

PROMOTING BUSINESS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: A MEANS FOR ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Nwanaka, Chigozie
Department of Business Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education
Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This discourse is born out of the desire to make a contribution to the promotion of business education in Nigerian. Business is what an entrepreneur does in order to achieve economic, social and political values. Business education equips students with skills and competences needed to make them self-reliant and job creators. Hence the paper is geared towards finding solutions to such challenges as high rate of poverty, youth and graduate unemployment, over dependence on foreign goods, and technology, poor standard of living and poor infrastructural facilities among others. Also strategies for promoting business education were discussed. The paper also recommended among other things that government should give adequate attention to entrepreneurial development as an important means and a valuable additional strategy to create jobs and improve livelihoods and economic independence of the people.

INTRODUCTION

Education holds the key to the development of every nation. Unfortunately the Nigerian educational system has not been able to emancipate her people from the clutches of social-economic, political and environmental issues among others. The high rate of poverty, unemployment, underemployment and their consequences are quite alarming. The implication here is that the type of education we inherited from our colonial masters has failed to capture the dynamics of the Nigerian labour market.

The need for business education started emerging in the mid 1980's when Nigerian economy collapsed which laid to mass retrenchment and retirement of workers as a result of structural adjustment programme. Currently youth and graduate unemployment is the major problem facing the government of the day. Business education which would have salvaged the situation was not encouraged. Tertiary education has not properly, included the philosophy of self-reliance such as creating a new cultural and productive environment that will promote pride in primitive work and self-discipline, encouraging people to take part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare, promoting new sets of attitudes and culture for the attainment of future challenges. Nwangwu (2007) opined that the failure of tertiary education to inculcate the above philosophy in students led to wastages in terms of both human and natural resources. This is because the youths and graduates from tertiary institutions are not equipped with the necessary skills with which to exploit the natural resources that abound in Nigerian. Business education has been an essential aspect of education which deserves adequate attention. However this paper will start by looking at what sustainable development is, who is an entrepreneur? Concepts of business education, constraints to business education development and government efforts in promoting business education in Nigeria.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DEFINED

Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present generation to meet their own needs (Minzer, 1992). Sustainable development implies economic growth together with the protection of environmental quality; each enforcing the other. The essence of this form of development is a stable relationship between human activities and the natural world which does not diminish the prospects for future generations to enjoy a quality of life at least as good as our own. The concept of sustainable development requires balancing environmental, societal and economic considerations in the pursuit of development and an improved quality of life.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Education for sustainable national development is the education that seeks to equip people towards creating a sustainable future. Stake holders' government, business, educational institutions, media and organizations play important roles in achieving sustainable development. Each of these sectors has a different view of sustainable development. Some may be interested in environmental preservation and protection; some have economic development interest while other may be more interested in social development. According to UNESCO (2008), the way each nation, cultural group and individual views sustainable development will depend on its own values. In some European countries, universities and technical colleges train students of science, economic and business management in skills that helps to build more sustainable societies. Programmes such as peace education, human right education, and environmental education and youth entrepreneur schemes are carried out in many schools. Hence such initiatives helps students and teachers to gain an understanding of the inter-linkage needed for sustainable development. The emphasis has been on education that will provide life and occupational skills that will enhance the potentials of individuals, reinforce self-sufficiency and improving quality of life.

Who is an Entrepreneur?

Meredith (1983) viewed an entrepreneur as a person who has the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities, gather necessary resources to take advantage of them and initiate appropriate action to ensure success.

Terry and Franklin (1982) in their contribution agreed that entrepreneurs are individuals who conceive the idea for a new business venture, gather the necessary human, financial and physical resources to start the venture, start the operation and grow it to the point where more people are added to the organization and they usually bear the most personal and financial risk in beginning the venture.

In other words an entrepreneur could be regarded as a person or persons who explore and exploit business opportunities to make profit, generate employment and create wealth. He /She has these abilities, traits and skills to establish and manage business enterprise with the hope of becoming self reliant and job creator.

Having seen who an entrepreneur is, one can consider the next concept business. Some people see the concept as vehicle to improve the quality of life for individuals, families and communities and to sustain a healthy economy and environment.

Types of entrepreneurs and their characteristics

Dyer in Oreh (2006) identified three types of entrepreneurs as:

- Technical entrepreneurs
- Organizational builders
- Deal makers

Their characteristics are as follows:

- The ability to take risk.
- The desire to compete.
- The ability to handle stress.
- The ability to make work fun.
- The ability to creatively solve problems.
- The ability to recognize opportunities.
- Goal orientation
- Realistic optimism

BUSINESS EDUCATION AND TERTIARY CURRICULUM

Ejiogu (1990) defined education as an instrument for effecting changes in a society. He believes that any nation that invests in education stands a chance of deriving the benefits of creating a better place for living or making a living.

The aim of education is to impart desirable knowledge or ideas or concepts or skills to the learners so that they might be useful to themselves and the society as well.

Therefore business education is an aspect of education that teaches entrepreneurial skills, qualities and functions of persons who wish to toe that line of endeavour. It could be that training given to person(s) to enable them identify their potentials and how to harness them to become commercial ventures that generate income, create employment and create wealth.

According to Arowomole and Adegoke (2006) the universally accepted objective of business education is self-reliance. And self-reliance and self-sufficiency have been stressed in the national policy on education since its inception in (1977), (NPE, 2004).

Therefore business education is an aspect of education which involves the identification of persons with entrepreneurial skills and develops such in them. The development of entrepreneurial traits through education is very vital as this will enable one catch up with the high level of scientific and technological advancement and to be aware of the many entrepreneurial ventures that are available today and how best to exploit these opportunities for the good of man.

