoku (1997) defines business education as that facet of educational training that helps the individual to acquire relevant skills needed for living. However, in 2006 Njoku gave another definition as an educational programme that equips an individual with functional and suitable skills, knowledge, attitude and value that would enable him/her operates in the environment he/she finds himself/herself. It can be seen from the foregoing discussions that as the years go by; the definitions of business education continue to change. This means that business education is not static. Therefore, any worthwhile programme has to move with time. However, business educators have always accepted that change is a fact of life. From the typewriter to the transistor, business curriculum has continually shaped itself to meet the needs of business. As a result, the success and survival of business education constantly depend on its ability to adapt and keep pace with the needs of its recipients. These changes present challenges for both the learner and instructor. Nevertheless, it is the business educator that must be willing to adapt and manage these challenges to ensure successful programs for the future. It is essential that business education be a useful and vital component of transformation agenda if the curriculum of business programs across the country is to continue to meet the needs of its students.

Objectives of Business Education

The focus of Business Education is orientation of recipients which enhances wealth creation, employment generation and poverty reduction is very important in people's life. All of which reduce and indeed, capable of eliminating, youth restiveness, promote societal peaceful co-existence and cohesion and un moulding responsible citizenry. All these are indices of development of a nation's economy and the absence of which portend under-development of the economy. This is necessarily so because with responsible citizenry, less restive youths and peaceful societal coexistence, nationalism and the desire for higher productivity are embraced by all and sundry. Hence, the aims/objectives of Business Education, as contained in section 6, sub-section 49 of the National Policy on Education (2004) are as follows:

- i. To provide the business knowledge and vocational skills necessary for industrial, commercial and economic development.
 - ii. To provide trained manpower in applied technology and commerce, particularly at sub-professional grades.
 - iii. To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of economic and environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
 - iv. To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.
- Furthermore, Aina (1994) posited that the objectives of Business Education broadly include:
- i. To contribute to goal attainment of the total educational programme.
 - ii. To provide basic and business knowledge for all students.
 - iii. To develop their economic understanding, personal consumer competency and personal-use competency.
 - iv. To provide vocational skills for persons preparing for a business occupation, i.e. business competency.

Challenges in Business Education

Inadequacies in the Curriculum Content of Business Education: the content of business education curriculum has been reported as inadequate at all levels. An example of such could be seen in a study by Njoku, 1997 on tertiary institutions, Njoku (1997) on Junior Secondary Schools and Nwosu, 1999 on private secondary schools. Most of the courses do not cover the scope of knowledge and skills required for the effective preparation of business education teachers today. Highly needed courses are not available in the curriculum. Typewriting, Administrative office management and Transcription are not included in the curricula of some institutions. Such inadequacies in the curriculum could lead to the production of half-baked graduates. That is, they would not acquire the necessary skills for effective performance. Such teachers cannot compete with business education graduates elsewhere. A probable reason for the above inadequacies may be that business education experts and relevant stakeholders are not often invited to participate during the development of the curriculum. Today, some ministries handpick people to develop the curriculum for teachers at certain levels. This could generate lots of problems, not only for the institutions, but also for their products.

Non-Relevance of the Course Content: a business education programme should include courses that would prepare the student for saleable skills, help them have an understanding of the economic system and how a business operates. It was also to be geared towards helping people to acquire knowledge, and attitude/value that would enable them function in the world they live. To this end, subjects that would meet the objectives or goals must be in the content of the curriculum. A good curriculum should also be geared towards helping the students to acquire knowledge, attitudes and values that would enable them function efficiently in the world of work. To this end, subjects that would meet the objectives or set goals must be included in the curriculum. Again, the content of traditional business education curriculum is geared towards the choice of the person at the head.

Poor Implementation of the Curriculum: today the training of business educators tends to deviate from what is contained in the curriculum. Industrial training is no longer carried out the way it was originally done. Should the ITF allow students to look for places to do their industrial attachment or should the college provide them with establishments for SIWES? This is a critical question for discussion. Should the institutions visit the students to find out whether they are properly placed or should the students report back to the school on how they were placed?

Time allocation: another aspect that shows inadequacies is the time allocated to the subjects on the school timetable. In some schools, Njoku (1997) and Nwosu (1999) observed that inadequate number of hours allotted to business education subjects at all levels was considered a major issue that needed proper attention.

