

**BUSINESS EDUCATION: A PANACEA TO PROVIDE SPECIALIZED
OCCUPATIONAL PREPARATION FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

BY

**UMO-UDO, BASSEY INIOBONG
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, AFAHA NSIT
AKWA IBOM STATE**

ABSTRACT

The present social, economic and technological changes in Nigeria have posed great challenges for occupational competence. Nigeria can achieve a great chunk of sustainable development through Business Education. Business Education was established to equip the beneficiaries with the knowledge of business and office education enable them earn a living. These skills, individual abilities and competence must be valuable and desirable. A step towards this would provide specialized occupational preparation for self-reliance which this paper sought for. Therefore, this paper x- rayed the Concepts of Business Education, Development of Business Education in Nigeria, sustainability, it implications for sustainable development. It was concluded that if the dreams of sustainable development is to be achieved, implementation of job-oriented programmes should be actualized through Business Education, based on its implications to sustainable development recommendations were made.

KEY WORDS: Sustainable Development, Business Education, Concept of Business Education,

INTRODUCTION

Every citizen in Nigeria should be equipped with necessary skills to contribute effectively to the sustainable development of the country, for this to be achieved there is no obvious need for Sustainable Business Education in Nigeria. The implication of our system of education as it concerns functional education is to emphasize those areas of education which will help an individual to be more self-reliant or self-employed, and help the country attain higher national productivity, James (2012).

Therefore, the relevance of Business Education hinges on the tenets of development and a common deep appreciation of the value and dignity of labour. This could be seen in the preparation of the learner for entry into the world of work and advancement in his chosen career, to manpower needs of the society, to enhance the option available to each student, to serve as a motivating force to enhance all types of learning and to enable the learner to wisely select a career.

According to Okafor (1992), the process of industrialization in developing countries, such as Nigeria, is ever-increasing, and education must keep in step and in tune with this demand. It is known that education provides lasting solution to social problem

(unemployment and unemployed ability and ensures the fullest realization of the potentials and aspirations of a nation.

Education, in this context, is an investment by the society to make itself a place to lives in and a better place to make of living. As a developing nation, Nigeria certainly needs to develop an organized system of education for the effective and adequate realization of these potentialities. There is the need to develop on elaborate mechanism designed to bring about the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

CONCEPT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION

Business education is relatively a new comer in the vocational education lexicon. It is by nature economics oriented because of its inter-disciplinary nature but wider in scope because of its focus on employable skills. It is a programme of instruction which comprises of office education, basic or general business studies, marketing/entrepreneurship education as well as general education and professional education. Office education is a vocational education programme for office careers through initial refresher and upgrading education leading to the employability and advancement in office occupations, while general business education is a programme which provides students with instructions and competencies needed in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of the world and providing services to others. Osuala, (2010) defined business education as that part of the total educational programme provided to help the individual attain the basic knowledge, skills abilities, understanding and attitudes that will enable the person to become a worthy human being, effective member of the society, catering for his own needs and the needs of others.

Business Education is not the same as Business studies, the term Business Education could be regarded as a body of related occupationally focused and systematically arranged subjects prescribed for graduation and certification after completion of the units of instruction and or passing a prescribed examination at the college or university level Osuala (2008). He further defined business studies as a body of knowledge which emphasizes on the management functions.

DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS IN NIGERIA

Like the American apprenticeship system of ancient time, in Nigeria, Business Education as an aspect of vocational education is as old as man's existence on earth. In the early days, vocational training was given to the younger ones at home, relevant to the needs of the family. With the advent of European explorers, missionaries and colonial masters, western education was introduced.

Osuala (2004) exposed that in its early days, Nigeria Secondary Grammar Schools provided necessary skill training for graduates to enter into highly rewarding white-collar jobs. As economic activities later become more differentiated, new and distinct occupations emerged. The need then arose for people with practical skills to be employed into government industrial and commercial establishments. Osuala further noted that in Nigeria, private indigenous proprietors introduced Business Education. The first private business school was established in 1936 in Eastern Nigeria at Onitsha.

CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is defined as a requirement for our generation to manage the resource base such that the average quality of life that we ensure ourselves can potentially be shared by all future generation.

CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

There are several definitions of “development” given according to the wits of individual economist defining it. What is actually meant in characterizing a country as developed is that there is in that country a constellation of numerous desirable conditions for work and life. The word development had its root from the French word “Voloper” which means to wrap. To develop therefore means to “de-wrap” or to unfold gradually, to cause to grow gradually fuller, larger, stronger and better (Udo Idem, 1992). A society develops economically as its citizen’s increase jointly their capacity for dealing with environment. This capacity depends on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools, technology and the manner in which work is organized.

