REINVENTING BUSINESS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CRITICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This study aims to highlight the pertinent issues and challenges confronting Business Education in Nigeria and the imperative measures to address these. Relevant literature was reviewed conceptually on the concept of Business Education and empirically from the work of several authors in the areas of business Education and education at large which were sourced from reputable journal articles. The study adopts exploratory analysis and a critical review of the literature as the methodology. Findings indicate that business education is faced with several issues and challenges which pose current and potential threats to the development of Nigeria if not quickly addressed and reinvented, The study therefore recommends that the government and other concerned stakeholders revisit the idea of investing largely in the educational sector of Nigeria while also recommending to the curriculum planners to incorporate modern and relevant contents to ensure that business education graduates acquire relevant industry skills to improve their competitiveness in the labour market and ensure self-support in business to boost economic growth and development.

Keywords: Business education, Education, Reinvention, Curriculum

Introduction

Historically, the initial type of business education involves apprenticeship training which allows individuals to get training under another person (supervisor) who has higher experience in the trade especially in areas of crafts, bookkeeping, farming, sales and several other areas of the economy with the training period varying over different trades. (Njoku, 1992) The idea of business education is a laudable occupational scope which is offered by the educational authority of Nigeria in the Technical and Vocational departments. The course however provides accounting, office management, marketing and office technology skills to students which then prepares them careers in several job opportunities and provides skills that promote entrepreneurship for self-survival and jobs creations which also give exposure to students on the knowledge of business in relation to Information Communication Technology (Ajisafe, Bolarinwa & Edeh, 2015).

Edokpolor and Egbri (2017) further asserted that business education equips students with the needed characteristics to secure employment and give them opportunities for business and entrepreneurship which aid survival and economic growth through the

establishment of several Small and Medium Scale Enterprises. The roles of business education in Nigeria cannot be ignored in ensuring the development of a country like Nigeria, several studies and indications have however shown that the issue of business education has not been handled effectively and efficiently in Nigeria despite its rich blessings to the economy as business education is faced with several issues and challenges that is not allowing the country to enjoy the current and potential benefits of the course to the nation (Oladunjoye, 2016). The hope of Nigerian Institutions preparing teachers for the 21st century has been criticized by several studies as there have been questions about the production of quality teachers who can easily collaborate professionally in the global space (Okumagbe, 2007).

The evidence available has shown that there exists inadequacy in the handling of business education with proof of inadequate funding, low quality staff, unavailability of modern facilities, old curriculum, and bad attitudes of government to the education sector among others. The outcome of these situations has affected the view and perspective to business education in Nigerian institutions and in the labour market which has degenerated to increase in the unemployment rate and increased poverty rate in Nigeria and even among the graduates of Business Education. There still exists further deteriorations of these issues as the problem of unemployment and increased poverty has led the working population of the country to pursue livelihood in social vices including kidnapping, thuggery, terrorism, increased crime rates, armed robbery, and vandalism among others which then poses general security risk on the entire country and add to the slow development of the Nigerian economy. It is clear to say the mismanagement of a rich potential blessing has led to curses on the Nigerian economy.

The aim of this research is therefore to highlight the issues and challenges facing business education in Nigeria and the measures to be taken to curb these issues. The other part of the study focuses on a literature review, methodology, discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review

Concept of Business Education

Business education according to Popham (1975) is regarded as education to produce goods and services. Business education was also defined as the course that prepares students for entry into job careers in areas of business and prepares students to take charge of their own business transactions to act rationally as citizens and consumers in a country. Jubril (2010) defined business education as special areas of vocational studies which create education training, attitude adjustments and skills development in a bid to promote business orientation and overcome academic challenges. Also, Osuala (1989) explained Business education as an imperative aspect of raising youths for life and living, he further stressed that business education is a program which consists of office education and general business education which is aimed at providing students with information and competencies which are essential in the management of personal and official business affairs. Business education also means the classes of education that aid individuals in getting the relevant

skills that are imperative for survival and living (Njoku,1992).

