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Role of Business Education Reforms in Unlocking National Transformation: A Nigerian Educational System Perspective

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Abstract

Education is widely seen as a potent catalyst for driving societal change and in the context of national development, it plays a pivotal role in shaping the future trajectory of a country by expanding possibilities and building capacities. Against this backdrop of the critical role of education in national development, this study investigated the intersection of business education and national transformation in Nigeria and equally highlighted the critical role of educational curricula in shaping the socio-economic landscape of the Nigerian State. The study adopted a qualitative research design and relied on data obtained mainly from secondary sources. It found that part of the barriers to effective national transformation can be located in the disconnect between the curricula of business education and the needs of contemporary society. It highlighted the importance of ensuring that educational curricula to reflect the evolving demands of the global environment to equip learners with relevant skills and competencies. Specifically, the study advocated for the involvement of experts in business education curriculum development processes to develop vocational skills and knowledge for student economic self-reliance. This study concluded that by prioritizing the alignment of educational curricula with the evolving needs of society, Nigeria can position itself for future success in a knowledge-driven global landscape. It therefore recommended that there is the need for stakeholders in education to collaborate

towards fostering a transformative learning environment conducive to national prosperity and progress.

Keywords: Business education, Curriculum, National development, Policy, Employability.

Introduction

Business education has a significant positive impact on productivity, economic growth, and human resource development, hence it is now becoming ingrained in many nations' national development strategies (Oluwasina et al., 2019). Entrepreneurial activities are expressed in sectors of business education such as stenography, petty trade, small business, account clerk, transportation, thrift loan, teaching, office profession, and so forth. In Nigeria, business education is crucial to the social, political, and economic advancement of any country. This is feasible if the formation of several businesses capable of employing the nation's unemployed youths results in the creation of jobs for the populace (Durojaye, 2020). A certified business education graduate should have the following competencies to operate a small business center: - Self-employment creation. This, according to Anyeaeneh and Nkegwu (2015 aids in easing Nigeria's social vices and unemployment issues. Business education, according to Amoor (2010) plays a key role in economic development by empowering students with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively transfer knowledge to others and manage complex office technologies and information systems. An entrepreneur not only creates employment for themselves but also for others. This improves the person's standard of living and per capital income to rise as a result. In support of this, Ugwuogo (2013) stated that business education has the potential to help achieve vision 2020 through its self-employment and job development packages. As a result, he claimed that having a job increases GDP per capita and lowers unemployment and poverty, two indicators of development.

Despite the centrality of business education in national development particularly as a mean of employment generation, in many emerging nations, the multiple production of graduates by tertiary institutions into word of work scant prospects for lucrative jobs has turned into a worrying phenomenon. This unusual trend has been attributed to economic changes in many countries and the global labour market, which have led to new standards for graduates' quality and new strategies for enhancing their

competitiveness (Ikpesu, 2017; Makulova et al., 2015), as well as disparities and inconsistencies between the curriculum and the realities of the current economy. In the Nigerian context, scholars have continued to decry how slowly business education is catching up with technological and research-based difficulties (Ekpenyong & Nwabuisi, 2003), the rapid changes posed by technology, and the lack of suitable teaching resources and methodologies that severely impacted successful teaching and learning experiences (Oluwadare et al., 2022).

According to the scholarly reasons presented above, Nigeria's business education curriculum is lacking in diverse learning opportunities and is at odds with its concept of employability. Unfortunately, a lot of graduates in Nigeria have already retired due to age while actively seeking job in parastatals under government ownership. With inflation at above 16 percent, the GDP growth further declined from 0.36 percent in the first quarter to 2.06 percent in the second. According to Oboreh et al (2020), the current labour market accounts for around 48% of the workforce. Bamber (2014) bemoaned the rising percentage of youth unemployment in Europe at the rethinking education summit hosted by the European Commission. Oliveira (2010) equally pointed out that, compared to the OECD average of 42%, more than 50% of Portuguese university graduates who are unemployed had been out of employment for more than six months. However, this number illustrates a complete divergence between the needs of the labour market and what education has to offer.

