

ANALYSIS OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL BUSINESS STUDIES TOWARDS PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE ACQUISITION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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Abstract

This study was designed to find out the preparation of secondary school students for employability skills through the offering of business studies. The study adopted survey research design. It was guided by three research questions. The population of the study consisted of 183 business educators. An instrument which consisted of 51 questionnaire items was used to elicit responses from the respondents. The tools used for data analysis in the study were the mean with standard deviation. It was revealed that all the business studies subjects were taught in the secondary schools; that the objectives of business studies are achievable, and that schools prepared students for employability skills needed for the world of work. It was concluded that the demand for employability skills on the part of the students and workers has been triggered by a number of factors, one of which is the multi-cultural nature of the workforce. It was recommended that business studies curriculum should be constantly reviewed, revised and content adjusted to include business studies subjects, includes additional objectives and also review office skills that could lead to job performance in workplace.

Keywords: Business Studies, Employability skills, Secondary School Business Study Curriculum

Introduction

When the Federal Republic of Nigeria released the maiden National Policy on Education in 1977, it was expected that the policy will address all the inherent problems in the former 6-5-2-3 system of education pioneered by the British Colonial Masters, However, the subsequent editions of the national policies seemed to address the hydra-headed problems associated and observed in the first policy (Esene, 2001).

Section 5 sub-sections 20 & 21 of the NPE defined secondary education as the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The broad goals of secondary education are to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and also to prepare students for higher education is designed to:

- provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background.
- offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles;
- provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grade;
- develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of Worlds cultural heritage.
- foster National unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity.
- raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those valued specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens;
- provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.



Business studies has not been popular in the Nigerian secondary schools until the emergence of the National Policy on Education. The public perception of business studies which forms part of vocational and technical education is based on the erroneous belief that vocational education is education for the dropouts (Esene, 2001). This is further reinforced by the attitude of Nigerian parents who prefer the conventional grammar schools to business schools whose curricula were directed for the training of secretarial and clerical personnel. This erroneous impression was corrected by the release of the National policy on Education of 1977, revised in 1981. The policy, which recommended the 6-3-3-4 system of education, was instrumental to the inclusion of business studies in secondary school curriculum. Osuala (2012) noted that a search for a means of providing the youth with the educational experiences which can equip them with saleable skills and competencies is the main goals of the 6-3-3-4 system of education introduced in Nigeria. The policy according to Osuala (2012) is capable of providing secondary school students with the necessary knowledge and skills that will enable them to be useful to themselves and the community in which they live.

The FRN (2016 Edition) emphasized the inclusion of vocational and technical education curriculum in which business studies is a component in order to make the recipients immediately employable on leaving school. In order to achieve the goals of secondary school, the secondary school system is provided in two stages, namely: the Junior Secondary School (JSS) and the Senior Secondary School (SSS), each running for three years duration.

Under the secondary system of education, the following business studies are offered and taught: typewriting, shorthand, and book-keeping and financial accounting, office practice, and economics, commerce and computer education. Each of these subjects is studied separately and has its own specific objectives. The secondary school is comprehensive with a core-curriculum designed to broaden students' knowledge and outlook. The subjects are divided into three groups the core subjects, the vocational electives and the non-vocational electives.

Communication, mathematics and science skills have been identified as the three basic academic skills required of secondary school graduates. However entry into the job market is contingent upon having a fourth set of skills as well. These are the job-specifics of vocational skills required by the occupation (Osuala, 2012). According to Osuala although these four types of skills are critical to individual's career progressions, they do not guarantee job success hence the emphasis of employability skills development while students are in schools.

Many employers believe that employability skills that enable an individual to acquire and keep a job are of primary importance. The reason for employability skills is because the changing nature of today's employment picture is creating new challenges for employers and employees alike. The demand for employability skills on the part of the workers has been triggered by a number of factors, one of which is the multicultural nature of the workforce. In the word of Osuala (2012), employability skills covers the following areas; personal image, attitudes, habits and behaviours, techniques of communication, problem-solving decision making, management and organizational processes.

Gainer in Osuala (2012) listed the groupings of employability skills and summarized below:

Individual Competence: Communication skills, comprehension, computation, and culture.

Personal Reliability Skills: Personal management, ethics and vocational maturity.

Economic Adaptability Skills: Problem solving, learning employability and career development.



Group and Organizational Effectiveness Skills: interpersonal skills, organizational skills, and skills in negotiation, creativity and leadership.