Awe (1986), also maintained that development must mean improvement in living conditions for which industrialization, innovation and economic growth are essential. In which case there must not be gross disparities within a country and the citizens of such a country must have their basic needs. These basic needs according to Burkey (1993), include clean (unpolluted) air, water, adequate and balanced food, physical and emotional security, physical and mental rest, culturally and climatically appropriate clothing and shelter.

Todaro (1980) defines development as the process of improving the quality of all lives. It is made up of three equally important aspects viz.

- (a) Raising people’s living level i.e. their incomes and consumption level of food, medical services, education etc.
- (b) Creating conditions conducive to the growth of people’s self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which promote human dignity and respect; and
- (c) Increasing people’s freedom chooses by enlarging the range of their choice variables e.g. increasing varieties of consumer goods and services.

Meier (1984) defined development in terms of increase in real per capital income over time, provided the number below on absolute poverty line does not increase and the distribution of income does not become unequal. Development is not purely on economic phenomenon. It is perceived as a multidimensional process, involving the reorganisation and reorientation of the entire economic and social system.

In addition to improve in incomes and output, development typically involves radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures.

BUSINESS EDUCATION AND SELF-RELIANCE: Implications for sustainable development

One of the motivating factors for according education a high priority in Nigeria’s development objectives is its human resources development potentials. Education and train for self-reliance or self-employment through integrated curriculum is required to reduce the high rate of unemployment and under-employment in the economy, which find expression in youth restiveness.

Unemployment brings about poverty and the saying that a hungry man is an angry man becomes true as the youth fight to see that unemployment which finds expression in hungry is eliminated unemployment is demoralizing. A feeling of dejection and insecurity trails the unemployed; his morale is low and the social relationship sagged. If the restive youths/area boys are empowered through training on a work oriented utilitarian setting the youth will function productively in his chosen occupation, will not be maladjusted and will be useful to himself and the society, justifying the need for Business Education and self-reliance.

Business Education is a programme to prepare skilled personnel at both professional and sub-professional levels. It refers to systematic leaving experienced designed to provide the beneficiaries with gainful employment in business occupations as skilled or semi-skilled workers.

Osuala (2008), pointed out that any programme of business education that does not emphasis on skill development and have employment objectives is a programme about business. The context of business education should include guidance and counselling services in connection with the training and other instructions directly related business occupations. Indeed, the programme of business education should be designed to develop skills, knowledge, attitudes and work habits in business oriented occupations. Business education programmes should include preparations for employment in business related occupations in which specialized education is required for which there is societal need. A good programme of business education should develop the students for academic and economic abilities.

Any programme of Business Education meant to prepare students for self-reliance, eradicate poverty or economic empowerment and bring about sustainable development should have both academic and economic objectives. Business education has been noted by many as having contributed to the development of Nigeria. Oriazowanlon and Iyekekpolo (2009) remarked that Business Education has produced skilled manpower for the employment need of a globalized economy. They added that qualitative education is essential for life transformation of the citizenry of any country. This transformation can only be achieved through competent manpower development and Business Education is a good platform for such transformation.

Business Education offers to every individual an opportunity to develop those skills, abilities and understandings that will enable him to handle competently his personal business affairs; to develop an understanding of the vocational opportunities available in the broad field of business and to assume his citizenship responsibilities through enlightened participation in an understanding and appreciation of the enterprise system.

It also offers to the student who wishes to pursue a career in business those skills, abilities and understandings that will enable him to enter, perform and progress in a business occupation after graduation and it provides him/her with the occupational intelligence to enable him to fit into and find job satisfaction in the labour force of our complex and dynamic economy.

CONCLUSION

Business Education in Nigeria was established with the aim of equipping the beneficiaries with the knowledge, attitude and skills necessary to earn a living in the field of work either as employee or self-employed, it is seen as a wise and fruitful education both for the nation and for the individual. It can ensure the development and conservation of natural resources. Thus, an effective administration and proper use of the nations resources cannot be achieved with the implementation of job-oriented education programmes. These dreams if actualized will bring about the achievement of sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are therefore considered useful to improve the learning and understanding of Business education which if implemented by government at all levels will go a long way to enhance the proper coordination and utilization of research findings for self-reliance and sustainable development.

1. Business Education programme must be academic and skill oriented. Teachers of programme must be masters of their subject, updating their knowledge with challenges of technology and emerging developing world.

2. Business Education must be taught by occupationally qualified business educators, who will inculcate skill consciousness in the learners thereby producing job creators instead of job seekers.
3. The governments should create enabling environment for private individuals to participate in job creation. The economy should be people centered and people driven instead of the present government driven economy.
4. There should be an opportunity to learn job skill to increase the youths and adults interest in the available job and help to prolong their life.
5. The institutions offering Business Education should be equipped with modern office facilities, equipment and machines such as are found in industries and commerce.

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