



## **BUSINESS STUDIES CURRICULUM IN SECONDARY SCHOOL: AN APPRAISAL**

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### **Abstract**

*The curriculum of every educational programme is designed to accomplish certain educational goal(s). The extent to which these goal(s) are achieved depends largely on the objectives, contents and learning experiences therein selected. However, it is crucial to note that no curriculum can remain perpetually ideal owing to the fact that the society is constantly evolving, and its needs keep changing. Thus, the goal(s) of a programme of study may remain suitable over a period of time but the objectives, contents and learning experiences would continue to be reviewed and modified to achieve the set goal(s) of that programme. This paper looks at the goal(s) of secondary education, the goals of business studies programme in Nigerian, its purpose, mandate, its learning objectives. More so, the paper appraised the business studies contents and learning experiences viz-z-viz the requirements of today's workplace and it went further to point out areas of strength and inadequacies based on the NABTEB syllabus.*

**Keywords:** *Business Studies, Curriculum, Appraisal*

### **Introduction**

No nation acquires progress, it is only quality and functional education could bring about that. Education is the primary basis of development and the development of manpower for the country is the responsibility of educational institutions. Thus, a country with good leadership always ensures that its citizens acquire quality education as early as possible so that they can fit effectively and contribute meaningfully to the society in which they live. Quality and functional education is very critical at this time considering the high rate of unemployment in the country. Unemployment is a big issue in Nigeria today. Decades of economic instability and poverty have driven a large percentage of young school leavers to crime and violence. Most school leavers are unemployed because they seem to lack the necessary skills for paid or self-employment (Ogwunte, 2015).

Business from time immemorial has always had significant effect on the standard of living and quality of life of people. Therefore, there is no doubt that all students will eventually encounter the world of business, irrespective of where they live and what they do. It is therefore pertinent that they must be adequately prepared to engage in business activities with confidence and competence. Business activities affect the daily lives of all citizens as they work, spend, save, invest, travel and play. It influences jobs, incomes and opportunities for personal enterprise.

In view of the aforementioned, business studies a pre-vocational and general course was introduced into Nigerian secondary education in 1987 when the 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced. It is integrative and comprehensive in nature. It was intended to give students the opportunity to understand how business functions, the role it plays in our society, the opportunities it generates, the skills it requires, and the impact it can have on their own lives and on society, today and in the future. Business studies was designed to provide practical skills for those who wish to move directly into the workplace. Thus, a secondary school leaver who cannot go further in education is expected to enter into the world of



work either by taking up appointments as clerical officer, receptionist, stenographer, bank teller accounts clerk, book keeper. Machinist, secretary typist, insurance broker, jobber, etc. or create a small business for himself (Esene & Okoro, 2008).

The curriculum is central to education as the commencement of every worthwhile educational programme is preceded by the development of it. This curriculum spells out in details how the aims, goals and objectives of the programme are to be achieved. It outlines and enumerates explicitly all the contents and learning experiences to be taught in the programme, then it goes further to organize the learning experiences systematically and sequentially so as to bring about the desired change of behaviour in the student over time. However, it is important to note that no curriculum can remain perpetually ideal because of the fact that the society is constantly evolving and changing. Although, the goal(s) of a programme of study may remain suitable for a very long period, its objectives, contents and learning experiences will continue to be reviewed and modified to achieve the set goal(s) of that programme.

The crux of this paper therefore is to look at the current National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB) business studies curriculum to appraise its relevance to the workplace of today; in terms of its contents and learning experiences. This paper would highlight the areas in which the existing curriculum is not in tandem with the expectations and demands of the present work place.

### **Secondary Education**

The senior secondary school is the last phase of secondary education. Thus, whoever completes secondary education has two options opened to him depending on the circumstances he finds himself, he either continues on to higher institution or he goes into the world of work.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) described secondary education as the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The broad goals of secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for:

- a. Useful living within the society; and
- b. Higher education.

