

ENHANCING JOB PERFORMANCE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES IN A DIGITAL ERA: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The paper is intent at determining the enhancing job performance of business education graduates in a digital era. The development of any given nation depends of the calibre of people in that nation to identify issues, challenges and find way forward. In this paper, the concept of business education, objectives of business education, areas of business education programme, job performance of business education graduates in a digital era, issues in business education, challenges of business education and way forward have been discussed. It was concluded that there were challenges of inadequate provision of financial resources, in adequate supply of qualified manpower, political barriers, higher tax rates on equipment, lack of functional digital libraries, lack of motivation, and inadequate laboratories for training. Based on the conclusion, it was suggested that the government and stakeholders should provide adequate financial resources, minimize tax charging and provide functional digital libraries needed to booster the job performance of business education graduates in a digital era.

Keywords: *Business education, digital era, and Job performance*

Introduction

The theoretical delivery patterns of education has recently been deemed insufficient for the digital era labour market preparation. Scholars and experts are concerned about the global job mismatched between graduates and technological-driven workplace. Many employers of labour today, find it difficult in recruiting graduates with the right job performance skills which has contributed to the global unemployment phenomenon. Graduates are produced who are not educated in anyway (Otamiri, 2014). In Nigeria, the government recognises the need to empower youths with skills by providing functional and qualitative education to make them job creators and reduce graduate unemployment. Many nations considered business education programme vital to equip the graduates for productive living (Ezeani, 2014).

Business Education is primarily education for vocation (Ekoh, 2015). This implies that the word "business education" is for self-independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency. Akiti and Onyemah (2022) defined business education as a personification of vocational skills and knowledge required for engagement and development in various business professions. Business education includes education for office occupation, distribution and marketing occupation, business, teaching, administration, and economic understanding. Okoye (2013) sees business education as an education program that orientates students in art of business making (marketing), typing skills, service delivery, secretarial jobs, stenography, account clerking, office information system and management. Business education prepares beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. It plays significant role in the economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the learners, thereby, enabling them to adequately impart knowledge to others, and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems (Adewole, 2022). It could be



deduced from the various definitions that the effectiveness of business education is paramount to the economic development of any nation.

In the Nigerian context it is assumed that a Business Education graduate is resourceful and can work in any field of venture as a teacher, administrator, accountant, confidential secretary, marketer, and even manager. Business education student graduates with quality and number of competency and skill needed to lead the future. It offers students an incentive for thinking creatively about an industry and broadens their understandings of career opportunities in industry (Ikpeama & Nwaokokorom, 2017). Therefore, as a business education graduate in a digital era, employment opportunities should overflow.

Shaibu *et al.* (2022) sees Business education as a programme of study designed to produce teachers of business education subjects in our secondary and post-secondary schools. To this school of thought ably supported by the assertions of Otamiri and Odigie (2010), that business education is education for business educators. This school of thought perceives Business education as a specialized and professional arm of the technical and science education focused at preparing and equipping those to impart business skills and competencies to students and other business trainees.

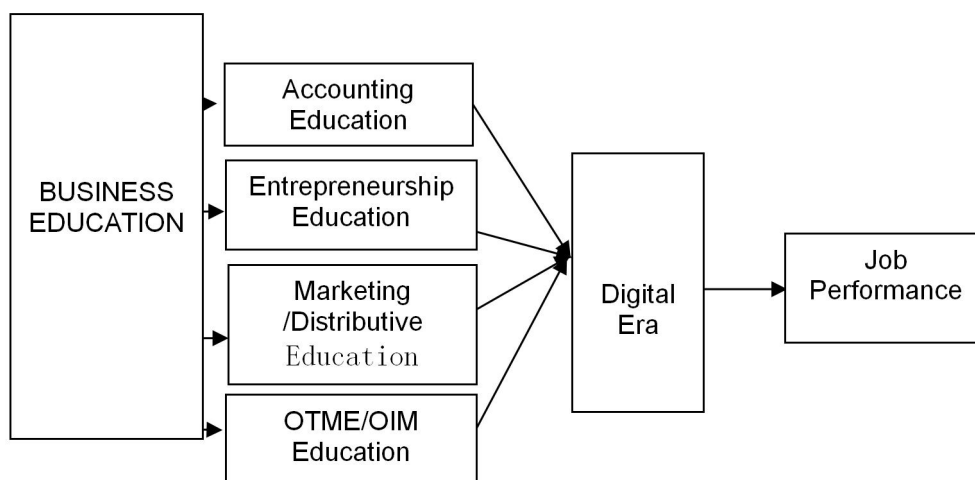
Objectives of Business Education

According to the Adewole (2022), business education has the following objectives:

