



BUSINESS EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

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Abstract

There has been a misconception in the past that business education was only required for school dropouts, unintelligent and under-achievers. This misconception has made business education very unpopular in Nigerian tertiary institutions. However, science, technology and researches have today erased this misconception. This paper reviews business education programme in Nigerian tertiary institutions in the past, looks at its present with the aim to erasing this misconception and possibly, imagine its future as business is rapidly changing. It was recommended that business education should run a model business centre, and this will serve as work environment for students and imbue on students aura for thinking innovatively to set up their own business after graduation.

Keywords: Business Education, Business Educators, National Development

Introduction

From the evolution of man, it has always been difficult for man to meet all his daily requirements (goods and services). Situationally, it became needful for man to interact with one another and in the process of interaction, then came a system of exchanging goods and services (trading) with an accompanying responsibilities of keeping records of transactions. This implies that business education whether structured or unstructured according to Ehiamezor (1990) has been the misconception in the past that it was strictly required for dropout, unintelligent and under-achievers. This misconception as observed by Danko (2006) has contributed immensely towards making this very useful discipline-Business Education unpopular in Nigerian Universities in particular and the society in general. Today, researches have been conducted to make curriculum of business education much more richer and the programme is not unaffected by the penetrating wings of technology. Hence, in response, to this technological revolution, business education has witnessed an elevation to an enviable height in its programme. This paper therefore reviews business education programmes from the past, look at its present and possibly forecast its future and come out with some recommendations that would permanently erase this long outstanding misconception of this useful business education programme with an anticipation to attract good funding template from diversified sources so that in the nearest future, business education can earn high confidence and integrity index to itself and as well assume its leading role in the improvement of the nation's economy through the production of quality entrepreneurs.



Concept of Business Education

According to Akpan (2003), business education is defined “as the training for the acquisition of business skills and competences needed on business occupations. It is a systematic learning experiences designed to give individual gainful employment in the areas of accounting, management, data processing, marketing, etc. Business education includes education for office occupation, teaching business administration and economic understanding.

Akpan (2003), further added that business educators are those who are involved in the production of people that would play effective role in the business life of a country either as employers of labour or as employees. Nigeria today needs dedicated and trained successions of business education for the continuous production of different levels manpower to keep the citizenry above subsistence level; to give opportunities for all to be self-fulfilling; to provide a sound base for multicultural economy; to reduce, if not eliminate over-dependence on foreign economics and to participate competitively in the activities that promote global industrial supremacy.

Goals of Business Education

A cursory look at departmental handbooks of various business education programmes in Nigeria reveals the following as goals of business education:

- to produce efficient and effective management, secretarial, accounting, finance and marketing managers.
- to produce business educators who will impact the needed skill and competences to others.
- To inculcate the right business attitude and values for the survival of the individual and abilities to occupational opportunities in business.
- to provide students with saleable skills and competences both mental and physical required in the world of work.

According to Anao (2008), the goals of business education includes: production of manpower who possess the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude for harnessing other resources and bringing them into comparative relationship, yielding the goals and services demanded by society for the satisfaction of their wants and needs.

The following are the areas of business education:

- Office Technology and Management
- Accounting Education
- Management Education
- Marketing Education
- Entrepreneurship Education (Akpan, 2003:4).

Business Education Yesterday (where we were)

Business Education has a long history. No doubt as some Business Educators has traced the existence of business education to the birth of man, at least in an informal sense. This accounts for why it is difficult to clearly and definitely state when formal business education started in Nigeria. However, it was observed by Aliyu (2006) that this type of education was found in the last two decades of



nineteenth century when some Nigerians in business partnerships with overseas exporters have to learn simple commercial arithmetic, some book-keeping, business communication and some skills in typing for the purpose of facilitating business transactions. It was believed that children of these early businessmen were sent to learn simple proportion, invoicing, record keeping, profit and loss concepts among others. Hence, this showed evidence that business education was pioneered by Nigerian entrepreneurs whose intention was to meet the needs of their export markets; and the fact that this discipline did not buttress this historical account.