In specific terms, the senior secondary education shall among other thing;

- a. Equip students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology
- b. Inspire its students with a desire for achievement and self-improvement both at school and in later life.
- c. Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future role.
- d. Provide trained man power in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub professional grade
- e. Provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

Sequel to the implementation of the new National Policy on Education, the system of secondary education was characterized by classical curriculum. This type of British oriented curriculum did not provide sufficient educational background for the youth for their citizenship role in a developing economy and as such much occupational information and placement was not given. The system produced job seekers with or without marketable skills instead of job makers, which lead to the predictable attendant problems of rising unemployment (Aliyu, 2001).

However, the National Policy on Education recognizes the importance of technical and commercial education. It emphasizes the need to relate its programme to requirements of commerce and industry. In order to achieve the above objectives, the following business education subjects were introduced at the senior secondary school level: book-keeping/ accounting, economics, commerce, typewriting, shorthand and office practice. It should be that in case the individual continued in the same education line at the higher level, with prior experience and knowledge the person had acquired would form a good platform for better performance. On the other hand, it was assumed that offering these subjects at the secondary school level would take care of a wide range of business activities that may be available in any community which should have formed the basis of the choice of courses.

### **Business Studies**

Business studies are the aspect of business education which is taught in Nigerian secondary schools. It comprises of office practice, bookkeeping, accounting, typewriting, shorthand commerce and economic. Okolocha & Onyenekan (2013) viewed business subjects as that which equips its recipients with personal skill, consumer skills and knowledge for clerical and managerial abilities needed to adapt to changing economic and business realities and these skills enable them to be wealth and job creators rather



than wealth and job seekers. Also, Oghen & Amahi (2008) Opined that business subjects equip students with knowledge and skills that will help them to find a job after schooling or create their own employment.

In a nut shell, business studies is that part of the entire secondary education curriculum which enables the student to make informed decisions in the everyday business of living. It contributes to the student's understanding of the world of business. It encourages a positive attitude to enterprise and it develops appropriate skills in that field. It clearly demonstrates how a variety of areas of study can be combined in productive activity that affects the lives of millions of people. All the subjects in this field are meant to provide the knowledge and skills that can help students make a successful transition to tertiary institutions, training programs, and the workplace. An ideal business studies programme should provide ample opportunities for relevant, real-world learning experiences. These experiences reinforce theoretical learning and at the same time provide authentic contexts in which students can apply what they have learned.

### **Curriculum**

Curriculum is a school-based effort to transmit a body of knowledge and achieve certain objectives in the lives of those to whom it is transmitted. It is a process which communicates core principles, facts and features of an educational programme which students must know to such an extent that the programme can be said to have achieved its peculiar objectives (Castling 1996, Smith 2000, Nwazor 2014). It is the basis on which teaching and learning activities take place. It spells out the knowledge, skills attitude and other traits or variables which it wants the recipient of a particular type of education to cover.

It must be noted that a worthwhile curriculum is not meant to be static, but rather dynamic. As the societal needs changes, curriculum changes or is modified to respond to the emerging needs. It then means that, a curriculum must be adaptive and relevant.

Osuala (2009) posited that curriculum planning must consider the present and the future, useful occupational information and the needs of learners. And that the study content of the secondary school business studies should have a close link with the skills and knowledge demands of the technology era.

The curriculum should encapsulate an overall educational goals for the programme, which the programme must achieve /actualize per time, this goals is a broad statement of purpose which describe a general overview of what the program is intended to achieve. It is a broad statement of purpose (Southgate, 2010).

### **The Goals of Business Studies**

The goal of business education (which business studies is an integral part) according to Ihimepeu (2002) is to produce manpower with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude for harnessing other resources and bringing them into co-operative relationship to serve society. The goals of business studies curriculum are as follows: To enable students to:

1. gain an understanding of business concepts through the study of subjects such as accounting, entrepreneurship, information and communication technology (ICT), international business, marketing, and business leadership;
2. achieve business, economic, financial, and digital literacy;
3. develop the skills, including critical thinking skills, and strategies required to conduct research and inquiry and communicate findings accurately, ethically, and effectively;
4. apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired through the study of business to a Variety of learning tasks and relate them to business phenomena on the local, national, and global levels;
5. develop lifelong learning skills that will help them adapt to technological advancements, the changing workplace, and the global economy;
6. make connections that will help them take advantage of potential postsecondary educational, work, and business opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The Federal Government of Nigeria in her bid to reduce unemployment introduced a new business subject curriculum in the senior secondary school in 2011. The goals of the new business subject's curriculum are geared towards wealth creation, entrepreneur development and skill acquisition training for self-employment. These new business subjects curriculum was expected to launch Nigeria to higher level in terms of vocational skill acquisition. Oduselu, (2011) summarized the philosophy of these new business subjects curriculum thus, "every secondary education graduate should have been well prepared for higher education as well as capture relevant functional vocational skills needed for poverty eradication, job



creation and wealth generation, and in the process strengthen further the foundation for ethical moral and civic values acquired at the basic education level.

