



## **Business Education Skills: Imperative for Job Opportunities and Sustainability of Graduates in Nigeria**

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### ***Abstract***

*Business education is a skill based programme designed to equip students with the necessary tools to meet up with the demands of today's business world after graduation. There is no aspect of the economy that does not feel the presence of business education skills. This paper therefore, focuses on the various skills of business education that can prepare and help the graduates to compete successfully in the labour market. Various literatures were reviewed so as to ascertain the types of skills and their relevance to business education. Conclusion was made that business skills are necessary for effective performance of graduates in any business environment. It was recommended amongst others that the various regulatory bodies of tertiary institutions in Nigeria should retouch the curriculum of business education for effective skills building for job opportunities and sustainability of students after graduation.*

**Keywords:** *Business Education, Skills, Employability, Training, Retaining*

## **Introduction**

Business Education is a comprehensive body of knowledge in the business that is taught at the tertiary institution level. Teaching of business education involves the imparting of various business skills in the learners in preparation for the world of work. These skills are what make the completeness of business education graduate. The present

world economic growth depends largely on the critical thinking and creativity through various skills of different endeavours. Business education skills play major role in equipping students with desirable office/business skills that are imperative for job opportunities and sustainability in the world economy today. The distribution chain cannot be complete without business skills. In the opinion of Agu and Kadunur (2016) “a productive society is a skill oriented society, a skill oriented society required a huge investment on human capacity”. This means that business education should be invested on in other to achieve human capacity development through skills acquisition.

### **Concept of Business Education**

Business education is a branch of vocational technical education which has its foundation from the junior secondary school level. The highest point in business education is at the tertiary institution level where students are exposed to the various business education skills in preparation for the work environment. The main focus of business education is career development which will enable the students to acquire relevant skills that will enable them to compete successfully in the fast growing business world. The most important aspect of career development in business is skill acquisition which is embedded in business education programme. Many authors have written on the concept of business education. Oladunjoye (2016) citing Njoku (1990) and Ihekwoaba (2003) stated that the earliest form of business education was the apprenticeship training. This is the form of training that an apprentice will learn a trade under a close supervision of a person who had the knowledge and the skill for that particular trade.

Before the 1969 curriculum conference in Nigeria, business education was relegated to the background and given different names such as Commercial Studies, Secretarial education, Stenographic studies and so on. The colonial masters then did not place as much emphasis on business education as on liberal or general education which made business education to fall into the hands of private proprietors. Unfortunately, the efforts of these individuals were not enough to publicize the roles and benefits of business education to the entire public. But, the 1969 curriculum conference gave formal recognition of business studies as well as laid much emphasis on the training of clerical officers which were badly needed then. However, the concept eventually gained more prominence and recognition in Nigerian educational system when

emphasis was placed on acquisition of practical and applied skills for national self-reliance and development (Ekpenyong, 2008). The conference aimed at recommending the curricula that would provide within the shortest possible time, the training necessary to enable young men and women fit into the environment of work. With regard to this new development, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1977) introduced the 6-3-3-4 system of education which stresses among other things self-reliance and the teaching of skilled subjects embedded in vocational and business education in both secondary and tertiary institutions. Since then, business education has continued to attract the attention of both low and high in the education industry as to what should be the definition and aims of business education.

Business education is defined in so many ways by different people. Ihekwaba (2017) defines it as the type of education that assists individuals to acquire skills which can be applied to solve problems in business occupations. It is a part and parcel of vocational/technical education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge. Edokpolor and Egbiri (2017) sees business education as an educational process which has the primary aim of preparing people for roles in business enterprises as both employers and employees. Therefore, business education skills can be used to get paid employment or create employment. It emphasizes character training, acquisition of skills to live a useful, honest and transparent life, and to build mutual trust in Business transactions (Ntukidem, & Anyasador (2018).

### **Objectives of Business Education**

According to the National Commission for College of Education (NCCE: 2012) the content of business education curriculum is structured into accounting skills such as principles of accounts, financial accounting, advanced accounting, cost and management accounting, auditing and taxation: general management subjects like principles of management subjects like business mathematics and statistics, teaching methodology, economics subjects like principles of economics, labour economics, monetary economics, public sector economics and international economics: information technology, computer appreciation and application: office technology and management subjects like typewriting, shorthand, word processing, office practice, office technology and management education, business communication, entrepreneurship and commerce. The objectives of business education curriculum content in tertiary institutions as

outlined in the National Commission for Colleges of Education (2012:18) include: to produce well qualified and competent NCE graduates in business subjects who will be able to teach business subjects in the secondary schools and other related educational institutions; to produce NCE business teachers who will be able to inculcate the vocational aspects of business education into the society; to produce NCE business teachers who will be involved in the much desired revolution of vocational development right from primary and secondary schools; to equip students with necessary competencies so as to qualify them for a post-NCE degree programme in business education and to equip graduates with the right skills that will enable them to engage in a life of work in the office as well as for self-employment. From the foregoing, one can understand the acquisition of relevant skills needed for students to participate effectively in the dynamic business world is an important feature of business education provides a window of opportunity to gain insight into the actual operations of the business world which allow students to not only acquire but also transfer and apply skills to real world of work situations outside the classroom.