According to Ajisafe et al., (2015), Business education is important as it helps more people to acquire skills that can prepare them for the labour market as this will reduce the dependence on the nation for job creation. It is also important as it helps people to develop standard values towards contributing to the economic development of the nation, Business education also helps citizens to develop moral values and avoid social vices that arise because of unemployment and poverty, it also aids in training and retraining to ensure skills and knowledge upgrade by having access to education among other importance.

Empirical Review

Oroka, Atarere and Okifo (2020) in their study titled Reinventing Business Education through Quality and Information Communication Technology (ICT) for Global Competitiveness among selected universities in the South-south and South-east regions of Nigeria, examined the process of reinventing business education through quality ICT. The study employed survey research using a population of 104 business educators located in six selected universities in the south-south and three universities in south-east. A questionnaire with 30 items on a 5 Likert scale was used as the research instrument for the study while the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that there are potentials for the reinvention of business education through ICT to aid global competitiveness among students and recommended that the curriculum presently in use should be retouched, reinvented, modified, adjusted and adapted to incorporate global competitiveness.

Nwokike, Ezeabii and Jim (2018) examined business education as an indispensable tool for achieving sustainable development in the southeast states of Nigeria, the aim of the study was to determine how business education can be utilized as an indispensable tool for sustainable development, survey research design was adopted with a population of 46 business educators who are lecturers in public universities in the south-eastern part of Nigeria, questionnaires was used for data collections while mean and standard deviations was used to test the hypothesis. The result showed that business education is imperative in achieving sustainable development in the region.

The study recommended that the authority who plans curriculum should be encouraged to incorporate needed industry skills to the study of business education to help labour productivity in the industry.

Edokpolor and Owenvbiugie (2017) in their work titled Business Education in Nigeria; Issues, challenges and Way Forward for National Development, the study was aimed to investigate the challenges faced by education programs and the possibilities of overcoming the issues of business education in a bid to boost national development. The study adopted a survey design using a population of 132 business educators in Edo and Delta states and adopted a four-point Likert scale questionnaire for data collection. The result revealed that there are several issues confronting business education in the study area and recommends that the

government and other major active players should invest heavily in the education sector to ensure they overcome the underlying challenges.

Ajisafe et al. (2015) in their work titled Examining the Issues in Business Education Program: Challenges to National Transformation examined the challenges facing business education in relation to national transformation. The study utilized exploratory analysis to identify some challenges facing business education in Nigeria. The study indicates that business education is an imperative foundation for human resource development as it helps to promote attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to perform efficiently and they recommend that business education should be speedily introduced into the national curriculum to ensure that the course is taught and also, in accordance to modern operations.

Okoli and Azih (2015) studied the topic of Re-engineering the business education program in Universities for enhanced human development in Nigeria, the study examined business education in Nigeria as regards its role in human resource development and has the objective of highlighting the issues in academic curriculum and service delivery. The study then recommends the usage of hybrid e-learning and a mix of traditional learning approaches to help in optimizing business education delivery and learning outcomes, the study further recommends that information, communication and technology be incorporated and facilities/equipment provided for proper administration of business education in Nigeria.

Summarily, several research has been done empirically on this subject matter and have focused on different regions in Nigeria with few identifying the major challenges facing business education in Nigeria. This study therefore fills this gap by identifying the issues and challenges relating to reinventing business education in Nigeria expanding the scope of empirical to guide concerned stakeholders to address the challenges.

Methodology

Considering the qualitative nature of this study, desk review research was adopted by using exploratory analysis and deep review of related and relevant journals and textbooks, publications and other materials relevant and related to Business education in Nigeria and its reinvention in order to clarify and amplify the concept of business education towards ensuring that its reinvention propels the growth and development of Nigeria. It is on this basis that the conclusions and recommendations of this study are made to ensure that the government and concerned stakeholders act accordingly to ensure the issue is effectively and efficiently addressed.

