

Business Education, Industry Cooperation and Technologies

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ABSTRACT

Business Education which is a phase of Vocational-Technical Education (VTE) is seen as one of the most powerful instruments known for developing entrepreneurship skills, creates employment and make the beneficiaries self-reliant in modern societies. It is also used in laying the foundation for commercial growth and development globally. This paper therefore examines the relevance of Business Education, industry cooperation, provision of modern technologies for teaching and learning of business subjects. It has recommended that: Institutions offering Vocational Business Education should provide state-of-arts technologies. Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) should be emphasized in the training curriculum.

Keyboard: Business Education, Industry Cooperation and Technologies.

1. Introduction

The philosophy of Nigeria's education is predicated on the Nigeria national objectives. Of particular interest to Business Education are the following: the training of the mind in the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (NPE, 2013). Zarifis (2000) affirms this when the author stated that one of the objectives of Vocational Education and Training (VET) is to satisfy the continuously changing needs of the labour market. As an integral part of Vocational Education, Business Education aspires to produce skilled graduates to meet the demands of a fast growing society.

One way by which these laudable objectives can be achieved is through Business Education-industry cooperation. This is because the establishment of a healthy partnership between Business Education and business communities can provide learning opportunities for students to put into practice the theoretical knowledge acquired in school. Expectedly, the knowledge acquired through such an industrial cooperative plan will place graduates of Business Education in a position to make meaningful contributions to the development of our national economy. Implicit in the foregoing is notion that the creation of effective human capital is largely the function of the approaches by means of which the content of Business Education is delivered to its recipients.

The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD, 2008) recognizes that modern technologies play a significant role in the teaching and learning of all school subjects. This recognition gives credence to the need for effective and efficient delivery of Business Education through technologies to ensure the full realization of Nigeria national objective of empowering people to make them useful to themselves and the larger society. In underscoring the rationale for technology in education, Evoh (2006) observed that there is a general consensus that modern technologies are transforming various aspects of human activities. According to the author (2006) modern technologies has change the way students learn and the way people generally do work. Consequently, today's employers are now looking for technologically literate workforce who can provide them with a competitive advantage in the world of work. This has led to the integration of technology and information systems into the educational curriculum using different methods to increase the quality of teaching and learning and thus provide the students with realistic experiences in the application of technologies. This clearly highlights the imperative to align current pedagogical practices in Business Education with the fast growing demands of the technology driven-world.

2. Concept of Business Education

The concept of Business Education has been severally defined. Many authors define Business Education in the context of general orientation for proper understanding of business activities. Others see it as a vocational training in selected business and office skills, while many other writers describe business education as a phase of education which prepares students for teaching of business subjects. Igboke (2000) pointed out that Business Education refers to those business subjects taught at the secondary school level such as Typewriting, Short hand , Book-keeping, Business law, General business and similar other subjects. Viewed from this perspective, Business Education therefore consist of that group of related, occupationally focused and general education subjects systematically arranged which are prescribed for possible certification.

Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (1975) stated that Business education represents a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all types of educational delivery system, elementary, secondary and post –secondary. The Commission went further to state the following as the mission of Business Education:

- i. To educate individuals for and about business.
- ii. To provide a continuous programme of planned learning experience designed to equip individuals to fulfill effective three roles namely, (a) to produce and distribute goods and services as workers; (b) to use the result of production as consumers; and (c) to make judicious socio-economic decisions as citizens.
- iii. To provide career information that helps students relate their interests, needs and abilities to occupational opportunities in business.
- iv. To provide educational opportunities for students preparing for careers in fields other than business to acquire business knowledge and skills needed to function effectively both in oral and written communication and to develop effective interpersonal and human relations skills. (Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education, 1975).

Bangs, (1970) and Ikpe (2013) noted that generally accepted and defensible long range aims and objectives for Business Education are:

1. To equip the business student with the capacity to solve practical problems;
2. To give the business students the capacity to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing;
3. To provide the business students with a detailed knowledge of the intricate performance of a complex economic system; and
4. To afford him/her through understanding of the functional arrears of business.

2.1 Early Beginnings of Business Education

According to Decarlo and Robinson (1966), the history of Business Education developed from its earliest apprenticeship form which they found described in the Code of Hammurabi (2285-42BC). Another historian-Reigner (1945) associated the origin of Business Education to the invention of the Double Entry Bookkeeping system in 1494 in Italy and traced its spread and Development in England, Scotland, Ireland and finally United States of America (USA). These historians maintained that the increasing interest in commerce intensified in America, Proprietor-Masters conducted classes in their homes, teaching navigation surveying, practical Mathematics and “Merchant Accounts”. Decarlo et al (1966) concluded that during the first half of the 19th century, Vocational Business Education was carried out in the form of mechanics’ institutes. The placement in the market of the shift-key typewriter invented by Christopher Lathan Shoes in 1878 greatly stimulated the growth of business schools and in turn, created a demand for office workers who could write shorthand.

