

THE NIGERIAN EDUCATION REFORMS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF BUSINESS EDUCATION

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Abstract

Nigerian educational system as witnessed several crises in recent times with frequent changes in structure, incessant strikes by teachers at all levels of education, leading to disruption of studies and general dwindling quality of education. Some of these problems could be attributed to many reasons such as poor preparation of teachers. The paper focuses generally on teachers of Business Education and specifically highlights the problems associated with teaching and learning of Business Education, implications of education reforms as it relates to Business Education and recommends among others that teachers should inculcate greater dedication towards their job, government improves teachers condition of services and adequate infrastructures should be provided to make the ongoing proposal on educational reform a success and thereby improve the quality of education.

Introduction

Education serves as the springboard for social and economic reforms. It remains the fundamental pillar of any progress and it is critical to the construction of a knowledge economy and the society. The large budgetary allocation to the educational sector by United State of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK) and other developed economy annually is an indication of the importance Government attaches to it. Nigeria's desire for an educational system relevant to her developmental needs and aspirations informed the convoking of a National Curriculum Conference in 1969 (Fafunwa, 1974). The recommendations of the conference led to several reforms in the Nigeria education. Since then, several attempts have been made through National Conferences/Workshops to ensure quality and functional education to meet the National Goals and objectives.

The Nigerian educational system has witnessed several crises in" recent times; these include the frequent changes in structure, declining quality and strikes by teachers at all levels of schooling. The quality of graduates in all levels of education in Nigeria in recent times is below acceptable standard most especially Business Education graduates. The teaching/learning of business education will be enhanced to meet the economic goals if the reforms in education are properly implemented.

Educational reforms in Nigeria in the last decade., have been driven by emerging global goals and declarations to which Nigeria is a signatory. These are the world declaration on Education for All (E FA) made in Jomthen, Thailand in 1990 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of year 2000.

Based on the Millennium Development Goals, the Nigerian Government set up National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) on which the goals of the reforms are anchored.

Education Reforms in Nigeria

Reform, according to Rundell (2005), is to improve a situation by correcting things that are wrong or unfair or make a system work more effectively. Education reform therefore is defined as an introduction of something in a new way, in which it focuses on making changes, aimed at improving the existing pattern or condition of doing things to make them more efficient and more effective (Ijanaku, 2007). Education reforms involves discovering many ways of doing things so that the new discoveries will integrate into the existing ways of learning/teaching to improve the quality of education in Nigeria.

The ongoing reforms are aimed at evolving a fresh education programme that will inculcate the right cultural and moral values in youths to curtail the multiplying social ills ravaging the society * and prepare youths that can engage themselves in meaningful occupations for nation building. The current reforms will propel the Nigerian educational system into a more purposeful and achievable standard that can stand in a new world of globalization and technological advances towards effective manpower development for a better future. As technology has created change in all aspects of society, it is necessary to change our educational system Jo meet the technological changes. According fo Winking (1991), education today is online culture

because it is possible for students to access thousands of different topics in a matter of minutes. Yet our current educational system is a throwback to the methods of schooling developed during the industrial revolution, in many cases, most of the modern methods of teaching the students are obsolete. Lawal (2007), asserted that the need for the present reforms is connected with persistent crises from every quarter with regards to the fading quality of education as well as the increasing realization that Nigeria is not developing as rapidly as desired. Ezekwesili (2007), disclosed that the education sector has failed the nation and this has called for a total reform. She further pointed out that the reforms should involve:

- (i) A quality assurance inspection of all levels of education.
- (ii) A survey of institutions and creation of asset registration that will show detail of the physical condition of assets.
- (iii) Massive transparency campaign on work ethics.
- (iv) A new curriculum re-alignment programme and new book policy with *UBE*, *NERDC* and *NECO* co-coordinating.
- (v) Boost to teachers' morale with the mortgage scheme.

The Concept of Business Education

Business Education is an important segment of Vocational Education. It is wide in scope because it provides the skills and knowledge needed for particular job such as accounting, marketing and secretarial occupation. Business Education or Commercial Education provides the foundation for many of our accountants, business executives, salesmen, data processing analysts, secretaries, stenographers and typists.

