



BUSINESS EDUCATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SKILLS ACQUISITION IN DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

The paper discussed the link between poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. Unemployment is one of the most difficult economic challenges facing Nigeria and its people, and it is the greatest obstacle to sustainable socio-economic development, security and peaceful co-existence in the country. When people acquire skills and are gainfully employed, level of poverty is reduced. Business education helps to create employment and reduce poverty as it leads to acquisition of practical and applied skills. The paper further discussed entrepreneurship and the need for entrepreneurs to think outside the box to be successful. Skills acquisition in a digital era, resources needed for business education skills acquisition, business education curriculum and skills acquisition, instructional delivery and skills acquisition and funding business education for skills acquisition were discussed. The paper concluded that there is no doubt the digital environment can be helpful in the acquisition of business education/entrepreneurship skills. Work is done faster, neater and in less time in a digital environment than in a manual environment. Six recommendations were made. One of them is that the law establishing the Industrial Training Fund should be amended to make the supply of equipment to institutions running business education and other vocational programmes as part of the mandates of the Fund.

Introduction

It can be argued that one of the most pressing economic challenges facing Nigeria is the large number of unemployed people in the country, especially among youths. Past governments introduced several strategies aimed at reducing the level of unemployment in the country. Many Nigerians live in abject poverty (a direct consequence of unemployment). Unemployment is one of the most difficult economic challenges facing Nigeria and its people, and it is the greatest obstacle to sustainable socio-economic development, security and peaceful co-existence in the country.

Unemployment prevents people from attaining acceptable minimum standards of living. Unemployment may lead to poor sanitation, poor nutrition, unfit shelter, poor environmental condition, low level of energy consumption, poor health status and lack of productive assets (Martins, 2010). Unemployment can thus lead to lack of basic needs that are necessary for survival. One way out of poverty is through the acquisition and deployment of business education/entrepreneurship skills.

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) defined business education as that aspect of education that leads to acquisition of practical and applied skills. Business education provides knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as a producer and/or consumer of goods and services. Business education is thus a skill-based programme. It



develops skills, abilities, attitudes and work habits in individuals. Business education prepares individuals to be productive in an economy, as employees or as self-employed individuals (Ibrahim, 2022). Business education, therefore, enables individuals to acquire practical skills required to enter into the labour force and be productive in the economy.

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is one of the four factors of production. The other three are land, labour and capital. The entrepreneur is the one that brings the other three factors – land, labour, capital – together. In other words, it is the entrepreneur that co-ordinates production activities. The entrepreneur is someone who is quick to realise that an opportunity exists, seizes the opportunity and looks for the necessary ingredients (land, labour, capital) to actualise the opportunity.

Entrepreneurship is about creating value as a result of recognition of a business opportunity, effectively managing the risk involved, co-ordinating the various activities and necessary resources and ultimately reaping the envisaged returns. Entrepreneurship is thus the process of creating value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychological and social risks and eventually receiving the envisaged returns.

Entrepreneurship is really all about identifying, developing and bringing a vision, an idea, an opportunity to reality. The ultimate objective is to eventually get a return for venturing into the unknown. Entrepreneurship is all about tenacity. The entrepreneur believes that the environment and what it offers can be influenced and successfully managed and value created for the benefit of the economies and citizens of nations (Ibrahim, 2017). Business education and entrepreneurship are skill-based courses.

Skills are mostly psychomotor in nature, involving some forms of activities. Activities in business education/entrepreneurship involve skill acquisition, example in keyboarding, word processing, data processing, accounting, marketing, salesmanship, office technology.