According to Okolocha and Nwadiani (2014), employability skills should be integrated with academic and vocational skills by forming a set of five basic skills. In this way, the relevance of the five types of skills is integrated and taught as basic to the job market success. According to these authors, the enrichment of business studies as contained in the 2016 edition of the National Policy on Education is a welcome development in the secondary education school system.

According to Akpan (2014), the inclusion of computer education has broadened the school curriculum and will reduce drastically the problem of unemployment as secondary school leavers go into the world of work. For instance, in the Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985), the following are among the educational objective stipulated.

Inculcating National consciousness and national unity

Inculcating the right type of values and attitudes for survival of the individual and the Nigerian Society.

Training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.

Acquisition of the appropriate skills, abilities and competence, both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Business studies has assumed a space in the Nigerian school system as the government has placed its emphasis on the education of children at all levels of education. Under the secondary system of education, the business studies curriculum has been enriched to include more business and commercial subjects where skills are infused as developed by the Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC) in 1982. Ehiamezor (1990) noted that through business studies, the interest of the secondary school children in the various areas of economic activity can be developed towards career options available in office. This, according to him will lead to the acquisition of employability skills and employment. Aina (1991) pointed out that the major purpose of business studies at the secondary school level is to provide the individual with such experience for and about business. Osu in Onwuachu (2018) listed some specific occupational needs which can be served by the offering of business studies, such as: bank clerks, book-keepers, cashiers, postal clerks, receptionists, shipping and receiving clerks, stenographers and secretaries, telephone operators, and typists. The introduction of business studies in the Nigerian Secondary Schools, according to Kanu, (1996) is a welcome development, noting that as a course of studies, its curriculum prepares students for entry into, and advancement in their chosen jobs. The programme according to him prepares students to handle their own business affairs and to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Conclusively, Aina (1991) opines that the inclusion of vocational and technical education with particular reference to business studies is aimed at equipping the students with a range of occupational experiences and activities to permit them to take full advantage of career development opportunities in business. Good as the enrichment of the business studies, it is the opinion of the researcher that more business subjects such as consumer economics, business law, business principles, and organization, money and banking, business English, general business, basic business, marketing and selling and insurance be included.

Every curriculum and programme of studies is guided by stating course objectives to guide the students and teachers. The six objectives of business studies as stated by CESAC are: to enable the students to acquire the basic knowledge of business studies; to develop the basic skills in office occupations; to prepare the students for further learning in business studies; to provide orientation and basic skills with which to start a life of work for those who may not undergo further training; to



provide basic skill for personal use, and to relate the knowledge and skills to the national economy. Okwuanaso in Agbo (2017) noted that the objectives of business studies are standard in order to provide a direction and guide to the teachers and students in the execution and in the realization of the national objectives. Esene (2014) that believes more objectives should be added to business objectives in order to broaden students' outlook. These objectives are: to develop student's understanding of the Nigerian economy, its characteristics, goals, strengths, weaknesses and problems; to understand the concept of free enterprises, and how the Nigerian economic system operates, and how dependent Nigerians are upon business to satisfy their economic wants and needs, to enable students to acquire knowledge of the legal principles, rules and to relate them to his own affairs. To develop knowledge of business principles, practices and procedures, to gain a better understanding of government and business relations, to understand the role of money in the economic system and to enable students to fully acquire reading and writing abilities.

Entry-level employability skills are the necessary knowledge, competencies and skills needed by secondary school students to perform basic office duties. Francis, Olafare and Orifa (2018) posit that office skills are those abilities and competencies that enable employees perform office duties effectively and help job seekers to be easily employable in the office as officer workers. These authors have noted that under the present business studies curriculum, students who are taught with the relevant instructional materials and equipment are adequately and sufficiently equipped for the world of business.

As the world emerges from the current economic downturn, the ability of individuals to increase the skills is important so that they can be fit and proper to contribute to national development. According to UNESCO and ILO (2002), business studies which belongs to technical, vocational education and training TVET is referred as those aspects of educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of elementary technology leading to the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes and understanding and knowledge related to occupations, in various sectors of economic and social life. Esene (2014) advocated that emphasis should be placed on the acquisition of employability skills in the secondary schools since it is at level students are introduced to pre-vocational skills leading to beginning jobs in the society such as store-keeping, office assistant, secretary-typists, shipping clerk, payroll clerk, photocopying operator, receptionist, computer operators, and so on.

