PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL BUSINESSES IN NIGERIA THROUGH MAXIMUM SKILL ACQUISITION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

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Abstract
This paper highlights ways of promoting sustainable development of entrepreneurial businesses in Nigeria through maximum skill acquisition. At the introduction, the paper defines terminologies such as business education, sustainable development, entrepreneurship and maximum skill acquisition in business education. It goes further to examine the importance of maximum skill acquisition in business education as well as discusses impediments to it among the graduates of business education in the country. The paper concludes by making recommendations on the way forward.
Key Words: Sustainable development; Entrepreneurship; Business Education and Maximum skill acquisition

Introduction
Business education is defined as that aspect of vocational education which provides skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes necessary for effective employment in any specific business occupations. According Udo (2015) Business education is a comprehensive activity-based occupational education programme that is concerned with the acquisition of practical skill, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in any chosen business occupation. It equips the recipients with practical skills in the areas of accounting, marketing, distributive trade, management and office technology, information and communication technology (ICT), economics, and entrepreneurship. Udo (2016) defines the latter as the practice of having one’s own business venture. On the other hand, skill acquisition is the capability to be trained in a particular business occupation and become a specialist in. Meanwhile, the World Commission on Environment and Development Report – Our Common Future (1987) defined sustainable development as that development which
meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future
generation to meet their own needs.

The field of sustainable development can be conceptually broken into three
constituents parts: social sustainability, economic sustainability and environmental
sustainability (World Commission on Environment and Development Report – Our
Common Future, 1987). Furthermore, people who are concerned about sustainable
development suggest that meeting the needs of the future generation depends to a large
extent on how well the present-day decision makers can balance social, economic and
environmental objectives when making decisions today (The World bank Group, 2001).

By developing adequate practical skills to the highest level, the graduates of business
education programmes can engage in sustainable entrepreneurial livelihoods that will
open the doors to their greatness and cause them to be up and doing in job creation.

However, acquiring practical skills needs to win over the mindset and the way of thinking
of the business education graduates so that the right frame of mind, attitudes and values
which will inspire them to be involved in sustainable development of entrepreneurial
activities. It is pertinent to note that maximum skill acquisition would lead to sustainable
development of entrepreneurship and this would also involve the business education
graduates conceiving business visions and turning them into business realities Certainly
highest skill acquisition in business occupations is what could be considered as a tool
leading to sustainable development of entrepreneurial businesses that business education
graduates can be engaged in.

**Importance of Maximum Skill Acquisition in Business Education**

Business education skill is very vital in the life of every Nigerian citizen. The
reason why many Nigerian technicians earns more than some university graduates is
because the technicians acquired more of skills than the theories the graduates were fed
with when they were in their universities. Skill can take the technicians to places they did
not expect they would ever find themselves. Skill acquisition is the capacity to be trained
on a particular business occupation and become a proficient professional in it. It is a
disappointment that there is terrible unemployment problem in many parts of Nigeria
today. This unemployment problem is giving many Nigerian youths in different parts of
the country sleepless night. It is one of the causes of rapid growth in criminal activities in
many parts of the country. This is because skill acquisition helps to reduce the crime rate
in many nations (Datol, 2004). In the absence of adequate skills, the youths start to think
about many filthy activities they will do in order to make money since they do not have
anything that they can call their own jobs or businesses (Ekpenyong, 1988). However, if
the youths have acquired maximum skill in any given occupation, they will work and
make money from their acquired skills. This will make them to feel comfortable in life
and do not disturb their life in any way. But do people feel there is any relationship between somebody who has acquired skill on how to perform a particular job expertly and make money from it and unemployment? The response is no because the skills that they have already acquired can always speak for them. According to Udo (2016) the acquisition of adequate practical skills is a means of increasing the productive power of any individual or nation and hence, a means to boosting sustainable development of entrepreneurship businesses in Nigeria. Consequently, Udo (2016) pointed out that the Nigerian society should recognize the fact that every citizen should be equipped to contribute effectively to the welfare of the country. The acquisition of such practical skills is important because when efficient and skilful hands are employed in any fields of human endeavours, high productivity is usually achieved (Telsang, 2007). Economically, maximum practical skills acquisition by business education students and others will help to enrich the Nigerian society and in this way, make possible sustainable development of entrepreneurship. Okorie and Ezeji (1988) opined that a rich nation is one that is capable of meeting the economic, social, moral and political needs of the citizenry. Nigeria as a nation will enjoy sustainable development if business education students in particular and all other students in general acquire maximum skills acquisition and competencies in their specialties.