Different countries have different business education curriculum structures. Nigerian business education deviates from international standards in this area. It is sacred and blends business with education. Although it was intended for graduates to be fully prepared for the challenges in the labour market, Nigeria's curriculum has been heavily weighted toward education with well over 30% non-business courses. What is being taught rarely qualifies graduates to grasp the need of the international economy.

Although, the unemployment crisis is not unique to African countries, the Nigeria's experience raises concerns about how much of the business education curriculum is applicable globally and in higher education institutions (HEIs). Nigeria's business school curriculum's content and requirements still need to be updated for the twenty-first century, especially in light of how quickly the world is being shaped by globalization, internationalization, and information and communication technology. Globalization in higher education refers to the movement of people, values, and ideas beyond national boundaries as well as the flow of technology, the economy, and knowledge. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Green et al., 2012) states that due to national peculiarities, cultural orientations, history, traditions, and priorities, globalization affects nations in diverse ways. According to Green &

Baer (2000), using the term "globalization" in the mission statements of many colleges is a good method to produce graduates who are globally competent and have a deep awareness of other cultures. Thus, it is not strange that most universities today are more entrepreneurial and competitive in their effort to generate graduates with worldwide relevance. These organizations engage in collaborations, provide development support, sell or export their educational programmes and services, and offer training programmes through remote learning, e-learning, or direct student recruiting. Thus, the teaching and learning procedures that provide pupils with a worldwide perspective on problems, events, and opportunities as well as comprehensive understanding of cultural variety and languages to function in various cultural situations are concerned with globalization. All of these largely exert pressure on the academic programmer's curriculum, teaching, and learning experiences that students are expected to engage in so they may learn, comprehend, and think globally.

Evolution and history of the Nigerian business education

According to the majority of authors and Ile and Mekuri-Ndimele (2022) (Ile & Mekuri-Ndimele, 2022), Popham *et al*. (1975) (Popham et al., 1975), Njoku (1997) (Njoku, 1997), apprenticeship training was the first kind of business education. At the time, in order to master a trade, one had to work under a mentor who possessed the necessary skills or had relevant experience. These included sales, farming, bookkeeping, crafts, and so on. The length of training varies depending on the trade. The amount of time was occasionally determined by how quickly the apprentice picked up the skill. For instance, single proprietors had the option of hiring apprentices to help with the selling of goods while teaching them the process. These days, apprenticeship training is used to carry on and gain this kind of talent. The trainee eventually gained freedom and went into sales or bookkeeping. In certain situations, he paid for the training time; but, when that wasn't possible, the apprentice's family had to mortgage land or any other important property. The apprentice is given the choice to stay with his master and receive some payment at the end of the training period, which might be supplemented with material goods. The emancipated apprentice's second choice was to start his own business and hire an apprentice of his own. The master had to feed him and give him minimal assistance if the first choice was picked. Overall, he remained answerable to his master and had to follow the guidelines he had set. The requirement for the apprentice to be deserving in learning and character was one aspect of the training that made it particularly remarkable and worthy of imitation, but which is lost in our culture now.

Some families are gifted with special talents, but they do not wish to share them with others. These all happened in a casual context. Itinerant tutors began traveling the country (USA) and teaching bookkeeping and penmanship as businesses expanded. According to Popham *et al*. (1975) (Popham et al., 1975), more workers were required in businesses. Moreover, the idea of restricting training to specific locations wasn't very effective. As the necessity for business training increased, people began to recognize its importance, and grammar schools began adding bookkeeping, commercial arithmetic, and penmanship in their curricula. Business education now has a place in the classroom as a result of this approach.

Each reporter has a different perspective on business education development in Nigeria. The majority of the journalists concurred that business education dates from the late 1940s. Private organizations and individuals ran the schools. The British government prioritized public grammar schools, whose academic-focused curricula were disregarded in favor of technical and vocational education. Institutions of higher learning in business were formerly referred to as Commercial Institutes. The Pitman, City and Guilds, London Chamber of Commerce, and Royal Society of Arts' examinations were prepared for by the students (Ile & Mekuri-Ndimele, 2022). Regarding the enrollment in these private schools, entrance was made available to primary school graduates from the many regions of the nation who were denied admission to the secondary school. These people were thought of as dropouts. Now it is clear where the public's unfavorable perception of business education came from. Despite these complaints, commercial schools have offered services to people and businesses who required their goods. According to reports, Joseph Etukokwu founded the first private school in Onitsha in 1836. In order to give the people a sufficient education and to encourage them to do so, particularly in the field of business, schools were formed. Business communities were supplied with the accounting, administrative, and secretarial staff that was required.

