

RESEARCH PAPER

STRATEGIES OF BUSINESS EDUCATION IN JOB CREATION AND SELF RELIANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

D. E. Ebinga

Department of Business Education, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

E-mail: dkkin444u@yahoo.com; Mobile: +2348034929222

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the strategies in business education and its role in achieving self reliance, job creation and empowerment for sustainable development. Lecturers in the Business Education Department of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki formed the study population. Data was collected using a suitable structured and pre-tested questionnaire. Descriptive statistical tools -mean and standard deviation, were used to analyze the data collected. The results showed that some of the contributions of business education to national development included the provision of technical, vocational and industrial skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and overall economic development, while specifically equipping young trainees with the technical know-how and requisite skills that ultimately enables them understand the increasing complexities of new-age technologies and the need to acquire skills necessary for the management of our nation's abundant human and natural resources.

Key words: Entrepreneurial operational skills, Job creation, Empowerment, Sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

Business Education according to Kanu (1990) and Agbobu (2002) (in Oduma, 2004), is the sum total of the knowledge, skills and attitudes, required for the successful running of a business enterprise. Writing on educational challenges in the 21st century, Fawole (2006) defined the discipline as a social process that helps maintain a dynamic society since the creation of human being. In other words, business education is an aspect of vocational education that equips individuals with the necessary skills and theoretical knowledge needed for performance in the business world; either for job occupations or self employment. According to Nwosu (2002), business education is entirely 'for and about' business.

Interestingly, business education has been affected by the revolutionary advancements in science and technology, as well as the current trends in information technology; making the world a global village and signifying that business education should no longer be seen in the business-mode of 'yester-years', but from the global point of view. As such, it exposes trainees to the practical applications of basic business skills for real work situations which can play significant roles in checking the increasing incidence of unemployment among young Nigerians and the associated social vices like kidnapping and armed banditry; hence the call to refocus educational curricula to target self employment and self reliance.

In the Nigerian formal school system, business studies is a compulsory subject at the junior secondary level, comprising shorthand, typewriting, commerce, office practice and book-keeping. In fact, one of the aims of secondary education is to produce secondary school leavers who can make a useful living for themselves and the



society (NPE 2002). According to Fafunwa (1991), vocational Education provides practical skills for occupational purposes that are capable of refining the society, improving the standard of living and ensuring economic growth. In a nut shell, business education plays the role of producing well qualified citizens that can employ their skills in the management national resources; create goods and services to satisfy human wants; add value to the economy; help in economic growth and development; increase the standard of living; and enhance the rating of the nation's economy at the global level.

This study therefore assesses the extent to which business education is achieving the objective of self reliance and job creation within populations and the strategies being adopted to achieve job creation and economic empowerment in Ebonyi State.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY:

Area of study: The area used for the study is Ebonyi State. Ebonyi state is made of 13 local government council areas. These local government areas are Ebonyi, Abakaliki, Izzi, Ohaukwu, Ikwo, Ezza South, Ezza North, Ishielu, Ohaozara, Ivo, Onicha, Afikpo North and Afikpo South. It is located in the South Eastern part of Nigeria and was created on the 1st October, 1996, by the then Military Head of State, General Sani Abacha, from the then Enugu and Abia States. Ebonyi State has an estimated population of 1, 736,136 and occupies a total of 5,533 square kilometers. It is inhabited predominantly by Ibos, and its capital is at Abakaliki.

Population of the Study: All the lecturers in the Department of Business Education (n=8), Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, formed the study population. With the questionnaire, enquiries were made on Items

Data Collection and Analysis. Data was collected using a suitable structured and pre-tested questionnaire. The questionnaire sort answer on varying issues especially strategies in skill acquisition in computer technology, entrepreneurship, accounting, key-boarding, management, communication and creativity. Descriptive statistical tools -mean and standard deviation, were used to analyze the data collected.