Furthermore, politically, practical skill acquisition makes possible the promotion of personal and national greatness. Okorie and Ezeji (1988) pointed out that the behaviour of an individual in a society or the behaviour of a nation in a community of nations may be influenced by the skills and competencies possessed by that individual or nation. Socially, the acquisition of maximum skills helps a person to provide amusement, happiness, love, affection and enjoyment to other individuals as well as the entire nation at large. It also helps to reduce criminal activities such as armed robbery, kidnapping, insurgency and other social vices among the youths. To the business education students, maximum skill acquisition helps them to be engaged in productive work either for themselves or for employers of labour. This enables business education students to qualify for and hold productive employment as well as increases their productivity and earns more remuneration. This is so because a business education graduate who acquired maximum skills is classified as someone who is up and doing (Datol, 2004). Such a graduate who have sufficient skills stand the opportunity of getting jobs from many establishments or even establishing his/her business venture. Indeed business education graduates who have obtained adequate business skills are being searched by many organisations. This happens as business organisations X, Y, and Z stand in a queue fighting over one skilled and talented worker. Such business education graduates are being searched for because they can do many functions expertly due to the highest level of skills that they possessed (Ekpenyong, 1988).
Self employment leads to sustainable development of entrepreneurial activities in the Nigerian economy. This is so because a business education graduate who has acquired a high level of skill in a particular business occupation could be a self-employed graduate (Osuala, 1987). The write-up that you are reading right now is written as a result of the skill acquired by the writer. There are so many self-employed writers today who do not border themselves of carrying files from one place of work to another in search of job. Their duty is freelance writing and they make a lot of money from their writing (Datol, 2004). In the same way, many successful businessmen and woman whose names are heard in many parts of the Nigeria are entrepreneurs. A self employed individual can never go starving because the skill he/she acquired provides food for him/her on daily basis. However one who lacks skill acquisition will find it difficult to be self employed because he/she has nothing to offer.

The ability of Nigerian business education graduates to generate employment for themselves and others through maximum skill acquisition is the key to the growth and sustainability of entrepreneurial activities. Today, the Nigerian governments are still finding it hard to offer jobs for their citizens because the citizens themselves lack necessary skills they needed to have acquired (Udo, 2016). A lot of job opportunities would have been generated for Nigerian graduates and other citizens if they were well equipped with skills (Udo, 2016). This is why it is necessary for government to organize practical skill acquisition academy for the teeming Nigerian youths as this will go a long way in providing with skills for job creation.

Other importance of acquiring maximum skills and competencies includes: it reduces the drop-out rates among the Nigerian youths; it helps to make the youths intelligent users of the products of technology as well as the most reliable vehicle for economic prosperity and diplomatic supremacy of the Nigerian nation (Osuala, 1998). These benefits of maximum skill acquisition are still there if business education students while in their colleges and universities will think twice and change their negative attitudes towards it and turn to develop themselves sufficiently in the skills inherent in business education programmes of their institutions. In fact when business education students fail to acquire maximum practical skills from their programmes; this in turn affects sustainable development negatively. Below are the major components of sustainable development that business education graduates can start various entrepreneurial activities.
The three components of sustainable development are explained below:

According to World Bank Group (2001), the Social Aspect of sustainable development looks at issues that impact people’s lives directly and that either helps or hinders the process of improving the quality of lives. From the diagram above, the social aspect of sustainable development includes elements such as services, household needs, industrial growth, agricultural growth and efficient use of labour. According to Njoku and Nwosu (2011) some entrepreneurial activities available for business education graduates in Nigeria include trading in fast food, snacks, native delicacies, assorted soup and foo-foo, roasted yams and plantain, etc. Other entrepreneurial activities are clothing merchandise, fashion accessories and garment production as well as dye and bleaching. The education sector has a lot of services to offer the Nigerian masses and these include establishment of day care centres, nursery and primary schools as well as the establishment of secondary schools and vocational training schools. Still others include making of non-alcoholic wine using locally made raw materials, making of washing detergents, fashion designing, establishing gymnastics and fitness centres, dietary centres, food processing and making of toys, table and floor mats from raffia.