Erickson (1974), opined that Business Education is the fundamental programme of economic education that has to do with acquisition, conservation and expenditure of wealth. Abdullahi (2001), defined Business Education as that aspect of the total educational programme that provides the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as a producer and/or consumer of goods and services.

Basic Business Education is that broad area of knowledge that deals with a nation's enterprise, identifies and explains the role of business as a nation's economic institution and provides content and experience that prepare individuals for effective participation as citizens, workers and consumers in the society (Osuala, 1999).

From the presentation above, it can be deduced that Business Education teaches students how to make a meaningful living as well as develop and operate successfully in the business world to meet the millennium development goals. The teaching and learning of Business Education needs to be improved upon to enable students to learn to navigate through large amounts of information to analyze and make decisions, and to master new knowledge domains in an increasingly technological society.

Objectives of National Policy on Education as Related to Business Education

The National Policy on Education (2004), articulated some goals, which are aimed at bringing about National development. These are some of the objectives that seem to relate to Business Education objectives:

- (i) To build a united, strong and self-reliant nation, (ii) A great and dynamic economy.

These lofty objectives can only be achieved if education is made to be qualitative and functional especially Business Education. The quest to enhance effective teaching and learning of Business Education for national development made the National Commission for College of Education to articulate the following objectives of Business Education in line with the National Policy (page 21) which states that every student shall take all the six (6) core subjects in group A and a minimum of one (1) and a maximum of two (2) from the list of elective subjects in groups B and C to give a minimum of seven (7) and maximum of eight (8) subjects.

Group A core (i) English Language (ii) Mathematics (iii) A major Nigerian Language (iv) one of the Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Health Science (v) one of the Literature in English, History, Geography or Religious Studies (vi) A vocational subjects.

Group B Vocational Electives (i) Agriculture (ii) Applied Electricity (iii) Auto Mechanics (iv) Bookkeeping and Accounting (v) Building Construction (vi) Commerce (vii) Computer

Education (viii) Shorthand etc. Objectives of Business Education:

- (i) To produce well-qualified and competent N.C.E. graduates in Business subjects who will be able to teach business subjects,
- (ii) To produce N.C.E. business teachers who will be able to inculcate the vocational aspects of Business Education into the society.
- (iii) To produce N.C.E. business teachers who will be involved in the much-desired revolution of vocational development from primary and secondary schools.
- (iv) Among others to equip graduates with the right skills that will enable them to engaged in a life of work in the office as well as for self-employment.

These lofty objectives have been difficult to advance as a result of challenges faced by business education practitioners in the area of teaching/learning of Business Education. No nation can grow economically if her education is not fixed right; hence there is need for aggressive innovation/reforms in every sub-sector of education most especially vocational education to eradicate unemployment problems faced by Nigerian Youths. Education should be made to provide entrepreneurial skills to the youths for self-reliance to build a great and dynamic economy (Ezekwesili, 2006).

Challenges of Teaching and Learning of Business Education

Teaching and Learning: Learning is understanding new things and getting better ways of doing things (Hubbard, 2006). While teaching means to help students to learn something in a school, College, University, etc by giving lessons (Rundell, 2005). For the teacher to effectively teach students to learn new things and get better ways of doing things depends on many factors as follows:

- Instructional/Teaching aids
- Students willingness to learn
- Conducive environment for learning
- Adequate/qualified teachers, etc

Dykman (1993), articulated the following challenges facing business education practitioners today hence made teaching/learning of business education difficult:

- (i) Declining teacher education enrolment and poor teacher quality.
- (ii) Low incentive for teachers.
- (iii) Lack of infrastructural development/instructional materials for business education courses.
- (iv) Outdated curriculum to meet the yearning of the present Information and Communication Technology (ICT) world.

