



**STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BUSINESS EDUCATION
AS AN INSTRUMENT OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AMONG FEMALE
UNDERGRADUATES IN THE E-WORLD**

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Abstract

The importance of business education as an instrument of economic empowerment cannot be over emphasized. Nigeria as a growing nation needs to develop technologically like the advanced nations in order to reduce unemployment, ameliorate poverty and to ensure social-economic development. There is no doubt that business education is potentially an important instrument for economic empowerment for the individual, community and the nation. This paper examines the concepts of business education and empowerment in the development of a nation. It posits that to enhance the efforts to empower students especially females for personal progress and national development, business education should be fortified and strategically deployed as a tool of social-economic empowerment and development. The paper suggests various strategies that can be adopted to empower female undergraduates through business education. It recommends adequate funding of business education programme in schools, admitting all females who meet the admission requirements to offer Business education in tertiary institutions, provision of adequate and up-to-date facilities and equipment among others, as the best means of sharpening Business education to become a veritable implement for accelerating societal progress and to guarantee economic development, particularly among women in the E-world.

Key words: *Business education, Economic empowerment and Female undergraduates*

Introduction

The current high unemployment rate has become a national concern to economic planners and political leaders. The rate is particularly high among graduates and women (Nickel, 2017). Unemployment engenders poverty which, in turn results in different socio-economic vices such as robbery, prostitution, kidnapping, vandalism, insurgency among others. Unemployment is one of the serious socio-economic problems facing Nigeria as a nation and it is a serious threat to the development of Nigerian economy. Ademiluyi and Agboola (2014) suggest that unemployment and underemployment in Nigeria may be as high as 45 percent. This is a serious challenge to the educational system which is supposed to



rise up to the challenge of equipping youths and adults with skills and appetite for self reliance and personal survival. This challenge apparently has not always been met. Most programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions pay greater attention to knowledge than to skills. However, if any education programme is to be capable of providing people with the saleable skills needed to counter unemployment, that should be business education.

In the effort to achieve national development through empowerment, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced different policies/programmes such as National Economic Empowerment and development Strategies (NEEDs), State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDs), Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (LEEDs), Social Development Goals (SDGs), Sure P, M-Power, Traders money, Farmers money among others. The central aim of the empowerment programmes is to accelerate development through education, health, freedom, gender equality, employment opportunities policies and support services to people especially females and other marginalized groups. However, as evident in the worsening employment landscape, these programmes have not achieved desired results.

Business education should be an important element in achieving these goals. The Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (2017) defines business education as education that equips students with skills necessary to perform particular functions in an office and also provide them with the understandings and knowledge needed for conducting personal affairs and for using the services of business world. The mandate of business education is to ensure that students are educated for and about business. This means that students are guided through carefully planned experiences that offer them the opportunity to master the knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes needed, not only to succeed in business but also have equal opportunity to succeed in life. Business education is vital in nation building and economic development. It prepares people for self-reliance and empowerment. Abimiku and Duktur (2014) citing Zwalcir and Duktur (2006) state that business education is an educational process which has the primary aim of preparing people for roles in enterprises and enabling people to become self-reliant. Such roles could be to become self employed, employers of labour or employees. Zwalcir and Duktur further stated that business education is an important tool needed for alleviating the increasing rate of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria today.

Economic empowerment entails the development of mental and physical capacity, power or skills in people for them to achieve enhanced social, cultural, political and economic status (Ajibodu, 2015). The most effective instrument for attaining mental and physical development and acquisition of skill is education. Awojobi (2016) explains that education is the best way to empower people and empowering people is the major way to eradicate poverty. Empowerment is very important at all levels, if sustainable economy is to be achieved.



Unfortunately, the level and quality of education is low especially among females. not only in Nigeria but in many developing countries The World Bank (2014) notes that one billion people cannot read or write and two-third of them are females while out of the 300 million school age children who are not in school, 60 percent of them are girls. However, there has been some slow progress to remedy the situation as asserted by the Communication Impact (2013). The slow rate of progress is attributable to social, cultural, economic and religious obstacles inhibiting access to education. These inhibitions cannot be surmounted over-night. They can also not be effectively addressed without qualitative business education.

