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Enriching the Business Education Curriculum for Relevance in the Global Workforce

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Abstract- The paper discusses the dynamic nature of business education and its relevance for successful living, job creation, employability and effective participation and contribution to the growth of the Nigerian economy and the global economy at large. Several key concepts were defined. The goals and objectives of business education were highlighted. Also highlighted were the 21st century skills and their relevance to life and employment, the current business education curriculum and technology, the challenges of the 21st century and emerging global issues. Finally the paper proffered suggestion for enriching the business education curriculum for sustainable employment, not just within the country but also in the global labour marker.

Keywords: Enriching, business, education, curriculum, workforce.

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Enriching the Business Education Curriculum for Relevance in the Global Workforce

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I. INTRODUCTION

Business education was brought to lime light, and given prominence by the new national policy on education in 1977. This policy has been severally reviewed. It is programme of study which is geared toward equipping the learners with employability skills and knowledge which would enable them create, or acquire jobs, stay on the jobs, and grow in the jobs. The programme is offered in the secondary and tertiary levels of the Nigerian educational system. The program has been implemented for more than three decades, yet graduates of business education are also plagued by unemployment. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1981) in Aquah (1998) observed that the laudable program of this new system of education, of providing the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude needed in the business world has failed to curb youth unemployment. Those who are employed at all are found to be incompetent in discharging their assigned duties. They lack practical knowledge and manual skills. It is wondered if this state of affairs has to do with the curriculum, the delivery system or the technologies employed in the delivery system.

Emama, Ewane, and Fontem (1995) stated that Nigeria has witnessed a lot of development which have great impact on business education. These development they stated, are in the areas of curriculum trends, rapid industrialization, and urbanization, economic forces-both national and international, new methodologies in the classrooms and offices, and government influences.

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In spite of these developments, many advocates call for better ways of handling the teaching and learning of business education. This situation tends to connote ineffectiveness either in the curriculum, the delivery process or the technologies applied in the delivery system.

The world has gone digital. It has been reduced to a “global village” where jobs abound and are accessible to any and all possess the requisite skills for the 21st century labour market. If business education graduates in Nigeria must avail themselves of these job opportunities, it is imperative to, as matter of urgency, enrich the business education curriculum and improve the delivery system.

II. BUSINESS EDUCATION

Business education is a broad and comprehensive discipline whose instructional program comprises

- i. The knowledge attitude and skills needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal business and the economic system and
- ii. The vocational knowledge needed for entry level employment and advancement in a broad range of business careers. (Joint Comm. On National Business Education Association and U.S Bureau for Office Education, in Aquah) (1998). According to Osuala (1995) Business Education consists of that group of related, occupationally arranged courses which are prescribed for graduation and for possible certification in the field of business placement. It comprises vocational or job preparatory education for initial office or selling jobs and for management of individually owned, controlled, and operated business enterprises.
- iii. General or basic knowledge and understanding of business essential for all persons regardless of age, occupation, profession, social or economic status. At the tertiary level, the term Business Education is sometimes considered as synonymous with education in the broad areas of business administration in which the objective is primarily preparatory for professional careers in the management and administration of business enterprises. Business education is also used to designate the preparation of teachers of business and economics both at the secondary and tertiary levels of education.

It is an important part of the general education which emphasizes on skills and competency acquisition (Okoli 2010). Business education is that program of study which encompasses education for office occupations business teaching administration and economic understanding. One remarkable and important characteristic of business education program is that its products can function independently as self employed and employers of labour (Aquah 1998, Abdulkadir 2011). Consequent upon these, there exists a broad spectrum of job prospects for products of business education even from the junior secondary level to the graduate level. Included in this spectrum are: teaching careers, entrepreneurship, office environment, vocational practices.

III. THE CONCEPT OF CURRICULUM

Definition is basic to any field of interest. This paragraph will presents the different definition studied and then a definition will be presented which will serve as the operational definition for the present write-up.

The word curriculum is derived from the Latin word "Currus" which connotes a "run way" or "running a course". It is a course of study in schools and colleges. A curriculum is a document which comprises the goals and objectives of a particular course of study, the subject matter, or content, the learning, the learning experiences and evaluation. In addition, any comprehensive curriculum usually spells out the materials/resources required to enhance teaching and learning. To this, dynamic curriculum must have definite and dynamic objectives, must be flexible and must have built into a process of constant evaluation (Orogue 1998). It therefore becomes impertinent to examine the goals of Business Education in Nigeria.

IV. LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION

Business education is offered at all levels of education in Nigeria. However, prominence is given to this program only at the junior secondary level (Business Studies). Senior secondary level (separate subjects-book-keeping/accounts, office practice, commerce) and at tertiary level-Business education including business teacher preparation, with options in accounting, management, banking and finance, marketing, entrepreneurship, computer, and office technology.

V. PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

The philosophy of the business education curriculums includes:-

- To lay a foundation and / or build on the foundation at NCE level in the pedagogy education system.
- To equip the learner with saleable skills i.e. skills which will enable them
- acquire, sustain and grow on their jobs: create jobs, be self employed, and be employers, of labour,

become better and wiser consumers of goods and services.