Thinking outside the Box

One thing that has become clear is that to succeed as a business educator/entrepreneur, one needs to think outside the box. For the purpose of this presentation, thinking outside the box is defined as the ability to find a solution where others think it is impossible to do so. Thinking outside the box entails doing things differently. It is a strategy and it can be learnt and mastered. The following are parameters for thinking outside the box:

1. Ability to identify opportunities. The opportunities are there waiting to be identified and be explored.
2. After identifying an opportunity, ability to draw up a business plan that will be used to convince sponsors to finance the actualization of the identified opportunity. An entrepreneur may not necessarily have the financial wherewithal needed to actualise the identified opportunity.
3. Think big but start small and let the business build itself. As experience is gradually gathered, confidence in one's ability to succeed is built up.
4. Being focused in whatever one chooses to do. There will be hurdles. When you fall, pick yourself up and continue.
5. Being able to quickly grasps the essentials of business. For example, as a business person, one should not over-trade, one should plan his business such that he collects from his debtors before he pays his creditors, one should be liquid and yet he should not leave current assets idle.

As earlier stated, the ability to think outside the box is increasingly becoming a requirement for success in any business endeavour one engages in.



Objectives of Business Education/Entrepreneurship

Nations that are economically buoyant have citizens who are fully equipped with skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable them function effectively and contribute to the development and growth of the economies of those nations. Business education/entrepreneurship play important role in equipping citizens of nations with abilities to become economically effective and efficient.

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) stated the following as the objectives of business education:

1. To provide trained manpower in commerce, particularly at the sub-professional grade.
2. To provide technical knowledge for business and economic development.
3. To give an introduction to professional studies in business.
4. To give training and impart the necessary business skills leading to the production of skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant.
5. To enable young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of economic development.

Skills Acquisition in a Digital Era

A digital environment is an environment populated by equipment such as computers, scanners, printers, electronic office organizer, mobile note-taker (Amoor, 2020; Sani, 2022). In a digital environment, manual operations are replaced by the use of machines. With the advent of Information and Communication Technology, the digital environment also covers the world wide web and the internet.

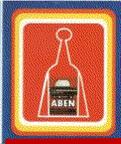
The digital environment is convenient and advantageous in the acquisition of the following business education/entrepreneurship skills:

- i. Keyboarding skills
- ii. Word processing skills
- iii. Data processing skills
- iv. Marketing and salesmanship skills
- v. Advertising skills
- vi. Accounting skills
- vii. Office technology skills

Resources for Business Education Skills Acquisition

Skill acquisition, undoubtedly, requires resources. Finance is crucial in getting the needed resources for skills acquisition. The resources are both human and material.

- i. Human Resource: - Those to impart the skills to others must themselves have these skills. As such, there is the need to have a stock of trained personnel to impart the skills to others. These skilled personnel can be gotten from the industry to serve as resource persons, pending the adequate recruitment of permanent staff or re-training of existing staff.
- ii. Material Resources: - Sani (2022) outlined the following as the resources needed in skills acquisition in the business education programme:
 - a. Workshop/Studio/Model Office
 - b. Computer
 - c. Printer
 - d. Photocopier
 - e. Scanner
 - f. Paper Shredder



- g. Spiral Binder
- h. Laminating machine
- i. Paper Punch
- j. Paper cutting machine
- k. Staplers (giant and small)
- l. Stapling pins

Amoor (2020) added Electronic Office Organizer and Mobile Note-taker as resources.

As stated earlier, finance is crucial in acquiring resources needed for skills acquisition. One way around this problem is attaching apprentices to master craftsmen who already have established and equipped workshops. This is where the Students' Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) comes in.

Business Education Curriculum and Skills Acquisition

Curriculum is a prescribed course of study which students must learn in order to reach a certain level of education. It is the sum of all the activities, experiences and learning opportunities that institutions and teachers have responsibility to ensure that they take place in the learning environment.