Discussion

Business Education Curriculum

a. Unchanged: The Business Education curriculum has remained unchanged for decades! The socalled curriculum revision of a few years ago does not count as adding a couple of topics and recording courses cannot match the change in Nigeria. With the change Nigeria witnessed between political dispensation, insecurity, disease outbreaks, etc., these have had disruptive

effects leaving the Nigerian educational system vulnerable. It is quite evident Nigeria is of a turbulent environment, one would expect matched educational policies and curriculum which are responsive to the environment. Nigeria's Business Education does not prepare students for the true nature of the workforce and citizenry Nigeria needs today.

b. Mismatched: Nigeria's curriculum is very supply-sided and not demand-driven. There is a gap between what is required in the market and what is produced through Business Education. There is a gap between Nigeria's Business education curriculum and the market, turning business educators who can combat unemployment and poverty, and contribute to international business, to be under-performing.

Current practices

• Assessment: Today, Business Education like many other courses in Nigeria is heavily graded on single examinations written at the end of each semester. Some academic scholars have, however, found business education being assessed purely through written exams to be unviable. Thus, the reason for the criticism of Waddock and Lozano (2013) that the assessment method is too narrow which calls for a more holistic method where "simple answers just do not work."

• Non-practical: Business Education today in Nigeria is mostly stuck in the classroom, in most institutions, the only practical Business Education students are typically three months long teaching practice and industrial placement which typically occur once each during a degree certification. For Business, this is not enough; the worst part is these student industrial placements are done haphazardly with neither the students, the programs nor the industry taking them quite seriously. This creates a gap for future business educators who, regardless of how sound in theory they are, do not actually really know about the practice of business.

Other identified issues and challenges facing Business Education in Nigeria include but not limited to non-relevance of course content which is the outcome of inadequacies in the formulation of the curriculum and the poor implementation of the curriculum. Time allocation is also a major challenge of business education in Nigeria as inadequate hours are allocated to the teaching of business education in some Nigerian schools at different levels of education (Njoku, 1997). Also, the selection of subjects by students is majorly dependent on the head of the school, time allotted on the timetable and the availability of competent staff which then gives the students less opportunity to select business education at different levels of education. The services of teachers in some core aspects of business education are not always available, like shorthand, book-keeping, typewriting, etc.

Furthermore, the quality and qualifications of teachers are also major issues of business education in Nigeria as it is expected that a business education teacher should hold a degree in business education from a recognized university or a National Certificate of Education which makes them competent to take several areas of business education in different levels of study. But the reality, especially in secondary schools, involves substituting related

degree holders such as economics and accounting to teach business studies which then reduces efficiency. The availability of adequate facilities and incorporation of modern learning techniques and ICT is a major concern as it is difficult to achieve the aim of a well-designed education program without providing the imperative facilities to facilitate excellent service delivery in the educational sector of Nigeria (Ajisafe, et al. 2015).

Reinventing Business Education

There is a need to reinvent Business Education in Nigeria as not doing so and expecting a different result as insanity, according to deemed by Albert Einstein. We need to change, alter the status quo, prevailing customs, current thinking, long-held traditions, assumptions and the ways society works and does things (Starr 2014). Nigerian Business Education needs a program that will be both societally as well globally oriented; a program that will be driven by the needs of the society, workforce and citizenry.

Curriculum Redesign

The curriculum must be redesigned particularly with the issue of aligning the industry and the schools. It should first be determined what is required in the market. This reflects the fact that we must begin with exactly what purpose Business Education is to fulfil, beginning with the end in mind. Business Education graduates need to be able to at least meet the current demands in the business world to be able to teach others in future. The Business Education curriculum needs to emphasize entrepreneurship and the graduates need to be able to become employers of themselves and others.

Furthermore, practical aspects of business should be more emphasized from within the curriculum with better synergy between the classroom and the industry. People who have undergone business education in the Western world narrate the use of practicals in Business Education to include case studies, placements and company projects. Case studies are typically assigned by instructors for each chapter for the purpose of allowing students to apply theoretical underpinnings to real life events. Of course, some would argue most cases are outdated even before they are published in textbooks, the response to that is technology, where cases are on the internet even before they hit newspaper stands (Waddock & Lozano 2013).