- i. Vocational objectives relate specifically to the preparation of students for initial employment, upgrading existing skills and retraining in related business office occupation.
- ii. The exploratory objectives aimed primarily at the middle grades and early high school and this provides opportunities for students to gain information about business.
- iii. The occupational intelligence objectives recognize that all citizens should have an intelligent understanding of the various areas of work in which they can earn a living.
- iv. The economic understanding objective is related to developing economic literacy in all citizens.
- v. The personal use objectives relate to those business courses designed to prepare students for proper execution of their personal business affairs.
- vi. The college preparation objectives recognize 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.

The goal of business education is primarily to produce competent, skilful, and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work. Its primary aim is the preparation of people for roles in enterprises such as employee, entrepreneur, and employer.

Areas of Business Education Programme



Source: Nwaokokorom *et al.* (2023)

Accounting Education: Accounting remains one of the relevant skills in business education which learners perform basic bookkeeping and accounting function. They are regarded as entry level workers in



accounting profession. Entry-level accounting jobs as listed by Ubese in Nwaokokorom *et al.* (2022) include accounting clerking, bookkeeping, machine operating and payroll clerking. Accounting is a system which is based on information communication technology for the capture and processing of a business financial data (Venegas, 2017). Accounting is digitalised. Digital accounting skills include ability to use spreadsheet software tool to enter, sort, calculate, manipulate, and analyse sets of financial information. It also involves ability to use advanced excel package, quick book, and Peachtree accounting software among others for stock controls, financial records or in assisting management with budgetary control. Schwartz (2020) listed ability to use Enterprise Resource Planning software to carry out business functions; help shape user experiences that enhance performance; help manage expectations regarding budget, schedule and resources, and management change and contingency plans.

Entrepreneurship Education: Entrepreneurship education support student to develop positive attituded, innovation and skills for self-reliance, than depending on the government employment (Emeraton & Obunadike 2018; Nwaokokorom, 2023). This produce graduates with self-confidence and capacities for initiating development. Entrepreneurship education aims at developing the requisite entrepreneurial skills, attitudes competences and dispositions that will predispose the individual to be a driving force in managing a business. The objective of entrepreneurship education clearly show that it is concerned with the development and survival of both the individual and society. Entrepreneurship education programmes had enhanced job performance of business education graduates in this digital era.

Marketing education: Marketing education is also called Distributive education. It has the objectives of maximizing customer's choice, quality of life and satisfaction. It also aims at ensuring that the recipient can analyse market situations, acquire effective sales habits, and develop competencies that would reduce distribution cost. Egele (2011) states that Marketing education is an aspect of business education which equips a person with skills on how to get the right goods and services to the right people, at the right place, time and price using the right communication. It could therefore be deduced that distributive education is an educational programme which focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies which enables the recipient to perform well as a marketer. Gidado and Akaeze (2015) also, explained that marketing education can be Teacher marketing education or Professional marketing education. The latter equips a person with skills for becoming a professional marketer, while the former, in addition to the professional marketing skills; makes a person to become a professional teacher. These show that contrary to the notion of some people that anybody who studied any discipline in education will end up teaching, the Distributive education gives its recipients dual career advantage (teaching and marketing) and they may choose to pursue any or both careers.