Therefore integrating entrepreneurial education in curriculum of tertiary institution will equip graduate of higher institution with relevant skills, ideal business knowledge, self-confidence and other attributes necessary for self-reliance and national survival (Thom and Ikechi, 2009).

A kind of curriculum in which business education will occupy a reasonable portion for training students irrespective of area of specialization, school, program or course of study. A kind of curriculum that can bring the satisfaction of competencies and skills in learners, the curriculum that can help students imbibe vocational and technical skills and knowledge, capable of inculcating the spirit of creativity, innovation and business for employment.

ROLES OF BUSINESS

The Nigerian government at the national and state levels has articulated the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) packages as part of a long term programmes to address gross unemployment and under employment especially at post graduate level. This programme at maturity is expected to power Nigeria economic growth through the development of Small scale and Medium scale Enterprises. (SMEs).

Business, according to Ohaegbulam. (2000) plays a major role in our lives which include among others the following:

- Production of goods and services that are important to the wellbeing, comfort and happiness of individuals and the society as a whole.
- Creation of self-employment. This helps to solve the problems of unemployment and other social vices. It provides employment for others.
- The entrepreneurs are usually motivated in their activities not only by the need for their material contributions to the welfare of the community, but also by their desire to make a profit. The dignity of labour is uplifted.
- Through business, the entrepreneurs' standard of living and social status are raised as well as helping in national development.
- Business determines the specific wants of the people and what type or kind of goods and services would fulfill those wants comfortably.
- Business makes uncertainty bearing possible.
- Business helps to develop a pool of potential entrepreneurs who are well equipped with skills and technical know how to manage small and medium scale industries.
- Business stimulates rural, economic and industrial development.
Thus it contributes to the development of rural and less developed areas.

Some other reasons for promoting youth business are:

- Creating employment opportunities for self employed youth as well the other people they employ.
- Bringing alienated and marginalized youths back into the economic mainstream and giving them a sense of meaning and belonging.
- Helping to address some of the socio-psychological problems
- Helping youths develop new skills and experience that can then be applied other challenges in life.
- Promoting innovation and resilience in youth.
- Promoting the revitalization of the local communities by providing valuable goods and services.
- Young entrepreneurs are more responsive to new economic opportunities and trends.

CHALLENGES TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Currently there are many problems hindering the progress and successful implementation of business educational development programme in Nigeria education institution to include:

- Inability of the government to improve on societal standard of living: Standard of living includes good health system, better housing and good working condition. This will make the individual youth who is not settled to be a critical thinker.
- The status of entrepreneur education is not specified in the curriculum whether core course or not for some discipline in the universities. Polytechnics and College of Education Technical.
- Lack of infrastructural facilities and shortage of qualified staff in tertiary institutions.
- Inability of the government to provide financial assistance and short term course on business education in Nigeria.

Unfortunately, those who influence education policy in the society feel that graduate of technical vocational institution are not equal to university graduate hence there is need to address this issue so that both will contribute to national development.

Toward promoting business education in Nigeria

• **Curriculum redesign**

This is the total experience by means of which the school educates the young and inexperienced members of the society NTI, (2007). It involves guided living because the school selects and recommends the kind of life expected the learners to lead.

The school curriculum as it is today may not be able to give Nigeria society what is required to develop entrepreneurs needed for sustainable development. Ihenunekwu (2003) observed a serious challenge with the present school curricular noting that educational curricular of tertiary institution in Nigeria have not fully captured the dynamics of the Nigerian labour markets. The implication here is that the contents of the present curricular especially at the tertiary schools would mean having more unemployment, underemployment and poverty stricken people in the country.

Therefore, the first step would be to re-design the curriculum to entrench business education irrespective of whether one is in business study or not.

• **Personnel re-orientation**

Presently, the country does not have adequate staff to train the youth in business. What this means is that staff should be trained and those who were to bring them up to modern day entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Train the trainer workshop should be organized where expert in entrepreneur will train personnel who will in turn train more teachers in this area (Paul, 2005).

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• **Micro-finance**

The government should establish micro finance institution to assist graduate to establish business of their choice. The funds should be made accessible as this would encourage them to venture into private ownership of small scale industries (Nwangwu, 2007).

- **Environmental re-design**

Our environments do not encourage business. Many youth whose interest are to be employers of labour are not given favourable learning atmosphere and therefore ended up as seekers of labour. There is need for proper enlightenment campaign on the need to encourage youths, graduates and non-graduate to venture into business. Business de-emphasizes theory. Therefore, workshops that would serve as training of entrepreneur should be created.

- **Provision of small business schools**

This is needed because it is a place where interested students and community members can participate.

- **Develop entrepreneur internship programmes.**

This would help to match students with locally successful entrepreneur with clearly established education programmes.

- **Establishing an enterprise college**

This would aim at fostering the specific skill sets required for business to serve as skill acquisition centers for the youths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For any country to achieve greatness, its citizens must apply their creative abilities to transform their environment and get transformed in the process. Therefore

- Government should provide enough infrastructural materials for business education and vocational skills acquisition and make sure that the graduate possess the required and modern skills that are needed in today's labour market and capable for self-reliance.
- Tertiary institutions should in co-operate comprehensive functional and implementable business programme into their curriculum that will prepare graduate for self-employment.
- Government should improve in the current state of electric power supply. No business can flourish when there is no adequate supply of electric power. The cost of diesel and petrol is so high that many businesses have to close down.
- Federal government should increase the budgetary allocation to education to make the purchase of more educational equipment and infrastructural facilities possible.

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