RESULTS

The results of this study showed that items 1- 6 (Table 1) had the following mean scores: 3.37, 3.75, 3.50, 3.12, 4.00, and 3.12. All the mean scores were above 2.5 and as such, served as the basis for acceptance that business education had impact on job creation and performance for sustainable development. On the other hand, the mean scores for the strategies adopted by business educators to create jobs and economic empowerment were 3.37, 3.25, 2.87, 3.00, 3.62, 3.50, and 3.50 respectively as shown in table 2, and all the means scores were above 2.5; indicating that business education has positive impact on job creation and empowerment for sustainable development.

DISCUSSION

The results did show clearly that business education trains students in computer skills, key boarding/computer processing and analyzing skills, entrepreneurial development, accounting skills, records management, and secretarial skills. It did show also that business education adopts the following strategies: Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) type-writing, communication, case system, case analysis, data processing, as well as entrepreneurial strategy.

National development is the ability of a country or countries to improve social welfare and amenities for her people, like good education, pipe borne water. It also includes the degree to which other development indices have been well applied especially the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) that has now become the 'life blood' of most businesses. In developed countries, education has indeed improved beyond every reasonable doubt reasonable doubt, but can same be said for developing countries? In any case, education has been proven to be a dynamic instrument of social change and a cornerstone around which the wheel of human development revolves. Unfortunately, business Education in Nigeria neither have made significant changes desired in our society nor cursed the desired improvement in the lives of most secondary/commercial school leavers.



Analysis does show that there are incompetent stenographers, typists, clerical officers, account clerks and others alike, in both public and private sectors. Castle (1980) (in Ndukwe, 1996) warned that it is not enough to provide academic secondary education and higher professional education in medicine, agricultural sciences, and technology without training middle man-power –the skilled artisans. Nwosu (2002) posited also that business education makes students experience practical skills like entrepreneurship, keyboarding, communication, case analysis and reporting, as well as managerial, technical and operational skills.

From the results of this study, it is obvious that business education teaches students various computer skills – data analysis, data processing, calculations and spreadsheet data processing as stated by Oduma (2004) and Nwafor (2005). In fact, there are assertions that key-boarding remain an innovation in teaching as it enables business education graduates/trainees, secure gainful employment or be self reliant and compete favourably in the turbulent global society syndrome of the ‘survival of the fittest’.

Table 1: Decisions on the extent business education was achieving objective of self reliance

S/N	Hypothesis	N	X	δ	Decision
1	Business education trains students in computer skills	27	3.37	0.29	Accepted
2	Business education trains students in entrepreneurial development	30	3.75	0.26	Accepted
3	Business education trains students in accounting training skills	28	3.50	0.28	Accepted
4	Business education trains students in key boarding skills	25	3.12	0.32	Accepted
5	Business education trains students in records management	32	4.00	0.25	Accepted
6	Business education trains secretarial skills	25	3.12	0.32	Accepted

Interestingly, the federal Government of Nigeria is aware of the importance of functional/business education when she stated the following as the focus/aims of vocational education in the National Policy of Education as follows (NPE 1998):

“provide trained man-power in applied science, technology and commerce particularly, at sub-professional grades; provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development; provide people who are to apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man; and give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians, and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant”.

Amaewhule (2000) (in Oduma, 2012) noted that the economic development of any nation demands active participation in all economic activities by its people, and this could be achieved through entrepreneurship education. The National Economic Empowerment and Development strategy (NEEDS) is a home medium term development and poverty reduction plans that describes the countries’ economic, structural and social policies/programmes for promoting growth and development in all facets of the economy. It specifically emphasized the need for value re-orientation, wealth creation, poverty reduction and employment generation.



Studies conducted in 2007 by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Food and Agricultural organization (F.A.O) in the Latin American and Caribbean regions have indicated that rural enterprises can be an important modernizing agent for small scale Agriculture. The governments supported this process by creating incentives for agro-industry to invest in the region. This has not only been in developing countries, but also a clear development policy of the European Union which channels a large part of the total common budget to develop the backward and poor regions in Europe.