Selection of Subjects: at the different levels of education, the selection of subjects to be offered was to a large extent influenced by the person at the head, the time (space) available on the time-table and the competence of the teachers available in some cases. For instance, in most vocational schools, office practice; shorthand; typewriting; commerce and book-keeping were offered, but a few others offered secretarial studies as a major course. Although the state ministries of education approved the courses for them the schools were still selective in what they teach. At the JSS level, business education subjects are put under Group B as Vocational electives. This becomes a source of concern to all of us. Nwosu (2005) reported that not all the schools studied offered most of business education subjects. This can show that the programme at this level is not uniformly taught by schools.

Current issues and debates: a lot of discussions are currently going on as to why people in related areas of business education should not be allowed to teach core business education subjects. The following arguments were put forward by some business educators that business education is highly specialized hence should be taught by experts who possess the required skills. That no matter the residual skills acquired by non-experts in core business education, they are not qualified to teach, since they are not professionally qualified in the business teaching business education. The following were put forward by those in related areas, that those in related areas studied courses like personnel management, office management, typewriting and others, hence, are competent to teach the subjects; that having studied business education at the NCE and HND levels before branching off is enough to qualify one to teach business education; that having studied economics or educational management at the Bachelor's degree level and then Business education at the master's level is adequate to be admitted into the profession. The teacher should take a stand immediately on issues and debates of this nature in order not to block critical thinking in students. It is a way of accommodating all the learning styles-theorists, pragmatists, activists and reflectors as well as the different teaching methods.

Qualification and quality of teachers: A Business education teacher is a person who holds a degree in business education from a recognized University or an NCE (National Certificate of Education). Holders of NCE from the recognized colleges of education in business education are competent to teach the five components of the JSS business studies programme. He is a person who is constantly aware of the state of art in Business Education and has a thorough knowledge of the requirements of a business education programme. The business education teacher ought to have 3 qualifications. Business qualities; personal qualities for him/her to do the job as a trained business education teacher and professional qualities, i.e. a business education teacher should belong to a professional association. But what do we have today? Individuals who lack the requisite qualification in business education, teachers that are not professionally trained and use of non-existing professional bodies for the purpose of gaining accreditation status.

Facilities: facilities for teaching and learning in any programme are usually given a prominent position in the field of instructional technology. Just as Nolan said, it is not possible to achieve the objectives of a well-designed programme without adequate facilities. This means that facilities must be adequate and functional. Facilities in Business Education are as important as the business education teachers. The facilities you will need for your business education courses would depend on:

- the content of each course.
- the objective of the programme for each course
- in some cases, the method of teaching.
- the level and number of students.
- adequacy - this means that facilities needed for instruction must be capable of taking care of all those who need them. For instance, in a class of 30 students, 36 computers must be made available. So that the teacher would have 1 for demonstration and the rest would be left as stand-by.
- relevant - how relevant are the facilities to the course content and objectives as well as societal needs?

Lack of Training Facilities: The facilities needed in the workshop are grossly inadequate. Not only that, they are few in number but also most of them lack spare parts. This makes practical aspect of business education to be relegated to the background as situations as most business organization to which the students are attached cannot provide them with enough exposure to the relevant modern equipment.

Inadequate Funding: Business Education is a highly capital-intensive programme. Funds are required to acquire numerous machineries necessary to equip the learner effectively. Infrastructures, workshops and to retain highly qualified teachers, demonstrators, laboratory assistants and other personnel needed. Funds are also needed for procuring workshop materials, stationeries, hand tools, books and other reading materials and ensure regular maintenance of equipment. Most times budgetary allocation tends to be discouraging. This hampers the effectiveness of the programme.

Wrong Perception of the Course: Some parents/guardians do not want their children/wards to study Business Education. They believe that it is meant for drop outs, dullards and less brilliant individuals. Instead, they opt for courses like Law, Medicine, Pharmaceuticals, Engineering, Architecture, and Political Science and so on. Of course, they may not fit in per say.

Students' Laziness/Poor Attitude: Business Education is an educational programme it requires efforts and dedication. Most students of today do not want to exhaust their energy in the development of manipulative skills demanded in the course. This is one of the major problems of Business Education today.