There is a clear linkage between the objectives of business education, as stated in the National Policy on Education, and skill acquisition if the objectives are to be achieved. It is the objectives that should guide and decide how the curriculum is to be planned and actualised. The following are pertinent issues regarding the business education curriculum:

- i. It is to be designed by business educators, not by educational administrators or business administrators. It is worrisome that the business education curriculum is reviewed and modified by non-business educators, especially at the secondary school and college of education levels. Even at the university level, accreditation and re-accreditation exercises are assigned to non-business educators to carry out.
- ii. It is to be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is still effective and relevant to the needs of society and also still capable of equipping students with the critical skills and abilities needed in the world of work.
- iii. Intellectually stimulate students and enable them to apply acquired skills to range of problems and their relevance in the work place.
- iv. Provide a bouquet of theory and practical activities for the students.
- v. Develop in students the ability to apply the analytical tools, knowledge and skills acquired to the solution of societies' problems.
- vi. Develop in students a range of transferable skills that will be of value in employment and self-employment

On a final note, it is important that the business education curriculum should emphasise acquisition of skills. This means establishment of well-equipped workshops/laboratories/model offices is to be made a pre-requisite.

Instructional Delivery and Skills Acquisition

Instructional delivery is an activity, manner, style used by a teacher to impact knowledge to learners. It is a process that encompasses a combination of actions aimed at passing knowledge to learners.

There are many instructional delivery methods in existence. The one employed by a teacher at any point will depend on what is to be taught, who is to be taught and the available resources to teach it with. Whatever method chosen by a teacher, proper classroom management, motivation, a



welcoming classroom environment and activities that address a multitude of learning styles are paramount if the teacher is to succeed.

To effectively teach, which is what instructional delivery is all about, the teacher needs to master and apply different principles of learning.

Teaching methods are the tools or means through which teachers engage their students in meaningful activities, as a result of which ideas, values and facts are learned. For effective teaching to take place, the teacher needs to use different methods and techniques at his command. There are many teaching methods, and no one of them can be regarded as the best for every teaching situation. A carefully chosen and applied teaching method can work wonders in making learning effective. Therefore, the success in the use of a method depends on an intelligent analysis of the educational purpose, those to be taught and the curriculum content at the moment as well as the type of subject being taught.

The instructional delivery method that is most suitable for skills acquisition is the demonstration method. Many empirical research findings attest to this (Unogu, 2015; Idoko, 2016; Ezeh, 2016; Adebote, 2016; Emeh, 2016; Ado, 2017).

Demonstration teaching method

The demonstration method is valuable in learning new skills or a better way of doing something. The demonstration method is the basic method for introducing new skills to learners. The method is effective for developing understanding and for making people to accept new and better ways of doing things. The demonstration is done by the teacher while the students watch.

Demonstration method of instructional delivery is based on the simple principle that we learn by doing. The demonstration done is accompanied by explanations on the part of the teacher. This teaching method can only be effective if it is properly chosen and used. Demonstrations, when used by a skillful teacher, are conducive to the development and maintenance of interests among learners.

Demonstration is a method of teaching where sight and hearing are the major means of communication. The teacher generally begins with a description of what is to be shown along with a list of main points that the students should focus their attention on. This is followed by the demonstration proper, accompanied by a discussion of what is happening. If the demonstration is to teach a skill, then there follows a period in which the students are given an opportunity to perform the procedure just demonstrated while the teacher goes round and offers suggestions. Demonstration can be practiced in three major ways; the class demonstration, the group demonstration and the individual demonstration.

a) The class demonstration

Sometimes demonstrations are used as a teaching method for the entire class. Since the entire class is involved, the teacher's time is saved as there will be no cause for some students to bother the teacher to repeat the procedure, or to repeat the basic information again. Generally, this type of demonstration invokes much enthusiasm and interest among students, especially as the entire class members are actively involved in watching the teacher and asking questions on some points not clear to them.

b) The group demonstration

The major difference between this type of demonstration and the class demonstration is that it is presented to a section of the class while the rest of the class is engaged in another assignment, which may not be related to the topic presented. The need for group demonstration arises as a result of individual differences in ability and aptitude which may cause some pupils to complete a given project ahead of time, thus creating a serious gap in maintaining a uniform demonstration.



c) The individual demonstration

There are times when individuals are taught at a time. This could be because of differences in students' background and general learning ability and irregularity in attendance.

