THE PLACE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Poverty as a ravaging economic and social malady manifests in the inability of the victims to acquire basic necessities of life. Business education is a veritable instrument in poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Business education will help in alleviating poverty by making its graduates possess saleable skills and also be self-reliant by being employed in establishment and employers of labour. A practical approach is necessary in the provision of qualitative education such as business education in Nigeria. It is recommended that government should take issues of providing more functional equipment in schools, strengthening the teaching staff and funding of business education very serious.

Introduction

The poverty situation in Nigeria has become so services that it is regarded as one of the major developmental challenges to her economic and social growth. Poverty is antithetical to human rights (Zanna, 2000). Research has it that about 50% of the nation’s population is living in poverty. This means that these Nigerians cannot, with any degree of comfort, afford the basic needs for human living (viz food clothing and shelter). It needs not be over-emphasized that this is not only unacceptable, but also pathetic. The leaders on their part have made varied efforts and attempts to check and arrest this phenomenon, fabulous sums of money have been spent over decades of trials. This paper will examine how business education will assist in poverty alleviation. This is to complement government’s effort in this direction.

Business education according to Osuala (1996) is a programme of instruction which consists of two parts viz office education which is a vocational education programmed for office careers through initial, refresher programme that provides students with information and competencies which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of business.

Office education involves education for office occupations, or the acquisition of skills, attitudes, aptitudes, and knowledge needed to carry out the function of office (Osagie, 1992). Such occupation may include book-keeping transcribing, telephone operation, stenography, confidential secretaryship, machine operation etc. Which in addition involve management and advancement in occupations related to the office. Business education is an educational process, whose primary aim is to prepare people for role in enterprises, as employers, entrepreneurs or self-employed (Amaewhule, 2000). Anao (1986) said that
business education could be seen as the sum total of the knowledge, skill and attitude that are required for successfully promoting and administering business enterprises.

Theories of business education include:
1. To give special attention to the development of human relations skills.
2. To prepare individuals for work in local business and government organizations as well as for regional and national job opportunities.
3. To provide training which reflects changes in business brought about by technological advances.

Osuala (1996) further outline the roles of business education which includes: the provision of a continuous programme of planned learning experiences designed to equip individuals to fulfill effectively three roles.
(a) To produce and distribute goods and services as workers.
(b) To use the results of the production as consumers and
(c) To make judicious socio-economic decisions as citizens.

Amaewhule (2000) in buttressing the roles of business education stated that it provides specific training for a cluster of skills, and provides a programme flexibility to enable youths and adults make career choices. Business education has a role to play in career development. It offers various individuals the opportunity to develop those skills; abilities and understanding that will enable them handle efficiently their personal affairs and assume their citizenship responsibilities (Okorie, 2001).

Types and Causes of Poverty

Poverty alleviation cannot be directly defined without having the concept of poverty clearly explained. Poverty can literally be stated as a condition where the total annual income (that is the total funds) available to individuals, groups of people, family or a society, for expenditure on feeding, clothing, shelter and provision of other necessary services is below a certain minimum value (Aliyu, 1999a). It is a multi-faceted affliction; a ravaging economic and social phenomenon that manifests in the inability of the victims to acquire the basic necessities of life (National planning commission, CAPPA, 1995 in Zanna, 2000).

Poverty goes beyond material deprivation to include insecurity, vulnerability and exposure to risks, shocks and stress. It includes specifically; a high rate of infant mortality; low life expectancy; poor environmental conditions; low level of energy consumption; low educational opportunities; inadequate health care; lack of productive assets; lack of economic infrastructure, and lack of active participation in the decision making process.

There are basically two main types of poverty; namely primary poverty and secondary poverty (Alagbe, 2004). Primary poverty emanates when the income of an individual or quality is insufficient to provide for the basic needs required for physical efficiency. Secondary poverty on the other hand, emanates
from the mis-management of an income that would otherwise have been sufficient for the satisfaction and provision of basic human needs. The primary poverty is more critical and should be of great concern to the government and policy makers.

One of the major crucial factors leading to poverty in most countries of the world is that of mismanagement of resources by rulers and government functionaries in every part of the world (Oloide, 2000). This is the Nigerian situation. James Woltersohn boss of the World Bank refused to include Nigeria as one of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) because the country is not poor in the sense that she has numerous resources. Woltersohn said that it is mismanagement, corruption and policy distortion that gave the impression that Nigeria is a poor" (Oloide, 2000).

Other causes of poverty include two much emphasis of our policy on paper without adequate implementation, poor human capital development and poor or weak leadership style of our people. This is as a result of the leaders not being able to protect people’s properties and properly coordinate affairs of the nation. Causes of poverty also include deregulation, budget passed at the time people cannot plan alongside with the budget and lack of relationship between what is budgeted and executed.

**Government Efforts to Alleviate Poverty in the Country**

Aliyu (1999a) said that the provision of the basic necessities not only to enable the individual or group to make logical and positive contributions to corporate existence but also affect the lives of others around them. Efforts are made to take poverty in this country by provision of the necessities of life. Such efforts are geared towards poverty alleviation. The efforts are the interventions being made. Poverty is only alleviated if the intervention is sustained (Aliyu, 1999a). It is important to note that because of the dynamic nature of poverty and its reduction, there is no single intervention is scheme that is generally adopted or accepted as the only scheme for poverty alleviation. This explains the reason why policies dating back to the oil-boom decade which were focused directly or indirectly at addressing poverty include:

- Operation feed the Nation which was later renamed the green Revolution.
- The universal free primary education which currently renamed the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme.
- Rivers Basin Development Authority, (RBDA).
- National Directorate for Employment (NDE)
- Guinea Worm Eradication Programme
- Directorate for Food, Road and rural Infrastructure (DFEEI)
- Better Life Programme (BLP)
- Family Support Programme (FSP)
- Structural Adjustment programme (SAP)
The list of poverty interventions already carved out in Nigeria is inexhaustible. Implementation of these programmes does not tackle poverty. Sustaining it, is what tackles poverty (Aliyu, 1999a). According to Aliyu (1999b) several poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria have failed due to overlapping functions among institutions which lead to unhealthy rivalry and conflicts between the public institutions charged with poverty alleviation programme. There is unwieldy scope of most of the programmes without the spread of resources (fund) to effectively cover the programmes and projects. Also exists is the unnecessary political interference and rapid rate of turn-over of management structures, and lack of centralized decision making body specifically charged with responsibility for success of the poverty alleviation initiative. Having identified the fact that poverty alleviation programme in the country is not achieving the much needed goal, it is therefore, necessary to come up with ways by which business education will contribute to poverty alleviation.

Roles of Business Education in Poverty Alleviation

In line with one of the four key strategies of NEEDS, that is, implementing a social charter which emphasis welfare, health, education, employment, poverty reduction, empowerment, security and participation, business education has a vital role to play in poverty alleviation in this country. With about 50 percent of the population as children, education is seen under the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) as the most important bridge to the future and a powerful instrument of empowerment. Business education as the instrument of empowerment possesses the basic preparation for two of the most important endeavours known to mankind, business and education.

Business education grandaunts in providing the most important endeavours which are business and education, equips it graduates with necessary skills and potentials, that will make them perform very well in business and also take to teaching as a profession. With courses in accountancy, secretarial studies, computer, marketing and distributive education, the individual will acquire salable skills be self-employed and above all create jobs by being employers of labour. By so doing, the alleviate poverty in the society.

Graduates of business education specializing in computer will be gainfully employed in companies to work as computer operators, or set up their own computer business outfits where they will handle different jobs like printing of invitation cards, posters, flyers and typing of documents. Designing of buildings will also be done using the ANWCAS. This will lead to the
installations of many computers and photocopying machines in the centres and evidently more hands will be required for effective and efficient operation of the centre, as a result jobs will be created thereby alleviating poverty.

Business education graduates as mentioned earlier also teach in the classrooms. They take up teaching appointments in both private and public educational institutions. There they impart the business education knowledge to the younger generations.

Accounting graduates can establish firms of accountants which will enable them to be consultants to the government and private establishments. They can as well establish accounting schools and learning centres for professional studies, engage in writing and publishing books on accounting, organize workshops and seminars for organizations.

Graduates of marketing and distributive education are suitably fit to undertake marketing/salesmanship activities on behalf of producers. The individual could earn a living and sustain his/her household by marketing and promoting the goods and/or products to the public.

**Constraints of Poverty Alleviation through Business Education**

The growth of business education in the country is not encouraging owing to so many factors. These factors if not addressed and improved upon will contribute to a greater poverty level being experienced by the learners. The problems of business education include:

1. **Lack of adequate equipment**: Like other vocational programmes, business education lacks modern equipment for proper training of the students. Most of the available equipment are obsolete and do not meet needs of the time.
2. **Inadequate teaching staff**: There is death of staff in the business education departments. Most of those trained prefer working in companies to teaching. This is because of poor societal perception of teachers in the country in particular.
3. **Inadequate infrastructures**: There exists few lecture halls/classrooms for the business education courses. If available, there are few or no-desks for the students. In its totality, the learning environment is not conducive.
4. **UBE scheme**: Little or no emphasis is made on the place of business education in the current UBE programme. With such, people will not be willing to enroll for the programme of study and as such will not acquire the skill needed for them to be self-reliant and employable.
5. **Poor societal perception**: The Nigerian society, has poor regard for vocational education programme with business education which is an integral part of vocational education inclusive. Nigerian views this form of education as education for the never do wells or drop outs. This is evident on the very low population of students receiving vocational education nation – wide. Most of the states in the country till date have
not and are still unwilling to set up separate board for the management of vocational and technical education in their woman state. This is because they have little or no value and regard for vocational education.

6. **Inadequate funding:** This is the major problem of vocational education in this country. The government finds it extremely difficult to release reasonable fund to this programme of education. Consideration is not given to acquisition of machines, tools and materials for practical which will enhance students skill acquisition. This therefore makes it difficult for the students to acquire the proper skill.

**Conclusion**

The poverty situation in this country has become so serious. It is regarded as one of the major developmental challenges of the country. Efforts have been made to reduce this ugly monster but all to no avail. Business education as a programme caters for interests in and outside the classrooms, with its grandaunts making a remarkable contribution to societal improvement. This development and improvement on the individual is geared towards poverty reduction.

Except the Nigerian government without further delay puts in place a practical approach to the issue of provision of quality education in the country, it may be difficult to succeed with any poverty alleviation programme irrespective of how well planned.

**Recommendations**

Undoubtedly, business education is the proper education for poverty alleviation. For effective poverty reduction through business education the following issues should be properly addressed:

1. More functional equipment should be provided in every institution offering business education. This will enhance proper training to the students geared towards acquisition of the right skills.
2. The teaching staff should be strengthened by the authorities that be by recruiting more business education teachers.
3. Enough structures should be put in place with modern and adequate facilities provided, for conducive teaching and learning exercise.
4. Clear emphasis should be made in the UBE programme on the nature of skill acquisition, how and where it will be received.
5. The Nigerian society should be properly informed on the gains of business education, mainly on skill acquisition and self-reliance.
6. Government should improve on funding of business education, realizing that equipment, tools and machines needed for the programme are expensive to procure.


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References