Problem of the Study

The National Policy on Education, has been reviewed, revised and adjusted for the purpose of making business studies programme functional at the secondary school level. Despite these revisions, there is the allegation and counter allegation that secondary school leavers do not possess the right skills and competences required in the world of work. This is the basis for which the study is undertaken.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to find out how business studies can prepare students for gainful employment after school. Specifically, the study:

Examined business studies taught towards preparing students for entry level employment skills.

Assessed the objectives of business studies towards meeting the entry-level employment of secondary school students.

Determined the employability skills needed by the secondary school students.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions

- What are the business studies offered and taught in the secondary schools?
- What are the objectives of business studies?
- What are the employability skills needed by the secondary school students?

Method

Survey research design was adopted in this study. The population for the study comprised 183 business educators in selected secondary schools from the three senatorial districts in Delta State. The entire population selected was studied since it is manageable.

The instrument used was a structured questionnaire made up of two sections. Section “A” sought for demographic data of the respondents while Section “B” consisted of 51 item questionnaires on a 5-points rating scale. The 5-point rating scale is as follows: Strongly Agree (5 points), Agreed (4 points), Disagree (3 points) Strongly Disagree (2 points) and No response (1 point). The midpoint on the scale was 2.5. Any item with a mean value below 2.5 was regarded as “disagreed”. The instrument was face validated by three business educators for fact, clarity, relevance and content validity. The final draft of the validated instrument was tested by administering it to 15 business educators. Data collected were analyzed and the internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha formular. The reliability index obtained was 0.86. The instrument was administered to the respondents with the help of two research assistants. All the 183 questionnaires distributed to Business Educators were retrieved. The research questions were answered using the mean on a 5-point ratings scale and the standard deviation.

Result

Research Question One

What are the business studies offered and taught in the secondary school?

Table 1: Business Studies subjects taught in Secondary Schools

Q/I	Business Studies	X	SD	Remarks
1.	Office Practice	3.42	1.15	Agree
2.	Commerce	4.62	0.64	Agree
3.	Book-keeping/Financial Accounting	4.68	0.61	Agree
4.	Introduction to Business Management	4.60	0.59	Agree
5.	Economic	4.72	0.60	Agree
6.	Typewriting	3.24	1.19	Agree
7.	Shorthand	3.02	1.24	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2018

The analysis in Table 1 shows that all the items recorded a mean (x) rating above the criterion level of agreement of 2.5. It is safe to conclude therefore that all the business studies subjects are offered and taught in the secondary schools.

Research Question Two

What are the objectives of Business Studies in the Secondary School?

To answer this question; the data in Two (II) were used.



Table 2: Objective of Business Studies in the Secondary Schools

Q/I	Objective of Business Studies	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1.	To improve the quality of work place	3.50	0.39	Agree
2.	To provide employees with learning experiences and a new direction and understanding of the educational system.	3.71	0.36	Agree
3.	To provide opportunities for student's career exploration.	2.30	0.42	Agree
4.	To bring resources to enrich the business studies curriculum	3.52	0.38	Agree
5.	To ensure that school teaching is relevant to the skills required of industry.	3.01	0.62	Agree
6.	To improve the education setting through upgrading facilities or equipment.	3.88	0.30	Agree
7.	To integrate young people into the labour market by involving them in cooperative education experience.	3.51	0.38	Agree
8.	To connect schools with local business.	3.84	0.31	Agree
9.	To assist with curriculum development, new learning opportunity and skill development.	3.32	0.41	Agree
10.	To meet the labour market needs of business, commerce and industry.	3.76	0.33	Agree
11.	To introduce business studies students to business and administration.	3.92	0.29	Agree
12.	To encourage students to handle their own business affairs.	3.21	0.42	Agree
13.	To equip students with a range of occupational experiences and activities.	3.33	0.42	Agree
14.	To take full advantage of career development opportunities in business.	3.51	0.38	Agree
15.	To introduce students to elementary vocational and technical education programmes.	3.61	0.38	Agree
16.	To enable the students to acquire the basic knowledge of business studies.	3.48	0.39	Agree
17.	To develop the basic skills in office occupation.	3.43	0.40	Agree
18.	To prepare the students for further training in business studies.	3.61	0.39	Agree
19.	To provide orientation and basic skills with which to start a life of work for those who may not undergo further training.	3.70	0.35	Agree
20.	To provide basic skills for personal use.	3.71	0.31	Agree
21.	To relate the knowledge and skills to the national economy.	3.50	0.39	Agree
22.	To provide a direction and guide students in the learning activities.	3.74	0.31	Agree
23.	To provide students with office skills and those abilities and competencies that enable students perform office duties effectively after school life.	3.92	0.28	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2018

The data presented in Table 2 reveal that all the items had mean values above 2.5 which mean that all the items relating to the objectives of business studies are achievable.