Concept of Business Education

The importance of business education in economic empowerment and development has been emphasized by different scholars. Ayoola (2012) explains that business education is a vital transformational tool and a formidable instrument for social economic empowerment and development. Akpan (2013) asserts that business education is the most critical factor in the process of economic empowerment and development. Akpan maintains that economic development depends on how wide-spread business education activities take place in an economy. Business education which is an integral part of vocational and technical education is a total programme of education which deals with the relationships, techniques, attitudes and knowledge necessary for an individual to understand the social institution of business and successfully adjust to it. Also, it is an important tool for people who intend to be consumers of goods and services provided by business as well as for the individuals who intend to participate in the production of goods and services (Adebayo, 2014).

Different people have viewed Business Education from different perspectives. To some, it is a programme designed for the training of business teachers while to others, it is a programme designed for equipping people with saleable skills. All scholars agree, however, that business education is a sub-set of vocational education geared towards the economic and technological development of the nation. Osuala (2010) sees business education as consisting of groups of related occupationally arranged courses prescribed for graduation and for possible certification, in the field of business placement. From this definition, it is obvious that business education is a course that provides learner with the skills, abilities and attitudes acquired in formal and informal situations necessary for obtaining employment in business enterprises or for being self-employed. Abubakar (2012) perceives business education as an educational process which has the primary aim of preparing people for roles in business enterprises as employers of labour, entrepreneurs or as self-employed. Olakotan (2013) refers to business education as education which enables individuals fit into the intricacies of the world through the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills. Davis and Durojaye (2013) explain that business education is that aspect of education programme that provides skills, knowledge, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business



world as a producer or consumer of goods and services that business offers. Okwananso and Nwazor (2010) describe business education as the sum total of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are required for the successful running of a business enterprise. Oriola (2016) affirms that business education is a training that gives occupational identity. It prepares students for entry into and advancement in business jobs. It prepares students to be self employed and to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in business economy. Oriola is of the view that business education means education for and education about business or training in business skills and competencies required for use in business office and business policy analysis. It has been indicated that there is a distinction between the former and the latter. Agboola (2015) citing Etuk (2005) affirms that education for business is vocational education while education about business is consumer education. From the various definitions accorded to business education, it can be deduced that business education is geared towards preparing youths and adults for and about business in the world of work. Business education, if well effected will rid the nation of unemployment malaise causing different social vices among Nigerians especially females.

Objectives of Business Education

The Association of Business Educators (2017) explains that the objectives of business education are better understood, if explained as they relate to various skill components of the goals of business education. Below are some of these objectives:

1. Vocational objective of business education relates specifically to the preparation of students for initial employment, upgrading existing skills and retraining in new related business and office occupations.
2. The exploratory objective aimed primarily at the middle grades and early high school and this provides opportunities for students to gain information about business.
3. The occupational intelligence objective recognizes that all citizens should have an intelligent understanding of the various areas of work in which they can earn a living.
4. The economic understanding objective is related to developing economic literacy in all citizens.
5. The consumer education objective serves a dual role: it promotes both the discriminating use of services and resources by consumers and corresponding understanding of the consumer viewpoint and how best to serve the consumer.
6. The personal use objective relates to those business courses designed to prepare students for proper execution of their personal business affairs.
7. The college preparation objective recognizes that high schools have an obligation to provide background preparation in business as well as to develop skills that provide students with the tools to cope more effectively with college demands (ABEN, 2017).



Benefits of Business Education in E-World

Business education is essential to the development of any economy; the existence of business education is paramount to the development of any nation especially in today's electronic world. Durojaye and Onasoga (2014) citing Amao-Kehinde (2007) identifies some benefits of business education as follows:

Business education inculcates the fundamental qualities needed for the proper management of business, acquisition of knowledge and skills which improves and upgrades individuals' position in employment, enables individuals have the ability and quality to manage different departments in a more organized way, enables individuals have innovative ideas to connect themselves into various disciplines, invigorates sustainable development of organizations in a planned way, enables students' to have a mixture of education and experience relating to business concepts and principles, teaches students the fundamental theories and processes of business, builds a strong foundation for those who intend to establish their own businesses and provides practical skills for those who prefer white-collar jobs, provides pathway to specific apprenticeship and workplace destinations with valuable information and connections that help students to explore potential work and business opportunities. It is quite evident that if business education is well emphasized and taught with the necessary skills and competencies needed in today's electronic world, it will enable students to be successful in their various occupations.