Higher education students abroad typically go on industrial placement every summer or in some cases for one year and these are students, most of whom have started working since secondary school. Students of Business Education in Nigeria go on a three-month Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SI WoES) placement, more so, there is an opportunity to bridge the gap in the curriculum. Projects could be included at the end of courses such as Human Resource Management, Marketing, Business Proposal and Planning writing, etc. where organizations would assign actual projects to students, work with them throughout and interact with them as though consultants have been hired. Such real-life experience is not an uncommon practice in other countries.

Pedagogical Approaches

The goal here should be a well-rounded, practice-grounded orientation. A reinvention of Business

Education in Nigeria would require the use of actual cases/events and assignments for experiential learning. For events which have occurred in the business world, experiential learning could be students embarking on reflecting on events through dialogues while engagement practice can be employed for those that would include the students by assigning works which draw experiences, discussions, work-based projects, etc. (Waddock & Lozano 2013). The pedagogical approaches to be highlighted include interaction and experiential learning and practice.

This call for interactive practices should be carried forward to assessment, considering the abovementioned and earlier criticisms of written exams. Hence, Business education at all higher education levels (college, undergraduate, and postgraduate) should be designed to require oral examinations also. Burke-Smalley (2014) has found that this approach allows less cheating, builds confidence, calls for critical thinking, and 'thinking on the feet'. It also very appropriate for assessing students' communication skills which is a highly valuable skill for workplace readiness.

Thus, this issue also supports the argument that educational provision has forgotten to respond to market demands.

Train the trainers

There must be an introduction of continuous training, retraining and staff development for Business education instructors. At this point, it is not about what is learnt to become instructors, what is required is the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn, instructors should not just teach what they were taught, they must teach what is currently obtainable in the business world. This is why most instructors must be retrained; this training should not just be in the theoretical contents of Business education but also mindset and behaviour. Instructors must approach education not as merely imparting knowledge now to be recalled in future but also as preparing people to be able to learn when there are new things in future.

Funding

Like most institutional sectors in Nigeria, education suffers inadequate funding. Most institutions of higher education offering Business education are governmental, thereby subjecting it to the general situation of government-funded projects and policies. Starr (2014) has identified that

"Education is a contested and highly political realm of social life... reforms are "deeply political" (Starr, 2014). All the recommendations for the reinvention of Business Education can only be achieved if there is adequate funding; curriculum developments, practical and interactive pedagogical approach, and retraining instructors, all require funds. While it is important for the government to prioritize Business Education and start funding properly, reinventing Business Education requires not being totally reliant on the government. Institutions must begin to explore alternative sources of funding. Institutions and Staff and students of Business Education staff should cultivate relationships with donors, become entrepreneurial, organize fundraising events, among to explore funding sources.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on this research, Business Education in Nigeria is faced with a lot of issues and challenges which are detrimental and pose a potential threat to the development of the nation if not quickly addressed and reinvented. The world is becoming smarter, faster and smaller with globalization; the Nigerian educational system has to be rethought in terms of mindset, behaviour and operations. There is a need for reorientation to change the mindset about the purpose of Business Education as the output of businesses is what is responsible for a nation's productivity and competitiveness. According to Starr (2014), governments can increase national growth, productivity, efficiency and knowledge through a well-educated and innovative workforce and citizenry. Thus, Business Education is more than the individual; it is about the nation.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- It is imperative for the government and all concerned stakeholders to as a matter of urgency revisit the idea of investing largely in the educational sector of Nigeria with much emphasis on Business Education as it is multidimensionally advantageous to the growth and development of the Nigerian economy.
- The curriculum planners are also encouraged to ensure the incorporation of modern and relevant content to ensure that business education graduates possess the required industry skills and to ensure relevance in the labour market while encouraging self-support in business.
- Several policies should be put in place to ensure that modern facilities in line with ICT are provided to meet global standards with adequate training provided for the teachers in this regard.

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