Social sustainability is often considered to be an area of priority because adequate skill acquisition has to be built upon it so that that could assist to contribute to sustainable development of entrepreneurship activities in the economy. In Nigeria, the curriculum contents of business education equip the recipients with social entrepreneurship skills which assist them to recognize, evaluate and exploit business opportunities in direct and personal services, as well as commercial entrepreneurship skills that help men and women to embark on activities which help them solve some social problems of the Nigerian society. Apart from that, business education skills and competencies of accounting, marketing, ICT and entrepreneurship tend to support
industrial and agricultural growth and household needs by creating employment opportunities for households, thus enhancing sustainable development in one way or the other.

Economic aspect of sustainable development highlights another priority area towards starting entrepreneurial businesses in Nigeria. This aspect determines how limited resources needed to improve people’s lives are distributed and used. It involves equity, participation, economic empowerment, social mobility and cultural preservation. Equity talks of fair play, impartiality, justice and even-handedness (BBC English and HarperCollins Publishers, 1992) while participation requires business education graduates’ involvement in the sustainability of entrepreneurial businesses which in turn give way for their economic empowerment. The latter can be said to take place if the relevant government agencies give grants and micro-credit facilities to help the business education graduates to start their entrepreneurial businesses for themselves. This will also enhance social mobility and cultural preservation.

The business education curriculum contents of economic education impart business skills and competencies in social mobility, cultural preservation, empowerment, participation and equity. Undeniably, the recipients of business education programmes are equipped with Economics curriculum objectives which emphasize economic literacy, prudent management of scarce resources, respect for the dignity of labour and acquisition of economic knowledge for solving the economic problems of the society. Consequently, the business education students are equipped with all the above economic knowledge and economic understandings. However some of them lack interest in the skill content of the curriculum, hence the level of skills and competencies acquired are poor. The implication of this is that although roughly all of them chose to study economics during their tertiary education level, yet the level of skills acquired would not be sufficient to help them to contribute to sustainable entrepreneurial business ventures. Lastly, the environmental aspect of sustainable development looks at how the natural resources both renewable and non-renewable that make up our surrounding can help to sustain and better the lives of the people. This appears to be a non-priority area even though the business education graduates can be engaged in entrepreneurial activities such as palm tree planting, clearing of duty public places and refuse disposal activities which can fetch them a lot of money to earn a living. Indeed, the acquisition of maximum business education skills by students of the business education programmes could help them to be engaged in the tapping and conversion of natural resources to the form that satisfy the needs of the Nigerian people nationwide.
Impediments to Maximum Skill Acquisition among Business Education Students

Efforts to improve the standard and quality of acquisition of practical skill inherent in business education courses to maximum level seems to be slowed down by a number of factors such as business education students’ poor attitude, mindsets and poor values towards the skills inherent in business education programmes, curriculum structure, inadequate personnel, inadequate equipment and facilities for the teaching and learning of the skills, inadequate material resources for training and others.

Many of the business education students have very poor attitudes and mindset towards acquiring the skills inherent in business education programme courses. These have made them to develop low interest towards the skills inherent in the business education courses. Because of such negative attitudes and poor mindsets, the personal interest and willingness to concentrate and acquire maximum level of skills expected of them are not there. One of such negative attitudes is failure to sit down and make wise use of their time and energy in acquiring maximum skills for self-development and fulfilment. This is because time is a critical matter in everybody’s lives. Consequently, the business education students fail to find time to engage themselves in practical exercises in courses such as in accounting, typewriting, word-processing, and shorthand to mention just a few. When assignments and home work are given in any of the subjects listed above, it is often discovered that about ninety percent of the business education students in the class did not find time and/or take time to do it. Such students fail to take their studies seriously as they often come late to the lesson and even when they know that they are terribly late, yet they would be listening to pop music/other music or talking to people with their phones. A careful examination shows that they put more efforts in playing with their mobile phones and in making calls than they do with their studies. In fact, many of the business education students often left practical subject lessons to stand outside to answer calls as well as make calls. A great majority of them does not consider the length of time spent outside the classroom for such calls neither do they consider that they have lost quite an important part of the lessons.

