

A Model for Evaluation of Business Education Programmes

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Abstract

This paper examines a model for the effective evaluation of business education programmes. The model is known as the Kernel of Truth. The paper briefly looked at some definitions of business education and evaluation. It further treated some models in programmes evaluation and Kernel of Truth theory was strongly advocated for use in the evaluation of business education and other educational programmes. Recommendation was made and conclusion drawn.

Key Words: Kernel of Truth, Educational Programme, Instructional Programme, Learning Skills, Participant Evaluation Research Technique (PERT), Meta-perceptual Congruence Methodology

1. Introduction

Certain trends of major reforms have usually been observed in some developing countries as attain their independence. One of such major reforms has been the emergence of new educational system aiming at meeting the aspirations and needs of such countries. Nigeria is not excluded. This paves way for the Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN. 2004) to place a great premium on vocational and technical education of which business education is a sub-set.

Business education is an educational programme offered in some universities and colleges of education as an undergraduate course of study. Whether conceptualized as broad-aimed or narrow in scope, business education programme requires adequate evaluation to enable to effectiveness of the programme or discrepancies in the programme be ascertained and decision made accordingly. It is a sound educational practice that such evaluation should be built into the programme development processes from the start. Moreover, it is necessary that the evaluation be made simple conceived clearly designed flexibly and imaginative and scheduled realistically.

2. What is Business Education?

Although the concept “business education” is frequently used, it is still in semantic flux. Research and theoretical formulations have continued to grapple with the problem of its definition. A generally acceptable definition has been difficult to arrive at because there are as many different meanings of the concept as there are many experts who have tried to define it.

Business education is an aspect of educational programme offered at the higher institution of learning which prepares students for careers in business. It is education needed to teach

people business in order to be a good citizen of a society. It is a profession of itself. It is education designed with the primary skilled aim of elevating one’s skills as well as providing citizens with the required skilled to secure gainful employment as to earn a living and to succeed in life through further education.

Business education is seen by laymen as those business subjects taught at the secondary school level as well as private institutes. For example, book keeping, shorthand, typewriting, business law, commences; etc., in another development when laymen and some literates were asked, what was business education?; their answers were identified under the following statements:

1. Learning skills to enter into a business or job
2. Education to produce goods and services
3. Economic concepts necessary for living in a business economy and
4. The avenue to enormous profits

Business education in the real sense means something above these notions. The Joint Committee of the National Business Office Education, Division of the American Vocational Association (1980) stated that Business Education is a broad comprehensive discipline whose instructional programme encompasses.

1. The knowledge, attitudes and skills needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal business and economic system and
2. The vocational knowledge and skills needed for entry level of employment and advancement in a broad range of business careers.

Tonne (1954) as cited by Igwe (1992) viewed business education as a type of training with the primary objective of preparing people for entrance upon a business career or having entered upon such a career to render more efficient serve therein and to advance their present levels of employment to higher level. It is regarded as that aspect of education, which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills and basic scientific knowledge (FRN, 2004).

According to Osuala (1981), business education is a programme of instruction which consists of two major parts. One part is composed of office career through initial refresher and upgrading education leading to employ ability and advancement in office occupations. The second part according to him is the general business education, a programme to provide students with information and competencies, which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and using the services of the business world.

Business education is education for business or training in business skills which are required for use in business offices, clerical occupations and business policy analysis (Ulinfun, 1985). It is that aspect of the educational process involving in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge. According to Anao (1986), business education is an educational process or context which has primary aim of the preparation of people for roles in enterprises; such roles could be as employee, entrepreneur/employer or simply as self-employed. A critical examination of the above definitions of business education shows that certain things in common are discovered, which are as follows:

1. Business education is concerned with equipping the individuals with skills and competencies required for participation in the business world.
2. These skills may be for personal use, such as enabling the individual s to be good consumers of the products of the business enterprises and
3. The skills may be for entry into the business community as employer or employee.

Despite all debates, more definitions of business education still manifest. For examples Anyaduba (1986) saw business education as concerned with the education of the individual for business and about business: the former focusing on those who need career in business and the later for all students in the entire school system irrespective of their career aspirations. This definition simply means that business education involved in:

1. All learning activities that relate to business and its environment that are systematically undertaken with career focus on one related field or the other which is education for business.
2. Education about business is one offered to all students in the school irrespective or their career aspirations. This may be regarded as functional business education in orientation. This implies that business education aims at making people.
3. Illiterate in business and economic affairs, especially in area of counting business management office education, marketing, data processing and business communication.