Status and Challenges of business education in Nigeria

The inculcation, acquisition, and development of the right values for the individual's survival and the community are central concerns of business education, which consists of a variety of courses (FRN, 2004). Business education, according to Aliyu (2006) is the education for acquiring and developing the skills and abilities, attitudes, and traits required for the effectiveness of the economic system. As a result, business education assists people in developing marketable talents that will allow them to integrate into a variety of business organizations or work for themselves in the absence of a paying job. According to Oladunjoye (2018) employers continue to require qualified and

knowledgeable workers, but the educational system is failing to appropriately prepare students for the workforce because of new and complicated issues it is facing. As a result, firms are also facing a rise in demand for suitable learning opportunities for employees at all levels. If properly implemented with efficiently delivered infrastructure, a well-articulated business education can help close the gap of skills that exist between graduates of schools and the needs of corporate business organizations, lowering the high cost of the development of human resource in business organizations.

Usoro (2010) argues that computer introduction, the internet, and microelectronics to modern day offices has altered how they carry out their duties. This necessitates the training and development of capable individuals who will be outfitted with the necessary abilities to handle the problems facing the modern workplace. Aduke (2013) emphasized that it is important to prepare graduates to have the necessary education, skills, attitudes, and knowledge to work in corporate settings. With the speed at which technology is developing, businesses have a huge opportunity to optimize their workplace and cut costs. The contemporary workplace has evolved into a hub for numerous automated operations (Agomuo, 2005). Business offices today offer a wide range of support services, from the supply of specialist services to the word processing of letters, reports, and several other documents.

Every office today that uses e-office operations is tasked with handling information, which includes processing information, managing information resources, planning information systems, planning information architecture, processing information about people, using information resource centers, developing information systems, and analyzing information systems. Every year, as new technological advancements enter people's daily lives, office norms evolve. The aforementioned skills are essential for today's office professionals to have in order to thrive in the modern workplace. According to Azih (2011) (Azih, 2011), over time, there has been a significant change in how office personnel carry out their jobs. As a result, office technology advancements led to the usage of video conferencing, e-mail, the internet, computers, etc. in the workplace. To meet the demands of the modern workplace, the current business education curriculum needs to be modified.

According to Okoli and Ohaegbulem (2011), the Nigerian business education curriculum is currently very theoretical and rhetorical in style. As a result, business education programme graduates do not have the abilities and knowledge required for real-world efficiency at work. Inadequate resource personnel, poor perception by the society, insufficient instructional tools, poor funding and inadequate curriculum

content among others are some of the issues currently plaguing business education in Nigeria

The outcomes of this situation are obvious. A weak curriculum cannot function efficiently and effectively in the present day changing workplace because business education focuses on the development of broad specific occupational knowledge and skills, employability skills, technological literacy, occupational and communication skills, and personal and individual attributes and skills (Aina, 2002). Database administration, Microsoft Excel, design of web pages, desktop publishing, fundamental networking of computers, and other topics are not covered in their curriculum for business education, according to an analysis of the performance of business education in numerous Nigerian colleges (Azih, 2011). One then asks how graduates from such a failing institution can handle the difficulties in the workplace today. In fact, Anioke (2013) notes that there is a significant disconnect between the curricula taught in higher institutions in Nigeria and the needs of the business world today.

Filling skill gaps through the optimization of business education curriculum

The aforementioned debates highlight the necessity of restructuring the current curriculum of business education in Nigerian universities so as to adapt to the evolving workplace environments in business organizations so that programs involving the business education may play a greater part in the development of human resources in Nigeria. According to Afolabi (2019) (Afolabi, 2019), the curricula for future business education ought to:

- Be based on competency.
- Equipped and critical to teach graduates of business education problem-solving techniques.
- Practical work incorporation training and self-reliance.
- ICT based teaching incorporation and learning methods.