- To prepare the individuals for higher studies in business education

Objectives: The Bachelor of Science B.Sc. Ed. In Business education is geared towards the preparation of individuals who are skilled in

- Pedagogy in business education
- Principles and practice in Accounting, Management: Marketing; and Information and communication Technology (ICT)
- Curriculum design and evaluation in business education
- Development of instructional materials for business education
- Supervision and administration of the business education program in secondary schools. Thus at the end of the programme of study the learners are expected:-
- To acquire the basic knowledge and skills of business education
- To relate the knowledge and skills acquired to national development
- To develop basic skills in office occupations
- To provide the needed background for teaching business subjects.
- To prepare students for further training/studies in business education
- To provide orientation and basic skill with which to start a life work for those who many not further educational training.

For business education to provide the individual with the knowledge, skills and attitude needed to take up readily available jobs or openings in the global job market, it becomes imperative that our educational system must function optionally and the curriculum must encompass the most current topics that will provide the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude that will enable the individuals avail themselves with the job openings and opportunities in the global market.

Available evidences show that institutions offering business education turn out graduates in large numbers annually, yet unemployment is on the increase in Nigeria. Those who are employed are found to be unable to carry out their assigned duties without further training. A question therefore arises as to the effectiveness, relevance, and functionality of the curriculum and curriculum materials used in the educational process. It is to this question that this study will address itself. It will cause the study to address the issue of curriculum materials and the curriculum environment.

Technology- technology and information and communication technology (ICT) are two key words which will be considered coterminous in this write up. ICT refers to the use of computers and other

telecommunication equipment (Telephone lines and wireless signals) middle ware as well as soft ware, storage and audio visual systems to create, access, store, transmit and manipulate information. Scott (2002) describes ICT as encompassing a range of applications, communications and technologies which aid information retrieval, research, communication and administration, included among these devices and application are online data bases, library services, online service and fax machines. ICT predominates all aspects of our lives:- governments, business, markets, productivity, education, and the labour market. It therefore became imperative that we integrate to the fullest the new technologies in the implementation of the business education programme.

With the emphasis/re-emphases in the National Policy on Education FRN (1988) revised (2004) to empower youths with ICT skills to prepare them for competitiveness in the global environment, integrating ICT into the mainstream of education, and training, it became imperative to adopt these new technologies in order to expand access to the education (by use of synchronous learning, access to the internet and world wide web). ICT also strengthens the relevance of business education to the work place. This is in conformity to Prosser's (1949) environmental theory of vocational education.

The use of ICT has many advantages and these include :-

- Provision of current up-to-date worldwide library for use for both teachers and learners.
- Making education learner-centered
- Improving the quality of education and training by increasing learners' motivation and engagement and facilitating the acquisition of basic skills.
- Provision of internet connectivity which enables users to participate in "world events", above all,
- ICT enhances the transmission of basic skills and concepts that form the foundation of higher order thinking skills and creativity-a key skill for the 21st century labour market.

VI. RELEVANCE AND FUNCTIONALITY OF THE BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

For the business education programme to become relevant and functional it must not only seek to achieve the goals and objectives of the general business and basic business education, but also seek to give learning in the 21st century skills basic for employability in the global labour market. The training required includes.

- Training for better appreciation of the learners' culture and tradition

- and the culture of one or two other nations outside Nigeria and develop creative abilities in all aspects of life (cultural, social, and technological).
- Development of creative abilities of good citizenship
- Equipping the learners with the ability to absorb new ideas, new information, and new data for resolving constantly changing issues of life.
- To relate with and interact with other individuals in the immediate and global society (this is greatly enhanced through ICT).
- To inculcate and foster values such as hard work, personal integrity, tolerance and selflessness-- all tributes of good citizenship.
- To promote the culture of productivity and maintenance culture.
- To create awareness and consciousness of the important nature and relevance of emerging issues in everyday living.

Functional education (Curriculum) would manifest positively in the output. Thus – the graduates would be able to apply knowledge, skills acquired, and values, and attitudes inculcated in them to practical living. Business education graduates who have been trained with such a relevant and functional curriculum would be able to create jobs or be self employed, or, if employed would be able to carry out assigned duties without further training by their employers. Today, with changes in educational philosophies the growth of world awareness and reduction of the world into a global village, there is an urgent need for employees who are more adaptable to work situations and who are highly skilled in business education and pedagogy than in the previous generations.

VII. CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY AND EMERGING GLOBAL ISSUES

It is not just sufficient in this global age to be knowledgeable in any one discipline or profession. What matters today is knowledge about the myriads of issues and problems or challenges plaguing mankind today. These issues have concomitant negative impacts on the society. The issues do not emerge in isolation. They are usually inter-related. Also they do not just spring up immediately. They emerge gradually and culminate into states of emergency or knowledge explosion. They include. diseases, all kinds of economic down-turn, unemployment, poverty, climate change, political issues, environmental pollution, population/family life education, computer education, advance in science, mathematics and technology, environmental education, citizenship education, reproductive health issues, gender issues, STD/HIV/AIDS education, globalization, millennium development goals, entrepreneurship, 21st century skills, poverty, and global warming, and very recently the EBOLA scare. A question therefore arises as to how we can, as expert business educators enrich

our curriculum offerings to address the ever changing global concerns. The challenge here lies on how to ensure that the input (curriculum) and process (delivery system) ensures satisfactory output that can function effectively in the global labour market.

