

Repositioning Business Education Programme for Peaceful Co-Existence and National Development of Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria since independence has been facing a lot of problems. These problems cut across economic, social, political, cultural and moral spheres. Thus, political instability, religious and community conflicts, crisis, economic underdevelopment, cultural misdirection, poverty, moral decadence and many other vices become the order of the day. It was for these reasons that the Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Policy on Education (2004) institutionalized the teaching of Business Education subjects at the lower, middle and upper Basic Education levels, with the hope that if properly taught at these levels, Business Education subjects will help to develop in the youth, the desired knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and competences that will make them to be useful and effective members of their society. It is believed that Business Education will help the youths to acquire social and civic literacy that will promote and bring about peaceful co-existence and national development in Nigeria. This paper therefore seeks to address how Business Education programme can be repositioned to be highly effective in providing quality skilled-type education that will bring about peaceful co-existence and national development in Nigeria.

Keyword: Business Education, Repositioning, Peaceful Co-Existence, National Development

Introduction

It is generally believed that the development of any country is directly proportional to the educational attainment of the people. The economically advanced countries of the world are the countries which are distinguished by the excellence of their educational system. Business Education represents a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all types of educational delivery systems, elementary, secondary and post-secondary. Business Education includes education for office occupation, businessteaching, business administration and economic understanding.

In order to be economically literate and an informed citizen, wise consumers and competent workers, each person must have some understanding of the world of business and how it functions. It is important that everyone possesses at least minimum knowledge, skills

and understanding with which to make judgement needed in our free enterprise society and to make contributions to the world of work. Business Education aids in providing students at levels with the ability to function effectively in the business world (Yahaya, Nana & Abdulrahman, 2014).

Business Education is a conglomerate of courses/subjects that is concerned with the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value for the survival of the individual and the society, the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate environment; the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community, the acquisition of an objective view of local and external environments (National Policy on Education 2004).

The poor implementation and consequent positioning of Business Education worsens the dwindling situation of myriads of problems experienced in Nigeria today. As a result, the poverty and unemployment rates in Nigeria remain on the high side (NEEDS, 2004:6). As noted by Osuala (2000), the success or failure of any economy depends on the functionality of its Business Education system. It is in recognition of the desire to create job-makers out of Nigeria, through Business Education, which makes them acquire employable and saleable skills that this paper intends to stress the urgent need to reposition the Business Education through its implementation. In particular, the paper's scope is to reposition Business Education programme for peaceful co-existence and National Development in Nigeria.

Concept of Business Education

Business Education has been defined by many people from different standpoints. Some people think that Business Education are those business subjects taught at secondary school levels such as Typewriting, Shorthand, Bookkeeping, Business Law and other related subjects. Others sees it as the same as any education for entrance into the business world given at any educational level. Aliyu (2006) noted that Business Education is education for the acquisition and development of skills and competencies, attitudes and attributes which are necessary for efficiency of the economic system. Igboke (2006) noted that Business Education is a total educational programme that provides knowledge, skills and understanding needed for performance in business world as a consumer or producer of goods and services which business offers.

Osuala (2004) conceived Business Education to include the sum total of the knowledge, skills and aptitude that are required for successfully promoting and administering a business enterprise. He described the focus of Business Education as the production of manpower with the requisite skill and aptitude for harnessing other resources and bringing them into a co-operative relationship yielding goods and services demanded by the society for the satisfaction of their wants and needs.

From the above definitions, it is imperative to conclude that business education is education for business. It is regarded as the education that aids an individual to adjust in his business environment. It is the intellectual and vocational preparation for earning a living in a contemporary industrial environment. According to Sadiq (2001) "No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers" In this paper, it is enough to state that "no Economic and

Poverty Eradication Programme could be achieved without proper appraisal of Business Education Programme." Perhaps this expresses the view of Kwairanga (1999) in Sadiq, Kire and Kwairanga (2006) where he said: "National development is the sustained upliftment of the wellbeing of an entire society towards a better human life". It connotes and involves complete re-organization of the entire system of a society, be it economic, political, social or educational, with a view to improving the quality of its members.

Concept of Peaceful Co-Existence

Peaceful co-existence is a term derived from Peace which is a state of harmony characterized by lack of violent conflict, commonly understood as the absence of hostility. Peace also suggests the existence of healthy or newly healed interpersonal or international relationships, prosperity in matters of social or economic welfare, the establishment of equality and a working political order that serves the true interest of all. In international relations, peace is not the absence of war or conflict, but also the presence of cultural and economic understanding (Solomon, 2013).

