

# **SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA THROUGH BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS**

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## **Abstract**

The high rate of unemployment in Nigeria today either due to lack of vocational business education or the unawareness of its importance and existence, is a serious socio-economic problem. The problem is compounded by the fact that most school leavers wait for government to provide them with jobs because they do not have any special or saleable skills that can make them marketable or self-employed. This paper, therefore, tries to look at the provision of job opportunities with a view to evolving ways and means of preparing young individuals for vocational business education jobs. This paper therefore, stresses that when there is adequate funding and the provision of the equipment for teaching and learning in schools, students competencies will be guaranteed for gainful or self-employment. Conclusively, business education prepares skillful employees, employers, entrepreneurs and office workers when given the right and appropriate training environment.

## **Introduction**

Business Education has been in existence for a number of years in developed nations such as the United States of America, Europe, China, etc. The awareness only came into Nigeria when the Curriculum Conference of 1969, which held at Lagos, recommended the need for vocational courses in business education. This awareness was as a result of the Federal Government directives to all Nigerian secondary schools to gear their curriculum towards vocational and commercial training. As a result, the introduction of business studies in secondary schools curriculum was born.

Business Education is a very vital part of general education and an important component of vocational and technical education which involves the appreciation and acquisition of practical skills, knowledge understanding and attitudes' of various sectors of the economy. Beside the fact that an individual is educated about the business world, business education plays a double role of initiating the individual for gainful and useful employment after school as well as educating them to be intelligent consumers of goods and services of business life.

When the Federal, State and Local governments including other stakeholders in education are able to provide adequate and regular funding, provision of laboratories and classroom spaces, then, the needed competencies would have been achieved by students. And the much talk-about gainful or self-employment will be guaranteed. This, therefore, will create the needed occupation workforce in the economy.

## **Evolution of Business Education in Nigeria**

As a result of the growing rate of unemployment of school leavers in the 1970s, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the *National Policy on Education* recently revised in 2004. In the policy introduced, the teaching of business studies at the junior secondary school level was stressed with emphasis on the acquisition of practical skills, values and living a meaningful life in the society. The policy statement led to the development of business education programmes in the colleges of education nationwide. In order to prepare qualified graduate teachers to teach these subjects effectively and efficiently in the schools, these colleges were

given authority to do so.

According to Obikoya (1995), the programme is designed to develop special competencies in business skills embracing specialized training for secretarial, accounting, clerical, distributive and management occupations. The Nigerian government is placing much emphasis on vocational business education because it is a major and recognized discipline in nation building especially in the area of self-employment and self-sustenance. As a result of these attributes, it has been able to survive the rationalization syndrome in our higher institutions in Nigeria today.

Business education as perceived by Anao (1986) is an educational process which has primary aim in the preparation of people for the roles in enterprises such as employees, entrepreneurs, employers or simply as self-employed persons. The term 'business education' is a recent terminology in Nigeria because the majority of people cannot differentiate it from the term 'business administration' or 'business management'. It is a programme of education which equips the student with marketable skills, values, knowledge and attitudes that are needed for initial employment and advancement in business occupation.

The business education curriculum offers knowledge in subject areas that enables one seek for careers in the business field. Opportunities for employment as a result of business education preparation are enormous, which includes development of small scale business ventures which, if properly managed, is able to keep the family members gainfully employed, thereby, improving or upgrading their living standards in the society. Subsequently, small scale enterprises with good management also provide employment opportunities for others.

Manpower development can rely on business education. As a vocational training, it has vital roles in the implementation of the *National Policy Education* (6-3-3-4 system) which places emphasis on pre-vocational preparation for the youths and young persons. Vocational business education has the economic role of providing qualified manpower demanded by the ever-changing technology for better resource management of the economy.

### **The Need for Business Education**

Nigeria, like many developing nations of the world, has been faced with economic problems like poverty and unemployment. Developed and developing nations like the United States of America (USA), Britain, Japan, Kenya, Tanzania, etc., have been able to use vocational business education to reverse their poverty and unemployment status. The Nigerian economy has undergone radical changes since independence. In a bid to reverse this trend, the government embarked on several remedial measures aimed at achieving self-reliance through self-sufficiency. This government has been able to do, through the encouragement of business education programmes in the educational institutions within the country.

It is worthy to note that developing countries like Nigeria is blessed with abundant mineral, human and natural resources. As such, preparing students and young persons for services in the business sector as well as business education teachers with opportunities to be certified, provide in-service and continuing education to enable teachers and office administrative support personnel to update their skills and acquire additional competencies needed for continued advancement.

