

Skills Acquisition: Imperative For Business Studies Educators Among Secondary Schools In Rivers State

Nwanaka C. R.

*Department of Accounting
Rivers State University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria*

Amaehule Samuel

*Department of Marketing
Rivers State University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria*

Abstract Fundamentally, the placement of Skill Acquisition for self-reliant education which leads to sound productivity in the society cannot overemphasized. On that note, skills are appropriate towards the contribution and development of both individual and the nation at large. These include attitude of government, acquisition process, infrastructure and equipment and student interest. We found out that these problems obstruct the sound process of acquisition and recommend that government and private sectors should take it as a matter of urgency to eradicate these problems to have a clear skill acquisition through sound curriculum of Business Studies.

Introduction

The system of education in a society may be diverse and complex according to the need for educating, training and retraining of it's people. From ancient times, human beings have been striving to master and improve their environment. This quest has continually increased the need for well-trained and efficient work force. It is a well-known fact that effective training in skill acquisition has immensely contributed to the technological excellence and economic self-reliance of the industrialized nations. It is for this reason that Ezeji and Okorie (1999) while stressing the importance of skill acquisition in the national growth, emphatically contended, "that Nigeria's social and economic problems will be drastically reduced if people are given adequate vocational training in skills, raw materials, machineries and equipment". It is only with skilled men that materials can be harnessed, manipulated and transformed into products. With quality skill acquisition programmes countries like America ,Britain, Germany and Japan have rehabilitated drug addicts, school dropouts and several destitutes who eventually contributed meaningfully to the economy and the development of high volume of productivity in their countries.

Also education, according to Bebebiafial (2000) "is an investment by the state for its continued existence, development and general welfare of its citizens". Therefore, education is not concerned only with national economic development, but must be seen as encompassing all aspects of national life including the social, political, religious, ideological needs and aspirations of individuals. This becomes relevant to the people of Rivers State.

Education according to Nneji (1999) "is supposed to prepare an individual for a career in life. Unfortunately, most Nigerian children go into various stages of education, right from the primary to tertiary institutions without any preparation for whatever career stages they aim at". Today, there are many graduates without jobs while there are many jobs without people. When secondary school leavers acquire sellable skills, they become useful to the society in the following ways:

- a. Work as trained craftsmen with financial and psychological security.
- b. Their employer receives productive work from them.
- c. Society at large receives continuous supply of skilled labour and quality goods.

Evidently, possession of skills is important in preventing youths from becoming social misfits; because, these skilled persons become gainfully employed through vocational training and acquisition of skills.

Therefore vocational and technical training helps to arrest some social ills such as armed robbery, stealing and youth restiveness among others. As is the case with the entire country, which Rivers State is not an exception as an oil producing area, most youths in the oil and gas producing areas have no higher education and also have no skill that could give them well-paid jobs in the oil and gas companies that surround them. The flamboyancy displayed by workers of these companies, who in most cases are non-indigenes of the places, give them a clear signal that these workers are well paid.

Since these youths find it difficult to be employed, to partake in the enjoyment of the "oil money" (because they have no skill) they begin to feel marginalized. Consequently, they begin to make trouble here and there, disturbing the operation of the companies. The companies in order to take care of the situation employ the troubled youths as casuals and later lay them off after a particular operation. When the laid off youths are done with their fat pay-off, trouble will start again. This calls for a more permanent solution to the problems.

It is on this note that the researcher decided to carry out a research on the problems of skills acquisition in Business Studies amongst Secondary School Leavers, to find a permanent solution to the incessant employment-based youths problems in the oil producing areas. The economy needs skilled people to produce the goods and services demanded by the society. The future of the present Nigerian School Leavers in general and that of Rivers State in particular should be a great concern to all who think of the development of the country. The National Policy on Education (1981 revised) stated that secondary education is the form of education children receive after primary education and before tertiary levels. The National Policy provided for vocational emphasis in the junior and senior secondary schools to make it possible for recipients who cannot continue their education to the next level to find a useful job.

Udonkang (2002) defined Business Education as "a programme of vocational training deigned to equip students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are essential for gainful employment so that the students may learn to live as useful and acceptable members of their communities". Oladunjoye, (2007) defined Business Education as "a type of education or training for preparing the individual for the world of work". If we should agree with the above assertions, one would tend to ask the question: does skill acquisition in Business Education at the Secondary School Level in Rivers State not seem to influence the production system in the economy, as secondary school leavers remain largely detached from the industrial sector? To answer this question, business education should be made to have human face in such a way that skill acquisition will be eminent than theory. Our schools are bound with theory than practical issues in business.

