



STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING THE FUNCTIONALITY OF BUSINESS STUDIES AT THE BASIC EDUCATION LEVEL IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The study focused on strategies for improving the functionality of business studies at the basic education level in Anambra State, Nigeria. One research question guided the study and one null hypothesis was tested. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study was 467 (257 Principals and 210 Business Studies Teachers) in 257 public junior secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. No sample was carried out since the population was manageable for the researchers. A 12-items structured questionnaire validated by three experts was used for the study. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using test re-test method and was calculated through Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which yielded a co-efficient value of 0.87. Data related to the research question was analyzed using mean and standard deviation while t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that respondent agreed that the strategies mentioned could be for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level. The findings also revealed that there no significant difference exist between the Principals and Business Studies Teachers regarding the strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level. It was concluded that, Business Studies encourage students to develop a positive attitude to enterprise and eventually develop appropriate skills required in the world of work for effective functioning. It was recommended, among others, that Business Studies Teachers who are capable of teaching the core subject such as Commerce, Book-Keeping, Office Practice, Shorthand and Typewriting.

Keywords: *Business studies, basic education level, improving, strategies.*



The 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced in Nigeria in 1981, as stated in the National Policy on education (FGN, 2013). This is to overcome the observed inadequacies of the old system of education. In the 6-3-3-4 system, the emphasis is on education for self-reliance, self-employment and technological development of the nation (FRN, 2013). As a result, this gave birth to introduction of Business Studies in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) curriculum. Business Studies is an integrated Pre-Vocational course taught at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level. It is made up of Commerce, Book-Keeping, Office Practice, Shorthand and Typewriting.

Business Studies is taught as one of the basic subjects that will enable students acquire further skills which are common and fundamental to all personal and occupational activities (Inyang in Udoukpong, Emah & Umoren, 2012). According to Oluwade and Oluwade (2015), the study of Business Studies will encourage students to develop a positive attitude to enterprise and eventually develop appropriate skills in the field. The curriculum content is broad and rich in skills acquisition aspect. Its primary aim is the preparation of people for roles in enterprises such as employees, entrepreneurs and employers or simply as self-employed. In the context of this study, business studies refers to a subject that is taught at the junior secondary school which is designed to enable students acquire basic skills in office practice, shorthand, commerce, bookkeeping and keyboarding. It helps in training the students on those skills that are relevant to develop skills, attitude, aptitudes, potentials and competencies to be useful citizens and contribute economically to the society. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2009) stated the objectives of Business Studies as:

- a. to enable students to acquire the basic knowledge of business studies,
- b. to develop the basic skills in office occupation,
- c. to prepare the students for further training in Business studies,
- d. to provide orientation and basic skills to start a life of work for those who may not undergo further training,
- e. to provide basic skills for personal use in future, and
- f. to relate the knowledge and skills to the national economy.

Esene (2012) described Business studies at JSS level where the subject is taught as a single subject but these subjects can stand alone at senior secondary school level-Bookkeeping, Commerce, Typewriting¹ and Shorthand.

To translate these laudable objectives of Business Studies into concrete reality, federal government has also introduced another program, Universal Basic Education. It is a program that is aimed at addressing problems of access, quality and equity in primary and junior secondary schools. It is a 9-years educational program of six years duration for the



primary segment and three years of upper basic education. These two levels of basic education are universal, free and compulsory for all Nigerian children aged 6-15. The Universal Basic Education program stimulates learning from the early years of 3-5+ which is called Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) Universal Basic Education (2008).

Okoro (2013) opined that the inadequate attention paid to the basic education sub-sector over the years had resulted in the near total collapse of the education system which led to limited access to, poor retention in, and poor quality of basic education. He also stated that rate of illiteracy was unacceptably high, the condition of the school infrastructure was appalling, teachers were poorly trained and poorly motivated, and school drop-out rate had not abated, while funding of basic education continued to decline.

Consequently, Nigeria was nowhere close to achieving full access to primary education reports and studies have consistently pointed to this fact. As a result of the failure of other initiatives to register any sustainable impact on access to primary education, due principally, to lack of sustained political will and poor implementation plans, the Federal Government re-launched the Universal Basic Education program in September, 1999, as a radical intervention strategy for ensuring access to quality basic education. Thus, strategies are activities that are implemented towards the achievement of stated measurable objectives (Nwazor & Udegbumam, 2016). They describe the actions to be taken in order to achieve each objective. In the context of this study, strategies refer to specific ways or action plans that could be adopted to promote teaching and learning vis-a-vis Universal Basic Education.

Influencing factor subjected to strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level could be Principals and Business Studies teachers. Okoro (2013) observed that availability of necessary equipment and materials as well as competent teachers are strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies in the Universal Basic Education program. Okoro, further revealed that there was no significant difference between principals and teachers on strategies for enhancing the functionality of Business studies in the Universal Basic Education program.