Table 2: Decisions on strategies adopted by business education to create jobs and economic empowerment

S/No	Hypothesis	N	X	δ	Decision
7	Business education adopts type writing skill building strategy	27	3.37	0.29	Accepted
8	Business education adopts communication strategy	26	3.25	0.30	Accepted
9	Business education adopts case system strategy	23	2.87	0.34	Accepted
10	Business education adopts conceptual development strategy	24	3.00	0.33	Accepted
11	Business education adopts data analysis and processing strategy	29	3.62	0.27	Accepted
12	Business education industrial training (SIWES) strategy	28	3.50	0.28	Accepted
13	Business education adopts entrepreneurial strategy	28	3.50	0.28	Accepted

At this present stage of our national development when emphasis has shifted to technology, educational policies must be designed and implemented in a manner that emphasizes short and long term societal benefit and how applicable it is to particular social and economic circumstances. It is on this very issue that Ndukwe (1996) in his article titled "Nigerian's false Education System" observed that our Educational practices are based on the myth of how things are done in Britain, United States of America and Russia. Indeed, the sad circumstance governing the prospects of business education in Nigeria has been that of a very few enlightened populace recognizing the high premium placed on business education and those who hold a pen and earn more than those who wield the hoe and operate different type of machines. The poor public perception towards commercial education and the negative gesture of the government on its enhancement, as well as the gross misconception by students about its attributes and merits and the mass exodus of business education experts form the bulk of colonial legacy have also taken its toll on business/commercial education in Nigeria.

Furthermore, with the seeming inadequate fund allocation by the federal government of Nigeria, one would see the contradiction in Nigeria's philosophy of Education and what is presently the true position of her educational system. Take for instance, the high import duty on textbooks and other instructional materials and the strong bias for academic and literary subjects, are some of the major defects in the Nigerian Educational policy framework. As such, technical education has not been adequately developed and there has been a great dearth of man-power with the technical know-how needed for the effective implementation of the various programmes of economic development. Consequent upon this and as shown by recent developments, our comprehensive schools and road side commercial schools are plagued with cheats, misfits and quacks that debase the teaching profession.



The challenge for higher educational institutions therefore, is to create a new generation of teachers that are capable of employing a variety of technological tools into business education; be it academic, administrative, research, and extension activities. There is also the need to take more seriously, the quest to industrialize the nation while restructuring the educational system at all levels. Obviously, the challenge of staff turn-over in the teaching field is as a result of the delay in the payment of salaries and allowances. In fact, majority of the teachers never choose the profession but found themselves in it as a last resort; hence the problem of low teacher morale. More so, those who put in their private time and personal effort to ensure that the students acquire the skill expected of them do not get encouragement from the government. Above all, a teacher in Business Education is expected to know how to successfully integrate ICT into his/her subject area to make learning meaningful. This knowledge development during pre-service training has gained much importance and the exposure to ICT during this time is helpful in increasing teacher's willingness to integrate technology for classroom teaching.

In conclusion, the framework of this study suggests that the department of business education in the universities and colleges of education needs to be expanded to turn-out good number of teachers in business subjects in order to meet the demands on the already existing ones. Also, funds for the establishment of new business schools should be channeled towards equipping and maintaining the established ones. Most importantly, the conditions of service for teachers in general should be improved especially those involved in business education. Similarly, the rate of supply of instructional materials required for effective teaching and learning of the subject in question should also be increased, while more time should be allocated to these skilled subjects in school time-tables for their mastery. Finally, business education programmes should be sustained and rejuvenated since it trains manpower for teaching, banking, commerce, insurance, public relations, marketing, and entrepreneurial operational skills in different areas of endeavors.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTIONS

Ebinga, D.E. conceptualized this study and was also responsible for the collection of data, literature search, data analysis, manuscript drafting and review processes. However, in the course of this study, he sort assistance from relevant individuals where necessary.