In view of the utilitarian nature of maximum skills acquisitions, business education students should cultivate the habit of working hard, commitment and dedication to studies in order to achieve maximum skills acquisition needed by the employers of labour. Indeed many business students who enrol for business education programmes do not show commitment and dedication to their studies because they are often attracted by very many unimportant issues during their studies. Such unimportant issues range from peer group pressure to friendship issues and joining the group of students popularly known as NFA – No future Ambition. The latter group can be said to be students who do not worry or who are not concerned about their poor performances at their varsities. All business students should regard hard work, commitment and
dedication to studies as the sole reason why they are in school. When they are driven by such forces, they will discover that they are breaking new grounds in their area of specialties and that they are acquiring maximum level of skills expected of them by labour market.

Furthermore, all business students should be determined to overcome the poor reading culture prevalent in the Nigerian society. In fact without a strong determination to overcome it, they will not be able to read their study materials and textbooks intensively and extensively. Globally, very many Nigerians are often associated with poor reading culture. In fact, there is an adage among the people of colour, that if you have something worth millions of dollars to be given to Nigerians, then hide it inside a textbook and give it to the Nigerians to read and discover it, they said they are sure the Nigerians will never read the textbook to discover that treasure. Poor reading culture has affected the fabrics of our society so much so that many Nigerian students are held captive to it. Intensive and extensive reading is very pertinent because it equips the readers with all the information and knowledge required for success in the acquisition of business education skills and competencies. However, many Nigerian students hate being given voluminous materials to read and in this way miss out the knowledge, skills and competencies that go with such materials. Some of them will even nickname the lecturers trying to involve them in intensive and extensive reading exercises as a way of discouraging them. Such business education students forget that a well read student is bound to do far better than a poorly read one in all facets of life.

Another issue that affects maximum skills acquisition among business education students in particular is their refusal to use their money to buy study materials for their own training. Indeed, most of them prefer to use their money to buy expensive handsets and recharge cards to phone their parents, friends and relatives at the expense of their studies. They forget that there is no substitute for having the correct textbooks and other necessary study materials when it comes to learning a skill to the maximum level of it. The business education students should remember that having a personal laptop nowadays can help them to obtain knowledge, skills and competencies in information and communication technology which in turns will help them to secure a lucrative job in the global labour market. In disregard of this, business education students prefer to use their money to go for anything that does not help them to learn business subjects at all. The other issue about the negative attitude of Business Education students is their unwillingness to change their thinking and behaviour positively. It is common place that one hundred (100%) percent of Business Education Students’ success in life or in their studies is dependent on positive attitude to whatever they are taught. Indeed, the willingness to change positively their attitudes, mindsets and behaviours will help them to acquire maximum skills expected of them for the labour market.
Unfortunately, many of the business students are often unwilling to change their negative attitudes. In fact, a majority of the business students in our colleges and the universities are often unwilling to concentrate and study the skill contents of business education to maximum level. For example, in the teaching and learning of computer keyboarding skills, many students only want to operate the computer keyboards with two or three fingers instead of their nine fingers. When teaching the students that they should use their nine fingers to type so that they could achieve maximum skills level, those who are used to operating the keyboard with two or three fingers would remain obstinate and would be unwilling to change. Consequently, such students would not be able to achieve maximum skills level for the global labour market.