### **Skills in Business Education Programme**

A skill is habit of doing a particular thing competently. It is the ability to do a task expertly. According to Bolt-Lee and Foster (2003), skill is the art of possessing the ability, power, authority or competency to do the task required of an individual on the job. On the other hand, skills acquisition is the ability to learn a skill. It is the practical way of developing and acquiring expertise knowledge, clear-cut competencies and technical knowhow in learners, which they would use to improve the economic frontiers of their immediate society. Practical skill acquisition is an important aspect of business education programme. From the aforementioned contents and objectives of business education curriculum in colleges of education, students are expected to acquire sufficient skills in teaching methodology, office technology and management, entrepreneurship, information and communication technology, Language skill, Managerial skill and accounting/computational skill. The acquisition of these skills stands to enable business education graduates to be self-reliant and contribute to national economic development.

Office Technology and Management skill includes the following skills keyboarding skills, operational skills, observational skills, calligraphic skills, mental skills, penmanship skills, transcription skills, behavioural skills,

managerial and public relation skills which will enable the graduate to function effectively in an office or any business environment.

Accounting skill is the systematic process of identifying, measuring, recording and communicating financial transactions and position of a business entity within a given period to users of accounting information. Accounting skills embedded in business education curriculum according to Udo and Bako (2014) include: the ability of students to keep records for personal use, ability to interpret and analyse business papers and records in the capacity of a final consumer and the ability to understand records keeping practices to carry out a small business among others.

Entrepreneurial skills and development will give the student an opportunity to learn something new and improve upon one's knowledge in business activities after graduation. The word entrepreneur originated from the French word, "entreprendre" which means "to undertake" (Aliu, 2008). In business context, it means to start a business, identify a business opportunity, organize resources, manage and assume the risk of a business or an enterprises. Egbe (2018) defined an entrepreneur as a person who makes money by starting or running businesses, especially when this involves taking financial risks. Aliu (2008) defined an entrepreneur as someone who shifts economic resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield. This definition has two aspects that deserve to be underlined. First, there are resources that undergo manipulations; second, the activity seeks to attain "higher productivity" and "greater yield".

- Gaining the knowledge of business concepts through the study of different business subjects.
- To achieve business, financial, economic and digital literacy.
- To develop technological skills, this helps in the overall productivity of the organization.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) skill includes all computer-based tools used by people to work with the information and communication processing needs of any technology-based organization (Yusuf, 2005). Information and communication technologies have a wide range of applications with enormous relevance to the teaching and learning of business education courses. ICT skills embedded in business education include word

processing, spreadsheet, power-point presentation, desktop publishing, database management system and web page design among others.

Agu and Kaduhur (2016) opined that business education, either in the University or College of Education affords its recipients teaching mastery in business subjects, necessary competencies in professional education, functional general education for life, skills to undertake research and additional learning experiences through in-service programmes. The content of business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is structurally designed for students to acquire sufficient skills with which to create their own business venture and also meet the requirements of the labour market.

**Perseverance and Motivation Skills:** employers want people to have a bit of get up and go. Working life presents many challenges and you need to show employers that you are the kind of person who will find a way through, even when the going gets tough and stay cheerful.

### **Challenge to the Acquisition of Business Education Skills**

The word challenge means predicaments, hindrance, barriers, challenges, obstacle etc. there are impediments to skills acquisition in business education programme in our tertiary institution. Kehinde and Adewuyi (2015) noted the following as some of the impediments to business education skills.

- a. **Poor Economic Condition of the Country:** Vocational and technical education is very expensive as it is capital equipment based. Even though all the tiers of government in Nigeria are interested in funding the course, such government have lean resources to implement it. That is why training student's right from the secondary level to tertiary institution are theory-based rather than practice. Practical courses that are supposed to expose students to real practical training in order to match the theory learnt in the classroom with real work situation have become a mirage.
- b. **Lack of economic self-reliance awareness:** Many youths and adult do not know that vocational and technical education is the only branch of education that can provide gainful and immediate employment to graduates and that liberal arts education only makes graduates to be job seekers. This is due to erroneous belief that the course is offered to the never do well members of the society and it has greatly affected the

interest of student in both secondary and tertiary schools toward vocational and technical education.