Research Question Three

What are the employability skills possessed by the secondary school business studies students? The data in Table 3 presents the answers to this question

Q/I	Business Studies	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1.	Receptionist	3.56	1.28	Agree
2.	Telephone Operators Manager	3.86	1.09	Agree
3.	Filling Clerk	4.08	0.91	Agree
4.	Typist	4.20	0.93	Agree
5.	Junior Book-Keeper	3.56	1.05	Agree
6.	Payroll Clerk	4.72	0.58	Agree
7.	Stenographer	3.91	1.12	Agree
8.	Secretary	3.28	0.91	Agree
9.	Computer Operator	4.07	0.92	Agree
10.	Duplicating Machine Operator	3.73	0.14	Agree
11.	Shipping Clerk	3.10	0.94	Agree
12.	Stock Clerk	4.02	0.56	Agree
13.	Supply Clerk	3.29	0.90	Agree
14.	Transcription Operator	3.72	0.95	Agree
15.	Operator	3.90	1.13	Agree
16.	Billing Clerk	3.12	0.91	Agree
17.	Mailing Clerk	4.00	0.82	Agree
18.	Secretary Typist	3.31	0.89	Agree
19.	Office Assistant	4.02	0.80	Agree
20.	Store-keeping	3.87	1.10	Agree
21.	Photocopying Operator	4.02	0.80	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2018

The data presented in Table 3 show that all the questionnaire items received 3.00 and above. The implication is that the secondary school business studies students possessed employability skills needed for the world of work.

Discussion of Findings

This study examines Secondary School business studies with a view to finding out the extent to which students have acquired employability skills needed in the world of work. The study revealed that business studies offered in the secondary schools are taught to enable students acquire knowledge, skills and competencies needed in the world of work. This finding was supported by the finding of UNESCO and ILO (2002) and Osuala (2012) which noted that the National Policy on Education was designed to provide the youth with the educational experiences which can equip them



with saleable skills and competencies that will enable them to be useful to themselves and to the community in which they live. Although, business studies curriculum appears comprehensive, it is expected that more business studies subjects should be added as suggested on this work to broaden economic activities of the students. The study also discovered that the objectives of Business Studies as specified by the National Curriculum of Business studies are achievable. This findings is in line with earlier findings by Ehiamentor (1990), Agbo (2017) and Onwuachu (2018) which noted that the objectives of Business studies are standard document designed to provide a direction and guide to both the teacher and the students. Indeed, more objectives are needed in view of the dynamic of business studies.

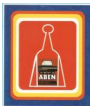
Finally, the study revealed that the secondary school business studies possessed employability skills needed in the labour market. This finding was supported by the earlier finding by Esene (2014), Onwuachu (2018), Francis, Olafere and Orifa (2018) who posited that secondary school business studies leavers could hold beginning jobs in both private and public offices since office skills are those abilities and competencies that enable employees perform office duties effectively and help job seekers to be easily employable in the office as office workers. The reason for employability skills is because the changing nature of today's employment picture is creating new challenges for employers and employees alike.

Conclusion

Business studies as the secondary school level consists of skill and non-skill subjects. The skill subjects are usually conducted in the laboratory with the aid of the materials and equipment under the supervision of the teachers. The non-skill subjects are theoretical-based subjects conducted in classrooms or lecture halls. Both provide students the learning opportunities to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies. The demand for employability skills on the part of the students and workers has been triggered by a number of factors, one of which is the multi-cultural nature of the workforce and schools must be ready to equip secondary school leavers with those skills that can lead to employment and advance in their respective chosen careers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusion drawn, it is hereby recommended that. Although the subjects comprised business studies are comprehensive more subjects such as general business, basic business, insurance, money and banking, business principles and organization, business law and business English should be included. Since objectives serve as a direction and provide proper guidance, more objectives should be added to business studies curriculum in order that the curriculum is broadened and functional to enable students contribute meaningfully to national development. Business studies curriculum revolves round employability skills that are needed for job performance; therefore office skills (knowledge, skills and competencies) should be the guiding principles and practice that schools should aim at from time to time.



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