Obi (1998) explained that the Latin Grammer School of Pre-American Independence included in their curricula, Bookkeeping, Arithmetic and Writing. After the independence, great expansion in business followed and more bookkeepers and office workers were demanded than the apprenticeship and the private tutorials could provide. Consequently, private business schools were established to meet the increasing need for bookkeepers and office personnel. In Britain, the passage of the Technical Instruction Act of 1899 brought a new dimension to

commercial (business) education. The London School of Economics and Political Science founded in 1895 was affiliated to University of London in 1900. This was a result of its success in wide range of instruction, mainly commercial.

2.2 Private Business School

Business Education has not always been given adequate attention in public secondary school system. Business Education has its initial growth in private business (commercial) schools. The organization of early Business Education in Nigeria could be traced to the establishment of private business schools by individuals or single proprietor or group or persons. The schools were usually started, owned, funded and managed by a proprietor or community. It offers courses leading to the acquisition of business and office skills. The major focus was on the three traditional business subjects of (a) Bookkeeping (b) Shorthand and (c) Typewriting. Currently, the private business school's curriculum has been broadened to include more business and academic subjects.

Aina (1986) and Osuala (1996) maintained that increase in commercial activities and the inability of public secondary schools to provide training for office workers prompted the opening of secondary commercial (business) school by private proprietors. In the post-civil war years in Nigeria in 1970s, there was the proliferation of private business and information, communication and technology centres (ICT) in almost all urban centres and state capitals especially in the southern parts of Nigeria. These schools provide training for persons who require business training to secure immediate employment as accounts clerks, bookkeepers, cashiers, marketing assistants, insurance agents, sales promotion agents, operators of business centres, data processing assistants, office assistants, stores assistants, sales assistants, stenographers, secretaries, typists, record clerks and receptionists/telephone operators. The private education at the foundation stage (Ikpe 2013).

3. Primary School

Business Education as a field of study cuts across all levels of education. However, at the primary school, it does not stand out as a subject of its own. Rather, it is incorporated in some other subjects taken at that level. One of the aims of primary education is to provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

A cursory look at the subject areas in Business Education, one will quickly identify areas like Business Mathematics, Business Communication, Social Studies where concepts like buying and selling, transportation, advertising, and storage of goods are mentioned. The basic counting and arithmetic operations upon which accounting, statistical and commercial mathematics are based, are part of arithmetic curriculum. Also the communicative skill, ability to read and write which is essential to any business studies programme has its introduction or background from the primary school English Language. From this, one can affirm that Business Education is evident in the primary school curriculum though not pronounced or documented as Business Education subjects like any other discipline (Okorie, 2011).

4. Secondary School Business Education

Significantly, the goals of business studies at the junior secondary school (JSS) level as entrenched in the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) for Junior Secondary Schools (BEC, 2013) include:

1. To enable students to acquire the basic knowledge of Business Studies.
2. To prepare students for further training in Business Studies.
3. To provide students with orientation and basic skills with which to start a life of work for those who may not undergo further training.
4. To develop in the students the basic skills in office occupation.
5. To equip the students with the ability to relate the knowledge and skills to the national economy.

The curriculum of Business Education at the JSS level is Business Studies taught as prevocational subject. The emphasis here is not for skill acquisition but to create general awareness of the basic business subjects. Business Studies are integrated subject and the following subjects are incorporated into it and taught as one: office practice, commerce, bookkeeping, shorthand and typewriting. Core subject such as Mathematics, English Language, Nigerian Language, Science, Art and Music, Religion Education, Moral Instruction and Practical Agriculture are included.

At the senior secondary school (SSS) level, the subjects that make up the Business Studies in the prevocational level now become vocational (business) subjects and offered as single subjects. The emphasis is for an in-depth knowledge and skill acquisition. The subjects are: (a) Commerce (b) Economics (c) Shorthand (d) Typewriting and (e) Bookkeeping/Accounting.

5. College of Education

The philosophy of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is to make the business teachers understand the concept and philosophy of the National Policy on Education as regards Business Education and the importance of Business Education in National development.

Objectives

The objectives of NCE Business Education as contained in the National Policy on Education (2013) are as follow:

1. To produce well qualified and competent NCE graduate in business subjects who will be able to teach business subjects in our junior secondary schools.
2. To produce NCE business teachers who will be able to inculcate the vocational aspects of Business Education into the society.
3. To produce NCE business teachers who will start so much desired revolution of vocational development right from the Nigeria Primary and Secondary schools.
4. To prepare students in Business Education with necessary competence so as to qualify for a three-year post-NCE degree programme in Business Education in Nigerian Universities.
5. To equip graduates with the right skills to engage in a life of work in the office as well as for self-employment.