- c. **Inadequate workshops/laboratories for training:** Laboratories/workshop, which house the tools, machines and equipment for the training of students, are hardly available and the available ones are obsolete. This is why many vocational and technical education teachers resort to theoretical teaching. Where few functioning equipment or machines are available, students are divided into groups. This system is not effective, as many students do not have access to such equipment for practice as much as they want.
- d. **Parental influence:** Some parents have cultivated an undue influence over their children or ward by counseling them on the type of courses(s) to be taken due to their educational status.
- e. **Consumption of foreign products in preference to home made products:** Many Nigerian still prefer the consumption of foreign products to that of Nigerian made ones. This is invariably killing our infant industries by making such industries to close down while employees become jobless.
- f. **Policy and legislative inadequacies contributes to poor performance of Vocational and technical education in Nigeria:** Some policy provision like amorphous merger of science and technology education, where science over shadow and stamped most considerations disregarding occupational orientations of vocational and technical education subject area.
- g. **Lack of appropriate trained personnel and rigid curriculum requirements of vocational and technical education courses and programmer:** Ezenwafor and Onokpanunu (2017) asserted that Nigerian business education graduates are roaming the street unemployed not because they do not have the correct credentials but because employers of labour maintain that their expertise is paper-oriented and not skill-based. These business education graduates were trained based on the rigid curriculum content developed for students' theoretical learning and not for acquisition of skills for appropriate application after graduation. The government and supervisory bodies should retouch the content of business education curriculum to emphasize more on practical skills for skill training of the graduates.

- h. Lack of mobilization:** There is also inadequate mass mobilization by way of publicity campaigns to raise awareness in vocational skills acquisition. This lack of mobilization and advocacy campaigns has tended to stunt the growth of vocational training education.

Udo and Bako (2014) in Owen (2003), noted that the following as the challenges to Business education skills.

- 1. Poor Remuneration:** Employee remuneration is the reward or compensation given to the employees for their work performance. Management study guide added that remuneration is a method of promoting moral, increasing motivation and foster team cohesion. Most of the teachers employed to teach business education are paid poorly hence the zeal to impart skills on the learners will be very low.
- 2. Poor maintenance culture:** In addition, there is poor maintenance culture in our schools, colleges or universities. Consequently, the building are dilapidated: windows and doors are often broken down. The principal, provosts and vice chancellors are often not disturbed about the poor state of facilities and equipment in their learning institutions. The government on power may not release money for yearly maintenance.
- 3. Inadequate physical resources or infrastructural facilities:** Olaitan (1996) asserts that physical resources/infrastructural facilities such as workshops. Laboratories, classrooms, library and equipment in business education support skills acquisition. He added that for any meaningful learning to take place, physical resources/infrastructural facilities are inevitable. On this, Olaitan noted that the condition under which vocational education is imparted is poor. Most secondary schools and tertiary institution lack relevant equipment for training, lack of workshop and its facilities, have ill equipped laboratories and outdated laboratories. He opined that if there are shortage of laboratory facilities, effective teaching and learning cannot take place.
- 4. Unstable electricity or power supply:** The power supply in most of our business education workshops/laboratories are unstable. Some of our leaders are not bordered about the poor supply of electricity in our schools. Whether the lecturers get light to carry out the practical work



or the students have lights to read or practice what they were taught is not their concern.

### **Conclusion**

Business education skills encompasses all needed professional training that a business education graduate requires for self development which will enable him to compete for job in the presence day economy of the country.

Business Education skills have helped exceedingly in the production of human skills in many sectors of business and technology development.

Business Education Programme has brought up marketable skills and techniques on secretarial and accounting sectors of business management. There is availability of competent school teachers, good business managers for proper management of business and good business counsellors etc through business education skill.

Business Education skill has solved the problem of unemployment; eradicate idleness, dependency and poverty. It can also generate National Income for the nation if properly implemented, resolves poverty crisis and establishe well developed standard of education. Business Education is applied in all levels of education. It helps in making/providing means of livelihood for millions of people.

Therefore, with the modern technology in place, Business Education stands a greater chance of making life of graduates in particular and the entire popoluce a lot easier for living.

### **Recommendations:**

The following recommendations are important:

1. The various supervisory bodies for all the tertiary institutions should retouch the content of business education curriculum to emphasize more on practical skills.
2. Institutions management should provide enough infrastructure and equipment needed to improve skills acquisition in preparation for the students' graduation.
3. Government should adequately fund skills acquisition programmes in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria.
4. Lecturers of business education should always undergo continuous training and retaining to acquire new techniques in teaching different skills.

5. There is need for adequate training of the student in other to improve the productive level of the individual in order to enable graduate who acquires the needed skills in business education to become self-employed or employers of labour as the programme stipulates.

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