Other challenges are:

- (1) Ill-equipped libraries
- (2) High Students-teacher ratio
- (3) Teacher-centred method of teaching
- (4) Fraudulent entry qualification by students
- (5) High level of examination malpractice
- (6) Low interest of learners

Adams (2007), wondered if business teacher education has become so driven by its past that it is unable to respond to changes sweeping the workplace. Answer to the question is likened to the situation in the railroad. The railroad industry declined because its leaders never realized they were irt the transportation business, not the train business.

Business Educators must realize that they are not in the Business Education "business", (though some may disagree) but rather are in the workforce education "business" which is changing drastically.

Harrison (1992), suggested that we seem to have lost the focus on what is important developing human capital. He further stressed that the central challenges facing teaching of Business Education in the 21st century is the degree to which teachers acquire new relevant competences to use information technology facilities,

This challenge is central to the future viability and relevance of Business Education.

Ake (2007), opined that ability to groom teachers sufficiently to match the need and task ahead are some of the important things that should be taken into cognizance to ensure success in Education. He further stressed that many teachers lack the content and the ability to deliver (the goods). The future lies in refocusing on this basic mission of strengthening teachers by training and retraining.

Implication of the Reforms for Teaching and Learning of Business Education

As envisaged by the Federal Government in the National Economic Empowerment Strategy (NEEDS) document, a progressive Business Education policy embedded in pro-growth and anti-poverty set of overall policies can transform Nigeria to one of the twenty foremost nations of the world by 2020.

The vision of the reforms will bring about effective teaching and learning of Business Education, as teachers will be retrained to cope with the new Information and Communication Technology world. More facilities/teaching aids will be provided to enhance effective teaching/learning of Business Education.

The vision has numerous imperatives for the way we present Business Education in schools. Its implication include inclusive education, curriculum reforms in Business Education, improving teacher preparation, provision of adequate funding for Vocational Business teaching raising the standard of achievement in Business Education and maintain equity and learner friendly environment, i.e. placing the learner firmly in the centre of the learning process. It will enhance and maintain high quality of learning/teaching of business education at all levels by providing facilities and infrastructures.

The reforms will ensure employment of more qualified and retraining of existing teachers to reduce the high level of students/teacher ratio. This will make learning/teaching environment more conducive for the teachers and the learners. Another implication is that teachers will become more equipped for their work and learners will be more motivated to learn as infrastructures and facilities will be provided.

Recommendations

- (1) The reform should be based on objective findings and should be people oriented i.e. all the stakeholders in education should be fully involved for a comprehensive reform. The education reforms should be properly articulated and strategically planned as any haphazard exercise can cause a lot of problems to the system.
- (2) The quality of learning materials in the school libraries should be improved upon to ensure effective teaching and learning of Business Education.
- (3) For effective teaching and learning of Business Education, the curriculum of business education should be changed in line with the current economic realities. That is the content and skills should be made relevant to the learner.
- (4) Government is called upon to build more classrooms and provide enough computer centres in all our tertiary institutions to meet the need of our student population. Equally, all teachers should be trained to be computer literate.
- (5) Though, the training of teachers recently is acknowledged one should advocate for teachers' salary scheme which would cater for the welfare of teachers as the quality of teachers would determine the quality of instruction passed to the learners.
- (6) Government should refrain from outright privatization of educational institutions as it will have a negative effect on the learners as many of them from humble background might not have the resources to access quality education which invariably will affect Business Education.
- (7) There is need to incorporate the element of retraining in our graduates. This is already happening in China where people who probably have degree in Liberal Arts but want to be equipped with skills, which will enable them to operate on their own, go for further training. This will enable us to focus the vision of our graduates on the world of works.
- (8) Teaching and learning of skills in Business Education should be informed with relevant for the upgrading of the self and the society. This can be done through encouraging curiosity as a motivator in Business Education. Teachers should stimulate curiosity in the students to make

them actively long for knowledge.

Conclusion

The recent Nigeria economic quest is to become one of the largest economies in the world by 2020. This dream can only be realized if the educational sector is properly positioned. The teaching and learning of Business Education will play important role in this quest as business education provides an individual with knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as a producer and consumer of goods and services. Government should be open and transparent in the reform process to involve all stakeholders in the education sector.

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