### **Problems Confronting Business Education Programmes**

Business education has not been adequately developed due to the defects in our educational system that is strongly biased towards academic and literacy subjects. The implementation of business educational programmes has not been given the appropriate attention that it requires.

Oyedele (1992) observed that business education in Nigeria is not without its own shortcomings. Almost all the business education departments in Nigerian tertiary institutions are plagued with inadequate funding and financing, facilities and manpower for the teaching and learning processes. The country's low economic growth in terms of manpower training and development is as a result of these.

In most of the institutions, the facilities that are available are either in bad conditions or out-rightly obsolete, thereby, making it difficult for use. The absence of these

machines such as typewriters, computers, etc., in other institutions makes it difficult equally for the educators to instruct their students in the appropriate manner that such training requires. As much as possible, when these facilities have been put in place, all the problems associated with lack of these machines would be a thing of the past.

In as much as many of these tertiary institutions run programmes for the training of teachers in business education, the graduate teachers are not enough to meet the demands of the schools. The teachers are usually in short supply.

The realization of the goals of education as highlighted in the nation's National Policy on Education (2004) cannot be achieved with inadequate funding of its programmes. The financing of such programmes have failed to see the light of day. As such, students fail to devote their time to learning business skill subjects and this hinders gaining competence in the subject areas as a result of lack of motivation.'

Negative public attitudes frustrate genuine efforts towards vocationalizing of business education. Some people feel that business education is for only dullards, pupils who are mentally or intellectually disadvantaged and drop-outs. This attitude, according to Fafunwa (1974), makes a mockery of education and as such should be readdressed.

### **Prospects in Business Education**

The sky, they say, is the limit for anyone with business education knowledge and skills as he/she sells like hot cake in terms of seeking and finding employment in the labour market. Job opportunities are available in all works of life, for a pragmatic and practical individual.

In diversifying education, countries like: China, Cuba, Kenya, Britain, etc., have integrated the policy of work/study so as to improve and increase self-reliance. As much as possible, establish schools to run side by side academic oriented education and making business education subjects core subjects in the schools.

It must be emphasized that financing business education in a depressed economy like Nigeria, is not only associated with physical cash but enlarged to include provisions of human and material resources which are indispensable. No matter the degree of depressed economy, government at various levels should allocated funds to business education. This aspect should not be neglected on the pretext that there are other priority needs from the view of return on investment.

The role of business education emphasizes the dignity of labour. It encourages diligence and proper means of gaining prosperity, thereby, solving many economic problems by stimulating and encouraging creativity. It equips one with skills for earning a living and then gives adequate preparation for advanced professional training.

To reduce mass unemployment, (here is the need for clear purpose in the schooling at every stage of the students' life. The surest way can be through training in the business education setting to be enterprising and self-reliant. Thereafter, participating in the rapid socio-economic development of the nation.

Employment for business education graduates in the public and private sectors have grown tremendously over the years. However, one cannot have accurate data of graduates employed at any level in Nigeria. Adidu (1991) observed that there was a great demand for clerical and secretarial workers in the federal, state and local government levels as well as the public corporations and all kinds of private businesses and commercial firms nationwide. There are indications to show that business education graduates who opted to work were given opportunities to do so.

The inability to fund business education programmes would mean total collapse for the programmes. There should be cooperation between government and non-governmental institutions to procure this equipment for the schools in order that the programmes see the light of the day.

As much as possible, the institutions can generate funds themselves by rendering services rather than contracting services. Such income can be used to procure machines for use within the institutions, thereby, making the business education programmes more viable.

It is delightful to note that business education have been included in the

matriculation requirement to universities in recent times. This further goes to show that business education has gained grounds.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the foregoing, therefore, it is hereby recommended that:

1. Business education should, through the professional bodies, make aggressive efforts to promote business education programmes in Nigerian schools in order to improve awareness and employable skills in the youths;
2. Institutions in the country should organize fund-raising activities so as to generate funds' for the procurement of modern teaching equipment and gadgets.
3. Business educators should continually stress the need to adequately equip and update all the departments of business education with modern and recent equipment for training to go on.
4. As much as possible, adequate funds should be made available to take care of the production of quality business educators.
5. Lastly, loans and grants should be made available for graduates of business education to enable them acquire equipment for themselves in order to facilitate the establishment of small-scale private businesses or enterprises.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper is geared towards repositioning business education in our educational system. It must be noted that any nation either developed or developing should strive to achieve self-reliance. In this vein, all citizens whether young or old, have to be fully aware to the need of self-reliance through the knowledge of business education.

With this in mind, it would be advisable for any child who leaves school at any point in time to be able to fit into the world of work either as an employee or employer. It must be by great consideration as such individuals begin to contribute his/her own quota to the growing economy of the nation.

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