My experience in teaching skill subjects over the years using the demonstration method has clearly shown that the method has some advantages.

Advantages of demonstration teaching method

Some of the advantages of the demonstration methods are:

1. It assists students to become good observers
2. This method saves a lot of time
3. Demonstration adds variety to a lesson
4. Demonstration reduces the period of trial and error, and avoids fixation of wrong ideas
5. It defines the standard of performance and improves students' ability to observe accurately and completely
6. It is effective as an induction to new skills.
7. It has a high interest value
8. All students follow the same operation, and the teacher interprets the work to all of them.

In issues of skills acquisition, the Students' Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) and excursion can be used to augment teaching. They give students opportunities to see how things are done in the real world of work, thereby complementing classroom teaching.

Funding Business Education for Skills Acquisition

Funding is a very touching issue when it comes to education. A lot of people tend to get emotional over the issue of funding. A glaring fact is that the business education programme is a skill-based programme. Skill-based programmes are capital intensive and require lots of investment in workshops/laboratories, equipment and trained manpower. It is no wonder therefore that funding for business education is always not sufficiently met. My take is that:

- i. Business education students, at all levels, have to pay school fees, which should not be uniform, but based on parents'/guardians' levels of income.
- ii. Grants, equal to twice the amount generated by a school from school fees paid by business education students, be given to departments housing the business education programme.
- iii. Part of the mandate of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) to be the supply of equipment to institutions running business education and other vocational programmes.
- iv. Establishment of skills development and linkagescentres by departments having business education programmes for the sole aim of organising workshops and training activities for generating revenue. The centres are also to be responsible for linkage with former students of the departments for assistance.

Business Education, Entrepreneurship in a Digital Era

Business education/entrepreneurship create opportunities in the following areas:

1. Establishment of business schools/centres for training professional secretaries, accounts staff, marketing/sales staff.
2. Establishment of consultancy services outfits (for registration of businesses, recruitment and employment services, writing and publishing of books in secretarial, accounting, marketing, entrepreneurship fields).



3. Organising workshops and seminars for organisations in various fields, including recruitment, induction and refresher activities.
4. Buying and selling of office machines and equipment.
5. Establishment of retail outlets.
6. Sales promotion of all products of different establishments.
7. Provision of extra lessons to secondary school students at home, especially those preparing for external examinations (WAEC, NECO, NABTEB, NBAIS).

In carrying out these activities, the following services of the digital environment can be used:

- i. Getting information from the web on relevant and current data for preparing lecture notes
- ii. Holding classes, attending conferences and workshops and holding external oral examinations via video conferencing using applications such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, Skype, Facebook Live, YouTube Live.
- iii. Summarising and delivering lectures using power point
- iv. Buying goods online
- v. Selling goods online
- vi. Using Excel for data visualisation and analyses
- vii. Advertising goods online
- viii. Connecting buyers and sellers online

Conclusion

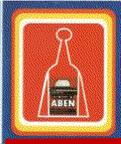
There is no doubt that the digital environment can be helpful in the acquisition of business education/entrepreneurship skills. Work is done faster, neater and in less time in a digital environment than in a manual environment. The main problem is that the equipment needed in a digital environment are not cheap. Therein lies the challenge in using the digital environment to acquire skills. A way has to be found to overcome this challenge.

Recommendations

- i. Budgetary allocation to business education/entrepreneurship programmes in our educational institutions should be increased to enable the adequate equipping of laboratories in the programmes.
- ii. Private organisations and individuals should be encouraged to assist business education/entrepreneurship programmes in educational institutions with the equipment needed in the digital environment.
- iii. The law establishing the Industrial Training Fund should be amended to make the supply of equipment to institutions running business education and other vocational programmes as part of the mandates of the Fund.
- iv. Local production of equipment used in digital environment should be encouraged.
- v. The Students' Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) should be properly implemented to ensure that the core objective of the scheme (skills acquisition) is achieved.
- vi. There should be constant training and re-training of business teacher educators in the use of equipment used in digital environment.

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