From Latin pax, meaning, "freedom from civil disorder", the English word came into use in personal greetings from the Thirteenth Century as a translation of the Hebrew word shalom. Such a translation is, however, imprecise, as shalom, which is a cognate with the Arabic, "salaam", has multiple other meanings in addition to peace, which includes justice, safety, well-being, prosperity, equity, prosperity, good fortune, and friendliness. At a personal level, peaceful behavior are kind, considerate, respectful, just, and tolerant of others belief and behavior, tending to manifest goodwill (Solomon, 2013).

Concept of National Development

Development is the transformation of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable conditions, with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. It is also referred to as the uniform distribution of resources, the integration of the people into national economy; it is a socio-economic process which seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources and income within the society (Mundi, 2008).

According to Ohagwu (2010) development is not the same thing as change, growth or modernization, but the nature, content and course of a society, it is the choice about goals for achieving the realization of human potential. Gboyega (2002) described development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances.

Objectives of Business Education

The focus of Business Education orientation of recipients which enhances wealth creation, employment generation and poverty reduction are very important in people life. All of which reduce and indeed, capable of eliminating, youth restiveness, promote societal peaceful co-existence and cohesion and unmolding responsible citizenry. All these are indices of development of a nation's economy and the absence of which portend under-development of the economy. This is necessarily so because with responsible citizenry, less restive youths and peaceful societal coexistence, nationalism and the desire for higher productivity are embraced by all and sundry. Hence, the aims/objectives of Business Education, as contained in section 6, sub-section 49 of the National Policy on Education (2004) are as follows:

- i. To provide the business knowledge and vocational skills necessary for industrial, commercial and economic development.
- ii. To provide trained manpower in applied technology and commerce, particularly at sub-professional grades.
- iii. To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of economic and environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.
- iv. To enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

Furthermore, Aina (1994) posited that the objectives of Business Education broadly include:

- i. To contribute to goal attainment of the total educational programme.
- ii. To provide basic and business knowledge for all students
- iii. To develop their economic understanding, personal consumer competency and personal-use competency.
- iv. To provide vocational skills for persons preparing for a business occupation, i.e. business competency

The Role of Business Education in a Developing Economy

It is obvious that Business Education plays an important role in the preparation of the citizenry both vocationally and professionally for divergent careers in business. The numerous roles of Business Education in a dynamic business environment are as glaring as they prepare educators to cultivate creative behavior to become proud business operators. They could identify and exploit business venture opportunities to enhance entrepreneurship in the system. The academic exposure enables them to interact with successful business men in the community and share the benefits of their successes in the community of their business empires. This enhances job creation and entrepreneurship development (Rufai, 2013).

According to Osuala(2000) business graduates have the understanding of the economic system and therefore can intelligently position him in a manner that he can take advantage of latent choices which abound by the uninitiated. Recipients of Business Education are well groomed for manifold purposes in the society. It produces specialists for various fields such as Business Management, Secretarial Duties, Office Technology, Accounting, Marketing, Banking

and Finance, Distributive Education etc. This creates avenue for career opportunities which has tremendous impact on global economy.

This is more so in the light of the contextual issue facing the discipline in the present day Nigeria. Business represents a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all types of educational delivery systems. It can begin at any level. It can be interrupted for varying periods of time and can be continued throughout the lifespan of an individual. Business education includes education for office occupations, distribution and marketing occupations, business teaching, business administration and economic understandings (Osuala, 2004). Its objective is to prepare entrepreneurs, managers, and employees for effective work relationship with the institutions of business and to give extension and rehabilitation education to those already employed in business occupations.

It is a veritable tool of overcoming the precarious unemployment situation in the nation. Unemployment as a social menace is assuming an upward trend in the world today and is posing serious threat to global economy on daily basis. Business Education has the necessary potentialities and capacities to reverse this trend and halt the present rural– urban drift and/or migration by elites. Training acquired in business is capable of making graduates to be self-employed through the acquisition of adequate skills to make them mentally and manually dexterous so as to contribute modestly to the global economy (Rufai, 2013). In the same vein, when a business educator establishes an enterprise, he/she would certainly employ oneself and others, thereby reducing and combating unemployment problem in the economy.