Office Technology and Management: Office Technology and Management education programme is a curriculum response to the demands of dynamic and computerised workplace, which is aimed at the production of highly proficient breeds of administrative and teaching personnel that would coordinate high office information systems and provide technical skills with core business line function. Every scholar in this field is a secretary. Secretaries are aided in these tasks by a diversity of office apparatus such as fax machines, photocopiers, scanners, telephone, paper shredders, etc. In addition, Confidential Secretaries in the new normal use laptops to do jobs formerly handled by administrators to create databases, compose e-mail, manage files bases, generate presentations, news and documents using desk-top printing software and digital visuals (Amoor, 2013).

Digital Era

The Digital Era is a period in human history characterised by technology which increases the speed and breadth of knowledge turnover within the economy and society. The process of moving a business into the digital age is known as digitalization. This involve embracing the technologies that are relevant to improving your organisation and enabling it to become more competitive in the marketplace. For businesses to survive and compete favourably in this era, there must be an understanding of the necessary required innovations. Verobiova (2021) noted that the way we live, work and play has drastically changed in about the past half-century age. The initial 9/5 economies have been replaced with globally integrated 24/7 service offerings. Digital age consumers now have access to several services and products that would have previously been considered available only in the realms of science fiction.



Job Performance

Job Performance in organisations are the engine that drives productivity which other elements like motivation and skill grease the engine. Adeyemo (2000) explains that job performance is so important that it cannot be ignored in the industrial setting. It is the behaviour and action that brings out the desired results of the organisation, which are higher productivity and profitability. It embeds skill, willingness to perform assigned tasks, putting extra effort to achieve results, creativity, and ingenuity. Once there is effective job performance of worker, productivity is bound to rise, and the organisation will be better. Job performance is, therefore, very important because it leads to productivity. Low job performance of any business education graduates in the digital era is much likely to lead to low productivity which is bad for the health of any organization.

Issues in Business Education

Issue is an ongoing conversation, it has not ended, that is while is an issue. Who will tell us to agree hook line and sinker and not to be ashamed that we are training people who will teach business courses or skills in schools and colleges. The day we accept it, business education will become better. Those who open industries by hook, go to the ministry, those who study accounting in management are posted to industries and ministries while those who study business education (accounting) are to go to the classroom. It is the unresolved universal conversation that are going wrong (Otamiri, 2022).

Who to Teach Business Education?: Those in management science or management studies who read Financial, cost, management accounting and auditing believed that they are the once qualified to teach accounting courses to business education students. Those who studied business education as business educators can they not teach accounting courses as business educators? This is an issue in business education. Why do they teach me accounting courses? Is it to learn without practicing it? Education is a process that helps an individual to develop his whole being.

Who are Business Educators?: Many Scholars claim they have courses in business education, because of it they are business educators. Those who are not fully in business education are called interlopers. Some said for you to become business educator, you must study business education from the start to the end. Where do we stand?

Our Faculty Home: Where is our country home? Recently business education is under business studies. In Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, business education is in department of Technical and Vocational Education, Faculty of Education; in MOUAU, was under educational management, now in agricultural and vocational education; it was moved from Faculty of Management Science to Faculty of Education not considering Vocational and Technical Education in IAUE. The question is where is our country home? Are we in business education, business studies or vocational and technical education? Where are we or do we take our own position and become our own faculty?

Who Directs? In every establishment, there must be one that directs, of whom people listed to according to their level of profession and operation. The Dean, HOD, Coordinators and professors, who do we as students, staff, and outsiders listen to. Power and position are involved. It becomes an issue in business education.

Challenges of Business Education

Business education is one vital programme in Nigeria tertiary institutions that has the capacity to bring about the required liberation and stimulation of the citizens for global competition and national development. It is believed that for any nation to help in promoting sustainable economic growth or development, efforts shall be made to invest enough financial resources on education particularly business education programme for job performance in this digital era. Sadly, business education is faced with lot of issues and challenges of improving the capacity of their workforce to respond to the national development needs and the demands of a rapidly changing and globally competitive world. Some of the challenges are as followed:

- 1. Inadequate provision of financial resources:** Inadequate provision of financial resources has been identified as greatest challenge facing education in Nigeria, especially technical and vocational education sector because of its capital-intensive nature (Edokpolor & Owenbiugie, 2017) of which business education is one of the components. Inadequate finance has made the



purchase and maintenance of ICT facilities in education sector difficult (Rumanyika & Galan, 2015:). Internet services are quite expensive for e-learning.