Organizational Problem: Vocational Education is meant to prepare an individual for gainful employment. To do this, the necessary subjects with the right number of instructional materials or facilities like typewriters, adding machines, filing cabinets, perforators etc. need to be in place. Unfortunately, there is gross inadequacy or decay of same in our schools. The result is to make the recipients become half-baked and render them unemployable since they have not been adequately empowered.

Government Discriminatory Attitude in Funding: There are so many new sophisticated office equipments that have appeared in the market such as electric typewriters, dictating machines, computers, etc. which are conspicuously absent in Nigerian schools due to inadequate funds for their acquisition. Ironically, government seemed to be funding heavily on Science and Science-related Education programmes at the detriment of Business Education. This does not augur well for the intended empowerment of Business Education graduates for them to play their roles in national development.

Non-use of Appropriate and Approved Methodology: One other outstanding constraint in the teaching of Business Education is the non-use of appropriate and approved methodology. In addition to normal lectures, the teaching of vocational subjects requires the use of variety of teaching methods and techniques some of which are simulation, discussions, role playing, demonstrations, study trips (Field trips) etc. it is sadly noticeable that while some teachers adhere faithfully to these professional practices, a number of others do not. It is either that they are unaware of 'these methods or are indifferent to their use.

Social Appraisal of Business Education: It is unfortunate fate of Business Education in Nigeria that its products are held in low esteem by both individual and society. There is no denying the fact that many parents do not prefer their children to go into business education except when they are unable to secure admission into other prominent courses like medicine, law and engineering etc. in the university.

Textbooks Production: Relevant locally developed Business Education textbooks are scarce. This is mainly because book publication is expensive and companies do not consider it, a profitable venture for the size of the sector.

The issue of poor remuneration and motivation of teachers: Teachers constitute a critical element in any educational set up. The problem however remains that generally in Nigeria; teachers are poorly remunerated and ill motivated. This situation also affects business education teachers. Poor remuneration and lack of motivation of business education teachers, no doubt, kill their morale and adversely affects their job performance. Poor teacher performance is a major cause of falling standard of education in Nigeria.

The issue of orientation of administration: One issue that business educators need to address is the question of who should administer business education programme. What happens in many cases is that those who administer educational institutions are ignorant of the value and potentials of business education in national competitiveness and development. Hence, Ahmed (2019) stated that business education in such school may not have the level of support it needs to gain acceptance among students and staff.

Inaccessibility of digital and internet technology: Modern business operation is IT-driven. Any business concern in the present technological age that lacks access to ICT will be groping in the dark. For business education to achieve its mission of producing youth with relevant and competitive employability skills access to digital and ICT facilities is imperative in the classroom. For digital and internet facilities in a business education classroom to be effective, the following conditions must be met.

1. Business education teachers must have the knowledge and skill to use the new digital tools and resources to help students achieve high academic standard.
2. Students and business educators must have sufficient access to digital technologies and internet in their classrooms and business education institutions.
3. High quality, meaningful and culturally responsive digital contents must be available for both business educators and learners.

Conclusion

Education is the pivot around which other spheres of Nigeria development revolve. Unfortunately, education in Nigeria has suffered unpardonable and unforgivable neglect over the decades with Business education having more than its fair share of the deplorable phenomenon. Business education remains the foundation of human resource development which 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. To ensure national transformation as being emphasized as slogan on daily basis, there is immediate need to tackle the challenges of business education programme headlong to pave way for the fulfilment of its roles in national development.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made;

1. Experts in Business education should be immediately drafted into the curriculum review to ensure that the contents to be recommended and taught are in tandem to what is obtainable in the modern-day organizations practices to deliver national transformation assurances.
2. The government should be courageous enough in insisting that only professionally qualified, competent and qualified teachers are involved in the teaching of Business Education courses as to improve the quality of the programme
3. There is need to motivate business educators adequately through improved remuneration and conditions of service by their employers.
4. Business education curriculum at every level should undergo constant evaluation and review in order to keep it up to date with current technological realities.
5. Business educators should improve their personal skills in the area of Information and Communication Technology to enable them impact skills effectively and efficiently to their students
6. Career guidance and public enlightenment should be provided by business educators and other education stakeholders to improve positive public perception (PPP) of business education by students, parents and the society.
7. There is also the urgent need to replace obsolete equipment used in business education studios and laboratories with modern ones.
8. Government should ensure adequate remuneration of business education teachers.
9. There should be adequate provision of teaching and learning facilities.

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