According to Oyedele (1985), business education is worthwhile as preparation for many professions, such as civil servants, accountants, administrators, lawyers, and business teachers. It could be looked at as an activity, which is carried out by all teachers of business subjects: all business administrators and executives (public and private) who further the principles and practice of business and trainers in business and industry. Business education can also be referred to as the pedagogical and business competencies necessary for teaching business attitudes, concepts, skills and knowledge. It could simply be defined as that aspects of educational or training process which an individual receives with the primary motive of enabling him acquire adequate attitudes, concepts, knowledge, understanding and skills in business activities for his personal or for vocational usage, for career as an administrator or manager or teacher, wherever he many find himself in the business world. This implies that business education is a component of general education, and where general education educates on about business; business education educates one for business. It is education for vocational preparation in business. It is an occupational banking and

finance personnel, personnel and administrative officer and manager, secretarial and production personnel and general management. It also includes teacher education, which prepares students to be business educators, or business teacher.

In most cases according to Ubulom (1997), business education is wrongly interchangeably used to mean the same thing with the terms like “business administration”, business management and business studies. It is entirely different from these concepts. It is a comparatively new development in the educational delivery system in most developing countries of the world of which Nigeria is inclusive. At the tertiary level of education in Nigeria, the philosophy of business education is to make the students understand the concept and philosophy of the national policy on education because of its importance in national development. It is based on this premise that Ubulom (1999) listed the objectives of business education as follows:

- a) To make available to all students the opportunities to explore and learn about world of business and the possible interests and potential careers it has to offer.
- b) To help develop in all students the ability to choose discriminatory and to use wisely the goods and services that business has to offer
- c) To assist in developing an intelligent understanding on the art of all students of the various occupations to be found in the world of business
- d) To develop in practical ways an understanding and an appreciation of the need for his personal use.
- f) To prepare students to enter into and follow business as a career
- g) To prepare students to perform business activities common to many professional areas.
- h) To prepare students for more effective study in the field of business
- i) To prepare students to become business teachers.

3. What is Evaluation?

Before discussing a suitable methodological procedure for the evaluation of business education programmes, let us briefly look at the nature of evaluation itself. Evaluation is a difficult concept to define because as Tumin (1970) observed, evaluation means different things to different people. First each person has different notions as to what are legitimate sources of pride and shame. Such differing perceptions can lead to conflicts over the purposes and results of an evaluation. Tumin noted that there is a defensiveness of people about the possible results of a systematic security of their effectiveness. This defensiveness may possess a serious impediment to effective evaluation of educational programmes. Scriven (1969) has referred to this defensive by the non-ethical expression as “chicken heartedness. The threat syndrome in evaluation is a reality. Many people feel threatened by the word “evaluation”. This apparent lack of consensus on the definition of evaluation also poses a problem in delineating the role of the evaluator. In one role, the evaluator is seen also as a decision-maker. The evaluator produces a description of the variables operating in a programme and a set of judgmental statements. Stake (1967) implicit definition of evaluation as the description and judgment of an educational programme encompasses these roles of an Evaluator.

However, some scholars contend that although evaluator is a judgment process, the evaluator is not involved in decision-making. He is mainly concerned with gathering, selecting and providing information objectively collected and analyzed to people in decision making positions. The decision-makers take their decisions based on information so provided by the Evaluator. Best known definitions reflecting this role of the evaluator are those provided by Alkin (1969) & Stufflebeam (1971). For instance, Stufflebeam (1971:128) defined evaluation as the process of alienating, obtaining and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives. A more practical compromise to the evaluator’s role was however offered by Worther (1970) and Sanders (1984) as they stated that the perception about evaluation as a collaborative activity is very pertinent to the discussion of evaluation of any educational programme of which business education programme is not an exception. We take the position that all interest groups involved in an educational programme such as the administrators,

programme developers, operators and consumers should report on the effectiveness or worth of the programme because they all have a stake in it.

Evaluation therefore is not the making of value judgment that is subjective, rather it is the application of formal inquiry techniques (Scriven, 1967) for data collection in order to conceptualise, refine and determine the effectiveness or worth of a programme with a view to aiding decision making as to whether to continue, modify or

terminate the programme. It is both qualitative and quantitative in nature; and the process of making objective judgment is based on the qualitative and quantitative information obtained from measurement.

