

Entrepreneurship Business Education Capabilities in Emerging Poverty Alleviation Programme in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper discussed to unveil the economic potentials in business education programme with emphasis on educational and employability capabilities. In spite of the high unemployment rate of graduates, some scholars have encouraged effective implementation of business education curriculum objectives. The paper made extensive use of these scholarly opinions that derive their basis from national education policy, NCCCE business education objective and the SIWES curriculum. The paper concluded that business education programme curriculum has the capability of enhancing graduate self-employment to reduce incidences of graduate unemployment in the country. The paper saw the importance of professionally qualified business educators to teach and administer their programme for effective growth and development. It was recommended among others that the challenge of quality business education teachers need to be pursued with zeal to eliminate the presence of interlopers.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, employability, objectives, business educators, interlopers.

Introduction

Employment is the key to every persons endeavours. The nature of employment may vary but the underscoring point is the search for a stable source of income. In some cases, education has been noted by some persons to be an area that is worthy of investment to guarantee their future economic contribution to the society. The conventional problem of unemployment has placed on man the additional pressure to search for productive educational area such as can be found in business education programme. This is because business education programme, according to Ogbonny (2010) is that aspect of the educational programme that provide knowledge, skill, understanding and attitude needed to perform in a business environment. The understanding that the investment in business education is capable of giving the student that desired capabilities he require to be able to effectively fend for himself has contributed to higher number of students in the programme than any other in vocational education generic programme. If properly implemented, the objective of business education programme is capable of inculcating in learners the ability to float small scale businesses on graduation. This will, in no small measure, make them employers and wealth creators in the economy which is the focus of government in Nigerian today.

Knowledge capabilities in business education programme

Poverty alleviation capability is the possession of knowledge and skill competencies that holds the ace to enhancing an individual's power of economic sustainability. These capabilities are found to

be inculcated in the context of business education curriculum where the focus is, on one hand, to help learners develop mindset for self-employment. The idea behind the introduction of entrepreneurship education in higher institutions is to realize the dream of private sector economy. This was recognized by the national education policy (2004) which in section 41 stated inter-alia:

Technical and vocational education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life, p. 29.

Underscoring the importance of the above, the policy went ahead to state the followings in the same section:

Technical and vocational education is further understood to be:

- an integral part of general education;
- a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work;
- an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship;
- an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable (sic) development;
- a method of alleviating poverty.

Category of courses in business education

Entrepreneurship business education curriculum content is positioned to deliver certain employability skill contents to participating students. As an integral part of general education preparation, contents contain two broad categories of courses – the general education category and the departmental category. The general education category are courses meant to educate the students on the conventional education principles and perspectives. These courses are found to be commonly applicable to most students in all tertiary institutions as grass-root courses which they must offer to give them the foundations of education. In addition to these courses are those departmental ones that have also been grouped into two broad categories – skill courses and operational courses. The skilled courses are offered from their first semester to their graduating semester.

These are provided with contents to develop skills, knowledge competencies and attitudes in the student to enable him acquire the needed vocational capabilities in his occupational field. It is the ability of the student to acquire these vocational capabilities that places him in an employability skills playing arena. With these, the student goes out with the cognitive and psycho motive competencies to practice in his occupational field. The objective of operational courses is to enable the student to understand the concept of ensuring success in any human environment. This brings him to understanding the role of human factors in the relationship between his business outfit and the society.

Corroborative intervention

Corroborating the stance of national policy on education in regards to the role of business education, the National Commission for Colleges of Education NCCE (2008) stated the objective of business education as:

- a. to produce well qualified and competent Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) graduates in business subjects who will be able to teach business subjects in our secondary schools and other related educational institutions.
- b. to produce NCE business teachers who will be able to inculcate the vocational aspect of business education into the society.
- c. to produce NCE business teachers who will be involved in the much desired revolution of vocational development right from the primary and secondary schools.
- d. to equip students with necessary competencies so as to qualify them for a post NCE degree programme in business education.
- e. to equip graduates with the right skills that will enable them to engage in a life of work in the office as well as for self-employment.

Teaching perspective of business education programme

From the above, the NCCE has looked at the NCE graduates from four perspectives. On one hand, is the teaching perspective for graduates designed to be competent to teach and inculcate the necessary knowledge at the junior secondary school levels. The objective is focused at the production of quality teachers. Stressing on the need for quality in the production of teachers, the policy stated that no nation can be greater than the quality of her teachers. This means that the NCE teachers must be given quality education to enable them deliver the same quality of resources in their effort to teach learners. Invariably, it further implies that the teachers of these NCE focused students must also be highly qualified in their various occupational fields to justify the dream of the policy.