2. **Inadequate supply of qualified manpower or shortage of qualified manpower:** Ilusanya in Oluwadare *et al* (2022) had observed that the state of vocational education generally in Nigeria is becoming embarrassing. Inadequacy of personnel as well as their lackadaisical attitude towards the teaching of the subject is a challenge. Many of the lecturers are not core business educators.
3. **Political Barrier:** Nigerian government usually apportions less than 10% of the nation's income to education sector which is far less the approved percentage given by the United Nations. Some of the appointees in educational sector are appointed without area of specialisation. The politicians appoints who is not in the field of education to lead based on their own interest.
4. **Tax.** The high tax rates on the equipment that are being utilized in the teaching and learning processes which enhance job performance of business education contributed to their high cost. According to Minishi-Majanja (2007), Rumanyika and Galan's (2015) computers and related items are often treated as luxury items and heavy government taxes are imposed on them which increase the cost of such equipment.
5. **Lack of functional digital libraries:** Non-inclusion of functional digital libraries in all levels of business education programmes seems to be no clear and definite policy or curriculum for digital libraries in business education programme. Some of the available libraries do not have functional server for downloading, uploading, storage and retrieval of information.
6. **Lack of motivation:** There is little motivation on the side of the education ministries and that of lecturers to promotion and implementation in Nigeria. Sponsorship into conferences, Institution Base Research (IBR) and workshops as required by TetFund is not followed.
7. **Inadequate Workshops/Laboratories for Training:** Workshops/Laboratories which house the equipment and tools for the training of students are hardly available and the available ones are obsolete. This is why many business education teachers resort to theoretical teaching. Where few functioning equipment or tools are available, students are divided into groups. This system is not effective, as many students do not have access to such equipment to practice as much as they are required.
8. **Academic staff:** 2012 minimum standards of National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) frameworks state that academic staff with minimum of first-degree criteria without area of specialisation while that of 2020 specified of minimum of First Degree in the core area of business education, one of whom should be computer specialist required. Employers of business education staff have refused to follow the guidelines and employ staff of business education according to their own desires without following the new minimum standards for vocational and technical education (FRN, 2012 & FRN, 2020). Many of the employers are ignorance of word processing, and they are against business educators.

Way Forward

We live and work in a knowledge economy where virtually every meaningful human activity depends reasonably on information (Otamiri & Ogwe 2020). Despite the challenges facing enhancement of business education for job performance in a digital era, there are many rooms for improvement, as business education graduates is one of the surest ways for sustainable economic emancipation and development. The production of employable and skilled human resources for the world of work is essential to sound economic development and growth. The following suggestion if duly implemented will foster the future of business education programme in Nigeria:

1. Government and stakeholders should provide adequate financial resources needed for purchase of required materials in this digital era.
2. Adequate supply of required and qualified manpower in business education should be adhered to enhance job performance in this digital era.
3. Politically the nation's leaders should not play politics with the education of their citizens. They should provide adequate funding (as approved by the United Nations), resources, facilities, tools, and equipment to the education sector.
4. Government should ensure minimal tax rates on the equipment that are being utilized in the teaching and learning processes, to reduce their high cost.
5. Government should provide functional digital libraries with relevant current materials for lecturers and students in Business education institutions as library is the highest reservoir of knowledge.



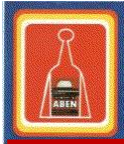
6. There should be promotion and implementation to motivate the side of the education ministries and that of lecturers. A labourer deserves his wages.
7. Employers of business education lecturers should follow the new minimum standards for vocational and Technical Education.

Conclusion

These researchers have established the fact that enhancing job performance of business education in a digital era is of necessity and essential as to make the graduates more viable in the world of work. For business education to maximally attain its goals in this digital era, effort should be made by the business educators to effectively use the modern facilities to enhance job performance of business education. This could be enhanced when the suggested strategies are implemented, so as to enhance the production of competitive graduates.

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