VIII. ENRICHING THE BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The business education prepares individuals for initial office or selling jobs, and for managing of individually owned controlled and operated business enterprises. It also provides general knowledge and understanding for all persons regardless of age, occupations, professions social or economic status. The programme also prepares individuals for pedagogy in business subjects at secondary and tertiary levels of the educational system.. (Osuala 1995).

The curriculum offerings, especially at the tertiary levels cater for some of the requirements of the 21st century skills. This is achieved through core and elective courses taken in other department such as

sociology department, psychology, law and others. In spite of this, graduate from this programme join the rank and files in unemployment and inability for those employed to carry out their assigned duties without further training. This creates doubts as to the relevance, functionality and adequacy of the curriculum and its delivery system in meeting the demands of employability. In light of this therefore, the following suggestions are proffered which if adhered to would enrich the business education curriculum for academic institutions in Nigeria.

IX. THE WAY FORWARD

There is an urgent need to:

1. Review the business education curriculum.
2. This review should be carried out on regular bases to provide inputs from the learner, the teacher, the school, the society and the environment.
3. Efforts should be made to highlight in the curriculum the 21st century skills which are crucial to employment within Nigeria and in the global village.

21st Century Skills

Initiative, enthusiamsm. Inquisitiveness, interest in continuous learning, courage, self-reliance, comfort with uncertainty	Self confidence, self-control, self-knowledge, positive outlook towards adversity, independence, appreciation of diversity, perseverance,	Creativity, flexibility, open mindedness, language and communication skills, assertiveness, sense of humour and above all, resourcefulness and adaptability.
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4. Also to be included and made mandatory should be internationally focused courses. This should include at least one foreign language integrated studies of history, geography and culture of other people within the language programme.
5. To match theory with practice in business education, conscious effort should be made to provide adequate time-tabling for the classroom teaching and learning.
6. Adequate provision should be made for instructional technology in number to meet enrollment needs. They must also be current to match the ones in the office where the learners will work upon graduation.
7. It is suggested that all stake holders in the curriculum should participate effectively during the planning and review process. Stake holders include not just the experts in curriculum design and evaluation but also the members of the society including prospective employers of labour, the implementers (teachers), and the learners themselves.
8. In addition, it is suggested that teachers, learners and employers take advantage of field trips and the student industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) to expose learners to work methods and provide needed experience in handling equipment and machinery that may not be available in the

educational institutions. SIWES has the advantage of updating learners' knowledge in new technological innovations; acquaint them with the actual work performed on the job, which task may be different from the theories learned in the classroom. Where the theories conform with the tasks, the learner has the opportunity to apply the theories learnt to actual work situation and also develop desirable attitude towards work a requisite qualification for employability in the global economy. The suggested way forward conforms to Prosser's (1949) Theorem that vocational education (of which business education is a component) is effective to the extent to which the learning environment is a replica of the actual environment where the learner will work upon graduation.

9. Educational/Office Technology – Computers, photocopiers, scanning machines, telephone sets, televisions for teleconferencing, with uninterrupted electricity to power the equipment should be made available and adequate to meet enrolment needs. These may seem expensive, but are cost effective in the long run. It is imperative that the federal, state and local governments make adequate budgetary allocations to this effect, and actually make the funds available. The academic institution can also source for funds to augment government spending.

Sources of such funds could include local and multinational corporations within the society as part of their social responsibility. Others could be public spirited individuals philanthropists, alumni associations, churches and non-governmental organizations, and vendors of computers and other technological equipment, and donor agencies. The funds provided should be enough to also cater for field trips and mobilization of resources persons.

10. The learning environment should as much as possible be made to be learner friendly.
11. All professional bodies in the areas of business education, vocational education and technology should monitor the standard of business education in the academic institutions in Nigeria. They should take necessary actions to remedy the deficiencies in the curriculum, curriculum materials (technologies) and the delivery system.
12. Above all it is highly recommended that the business education programme be mainstreamed as a general studies course in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

X. CONCLUSION

Business education in Nigeria failed to provide the requisite skills for employment and financial freedom. Many critiques blame this sorry state on issues such as the input factor, the delivery system and the school climate, government policies, and others. This paper focused on the changing nature of the curriculum, and technology. The paper highlight the goals of business education and discussed its relevance to, and functionality in the labour market of the 21st century, several suggestions were preferred for enriching the business education curriculum. It is hoped that if the suggested solutions are adopted, business education offered in our schools and colleges will be relevant for successful living, job creation, employability and effective participation and contribution to the growth of the Nigerian economy and the global economy at large. business education students, and indeed all graduates of tertiary institutions will, in addition to becoming gainfully employed, participate effectively in finding solutions and actually solving many of the global problems.

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