In view of the aforementioned, it is clear that the fundamental purpose of the business studies program is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to achieve success in secondary school, the workplace, post-secondary education or training, and daily life. These goals can be achieved in a concrete and practical context through real-world learning activities that combine the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills.

### **Objectives of Business Studies**

Business Studies is a pre-vocational subject for business education. It is made up of typewriting, shorthand, commerce, book-keeping, accounting, commerce, economics and office practice. The general objectives of business studies as identified by Centre for Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC) (2004), & Igboke (2005) are:

- a. to enable the students acquire the basic knowledge of business studies.
- b. to develop the basic skills in office occupation
- c. to prepare students in further training in business studies
- d. to provide orientation and basic skills with which to start a life of work for those who may undergo further training
- e. to start a life of work for those who may undergo further training
- f. to provide basic skills for personal use in future.
- g. to relate the knowledge and skills to national economy.

### **Mandate of Business Education and its Role at the Post-Basic (Secondary School) Level**

Business education is an essential part of the preparation of youth for life and living. Business education is a programme of instruction which consists of two parts: (1) Office careers through initial refresher and upgrading education and (2) General Business Education – a programme that provides students with information and competencies which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of the business, (Akanni, Yahuya and Kamaldeen, 2014). Business education as a functional educational programme provides individual with functional and suitable skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values that would enable him/her to be fit in the field of work and contribute to economic development of the nation.

Due to the fact that the primary aim of business education is to provide instruction for and about business, business education curriculum must continue to reflect currency in terms of technology and particularly in relation to the changing nature of work. As it is today, business education subjects have expanded to include: computerized accounting, entrepreneurship, international business, word processing, desktop publishing, multimedia computer programming, keyboarding, webpage design, database management system, e-commerce and other ICT related subjects among others (ABEN, 2017).

In view of the foregoing, business education at the post-basic (secondary school) level is meant to adequately prepare students for college, a career and to be informed consumers and citizens. Specifically, it is meant to:

1. develop common core skills that will enable them to be ready for college.
2. develop lifelong skills that will enable them to pursue career
3. develop essential foundational business skills and knowledge to be productive citizens that include personal finance and transferable technological skills.

It can therefore be said in a nutshell that the business education programme in secondary school in Nigeria is the foundational programme that prepares its recipient with the basic knowledge of these business subjects. However, the realization of the goals, objectives is tied to the content of the curriculum, the teacher and the teaching resources available.

Business studies at the secondary school level is crucial as it teaches on how the office functions, how to keep accounts and enter transactions into different books; it teaches on how to prepare and keep documents, how to own and run small business enterprise, and to manipulate the keyboard of a typewriter and the computer for the enhancement of business. It is also intended to make the student technologically literate and to acquire skills that expose them to the world of work. Components of business studies include: Office practice, Book-keeping, Commerce, Keyboarding and Computer studies.

### **Appraisal of NABTEB Business Subjects Curriculum Contents Typewriting and Shorthand**

A careful analysis of the contents of the typewriter and shorthand syllabuses, reveals that they were very suitable for the traditional office and business place of the past. However, these subjects offering



are yet to witness any meaningful modification regarding technological advancement obvious in the office of today. Hence, the secondary school graduates that had been taught using the curriculum are not adequately equipped for the modern business place as they are taught and trained on skills which no longer have a bearing on today's world.

Nwosu (2002) and Eze (2000) shared the same view that the present curriculum as it affects business courses is outdated and called for change of curriculum for secondary schools. Similarly, Kanu and Ohirin in Eze (2008) observed that with the current business studies curriculum, its goals and objectives cannot be realized because the manual training for achieving these objectives is obsolete.