Concept and Goals of Economic Empowerment

Empowerment refers to the ability to overcome structural obstacles that hinder someone from excelling or prospering. To empower someone is to enable that person take control and act in order to overcome obstacles. Hornby (2012), describes empowerment as the ability to give somebody the power or authority to do something. Empowerment in this study means giving people the opportunity to be self-reliant and ability to overcome the burden of unemployment and poverty. In other words, empowerment means mobilizing programmes that would enable people overcome any inequality that exists in order to provide equal opportunity in all areas of human endeavour. In respect of female entrepreneurship, it involves enabling female to have access to resources, education, political, social and economic freedom as well as other cultural values in the society as their counterparts.

Okafor (2013), affirms that the attainment of empowerment goals ensures a smooth progress in economic development and the aim of empowerment programme is to bring advancement and development of people, so as to enable them contributes to the economic development of their nation. Okoli (2015) identifies the following as goals of empowerment programme:

Overall development of the individual, nourishment of some essential skills, assurance of excellence and perfection, creating enabling environment through positive



economic and social policies, eradication of discrimination and all forms of violence against the less privileged and females, implementing programmes to increase the involvement of parents in the education of their children, facilitating cooperation between schools, families and neighborhoods, conducting training in the areas of literacy, career development and other social welfare issues, creating and implementing programs to enhance the quality of life for all and to disseminate information regarding the availability of social, educational and cultural programs beneficial to young and old among others.

Need for Female Empowerment

Ogbe (2014) asserts that if a man is educated, only an individual is educated but if a woman is educated, the whole nation is educated. Empowering female is empowering the whole nation, because females are the pillar of every home without which the home cannot stand. For any nation to develop and sustain its economy, women must be properly empowered. This is especially true of female graduates. Girls' education is at the core of female empowerment. There is therefore a need to invest more in girls' to increase female literacy in every home and the society at large. Females need to be encouraged to be creative, confident and self sufficient. They also need empowerment to contribute toward the family life in particular and society in general. Female empowerment implies empowering women by promoting their participation in all areas and sectors, building stronger economies, improving their quality of life and promoting gender equality. Female's empowerment enables them to take the right decisions in breaking all personal limitations of the family and society.

Economic empowerment for women is important because empowerment is one of the ways to get the under-privileged as well as the privileged women to realize their worth and potentials in today's global world. It enables women to get rid of poverty, achieve economic independence, support spouse financially, contribute positively to household maintenance, facilitate national development, eradicate corruption, reduce domestic violence and sexual exploitation, promote overall development of society and rule out under-employment and unemployment among women (Essien, 2016).

The Promise of Business Education in Economic Development in E-World

The potentials of business education as an instrument of economic development cannot be over emphasized in the E-world. Business education is a self-reliance course which offers a lot of opportunities in different areas of occupation such as marketing, secretarial, accounting, management among others. It equips the individual with skills to be self-reliant and prepares students to handle their own businesses and function effectively as producers or consumers in the contemporary world. Business education is concerned with the development of individual skills, talent, attributes and attitudes. Durojaye and Onasoga (2014) highlight the role of business education as follows:



Business education provides skilled manpower to develop the nation's economy, it inculcates knowledge and skills needed for effective job performance in the world of work, reduces rate of unemployment and engage individuals into various occupations, enhances different employment opportunities and reduces various social vices, improves the quality of individual's life, provides a wide range of opportunities for self-employment, empowers individuals in the society, create employment opportunities, reduces the rate of unemployment in society, fosters national unity with an emphasis to achieve common goals among citizens, promote Nigerian culture and enables us to value our heritage, organization of workshops, conferences and seminars to educate students on the evil of social vices such as cultism, examination malpractices, theft, corruption, thuggery among others which can prevent them from excelling in life. If business education is well emphasized, it would provide every graduate with various job opportunities and this will develop the nation economically.

The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has revolutionized the world and turned it into electronic world. Most of the activities been carried out today is electronic in nature such as E-commerce, E-banking, E-research, E-mail among others. Using electronics today is so much part of our daily lives. Internet has made it possible for us to connect whenever possible. World would have been empty without technology. E-world is the result of a confluence of many innovations and technology advances. The advancements in technology have made it possible for one to work in Lagos State and yet live in Osun State, make new friends online and reach out to a global audience. Oliseh (2016) asserts that for one to fit into today's E-world, one must be ready to acquire the necessary skills needed to operate and excel in the global world.