The next issue to discuss here on impediments to maximum level of skills and competencies needed to enhance sustainable development of entrepreneurial activities in Nigeria is business education students’ poor attitude to work. They do not want to be hard-working enough in their chosen careers. It is quite unfortunate that many business students choose to study a particular business education course and yet to refuse to work hard enough to acquire enough skills expected of them. They prefer to memorise the theory aspects of business education courses but have a disdain for skill acquisition. In fact often times, when serious-minded business education lecturers want their students to become serious and be very hard-working in their studies; such teachers are often called nicknames by those lazy students. A majority of the business students would not appreciate the efforts of their lecturers who want them to be hard working for their wellbeing in the future; instead they looked at such lecturers as being wicked, cruel and not cooperating with them.

Another impediment to acquiring maximum business education skills is the failure of governmental agencies, private organisations and local communities towards investment in the purchase of relevant equipment and facilities needed in the training of their business education students. The governments, parents and other stakeholders lack the will power to invest in the education of the business education students. They are not ready to buy and install modern facilities and equipment needed for practical assignments in their classes. For example, there are inadequate number of computers in almost all our colleges and universities. Also, there are inadequate word-processors and modern office technology facilities and equipment for the teaching-learning of information and communication technology (ICT). However, this is not the case in colleges and universities in Britain, China, Japan, America and other countries abroad. In fact, in those countries, primary school pupils play with as well as learn with computers and other educational resources right from kindergarten. Here in our nation, kindergarten children study under shades of trees, sitting down on the fields, or blocks without seeing anything like a computer or even a word-processor. Indeed very many business education students
often go from one level of their programme to another without properly acquiring the skills expected of them. In the end, such students cannot do well in skill acquisition throughout their stay in their institutions.

The other factors impeding maximum skills acquisition in our colleges and universities include: inadequate trained personnel to teach the skills plus too many students admitted into one class, poor maintenance culture, lack of electricity and dishonest students and leaders. In the case of having too many children to be taught at a go, it is not surprising to see over five hundred students in one business education subject class. Many of them have no seat and no writing table. Even when there are tables and seats, too many students are squeezed into one seat. Consequently, they lack the comfort and comfortable atmosphere needed for maximum skills acquisition. Again, the curriculum structure seems not to allow enough hours for practical work, thus the business education students learn more of theory than practical skill acquisition.

In addition, there is poor maintenance culture in our colleges and universities. Consequently, the buildings in colleges and universities are dilapidated, and windows and doors are often broken down. The Provosts and Vice Chancellors appeared not to be disturbed about the poor state of facilities and equipment in their institutions of higher learning. The government in power does not release money for yearly maintenance culture. In fact, most of our colleges and universities are worst than piggy farms in abroad. There is also lack of electricity in our colleges and universities for practical work and we have many dishonest students and leaders who are all out to steal and destroy whatever the government has made available to us in our colleges and universities. Lastly, the business students who would like to establish their own entrepreneurship activities cannot see anywhere to go and obtain grants and micro-credit facilities to do. The governments, banks and other money lenders are not in position to give grants and credits to the business education students to open and run their business ventures. This tends to limit sustainable development of entrepreneurial activities in the country.
Recommendations

Based on the above impediments to maximum skills acquisition in business education, the following recommendations are made:

i) The business education students should be willing to cultivate keen interest in the skills inherent in the business education programmes. Right from the start of the programme, they should make up their minds to value the skill aspect of the business education course contents. They have to develop good attitude towards the entire skills content of business education programme. The business education students should also determine to be more industrious and to show appreciation to teachers who could make them to work harder by drilling them hot with regards to the skills inherent in business education.

ii) They should learn to do away with poor reading culture and be prepared to read and practise intensively and extensively. The students should be seriously committed and dedicated to their practical contents of their programme. Both business education students and their student leaders should learn to do away with all forms of dishonesty. Furthermore, provision of basic facilities, equipment and material resources for the teaching-learning of business education subjects should be made available. Proper investment should be made towards boosting the teaching and learning materials in business education in our schools and colleges.

iii) Lastly, the governments should give grants and other micro-credit loans to help business education graduates to establish their own business ventures.

Conclusion

As business education equips the recipients with firm-specific, industry-specific and general skills and competencies, this paper therefore concludes by making a passionate appeal to all business education students to make sure they acquire maximum and sufficient skills and competencies that will help them to live and contribute to sustainable development of entrepreneurial business ventures in Nigeria.
References