### **Commerce**

Assessing the curriculum content in the light of its relevance to the present world of business, it can be deduced that some critical elements in today's business place are conspicuously missing while several contents are no more relevant. For instance, under the means of payment, in addition to legal tender, cheques, and standing order that is in the syllabus, there ought to be mobile transfer, automatic teller machines (ATM), token, Mastercard, verve payment, e-money, etc which are currently the commonly used means of payment today.

More so, the place of computer literacy as it relates to electronic inventory and stock keeping, E-business and E-commerce in business ought to be included. According to Osuala (2009) in order to prepare business students for the present and the future, attempt should be made to incorporate emerging technological developments in Nigerian schools.

Going by the fact that business education subjects at the secondary school level ought to provide the students with employment opportunities after school or opportunity for higher education, it is essential to make them to develop adequate skills and abilities to apply these emerging technologies wherever they will find themselves after graduation.

### **Office Practice**

An appraisal of the office practice syllabus shows that the content tends towards the traditional ways of doing things as it obtained in the traditional office. Stencil cutting and traditional file management is fast becoming obsolete and not helpful in adopting the much needed best global practices in office efficiency thus, in addition to the existing content, students should at this stage be introduced to electronic database management system which is commonly used in the modern office.

The conventional work place has evolved into a new concept- the concept of application of electronic devices into work situations. Ezenwafor (2012) stated that the earlier the students are taught to move away from the traditional method of using manual typewriter, cutting stencils and adding with manual calculator to embrace modern technological devices, the better for them. This is because upon graduation, they are expected to demonstrate marketable skills that would enable them to fit into and remain relevant in a competitive labour market.

### **Financial Accounting, Salesmanship and Economics**

Considering the contents in these two syllabuses, it could be deduced that the contents of the subjects are considered good enough as it is in tandem with the current realities. More so, the module is well designed; teachers and students activities are clearly stated and helpful guides are provided for necessary instructional resources and aid. If the subject module of this particular subject is fully and properly delivered, the graduates of this programme would certainly be equipped with useful skills and competencies that would help them navigate and gain relevance in the current economic situation of our time.

In summary, it was observed, that there is a huge gap between what is and what should be as far as the curriculum content is concerned. There is no doubt that the curriculum provision in the area of business subjects at the secondary school level is grossly inadequate especially that the subjects (accounting, shorthand, typewriting, commerce, economic and office practice) are compartmentalized and specialized and that they can hardly cater for a student who requires a range of competences to function in a modern office.

This implies that students offering these subjects; book-keeping, accounting, typewriting, shorthand and commerce are basically preparing for employment in the areas of distribution, book-keeping, clerical and secretarial /office managerial occupations. The implication is that the standard of training received in school should compare favourably or be exactly the same as in the offices, business or industry where the student would eventually work.



### Conclusion

The appraisal of the business studies curriculum reveals significant gaps between the current content and the skills demanded by the modern workplace. While the foundational goals of business studies in secondary schools remain relevant—preparing students for both higher education and immediate entry into the workforce—the curriculum requires urgent updates to address technological advancements and contemporary business practices. Key subjects like typewriting, shorthand, and office practice still reflect outdated methodologies that do not align with today's digital and automated office environments. For business studies to fulfill its mandate of equipping students with marketable skills and competencies, the curriculum must be reformed to include modern tools and techniques, such as e-commerce, electronic payments, and digital office management systems. By bridging these gaps, the curriculum can better prepare students to thrive in a competitive job market and contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's economic development.

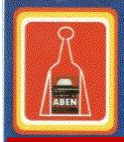
### Recommendations

In view of the aforementioned, the following recommendations were made:

- a. Business studies curriculum content should be reviewed regularly to accommodate modern office functions and current realities.
- b. The school and other stakeholders in education should ensure that learning experiences are real and in line with the expectations of the business world.
- c. Professional Business educator and Association of Business Educators in Nigeria (ABEN) should be consulted in times of curriculum review and modification.
- d. These new subjects that should be added include: Microsoft professional, webpage design, database management system, e-commerce, e-business, and entrepreneurship etc.

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