Ekpenyong and Nwabuisi (2003) on their part, illustrated that the history of business Education in Nigeria can be likened to that of a child who was abandoned because the father thought that he already had the type of children he wanted, and the child was later picked up by childless parent who knew the usefulness of a child, nurtured and groomed the baby to adult. This according to them, implies that business education did not come about in Nigeria through government effort, but through individual initiatives of few entrepreneurs. Such individuals were quick to realize the importance of business education not only to their personal benefits but also to national economic growth and development. For instance, the annual report of 1901 has it that John Holt's Trading Company that was into business in Nigeria in about 1855 established schools in Warri and Lokoja for the formal training of the required local manpower in their businesses. Closely followed by John Holt was United Africa Company (U.A.C.) that came into Nigeria for trading business at about 1890 and joined in the establishment of Business Training School in Lokoja among other places. Having witnessed huge returns in their businesses as a result of their investment in human resource, it became need in 1918 for British government to give more recognition to business education. The recognition to business education by British government manifested in Phelps-Strokes Committee of (1925) and the accompanying commitment towards implementing the outcome of that report which led to the establishment and Trade Centre and Modern Schools in Nigeria such schools include Government Trade Centre at Enugu and Government Girls Trade Centre, Aba among others. Aliyu (2006) noted that at a later time, about 1955, pre-vocational business trading schools were established. At post-Secondary level, Business courses like Accountancy, Book-keeping and Business Law were introduced leading to the award of Ordinary Diploma in Yaba College, Lagos. Adding to the historical development of business education, Osuala (2002) observed that graduates from these institutions do sat for professional examinations such as Royal Society of Art (RSA) and London Chambers of Commerce (LCC).

The yesterday curriculum of Business Education was as follows:

- ❖ Bookkeeping
- ❖ Office Practice
- ❖ English
- ❖ Commerce
- ❖ Geography and
- ❖ Arithmetic



The above course content of business education of yesterday conferred on the graduates the following responsibilities – Typists, Clerks, Book-keepers, Stewards, etc.

It is therefore the fusion of un-brightened beginning of business education and the above shallow course content coupled with the then duties of business education graduates that necessitated the misconception that business education was meant for unintelligent, dropout and under – achievers.

Business Education Today(Where we are)

Today, Nigeria has witnessed a tremendous increase in the numbers of institutions offering business education programme. It has spanned across all levels of the Nigerian educational system. At the University level, Ekpenyong and Nwabuisi (2003) submitted that University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), blazed the trail in 1965/1966 session, followed by Ahmadu Bello University 1979 and University of Uyo joined the league of Universities offering business education in 1981 with initial name Economic Business Education which later changed to business education in 1983. Other Universities in Nigeria running business education programme even at postgraduate level include: NnamdiAzikiwe University, Ebonyi State University, University of Benin and Rivers State University of Science and Technology. Nyesom, Egbule and Okwuokenye (2012) claimed that almost all the Universities in Nigeria offer Business Education at undergraduate level including College of Education, Polytechnics and Secondary Schools. There has also been noticeable innovation in Business globally (e.g. on-line retail shopping) which has led to corresponding innovations in business education programme at tertiary institutions in recent times. Again, the high unemployment rate and the global economic recession which resulted in a change in the dynamics of the country's economy made government and the entire society to confer recognition on (that were once reserved for the so-called prestigious disciplines) business education. The outcome of this development as Aliyu (2006) observed is an incremental movement in the number of students on enrolment compared to the past when it was minute. Aliyu further claimed that at present, business education usually has the highest number of students in Universities and Colleges of Education. According to Ndinechi(2001), the present curriculum of business education programme in Nigerian Universities at B.Sc. Ed. Level include:

- Computer keyboarding
- Business Mathematics
- Office Practice
- Principles of Marketing
- Entrepreneurship Education
- Business Statistics
- Financial Accounting
- Business Communication
- Commerce
- Economics of Production
- Costs and Management Accounting
- Business Finance



- Business Law
- Management Information System (MIS)
- Taxation
- Government Accounting
- Consumer Education
- Auditing and Investigation and
- Human Resource Management (HRM)\

Mustapha (2004) maintains that among the above courses, emphases are placed on entrepreneurship education and computer keyboarding in response to the dynamics of business operational environment. Entrepreneurship and small scale business management are now taught and widely emphasized in business education as it was not obtained in the far past to meet the yearning of self reliance and job creation of the society. In the words of Ndinechi (2001), typewriter is dying a slow armless death caused by rotting pockets of irrelevance; given the fact that computer has taking the centre stage. Therefore, emphasis is not led on computer keyboarding as a replacement to typewriter and as a way of equipping students with skills relevant in computer application packages so that they may be able to key into the electronic business transactions (e-commerce).