Skill Acquisition process

The emergence of new industries have given rise to demands for training and retraining in new skills in the existing and new occupational areas, so that people might fit into today's, and tomorrow's world of work.

Skills acquisition process in a developing country like Nigeria should be in three stages. These are theoretical, practical while the last has to be with exposure to challenges, Peace (2009). Also, it is well known that class activities are theoretical in nature and approaches teaching are bad, but theories are most a times general principles which apply to more than one situation. Practical on the other hand, may be by trial and error method and may involved doing something that is more physical applied to more specific situation. However, a secondary school leaver with knowledge in Business education is theory risk and so has theoretical skills applicable to more generalized situations, and also he is handicapped in respect to production skills. The point here is that the combination of theoretical and practical skills in solving problems depends on the level achieved in both types of skills. The theory and practical skills must be acquired to certain minimum level to facilitate the possession of appreciable relevant production skills.

An importance factor in skill acquisition process is exposure to practical situations where these skills are displayed. In such case, the individual might face challenges. Challenges concretize the efforts to acquire theoretical and practical skills. Challenges bring about rapid development. The students industrial Training Programme is a programme where they are exposed to practical steps in the right direction, (Ali, 1998). Rapid development should be based on purposeful plans rather than chance. Only the plans, which lead to rapid acquisition of relevant skills, bring about rapid development. Societies posed with challenges develop rapidly because it clears the way for the learning eyes and hands with the desire and urge to success, to perform beyond the obvious limits which the assistance they receive dictates. So, once an economy has developed basic modern skills, the wheel would have been set rolling to achieve a minimum standard of living.

It is important to be mindful of the general level of different skills in an economy so as to achieve a balanced development and high productivity in skill acquisition. To achieve skill acquisition, there is need to monitor all areas to ensure that effective linkages exist between attempts to develop theory and practical skills at various levels. Luig (2008), suggested that, "linkages be made between academic institutions." This could be made to enrich academic curriculum and as such utilizes the great potential in academic institutions. It would also create an venue for interaction among the various sectors in economy, such as the artisans, manufacturers, academicians, government and industries in a way to enhance rapid skill acquisition and technological development in the country.

Attitude of the Government and Skill Acquisition

Skill acquisition in Business Education is hindered by the attitude of the Federal and State Government who invest huge sums of money in the Universities and Polytechnics, than they do support skills acquisition programme in secondary schools. The attitude greatly affects state in the implementation at the secondary school level who on graduation will contribute towards the growth and development of the economy of the country.

This attitude also affects students who make inappropriate choices because they are victims of the national yearning for prestigious occupations. (Ama, 1990). At the very heart of our social and economic problem is a national attitude that implies that Vocational/Business Education is designed for somebody else's children. That so, primarily, in the sense that it is meant for the poor. Businessmen, labour leaders, administrators, teachers, parents and students share this attitude. Nigeria has promoted the idea that the only good education is an education capped with many years in a university. This ideas, transmitted by our values, our aspirations, is snobbish, undemocratic, and a revelation of why public schools disappoint so many students, both in character and in learning (Egba, 2010).

Again, there are several problems in the implementation of the business education programme. The problem of lack of legislation to back up the programme, though through, executive action the civilian government in 1979 accepted the curricula. For example, in the early sixties when the American government was embarking on vocational education to put American youths on the employment roll, a law was enacted to give public support to the programme. In 1968 a revision in the-law was necessary in order to properly direct and provide enough funds for the programme. Following the public endorsement of the need for vocational education, the U. S. Office of Education issued a document specifying the guidelines of vocational career education. A few of the important points were raised in the document. "Career Education: A Handbook for Implementation". Today, the American model is an all-embracing and complete vocational education al, aimed at developing a life long skill. The point here is that, the Nigerian model should reflect the exigency created by time. Government should provide the educational legislation to commit the finances needed by the educational system, at Federal, state and Local Government levels, a legislation is necessary to provide the implementers in the ministry of Education, document to work with.

Secondly, there is problem of lack of awareness about vocational business education programme at secondary school level. It has taken the educationist working for the government more than Twenty years to develop the national policy and the curriculum, yet the general public do not seem to understand the implication of business education in the development of the economy.