Business Education as a Tool of Economic Empowerment

The teachings and contents of business education permeate the entire life of a nation. It touches all aspects of human life through its broad curriculum and can be a very good tool in the hands of government for solving the problem of economic empowerment. This is because it helps people to acquire skills that can help them participate as responsible citizens in society. With business education, people are equipped with saleable skills which enable them to effectively contribute to the development of the nation, thereby creating employment, reducing poverty and hunger. Business education consists of skill and non-skill courses. The skill courses which can accelerate empowerment are: Accounting/BookKeeping, Office Technology and Management Education, Marketing Education, Cooperative Education, Computer Education, Hotel and catering Education, Arts and Design Education among others (Oni, 2015).

Strategies for Using Business Education to Empower Female Undergraduates

To empower female undergraduates through business education programme in Nigeria, orientation and perception of the citizen towards business education programme



must be modified. Specifically, there must be enforcement of some measures before positive progress can be achieved and maintained. Below are some of the strategies to empower female undergraduates:

1. **Introduction of Skill-courses into Business Education Curriculum:** More skill-courses such as catering; tie and dye; weaving and knitting; tailoring among others should be introduced into business education curriculum as electives. A student should master one of these skills before graduation. Female students should have in-depth knowledge of these courses; this will enable them to become self-reliant and employers of labour after graduation.
2. **Invitation of Successful Female Entrepreneurs:** Female entrepreneurs who are successful in their various businesses should be invited to orientate female students on acquisition of entrepreneurial skills and the benefits of being self-employed.
3. **Provision of Adequate Modern Facilities and Equipment:** The importance of facilities and equipment to the overall success of any educational programme is not contestable. Adequate provision should be made for functional training facilities and equipment such as computers, electronic typewriters, photocopiers, modern computer laboratory, shorthand laboratory among others. Each student should be allocated a typewriter, computer and printer and there should be 24 hours internet service. There is the need to provide sufficient modern facilities and equipment. It would go a long way in making teaching and learning of practical oriented business education courses efficient and effective. Thus, the students would be sufficiently furnished with the required knowledge and skills to combat some of the challenges in the contemporary world of business.
4. **Increase in Practical Hours:** More hours should be spent on practical aspects of business education courses. The number of hours allotted to practical courses should be increased; this will give students enough time to put what they have learnt into practice and thus preparing them for the world of work.
5. **Motivation of Female Business Education Students:** Business education students should be properly motivated by giving awards to the best female graduating students and provision of jobs for females who graduated in business related courses in federal and state tertiary institutions.
6. **Reduction in Teacher/Student Ratio:** The number of students to be taught by business education teachers should be reduced especially in practical courses such as Keyboarding, Shorthand, Desktop Publishing, ICT I and II among others. NBTE (2009) indicates 40 students per teacher to enable the teacher attend to the needs of each student.



7. **Adoption of Learner-centred Method of Teaching:** Learner-centred method of teaching should be adopted in teaching business education students especially skill-courses. This will enable them to be responsible for their own learning, go at their own pace, learn from their own mistakes, learn from one another and assist one another in achieving the set goals.

Conclusion

The development of any nation depends on the quality of education available to her citizens especially youths. The concern of business education programme is to impart knowledge in students for business and about business. Since the economic values and virtues of business education as an instrument for alleviating unemployment and poverty are self-evident, there is no doubt that business education is a potential cure to many of the nation's economic ailments. From the foregoing, it is evident that no society can thrive without putting in place an effective mechanism for imparting and regulating the impartation of business aptitudes and attitudes in the youths. Business education is germane and indispensable to any nation in search of accelerated national development and it has been identified as one of the programmes that can enhance socio-economic development of a nation, if thoroughly implemented. Different strategies have been identified to ensure that business education programme achieves its goals in equipping graduates especially females with the necessary knowledge and skills needed for self-reliance and to excel in the world of business, thereby contributing to national development and economic sustainability. It is hoped that Nigeria would develop economically, if government and other stakeholders pay adequate attention to the development of business education programme in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In order to achieve economic empowerment through business education programme the following recommendations were made:

1. NUC and NCCE should formulate policy to admit all females who meet the admission requirements to offer business education at the university and colleges of education.
2. Business education curriculum should be reviewed and up-dated on regular basis to accommodate skill-courses which are useful in today's global world.
3. Students should be exposed to both the theory and practical aspects of the programme as this will avail them the opportunity for self-employment.
4. Scholarship should be given to the best female students in Business education.
5. Management of institutions should provide sufficient modern equipment, this will enable students have access to their own equipment.



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