6. Polytechnic

Some of the major objectives of polytechnic education include among others:

- a. Provision of full-time courses of instruction and training in engineering, other technologies, applied science, business and management leading to the production of trained manpower.
- b. Provision of technical knowledge and skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development of Nigeria; and
- c. Give exposure on professional studies in the technologies (NBTE, 1991).

The elements of Business Education in the polytechnics programmes are in the area of Accountancy, Business Administration, Marketing and Office Management and Technology.

7. University

At the university level, Business Education is offered in the faculty of education. The goal of the programme is to make an optimum contribution to national development and preparation of vocational business teachers. It also prepares professional business teachers' education curriculum to reflect our national requirements.

8. Industry Cooperation

Industry cooperation, Business Education and preparation of office workers in Nigeria has not been given adequate attention unlike what is obtainable in other clines such as USA, Great Britain and Germany just to mention a few. Igboke (1998) noted that the teaching of business subjects especially the skilled business subjects in Nigeria schools and colleges is primary limited to classroom instructions using a few obsolete business machines and equipment with the absent of on-the-job or industrial experience in any established business or industrial firms. To worsen the situation, the industrial establishments are not quite often dispose to accept the students or trainees on student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). This author on many occasions had to go to offices, super-markets and banks soliciting for local firms to accept our undergraduates for industrial attachments with or without any stipends on the part of industrial firms. One could observe that the preparation of office worker-in-training should be joint effort of the training institutions and immediate business community. I have for many years served as SIWES Coordinator in my institution.

Cooperative Industrial Education is a structured method of combining classroom-based education with practical work experience (Wikipedia,2014). The Co-op program which is predicated on an agreement developed among employers, students, and the school staff provides supervised workplace employment opportunities and learning experiences which facilitate school-to-work transition, service learning, and experiential learning initiatives all of which contribute tremendously to the students' education and employability.

Osuala (2009) considered cooperative occupational education to be an instructional plan which combines learning experiences gained through regularly scheduled supervised employment in the community and vocational oriented in school instruction. The author noted that the employing community serves as a laboratory where students have an opportunity to apply the principles they have learned in the school in the changing world of work. The author further added that cooperative occupational education is a general term used to describe various types of cooperative plan programmes specifically designed to prepare youths for occupations in proportion to the distribution of employment and career opportunities. Based on these definitions, cooperative vocational education, is a cooperative occupational programme tailored towards meeting the objectives of vocational business and office education which include enabling youth:

- a. To have the skills and competencies required for the performance of basic business jobs;
- b. To apply the various business concepts acquired in class in the real life situation;
- c. To recognize and demonstrate their responsibilities and rights as consumers;
- d. To provide students with some business skills to enable them play their roles as productive participants members of society especially in our free enterprise economy;
- e. To improve personal qualities and build attitudes necessary for adjustments to personal and other employments situations;
- f. To guide individuals for suitable placement in business and office employment.

According to Igboke (1998), the implication of these is that Business Education, and industries must combine vocationally oriented classroom instruction with a series of progressive on-the-job learning experiences which are in keeping with trainees occupational objectives. The term "cooperative" merely describes the working relationship between the school and the employers in planning implementation and evaluation of the product and the programme. Cooperative business and office education is necessarily a strategy for human resource development, which involves the school, the student and the employers or their representatives.

The objectives of any strategy for human resources development, according to Yusufu (2000), should be to build the skills and knowledge required for rapid economic transformation. This is indeed necessary because any society that needs to be economically viable must encourage a healthy working relationship between the school and the industries in order to develop and maintain effective supply of managerial, technical and skilled personnel to meet the growing and changing needs of increased national productivity, enhanced social responsibility and industrialization (Inyang and Akpama, 2002). Although, investments in modern technologies are essential inputs for economic growth and industrialization, it is important to reiterate that the nature of the relationship which exist between the Business Education and the business community is one of the most decisive factor in the creation of a better society.

9. Needs for Business Education, Industry Cooperation

Business Education and Industry Cooperation is needed by both the nation and the trainees. Igboke (1998) has identified the following as reasons for which the Nigeria nation needs cooperative business and industry cooperation:

A) With the emphasis now placed on Competencies Based Education (CBE) in Nigeria, it has become necessary for our curriculum planners to develop our human resources for all-round development. Ifedi (1982) shared the view that shortage of talent, and skills needed for development can directly hinder economic progress; hence the need for the improvement of human capacity building through Business Education and industry cooperation.

b) Gardner (1961) held that the demand for high talented manpower is firmly rooted in the level of technological complexity which characterizes 21st century life style, and the complexity of modern social organization. In the age when new machines and equipment are constantly emerging, there is need for trainees and teachers to possess adequate on-the-job exposures in business firms and offices where these emerging technologies are available.