Challenges of poor quality teachers in business education programme

In his attempt to give directions on the quality of teachers, Bdiya (2010) opined that teachers of any tertiary institution programme must be university graduates with post graduate qualifications in their disciplines together with professional qualifications. He further informed that a significant proportion of teachers in Nigeria are untrained or not qualified resulting in substandard institutions of teacher education. He emphasized that the nature of challenges confronting teacher education in Nigeria may be dubbed the problem of numbers and the problem of relevance. These problems bear relevance to the state of affairs in business education teacher production where Nwosu (2009) lamented that it is only in business education programme that you can find the highest number of unclassified degree certificate holders claiming to be teachers of the programme. These holders of unclassified degree certificates parade themselves as business educators, and have in some cases, as a result of their numbers and the instrumentality of their institutions, subdue and intimidate professionally qualified business educators. In his view, Osuala (2004) opined that those who do not possess the needed university degree certificates and are teaching in business education programme are known as grasshoppers and interlopers.

In his contributions to the challenges of quality and numbers controlling business education programme, Odumuyiwa (2011) warned that the Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN) frown at a situation where non-professionally qualified people sit to decide the fate of business education programme in Nigeria. Stressing further he said that nobody can give to another person that which he does not have. By this warning, he means that a non-business

educator who sits to teach, or administer business education programme would, rather than giving what is professional to the learners, give that which he has, which automatically would be at variance with the objectives of business education. In his opinion, Ekpenyong in Ekpenyong (2010) has this analogy to create about the role of teachers:

It is possible to teach classics in such a way as to make it a soulless mechanical grind. It is possible to teach handicraft so as to make it a vehicle for liberal education. The difference lies in how the subject is taught, p. 6.

Educational prospects of business education students

From the second part of the objective of business education as seen from the perspective of NCCE, the programme is to enable students develop competencies to enable them pursue degree programme in business education. Under this consideration, the objective opened a leeway for these NCE students to pursue academic careers in a way that they would acquire post graduate qualifications to enable them teach in business education departments of higher institutions. The presence of qualified lecturers will encourage the development and growth of business education programme thereby closing the bridge through which grasshoppers and interlopers use to gain entry into the programme.

Self employment prospects of business education students

The third perspective of NCCE business education objective holds the ace for those students who would graduate with the right knowledge, skill competencies and attitudes capable of enabling them to engage in a life of work in the office. Uzor and Ike (2010) explained that in the office environment today, those who possess relevant business skills have better gainful employment opportunities than those who lack such skills. From this explanation, he opined that skill is the ability possessed by the individual to do something well, which he gained through training and experience. He therefore concluded that a skill can be said to be one's personal competencies in the performance of specific tasks acquired after a period of training or experience. This means that the competencies acquired by the business education student is effectively used to carry out his duties in the office as employee in which ever business organisation he is employed. His contribution through effective use of skills enhances productivity and helps others to carry out their works effectively too.

Ekpenyong (2010), in his view explained that business education programme curriculum is intended to provide learners with both intellectual and occupational skills. To him, these skills are intended to make graduates of business education function effectively not only as employees but also as self-reliant persons and therefore stand out as wealth creators of the society. Discussing further, he explained that since business education is one of the subunits of technical and vocational education, the followings represent the goals of business education:

- a. to develop individuals who will be properly equipped with the prerequisite knowledge and skills for productive work life;
- b. to develop individuals who will be capable of meeting the modern business and technological challenges;
- c. to develop a pool of competent and reliable technical manpower, capable of being mobilized in times of national economic emergencies;
- d. to develop in the youth the right attitudes and skills towards work;

- e. equipping the youth with the requisite knowledge and skills for paid or self-employment;
 - f. to prepare the youth for meeting community, state and national economic aspirations;
 - g. to enable the youth to choose and perfect on those areas of business education for which they have interests and aptitudes;
 - h. to equip the learners to develop skills for making rational economic decisions;
 - i. to enable the learners to relate their expertise to the needs of their communities;
 - j. to prepare business and industrial managers who will be capable of meeting technological and managerial complexities of modern industry;
 - k. to provide the vocational and technical knowledge in various areas of business.
- P.4.

Productivity in entrepreneurship business education

A close study of the educational policy of Nigeria shows that the policy demands of business education graduates to acquire the type of education that would enable him to have a holistic and generic view of general education. In addition to this, it requires the graduates to have skills and technological knowledge to enable him fit into the mainstream of our economic activities. This means that productivity of a nation is of primary importance in the objective design of business education programme through its focus to meet the needs of individual learners. An attempt to meet the needs of individual learners is an attempt to meet the needs of the industry and the society.