Problems inhibiting the Development of Business Education Programme in Nigeria: The Need for Reposition

Having highlighted the concepts and objectives of Business Education and the developmental changes it brings along with it, it is important to state that such may be far from being realizable given the present constraints of Business Education Programme. There are myriad of such constraints as noted by Yahaya et al (2014), some of which include:

1. **Lack of Training Facilities:-** The facilities needed in the workshop are grossly inadequate. Not only that, they are few in number but also most of them lack spare parts. This makes practical aspect of business education to be relegated to the background as situations as most business organization to which the students are attached cannot provide them with enough exposure to the relevant modern equipment.
2. **Inadequate Funding:-** Business Education is a highly capital intensive programme. Funds are required to acquire numerous machineries necessary to equip the learner effectively. Infrastructures, workshops and to retain highly qualified teachers, demonstrators, laboratory assistants and other personnel needed. Funds are also needed for procuring workshop materials, stationeries, hand tools, books and other reading materials and ensure regular maintenance of equipment. Most times budgetary allocation tends to be discouraging. This hampers the effectiveness of the programme.

3. **Wrong Perception of the Course:-** Some parents/guardians do not want their children/wards to study Business Education. They believe that it is meant for drop outs, dullards and less brilliant individuals. Instead, they opt for courses like Law, Medicine, Pharmaceuticals, Engineering, Architecture, and Political Science and so on. Of course, they may not fit in per say.
4. **Students' Laziness/Poor Attitude:-** Business Education is an educational programme requires efforts and dedication. Most students of today are such that they will not like to exhaust their energy in the development of manipulative skills demanded in the course. This is one of the major problems of Business Education today.
5. **Organizational Problem:-** Vocational Education is meant to prepare an individual for gainful employment. To do this, the necessary subjects with the right amount of instructional materials or facilities like typewriters, adding machines, filing cabinets, perforators, guillotines, etc. need to be in place. Unfortunately, there is gross inadequacy or decay of same in our schools. The result is to make the recipients become half-baked and render them unemployable since they have not been adequately empowered.
6. **Lack of Adequate Qualified and Committed Teachers:-** There is a gross inadequacy of qualified and business teachers. As such the few available ones are always overloaded with teaching tasks which render them inefficient and non-committed to the goals of teaching. In some cases, untrained or unqualified teachers are mobilized to teach and business courses. Of course, the result is obvious of the kind of graduates produced out of the programme course. Human resources are the most important assets of any nation. There are many sophisticated equipment/facilities, funds and other materials, but if they are not effectively utilized by efficient and dedicated teachers the aim for which they are meant tend to be defeated. Inadequate number of trained teachers of Business Education is prevalent in most of our educational institution offering this noble course. Not only this, many business education courses such as Shorthand and Typewriting suffered persistent lack of teachers. Some teachers in the department are square pegs in round holes (Amoor, 2010).
7. **Government Discriminatory Attitude in Funding:-** There are so many new sophisticated office equipments that have appeared in the market such as electric typewriters, dictating machines, computers, etc which are conspicuously absent in Nigerian schools due to inadequate funds for their acquisition. Ironically, government seemed to be funding heavily Science and Science-related Education programmes at the detriment of Business Education. This does not augur well for the intended empowerment of Business Education graduates for them to play their roles in national development
8. **Curriculum Defect:-** The Business Education curriculum at the secondary school is defective to the extent that and business studies is taught as a single integrated subject like social studies and integrated science. This is not practicable. For instance, there is no way Shorthand and Accounting can be integrated. Besides, it is not always possible to get a single teacher who can effectively teach the two subjects. Where it is enforced, it is doubtful if the subjects can be taught so authoritatively that the students can acquire

the basic skill necessary for their contribution to the national economic development. The curriculum is also deficient in content due to non-incorporation of some and business courses which will adequately prepare the graduates for the challenges of the complex and technological world.

9. **Non-use of Appropriate and Approved Methodology:**

One other outstanding constraint in the teaching of Business Education is the non-use of appropriate and approved methodology. In addition to normal lectures, the teaching of vocational subjects require the use of variety of teaching methods and techniques some of which are simulation, discussions, role playing, demonstrations, study trips (Field trips) etc. it is sadly noticeable that while some teachers adhere faithfully to these professional practices, a number of others do not. It is either that they are unaware of ' these methods or are indifferent to their use.

10. **Social Appraisal of Business Education**

It is unfortunate fate of Business Education in Nigeria that its products are held in low esteem by both individual and society. There is no denying the fact that many parents do not prefer their children to go into business education except when they are not able to secure admission into universities.

11. **Textbooks Production**

Relevant locally developed Business Education textbooks are scarce. This is mainly because book publication is expensive and companies do not consider it, a profitable venture for the size of the sector.