4. Kernel of Truth: A Model for Evaluating Business Education Programme

The evaluation of an educational programme is multivariate in nature. To this end, it is not easy to specify a suitable model. A number of evaluation models exist for use in evaluating educational programmes. Some of them are decision-objective model (Tyler, 1958; Matfessel and Michael, 1967; Hammond, 1969 and Wormer, 1970) and course improvement model (Cronbach, 1963). Others are assessment of merit model (Scriven, 1967), countenance model (Stake, 1967), discrepancy model (Provus, 1969) decision-management-oriented model (Alkin, 1969), CIPP model (Stufflebeam, 1971), Kentucky vocational education evaluation model (Denton, 1973) and model for evaluating vocational teacher education programme in Nigeria (Okoro, 1985 in Okoro, 2005). A central feature, which characterized these decision-making models of evaluation, is their applicability to decision making concerning aspects of evolving programmes.

In prescribing the methodology for the evaluation of business education programmes, care should be taken to avoid common errors that are often associated with evaluation studies. A classic example is provided by the evaluation carried out on the experimental world literacy programme of UNESCO. The programme carried out in eleven countries around the world, was recently reviewed in one of UNESCO's most candid reports. The evaluation procedure received considerable criticism, for unnecessary complexity and an accompanying sophisticated quantification was said to blind the evaluators occasionally to simple truths in plain comparable also produced many problems. The need for practicality and related simplicity has therefore been emphasized by evaluators working in the different fields of education. Overall, the past history of evaluation in Business education has revealed little or no action or imagination. Lowe (1975:104) after a worldwide study concluded that:

...the overwhelming majority is institutions make no convincing attempt to assess the effectiveness of their programmes, even in terms of their objectives still less is there any attempt to calculate social and economic benefits

One solution to the problem of evaluating broad-aimed programmes like business education been suggested by Farmer (1975) and is based on mixed of or quickly review whole programme, assign priorities and then select certain areas for careful examination. Farmer and others suggest that the following components of the programme should be scanned:-

1. Need for the programme
2. Philosophical consideration
3. Values
4. Assumptions underlying or otherwise related to the programme
5. The degree of the programme's development in general and in local situations
6. The context for environment in which the programme functions
7. Alternative ways that the programme has been and is being implemented
8. Consequences of the programme
9. Explanations of consequences – the extent to which those consequences have been attributed to the programme

In order to take care of all the concerns expressed about past evaluation studies on educational programmes and suggestions that have been proffered for effective evaluation, the meta-perpetual or kernel of truth evaluation model is offered as a viable alternative methodology for the evaluation of business education programme. This strategy is based on the decision-making models. It involves a clear definition of the program on which the presentation of summary data is essential. The Kernel of Truth Theory or Meta-perceptual Congruence Methodology has been proposed as a suitable model for the evaluation of educational programmes (Obanya, 1982; Akpe, 1987). This model stands unambiguously within the social anthology paradigm. Although by no means a well-developed and profound theory, it has been found useful by social psychologists in the discussion of the phenomenon called stereotype particularly ethnic stereotypes. The essence the theory asserts that although individuals may hold different views or opinions about people, things or events or offer different interpretations to propositions or phenomena, there is likely to exist areas of consensus, which is reflected in the different views of interpretations expressed. This area of consensus among the group represents the area of meta-perceptual

congruence, hence the Kernel of Truth of the thing or preposition under consideration. It represents the recognizable truth of a thing that commands respect.

The kernel of truth when applied to programme evaluation utilizes the degree of perceptual congruence among the various interest groups in the programme. Therefore, the measure of the Kernel of Truth in business education programme is also applicable. When all perceptual of interest groups in programme whom perfect agreement on any aspect of the programme, meta-perceptual congruence is used as a measure of the Kernel of truth. This is represented diagrammatically in the figure below. in the diagram, the shaded portion represents the area of perfect consensus or meta-perceptual congruence among the four interest groups in Business education programme. The rationale behind this perception-base model of evaluation is that consensual validation among those involved about the worthiness and quality of a programme one represents an approximation to an objective measurement (Stanton, 1987).

In every business education programme, there are always competing interest groups. These include the administrators or policy makers who provide the resources, the programme developers – professionals or experts who design the curriculum, the operators or instructors and the programme consumers or students who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the programme. The perceptions of these various interest groups are often at odds, depending on these expectations and orientation. In their assessment of the programme, which may involve both quantitative and reflective approaches, they may reach different conclusions. Very often, programme objectives, philosophy and other attributes are viewed from different perspectives. But despite these perceptual differences, when they are brought together to assess the programme on a provided set of criteria, there will likely exist an area of congruence among all the interest groups, this area of congruence among the various interest groups constitutes the “Kernel of truth of the business education programme being evaluated.