More so, it should be noted that the need to broaden educational opportunities, especially in developing countries has been highlighted since the Jomtien conference on Education for all in 1990. The international commitment to that effect stems from an understanding that education holds the key to individual and national development. This is to be realized through improvement of the attitudes, beliefs and practices that are inimical to human and national progress, and the enthronement of democratic values among citizens. Thus, the National Policy on Education



(FRN, 2009) stated that the Government recognizes education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. Apart from these plausible reasons for equitable access to education, another fundamental reason for such equity is the fact that the education is a right in itself as enshrined in the Child Right Act, 2003 (UBEC Manual, 2008).

It should be noted that Universal Basic Education program is not altogether a brand new initiative, but rather a reform measure, which is aimed at addressing problems of access and quality in primary and junior secondary schools. Thus, the Universal Basic Education is a nine-year educational intervention program, whose overall objective is to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty with the aim of stimulating and accelerating national development, political consciousness and national integration. Specifically, the program was introduced in order to remove distortions and inconsistencies in basic education delivery and to reinforce the implementation of the National Policy on Education and this will ensure that the child rights are well catered for.

Federal Government resorted to the Universal Basic Education because of its concern that States and Local Governments, which have the constitutional responsibility for basic education delivery were unable to effectively deliver, and ensure unhindered access to quality basic education for all children and youths aged 6-15 years. Relying on a constitutional provision, which empowered it to set and maintain standards in education, the Federal Government enacted the Compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education Act in April 2004. Part (1) of the Universal Basic Education Act states that: "Without prejudice to the provisions of item 30 of part II of the Second Schedule and item 2(9) of the Fourth Schedule to the 1999 Constitution dealing with primary school education, the Federal Government's intervention under this Act shall only be an assistance to the States and Local Governments in Nigeria for the purposes of uniform and qualitative basic education throughout Nigeria".

The act formally established the (Universal Basic Education Commission) as the agency through which the Federal Government intervention in basic education would be affected and also provided for State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB). Consistent with the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2009) and the relevant provisions of extant laws, the Universal Basic Education program is expected to achieve the following:

- a) an uninterrupted access to 9-year formal education by providing free, compulsory basic education for every child of school age (6-15 years.).
- b) drastic reduction in incidence of school dropout and entronement of relevance, quality and efficiency in the sub-system.



- c) acquisition of literacy, numeracy, life skills and appropriate values for lifelong education and useful living.
- d) removal of distortions and inconsistencies in the delivery of basic education by reinforcing the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education as provided for in the National policy on education; and
- e) enhancement of community participation in decision-making process in schools with a view to engendering community interest in, and eventual ownership of basic education institutions.

The implementation of Business Studies program at the junior secondary school level seems to have been haphazard and treated with levity (Esene, 2012). Like any other new educational program, successful implementation of the Business Studies curriculum at the basic education level depends on the availability of necessary equipment and materials as well as competent teachers (Iyeye & Okoro in Okoro, 2013). The importance of qualified teachers in an educational program cannot be overemphasized. Okoro (2013) noted that the strength of an educational system must largely depend on the qualities of its teachers. It is based on this background that this study sought to ascertain the ways for improving the functionality of business studies at the basic education level in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

For the purpose of providing prevocational skills needed in the world of work, business studies has become an integral part of the Junior Secondary School (JSS) curriculum. Despite this fact, business studies have faced some setbacks in its effective teaching and learning since it was introduced as a subject in Nigeria secondary schools since 1982. Okoro (2013) found out that teachers identified lack of instructional facilities, inadequate business studies teachers, inadequate and insufficient administrative support and students' lukewarm attitude also form reasons for the unattractiveness of Business Studies. The inadequacy of instructional facilities and teachers seems to have resulted to poor method of instructions. Researchers' participant experience revealed that students of most secondary schools in the studied area prefer arts and science subjects to the detriment of business studies as a result of inadequate instructors and instructional facilities and this could stem frustration and lower the students' morale. The subject seems to have been neglected; unfortunately, the subject has also been made elective in Upper Basic level at the Universal Basic Education program (2008). Most states have not accessed the intervention funds lodged by the Federal Government since the last quarter of 2005. Federal Government continues to lodge in funds quarterly since 2005. Based on this problem, this study is conceived to



ascertain the strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

This research question guided the study:

1. What are the strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated for the study:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Principals and Business Studies teachers on their strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 467 (257 Principals and 210 Business Studies Teachers) in 257 public junior secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. No sample was carried out since the population was manageable for the researchers. A 12-item structured questionnaire validated by three experts, two experts in business education and one in measurement and evaluation from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was used in gathering data for the study. Test re-test method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument, and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the reliability of the instrument. The analysis yielded a coefficient value of 0.87 indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study using the application of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The questionnaire was structured on a four-point scale, with response categories as "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" for the research question. In data collection, out of the 467 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 459 copies (representing 98 percent) were retrieved and used for data analysis. Data collected in relation to the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Decisions on the items and research questions were based on a cut off mean score of 2.50. Where an item or the mean scores is 2.50 or above, it means agree and where the item or mean scores is below 3.00 it means disagree by the respondents. The t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. A null hypothesis was rejected where the calculated p-value was less than the 0.05 level of significance as it means that there was significant difference. Conversely, where the calculated p-value was greater than or equal to the 0.05 level of



significance, it means that there was no significant difference and the hypothesis was not rejected.

Results

Research 1:

1. What are strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level in Anambra State, Nigeria?

Table 1:
Respondents' mean rating on the strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level Nigeria N= 459.

S/N	Strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1.	Business studies students having interest in the subject can improve the functionality of the subject at the Basic Education level	3.13	0.45	Agree
2.	Provision of teaching module for Business Studies can improve the functionality of the subject at the Basic Education level	3.10	0.47	Agree
3.	Provision of adequate instructional facilities can improve the functionality of Business Studies at Basic Education level	3.06	0.51	Agree
4.	Students learn about Window, Software and Hardware components of a computer system through business education program	3.01	0.63	Agree
5.	Provision of adequate shorthand studies can enhance the functionality of Business Studies at the Basic Education level	3.02	0.61	Agree
6.	Provision of sufficient typing pool with typewriters can improve the functionality of Business Studies at the Basic Education level	3.09	0.48	Agree
7.	Adopting project method for instruction in Business Studies can improve the functionality at the Basic Education level	2.22	0.78	Disagree
8.	Provision of conducive classes for Business Studies can improve the functionality at the Basic Education level	3.26	0.43	Agree
9.	Employing sufficient teachers can improve the functionality of Business Studies at the Basic Education level	3.01	0.64	Agree
10.	Employing of qualified Business Studies Teachers can improve the functionality of Business Studies at the Basic Education level	3.02	0.59	Agree
11.	Adopting field trip for Business Studies students can improve the functionality of the subject at the Basic Education level	2.41	0.73	Disagree
12.	Provision of sufficient classrooms for Business Studies can improve the functionality at the Basic Education level	3.04	0.54	Agree

Data in Table 1 show that all the respondents generally agreed that majority the items listed except two items (item 7 and 11) disagree as strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic



education level in Anambra State, Nigeria with mean scores ranging from 2.22 and 2.26. This is because its mean scores were above 2.50 which is the cut of point or the boundary real limit. This implies that majority of the items were agree as strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level. The standard deviations show that there is homogeneity amongst responses indicating a greater consensus of opinions.

Testing the Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of Principals and Business Studies Teachers on the strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Table 2:
Summary of t-test analysis on the mean ratings of Principals and Business Studies Teachers on the strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level in Anambra State, Nigeria

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	A	df	p-value	Remarks
Principals	252	3.04	.13	0.05	457	.06	Not Significant
Business Studies Teachers	207	3.07	.14				

Table 2 shows that at degree of freedom of 457, the calculated p-value is .06 which is greater than the alpha level of 0.05. This means that Principals and Business Studies Teachers do not differ significantly in their ratings of the strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level. This means that there is no significant differences exist between Principals and Business Studies Teachers regarding the strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level in Anambra State, Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that all the respondents generally agreed that majority of the items listed except two items (item 7 and 11)



disagree as strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level in Anambra State, Nigeria with mean scores ranging from 2.22 and 2.26. This implies that majority of the items were agree as strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level. This agreed with Okoro (2013) who revealed that availability of necessary equipment and materials as well as competent teachers are strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies in the Universal Basic Education program.

The study revealed that there is no significant difference between the Principals and Business Studies Teachers regarding the strategies for improving the functionality of Business Studies at the basic education level. This agrees with Okoro (2013) who revealed that no significance difference exists between principals and teachers on strategies for enhancing the functionality of Business studies in the Universal Basic Education program.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that Business Studies encourage students to develop a positive attitude to enterprise and eventually develop appropriate skills required in the world of work for effective functioning. Therefore, the strategies mentioned would equip the students with job and work place skills after graduation thereby helping them to be preparing for the world of work.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers proffer the following recommendations:

1. Business Studies should be made a core subject at the basic education level.
2. Business Studies teachers who are capable of teaching the core subject such as Commerce, Book-Keeping, Office Practice, Shorthand and Typewriting.
3. Students should have interest in learning Business Studies by doing their assignment regularly.
4. Adequate instructional facilities should be made available in the right quality and quantity by the governments and private individuals.
5. Adequate teachers should be provided by the state and federal government.

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