But Ekpenyong (2010) explained that the traditional method of instructions in business education created a gap between schooling and the world of work. This missing resources in the place of instructions are responsible for the inability of business education graduates from venturing into self-reliant employment but instead, prefer to join the endless queue of unemployed graduates. This gap was first recognized by National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) when it included in her Polytechnic products curriculum the Students Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES). This was followed by the inclusion of SIWES in the minimum standard of NCE programme. As business education programme is a beneficiary of this scheme, her students are expected to acquire practical knowledge of business operation within the three months of participation in the schemes. At the SIWES work stations, industrial supervisors who understand the concept of the programme ensure that student-employees are properly put through the entrepreneurial operations to close the missing gap resulting from theoretical lessons of the student while at school. The role of industrial supervisors are of paramount importance in the entrepreneurial development of business education students. If the students are well groomed, they return back to school fully aware of the practical aspects of what they had been thought in class before proceeding on Students' Industrial Works Experience Scheme (SIWES). On the other hand, if students are poorly handled, they return empty and worse than their state of preparedness before they proceeded on SIWES.

Business educators' entrepreneurial roles in teaching

Professionally qualified business educators teach business subjects with a view to linking contents to entrepreneurship setting. Virtually all the departmental courses in business education

programme are entrepreneurial in nature and are designed to teach students the operations of business organizations. This means that courses in business education curriculum have entrepreneurial impacts to play if properly handled by the teacher. This brings the author to boldly insist that it is only where a professionally qualified business educator teaches students that he can take the joy to expand entrepreneurial context of the curriculum content for the advantage of students. This has been the concern of NCCE objective when it states among others that the programme hopes to equip graduates with the right skills that will enable them to engage in a life of work in the office as well as for self-employment.

Business educators, in their attempts to teach students, put learners through the process of what Okoli (2010) explained that in business education, people have more opportunities to exercise creative freedom, higher self esteem and greater sense of control over their own lives. This has to be so because entrepreneurship business education serves as an instrument for students through which they are powered to control their future. For a student to establish the mindset for the control of his future, he needs adequate entrepreneurial knowledge of basic objectives which networks from class assignments, lessons, discussions, tests, examinations, reading habits, etc. If business educators are focused, this will eventually draw the attention of students to focus at the type of things they need to do to succeed in life such as activities that are productive to them as students rather than those activities that are unproductive. The nature of assignments from the educator to learners are those that have the capacity of helping students to discover hidden facts which invariably are transferred to business opportunity identification and his desire to exploit their service capabilities.

Regarding the current level of unemployment in the country, NCE entrepreneurship business education has the potentials to reduce poverty through involvement of business education graduates in small scale business operations. This is necessary today in the country where, according to Okolocha and Ile (2008) entrepreneurship education is most relevant in economies with high incidence of unemployment. These authors went further to explain that this is so because business education programme has in its subunits, areas as accounting, finance, marketing, office management, legal and the economic environments in which a new business venture operates.

Occupational career preparation in business education programme

In business education programme exists lots of occupational clusters from which the horizon of students are targeted at exploiting which area to select from. Business education programme provides students with information about careers in various business occupations as future wealth creators. The provision of occupational competencies and education helps students obtain counsel on areas of his interest in the various clusters. If students are well informed about the occupations in their programme, they stand the chance of adjusting their mindsets to a particular area of business occupation desired for the future. In this regards, counseling students on their choice of business come to play where the business educator acts as a counselor to ensure that students wisely select areas of interests rather than working on influence from peer group members. Counseling business education student for effective realization of vision 20:2020, Ordu (2012) questioned the rationale behind non-professional business educator serving as counselors to business education students. He argued that these counseling staff of institutions are graduates of guidance counseling and did not in any way undergo courses to make them knowledgeable in other academic programme peculiarities. In this circumstance, he questioned how such a person could give the knowledge he does not have to students who are in need of their own peculiar

occupational knowledge. He therefore concluded that business educators are better counselors for their programme than any other person.

Conclusion

Based on the discussions, the following conclusions are drawn:

Granted that the state of graduate unemployment rate is high in Nigeria, business education programme can position the future of her graduates. This is evidenced from the provisions made for business education programme as stated by national policy on education and the Nation Commission for Colleges of Education. To capture these provisions, there is need for non-qualified teachers of business education programme to key-in their absolute loyalty in the profession by upgrading their certifications. This will enhance quality of teachers which will translate to quality delivery of curriculum contents and quality products. This will also enable the programme to position herself and effectively control teaching and learning aimed at producing students that are equipped to effect some economic contributions. With the introduction of entrepreneurship education in the programme, coupled with the existing contents that are self-employment oriented, the future is bright for business education graduates.

Recommendations

Having observed that business education programme has the curriculum contents that is focused at equipping graduates with capabilities to survive as wealth creator, the paper recommends as follows:

1. To maintain quality, business education programme should fish out non-professional teachers;
2. these non-professional teachers should be encouraged by their institutions to proceed on courses in business education to integrate them into the programme mainstream;
3. Allocation of teaching course to lecturers should be geared towards areas of teacher's interest to encourage development;
4. Business educators should be encouraged to attend conferences to gain from the exchange of new knowledge and innovations that is the focus of conferences;
5. Graduating students should be encouraged to produce business plans in areas of their business interest.

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