These developments are crucial in ensuring that the materials and tools that students encounter in their various institutions are comparable to those they would encounter in the workplace. The National Business Education Association (NBEA), which established the American curriculum for secondary school business education programs, upheld standards for the curriculum in areas like marketing, management, international business, information technology, entrepreneurship, personal and economic finance, computation, career development, communication, business law, and accounting. For secondary education maintenance as an essential part of future

career and vocational education, NBEA took this action (Azih, 2011; Okoli & Ohaegbulem).

The integration of e-learning into the teaching of business education courses in secondary and tertiary institutions is now necessary due to the development of ICT (information and communication technology), since this technological approach has been proven to be highly efficient in the enhancement of learning and teaching outcomes, hence promising to be a viable way to use resources for teaching that are typically unavailable in the institutions (Quadri, 2019). Additionally, the recurrent and simple access to knowledge delivered in a variety of mediums via e-learning has the prospects to foster deeper understanding of topics. According to Ojeaga and Igbinedion (2012) (Ojeaga & Igbinedion, 2012), the usage of e-learning in the educational system of Nigeria is still little or nonexistent. The lack of accessibility to computers and the internet could be the cause of this.

The business education curricula in Nigerian secondary schools and university institutions need to be strengthened to include these areas of study that are now missing. The inclusion of these subjects in secondary education will improve the graduates' readiness for the workforce and for postsecondary education. A cornerstone to re-engineering and reinvigorating business education is updating the curriculum along the lines recommended. This is due to Lewis' (1999) (Lewis, 1999) contention that the curriculum has to do with the content, conceptual framework, and delivery method of the material. commercial education has a solid real-world evidence base, and if the curriculum is carefully formulated and put into practice, it can result in the high-skilled labor that is required in commercial organizations.

In developing nations, specifically, policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions need to give student creativity and innovation more attention in ways that are pertinent to their employability. a difficult issue that calls for business educators to pay closer attention to how students learn and take on new and various roles in a constantly evolving society. Thus, if business education curricula are to enhance students' entrepreneurial talents and sense of self-worth, they must increase academic, technical, employable knowledge, and soft skills. Curriculum must specifically contain learning materials that are value- and goal-oriented and capable of causing the desired behavioral changes. Ikpesu (2017) refers to the progressives' approach to curriculum planning and advocates for change in the way that information is conceptualized, how scientific knowledge is acquired, how learning occurs, and how formal education is connected to the lives of learners and the evolving needs of a broader society. The aforementioned academic claim is consistent with the research position that the business education curriculum in higher education today needs to be

re-examined in order to equip graduates with the analytical and critical thinking skills they need to play a key role in the global economy, explore domestic and multi-cultural business environments, and participate in society.

These goals do not appear to have been met by the business education learning experiences, as evidenced by the products' low employability status and failure to satisfy societal and employer demands. In truth, there are significant differences between Nigeria's educational system and those of industrialized nations in terms of course content, context, student-to-staff ratio, teaching quality, and funding. The traditional business education provided by the majority of higher education institutions has received harsh criticism for failing to prepare business graduates for the demands of the global market (Kao & Mao, 2011). These important concerns brought up serve as the foundation for the inquiry and give the justification for adding to the growing body of knowledge in the literature on business education.

Conclusion

There has been a strong call for a more qualitative and practical education around the world as people have come to understand the significant role that education plays as a true tool for the growth and sustained development of the country. If methodically packaged and effectively provided, business education, which is skill-oriented and self-employment inspired, holds the key to Nigeria becoming technologically relevant and economically wealthy. It equips students with the skills necessary for careers in management, marketing, finance, accounting, and computer information systems. Business education provides young people with the necessary skills, information, talents, and competencies that can enable them to be independent and self-sufficient, resulting in sustainable economic growth. Business education continues to be the cornerstone of human resource development because it delivers the knowledge, abilities, and understanding necessary to function in the business environment as either a consumer or a producer of the goods and services that business has to offer.

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