Prospects of Business Education

Despite the challenges facing most African countries today, some hold measures have been undertaken to bring Business Education into the mainstream of education and to bring it closer to the world of work. This is being carried out through a wide range of educational reforms and innovation as well as the restructuring of national economics to provide more employment opportunities. Oranu (2001) posited that a common goal has been, to make education more functional and development related by bringing Business Education into the mainstream of general education. Some of the most common innovations include the following:

1. Introduction of business education in early childhood education (at the primary school level) to inculcate positive attitudes towards Business Education in the world of work.
2. The diversification of Business education at the secondary school level to offer more opportunities to learners in order to enable them to choose and pursue careers of their interest.
3. The expansion and strengthening of Business Education, programmes at the post secondary level including teacher education.
4. The articulation of Business Education in higher education to ensure that those who are able and are motivated can pursue their education to the highest level possible.
5. Fostering a closer link between education institution and enterprises, to ensure quality and relevance in the Business programmes.

6. The introduction of entrepreneurship education in most Business Education programmes in order to prepare graduates for self employment in the growing informal sector.
7. The promotion of associations for heads of Business Education institution and teachers to enable them participates more effectively in the decision making and management of Business Education in the country.

How to Reposition Business Education for Peaceful Co-existence and National Development of Nigeria

In realization that a well implemented Business Education programme will pave the way for the peaceful co-existence and national development of Nigeria, the following Repositioning strategies are hereby advanced:

1. The government should expeditiously provide the instructional materials and facilities in the right amount in all our schools. Infrastructure decay in such schools needs to be urgently reversed. Sufficient funds should be expended in this regard.
2. Government's discriminatory attitude in funding education should be stopped forthwith in order to redress this imbalance and purchase basic equipment needed for teaching and Business Education subjects.
3. Since Business Education programme gives its recipients the skills they need to help themselves out of poverty and into prosperity, supports the growth of any society, democracy, and political stability, allowing people to learn about their rights and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to exercise them (Amoor, 2010). Then Government, Education Planners and Policy Makers should embrace this strategy if Business Education must play its role for the peaceful co-existence and national development of Nigeria.

Conclusion

Education is the pivot around which other spheres of Nigeria economy revolves. Unfortunately, education in Nigeria has suffered unpardonable and unforgivable neglect over the decades with Business education having more than its fair share of the deplorable phenomenon. Noting the utilization of unqualified/under qualified (untrained) and no-committed teachers, inadequate/decayed facilities due to poor government funding, curriculum defects both in application and contents, etc, it is not far-fetched to understand the down slide in the implementation of Business education programme. Thus, the educational improvement in Business Education couldn't have come at a more favorable time when Nigeria yearns for economic development so as to belong to the community of developed nations. This will, to a considerable extent, enhance the realization of the dual objectives of individual and national development and peaceful co-existence of Nigeria which is the focal point of this research work in Nigeria.

Recommendations:

- i. The government should be courageous enough in insisting that only professionally qualified, competent and qualified teachers are involved in the teaching of and Business Education courses. Premium should also be placed on a teacher's area of specialization which is very basic to the success of the programme.
- ii. As a measure towards enhancing the study of the vocational education subjects, there is need for students to go on field trip (study trip). Where appropriate, students should be released to participate in SIWES (Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme). These learning experiences would permit the students to study equipment and layout of office, observe employees at work and appreciate and business procedures, study the relationships between departments as well as acquire knowledge and skills necessary for their effective functioning in the society. As an intervention strategy at overcoming the problem of inadequate qualified and preponderance of unqualified/untrained teachers, the government should support the production of more vocational education graduates in tertiary institutions.
- iii. In order to checkmate the seeming ignorance of the use of appropriate teaching methods by some teachers and to spice up those who are indifferent to their use, adequate supervision of instructional activities should be mounted by the relevant government agency. The role of the Areas Inspectorate of Education (AIE) is relevant in this regard. The Business studies subjects should no longer be taught as integrated, pre-vocational subject as is presently the case at the Junior Secondary Schools. They should be disintegrated due to the constraint already identified earlier in this paper.
- iv. Membership of the professional association, the Association of and Business Educators of Nigeria, should be encouraged and, if possible, made mandatory for all the Business education teachers. This would help in updating their knowledge and teaching methods.
- v. The Business Education curriculum in Nigeria schools needs to be appropriately enriched to accommodate subjects like and Business Communication, Consumer Education, Entrepreneurship and Computer Appreciation. This is what Olaitan (1996) would rather describe as "complete career exploration" which promotes intelligent career choices and development.

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