c) The continuous massive unemployment rate among school leavers and university graduates has been repeated attributed to lack of skills and competencies required in the work environment. Also MCDonald (2008) had pointed out that one of the causes of unemployment in Nigeria is the lack of graduate with employable skills. This inadequacy explains one of the reasons among others for youth restiveness and delinquency.

d) Implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education recently in Nigeria. This system requires that school graduates should be equipped with basic skills and competencies to enable them enter and make progress in the work place. The instructors also required for implementation of this policy, have the basic skills and competencies. Ifedi (1982) concluded that other sundry needs of the country are:

- i. Production of responsible, productive and self-reliant citizens;
- ii. Reduction in the rate of labour turnover.
- iii. Increasing the morale and job satisfaction of worker and, above all;
- iv. Increasing the confidence that employer has in the skills, competencies and capabilities of new employees.

10. Benefits of Business Education, Industry Cooperation and Technologies

Business Education and Industry Cooperation or work experience programme has the following benefits;

- a) Administrators of schools, business teachers and students learn what industry needs and industry in turn learns what the school and students attempt to do thereby providing the needed technologies and strengthening the curriculum.
- b) Industry cooperation assists the school by reducing the burden of investing and acquiring latest office technologies.
- c) The trainees would have a wide exposure of modern state-of-arts equipment use in the industry which many schools cannot afford.
- d) Essentially school based programmes are theoretical, by Business Education, school industrial cooperation, students are exposed to practical work and learning by actually using the business machines and equipment the industry can provide.
- e) Business Education and industry cooperation promote good public relations between school and industrial firms.
- f) Student's entry to real world of work situation on post-graduation is made easier as fore-knowledge in the application of wide range of business office machines and equipment.

11. Provision of Modern Technologies for Teaching and Learning of Business Education

Business Education programme like other phases of vocational-technical education require the extensive use of modern office information technologies in the process of preparing 21st century office workers. Such facilities include computers, word processors, laptops, internet facilities, reprographic equipment, telex and telecommunication facilities, data processing machines, materials, studies and laboratories coupled with exposure of trainees to real work situations in industry business settings via students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES). Ikpe (2013) observes that vocational-business training, when aimed at meeting the needs of students, employers in the labor market and the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) or bench-marks by the National Universities Commission (NUC) set for the discipline itself should ensure that adequate provision is made of relevant office technologies and business office machines and equipment.

Professionally and qualified instructional personnel are very critical elements for the preparing of 21st century office administrative workers. Daughtrey (1974), Wanons (1967), Arukwe (1994) and Ikpe (2000) had over the years advocated that a vocationally oriented programme involved huge investment on ICT facilities. They maintained that Vocational-Business Education in any form or level cannot make any meaningful progress without the use of appropriate state-of-art instructional facilities.

Boyd (1979) reiterated that simulation has become an increasing popular instructional strategy in the training of potential office worker. The author suggested that a multi-job model office well equipped with modern office gadgets be built in the training process. The author concluded that provision of functional office training equipment would afford the trainees the opportunity to:

- i. Develop and apply a wide range of secretarial, clerical and administrative skills;

- ii. Experience realistic patterns of interaction with fellow trainees just as co-workers do in real work environment or world of work;
- iii. Learn at first hand personal traits and human relations skills that are needed to succeed on a job;
- iv. Increase individual awareness of the areas in which one should improve for successful entry into global village.

12. Conclusion

In an era where the demand for workers who can use modern technology to increase national productivity and industrialization is on the increase, the need for a symbiotic relationship between Business Education and the industries has become inevitable. This is more so because such partnership which is usually developed on agreement among employers, students and the school provide supervised workplace employment opportunities, service learning and experiential learning and thus facilitate school-to-work transition.

13. Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, this paper makes the following recommendations:

- a. All training institutions should ensure that their proprietors provide relevant and state-of-arts technologies for the preparation of their trainees for the 21st administrative business office environment.
- b. A Machinery should be put in place by NCCE, NBTE and NUC for a proper accreditation of vocational-business programmes at different levels of training institutions.
- c. Students industrial work experience scheme be intensified and should form a major part of the curriculum.
- d. Retraining programmes should be intensified for all trainable instructional personnel
- e. Separate statutory or budgetary allocation should be made for the provision or up-dating of relevant office information technologies.
- f. Regular training workshops and seminars should be organized periodically for academic staff of tertiary institutions offering vocational-business teacher education
- g. The issue of staff motivation should be pursued vigorously to attract highly qualified and talented instructional personnel to pick up jobs in training institutions.
- h. A team of experts should be set-up by **ABEN** to liaise with relevant statutory agencies of government to review the curriculum of Vocational Business Education at all levels.

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