Generally, the method of teaching and learning were change from apprenticeship and imitation respectively to more sophisticated teaching methods like team teaching and competency-based training with instructional materials such as projectors, interactive whiteboard, computer etc.

Now that noticeable progress have been made (in terms of course content, method of teaching and instructional facilities/materials) in the development of the programme – business education, one may ask the questions, are there no challenges currently being experienced? Or are graduates of business education equipped with sufficient skills and knowledge to enable them set up businesses on their own? While on one hand, one can say that there is no system that is devoid of challenges, on the other hand, it is admitted that business education is yet to put on record the quality of graduates who possess sufficient skills to compete with their business plan in programmes like Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOUWIN) which would have serve as a platform not only to secure grants or starter packs to graduates with lofty business ideas, but also to imbue the public with quality assurance which they earnestly desire and expect from business education. Perhaps this could be as a result of:

- ❖ Over-emphasis on theories
- ❖ Weak knowledge – platform in the area of writing business plan.
- ❖ Lack of mentorship in business education as obtainable in other professions like Medicine and legal profession etc.

The consequence of this situation is that people have resorted to obtain consultancy services elsewhere instead of relying on the services of business education.

Business Education and the Future (where we hope to be)



Despite the fact that business education is not completely devoid of challenges, there is a shed light of hope that the discipline will in the nearest future join the leagues of Business Schools in the developed countries. This is because government has now realized the importance of business and keyed into the cardinal objective of business education which is to raise a generation of people who through their salable skills will become job creators judging from such government policies and programmes like YOUWIN, and Graduate Internship Programme (G-WIN), etc. Hence, this holds sway that the biological father of the abandoned child is now ready to make case and assume the fatherhood of the once rejected child so that by this development, this can go to correct the historical accounts of business education as submitted by Ekpenyong and Nwabuisi (2003). Again, owing to the synergy currently being experienced between government and those implementing the curriculum of business education, in terms of pursuit of a common goal, the society looks forward to seeing business education of tomorrow wherein the programme will be run as a school enterprise cooperation and as well serves as entrepreneurship development centre with adequate equipment and proper funding from government and private sector. If this is finally achieved, it will in-turn earn business education more recognition from the society as proud producers of entrepreneurs who will take the lead in the management of the nation's economy wherein the yesterdays and today misconception about the programme would have gone to extinction and as a platform through which the following two principles of Vocational Business Education can be attained:

- i) Vocational Business Education will be efficient in the proportion as the environment in which the learner is trained as a replica of the environment in which he must subsequently work.
- ii) Effective Vocational Business Education can only be given where the training jobs are carried out in the same way with the same operations, the same tools and the same machines as the occupation itself.

Conclusion

Based on the review of Business Education from yesterday to today, it has been evidently seen that business education has witnessed a very significant and remarkable improvement in recent years and misconception is fast diminishing with a corresponding increase in its level of recognition. It is therefore hoped that business education will in the future enjoy absolute extinction of misconception paving way for more commitment by government and private sector in terms of funding and support for adequate equipment so that business education can assume the status of business school as obtained in the developed countries.



Recommendations

The following recommendations are preferred based on review of relevant literature:

1. Head of Business Education Unit through the Head of Department of Vocational Education should seek for a model business centre or school enterprise cooperation from the school management. This will serve as work environment for students and imbue on students the aura for thinking innovatively to set up their own businesses.
2. Tertiary Institutions offering business education should make writing of business plan a partial fulfillment for graduation in the same way as projects or dissertation writing.
3. Institutions offering business Education should create a platform for successful entrepreneurs to interact with students so that they can serve as mentors to students of business education in order to inspire them towards becoming entrepreneurs. Such forum will give private sector and the entire society an insight about the programme given to students hence, the school can secure an increment in the confidence index of the society about business education programme.

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