The third is the implementation of the national policy on education, is the provision of facilities, equipment and materials for every junior and senior secondary school in order to make learning meaningful. The national policy emphasis the practical use of the hand, and the exposure to various tools. Skill acquisition programme in Business Education at the secondary school level is capital intensive. Therefore, in addition to government's efforts, and those by the community, financial institutions and Philanthropists within the locality should assist in providing, Infrastructure, a good Library, Laboratory, Equipment, Computers, and other business machines.

According to Hornby (1990) "Laboratory is a special room or building used for scientific research, experiments, testing, and so on." The school Business Studies Laboratories are specially designed rooms, where latest offices equipment is mounted to aid student learning of special skills. The typing room on the other hand is a Laboratory where students learn how to manipulate the machines to produce finished typewriting works. Provisions should be made for secondary schools to have machine laboratory room. In this room, Calculating machines, Duplicating machines, photocopiers, machines Computer, Facsimile etc. The secretarial science students should acquire the skills of typing on stencil and run off copies from the duplicator, in addition they should have knowledge of computer and acquire the ability to use photocopiers. Just as the workshop is important for woodwork, metalwork, and electronic classes, so also, is the Laboratories useful to the business programmes. The necessary equipment should be provided in the schools, to allow for proficiency in the practical skills. This is one of the reasons why Ulinfun (1990) said, "the skill content of the current Vocational Education is insufficient. The ultimate consequences are that the training of students becomes impeded in the society." The career prospects for Business studies without adequate skills become a mirage.

It is overtly disappointing that; there are no facilities to train the students at both the junior and senior secondary levels. Business educators have no tool to work with. Even when they are available they are poorly utilized because the prevalent state of poor funding in secondary schools have left them to content with dilapidated run-down facilities most of which are outdated and obsolete.

Odina (2000) confirmed that: "if learners were to acquire the necessary skills, adequate material resources should be provided in school." The need for workshops, laboratories, studio and classrooms to be equipped with such items as benches, tables, machine tools and instruments cannot be Over emphasized. In supporting Odina (1985), Emmanuel (1991) in his study found that: "Teaching aids are meant to enhance the teaching and learning of any given subjects". Therefore, teaching aids in teaching of business studies are meant to make learning easy. Lack of teaching aids in skill subjects, will produced situation whereby most lessons taught in the classroom will be abstract to the knowledge of the students.

Students Interest

Student's interest in a particular area of study determines how a student will perform. When he shows a good interest in learning there is the tendency for such student to succeed academically. But lack of interest in the study of a subject, such as Business studies will pose a constraint to its effective teaching and learning situation.

Interest can be referred to as the selection of stimuli of attending to something. Thus, it is possible that things will simply not be noticed and not be attended to unless interest in an object, event or idea is present. Students with an interest in a subject tend to pay attention to it. They feel that it makes a difference to them. They want to become fully aware of its character. They enjoy dealing with it either for what it can lead to or

for its own sake. Their attention level will be high, their work output is sustained, and their satisfaction will be great.

The Business Studies Teacher

The federal Government observed that one of the serious factors, which can inhibit the success of the 6-3-3-4 programme, is shortage of trained teachers in various specialist area of Business Education. No matter the importance of any educational programmer, its ultimate success depends on those who operate it. The teacher stands at the center of the school system. He has a great role to play in ensuring that the educational system is updated. Obomanu (1988) commented that "the teacher implement the final step in the process of converting educational aims into practical realities" the teachers as the pivot of any educational system, occupies a significant position in any educational setting. The teacher translates educational policy into action, and mould the character of the society's leaders of tomorrow.

It has also been observed that many teachers are trained in the traditional core subjects and are therefore unsuitable for the vocational competence presently required. Ngbako-Ezennia (2009), reports, "the public believe that the falling standard of education especially the poor performance in public examination is caused by ineffectiveness and lack of personal commitment of teachers", the teacher's preparation or training is an important ingredient for performance in the classroom. In other words, the ability to motivate student and directs class activities depends largely on the training acquires by the teacher. In most schools system in this counter, there are numerous classroom teachers who were employed to teach subjects in which they had no training. Most professional teachers that would have made excellent teachers, only had a brief stay in the secondary School and they left for the oil industries where the grass is greener. Those have very good potentials to stimulate research and development activities in the secondary school left for the oil industries where, they felt more comfortable. Aina (1991) observed, "Most of the vocation teachers (Business Studies teachers inclusive) are under-qualified in the subjects they teach and with all technological changes taking place. Unlike what is obtainable in some parts of the world, (America to be specific). There is competency tests designed to help in the selection of qualified teachers. Unless a teacher passes the competence exams, he may not be able to create passes the competence exams, he may not be able to create a learning environment for his class. Due to lack of planning before implementation of the nation policy on education, the school systems across the country are short of the manpower necessary for the junior secondary education. In fact, the curriculum to train the teachers for this level of education was written between June and December 1983, a year after the junior secondary school system was established by some states in Nigeria. Since the number of ill equipped teachers were deployed from other areas into the classrooms. Even in some cases, unprepared, unskilled craftsmen were assigned classes. As a result, there are problems of:

- Inability to co-ordinate the learning behavior (outcome) and utilize it for solving student learning problems;
- Inability to follow the newly recommended performance-based teaching technique for maximum student learning achievement;
- Lack of competency.

These qualities can only be obtained from the teacher training colleges. In essence, the lack of competence is likely to arise from inadequate training, which may, in turn affect the learning behavior of students in the school system. Since Business studies is a practical and skill-oriented subject, it is particularly important for teacher to understand its objective, as well as its methodology for a success- oriented classroom as this is a step towards improving the status of the subject. It is essential to stress that the "objectives of Business Studies" is simply the objective of "Teaching Business Studies". Therefore the objective of teaching business studies as outline by Ojetunde (1993) is as follows:

- To inculcate in the student the practical skill and right attitudes necessary for a specific business job.
- To develop in the student the ability to use the acquired skills and attitudes or the development of the job.
- To develop in the student a good understanding, awareness of the economic and business activities of the economic and business activities of the society in which he is a citizen.
- To inculcate economics literacy in the student to enable him to be an intelligent consumer of goods and services offered by the business community.

The implication of these objectives for the Business Studies teacher is simply that he must always focus attention on the fact that his role is to prepare his student to become a productive worker, and intelligent consumer and an effective citizen.

Impact of Skill Acquisition

The curriculum of 'the scheme was designed in consideration of the entry background of the perceived majority of trainees. The institution already has large pool of qualified resource persons in all the areas already listed above. There are workshop/studios that are well stocked. Practical demonstrations are given priority in the teaching methods. Trainees exposed to courses on entrepreneurship education, citizenship, and ethical education as a preparation for the world of entrepreneurship and the environment they find themselves.

Between 1993 and 2001, a total of 850 youths have been successfully trained in the skills acquisition programme. The programme attracted sponsors from oil companies such as the Nigerian Agip oil company, total final Elf, addax petroleum Development Limited, Imo state, Chevron Nigerian Limited.

The skill acquisition programme currently sponsored by these oil companies and organized by the Federal College Education (technical), Omoku, for the School Leavers, if properly implemented will leave no child without survival skills in the Local Government Area. But despite all the publicity, many youths are seen roaming the street of towns and villages. This is because they have no basic education to qualify them for the programme. Have come in, practical skill Acquisition at the secondary school level.

The rapid industrial growths of towns and villages in ONELGA have given impetus to increases in human population. Unfortunately, though, increased human population in towns and villages is not matched by adequate knowledge and skill development for young school leavers. Although government has shown a lot of concern over the plight of these Nigerian, by establishing programme such as Better Life for Rural woman, Family Support programme, Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures to mention but few. The latest of such programme is Poverty Alleviation Programme, (PAP), but as beautiful and as well planned as these programme are, the question is to what extent does it solve the problem of youths in the Local Government Area? Momoh (2000) said that what agitates the minds of some Nigerian about this current effort of poverty Alleviation is the need to address the long-life sustenance of the beneficiaries". The poverty Alleviation programme as it is currently practiced takes care of the beneficiaries' immediate long-life sustenance is Skill Acquisition, which the programme does not address? Hence there is an urgent need for a realignment of the present situation towards improvement of education for productive work.

Conclusion

It is obvious that man cannot do without co-habiting in respect to business and other activities that will bring extracts income to the organization. Based on the above, the need for skill acquisition and its associated problems becomes necessary for investigation. However, possible solutions are proffer to enhance productivity.

Recommendation

1. Both government and private sectors should take it as a matter of urgency to have a clear curriculum of business studies towards skill acquisition at the secondary school.
2. The absence of manpower at the centres of acquisition leads to student's attitude and for that, it should be encouraged.
3. Both government and private sectors should aid in the provision of equipment and facilities towards the acquisition of skills in secondary schools.

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