Obanya (1982) pointed out that this Kernel of Truth or Meta-perceptual congruence can be identified and extracted by the use of appropriate analytical procedure. According to him, the Kernel of truth theory can be used as a suitable evaluation model for providing an accurate picture of a programme operation and the extent to which the programme has achieved its objectives. The Kernel of truth of a programme provides a realistic representation of its objectives. The Kernel of truth of a programme provides a realistic representation of the State-of-the-art of a programme. Akpe (1987) successfully extracted the Kernel of truth of a pre-service primary teacher education programme using a list of thirty evaluation criteria to which the Kernel of truth technique was applied. It is pertinent to mention that for any educational programme to thrive and be able to achieve its objectives, it must possess a stable core of attributes, embedded values and philosophy, which are acceptable to all those connected with it. This part of the programme, which is found acceptable to all interest groups involved in the evaluation study, constitutes its Kernel of truth.

The evaluator utilizing this methodology is similar to a social anthropologist or natural historian – like them, he makes no attempt to manipulate or eliminate variables: but takes as given the complex scene he encounters. This is the major strength of meta-perceptual congruence methodology. It requires its user to operate in a naturalistic situation. The main task of the evaluator is to attempt to identify and describe areas of agreement among the major interest groups involved in a programme. This enables the evaluator to assess to what extent the programme is operational, whether achieving its objectives or not. Meta-perceptual congruence or perfect consensus is achieved when all interest groups in a programme unanimously assign a negative or positive quality to any aspect of a programme. Such an assigned quality would therefore be taken as a valid attribute or demerit of the programme.

The successful utilization of this methodology for the evaluation of business education programmes, however requires the evaluator to have a thorough knowledge of the programmes to be evaluated. Such in-depth knowledge will help in the areas of major concern about the programme on which information is needed for decision making. The first essential, preliminary activity of an evaluator therefore is to acquaint himself with the reading of available information on the programme to be evaluated. Murphy (1980) referred to this kind of activity as scouting for the scene of action. Due to the intimate knowledge of the programme required by the evaluator, this evaluation approach can aptly be described as a Participant Evaluation Research Technique.

Despite some methodology problems that been pointed out (Akpe, 1987), meta-perceptual congruence methodology is a useful alternative, which evaluators could explore. The threat syndrome in evaluation is real and one of the evaluator’s strategies is to attempt to diffuse this threat syndrome. As a participant perception based model of evaluation, meta-perceptual congruence methodology poses little or no threat to faculty members. It also highlights the areas of stress and strain that may exist in a programme and provides a near-realistic representation of the state-of-the-art of programme operation. However, it must be pointed out that the utility of this methodology

can be well enhanced by Kagan & Harty (1979) in their recommendation of the utilization of an electric approach in order to achieve better evaluation results.

5. Conclusion

Meta-perceptual congruence methodology is a Participant Evaluation Research Technique (PERT). Like participatory research, it encourages the participation of the learner and other interest groups in the programme in every stage of the educational process. It is interesting to note that of recent, participatory research has been proposed as an alternative to traditional research methods in education. The rationale for such a proposal includes formulation of the problem, discussion of possible solutions and interpretation of findings. Meta-perceptual congruence methodology would seem suitable for the evaluation of business education programmes, particularly since there is a growing interest in the discussion of participatory techniques. However, more research studies need to be carried out to determine how the approach might best be used.

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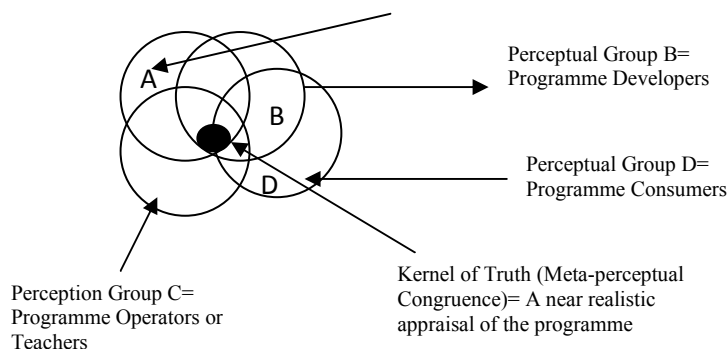


Figure 1: Kernel of Truth Diagram

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