



Role of Business Education in Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The role of business education in the overall socio-economic improvement of the citizens of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. It is one of the subjects / courses noted for developing in the citizenry entrepreneurship skills that create employment and make the beneficiaries self-reliant even in the face of economic recession that is battling hard on the average Nigerian. It is not only on foundation for the commercial growth of any individual or nation but it brings about global development. To this end, this paper discussed the role of business education in poverty eradication and sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper further discussed poverty as a social problem that affects the general populace, its types, causes and measures to alleviate it in the society. It also examined the challenges facing business education as a tool for poverty eradication and to bring about sustainable development. It was therefore recommended that attitudes of students to Business Education should be positive so as to be able to practicalise what they have learnt while in school in order to become employers of labour rather than job seekers. Government should provide the necessary equipment as well as an enabling environment that facilitates the needed training for business education students both at secondary schools and higher institution level.

Keywords: Business education, Poverty, Unemployment, Employer of labour, Sustainable development.

Introduction

The Nigeria society is facing lots of challenges in the area of socio-economic and political development; but most importantly in the area of generating employment opportunities for her teeming citizens. Describing the unemployment situation in Nigeria, Denga cited in Uwaneze (2016) affirmed that looking for job in Nigeria is fast becoming a job itself.

This clearly portrays the mobility of graduates from different educational levels in the country to engage creative ability that will lead to self-reliance. Thus, there is need to look inward into employment generating subjects and courses; bearing in mind the content of national philosophy of education as stated in the National Policy on Education: the training of the mind in the understanding of world around and



the acquisition of appropriate skills, the development of both mental and physical abilities as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society (Federal Government of Nigeria-FGN, 2014).

The above is in line with the objectives of business education/ vocational education as it is meant to satisfy the continuously changing needs of the labour market (Zarifis, 2002). Education being the bedrock for development in any society plays a crucial part in this process. The development of an all inclusive Business Education therefore becomes imperative. It is observed around the world, with particular reference to Nigeria, that there is an increase in the rate of unemployment coupled with thousands of people losing their jobs, due to the current global economic recession. Thus, the promises of the politicians can no longer hold water anymore as regards the provision of employment. In fact in recent times the slogan has even changed to government not being able to provide jobs for all her citizens and that citizen should rather be employers of labour than being job seekers.

According to United States Embassy in Nigeria (2012), in the Nigeria Economic Fact Sheet revealed the level of unemployment in the country as follows, that unemployment increased from 21.1% in 2010 to 23.9% in 2011 and remained at 23.9% in 2012. It further revealed that unemployment is concentrated in the

younger age group with unemployment rates of 41.6% among youths. Not only unemployment rates are higher for females (24.9%) than for males (17.7%). It was discovered by the Fact Sheet that the States with the highest unemployment rates are concentrated in the North Eastern part of the country and in the Niger Delta with Yobe State having the highest level of unemployment (39%), followed by Zamfara (33.4%) and Sokoto (32.4%), while Lagos had the least (7.6%). While the unemployment rate among the youth stands with the average of 35.9%, presently the Federal Government accepted World Bank (2013) unemployment rate of 28.57% for Nigeria (Gana, 2016).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of business education in poverty eradication and sustainable development; bearing in mind the importance of business education to national development. The paper will further examine the concept, types and causes of poverty and how the knowledge of business education could assist in curbing unemployment, a major social problem in the society. Finally, the paper will discuss the problems hindering the use of business education as an instrument to checkmate poverty and bring about sustenance of prosperity among the citizenry and the nation at large.

Concept of Business Education

Business education involves teaching students the fundamental theories and process of business. Education in this field occurs at several levels, including



secondary education and other tertiary institutions that include, Colleges of Education and Universities. Today, students hone their skills through practical experiences which are part of Business education. Igboke cited in Ikpe & Undie (2014) defined business education as those business subjects taught at the secondary school level. These include, subjects like shorthand, typewriting, book-keeping, business law among others. The summary of this is that business education consists of that group of related, occupationally-focused and general education subjects systematically arranged which are prescribed for possible certification. Not only this, the subject/course is a very vital tool in capacity building as it is important to human resources development, utilization and sustainability. Business education is an aspect of educational programme which prepares students for careers in business. It is the education needed to teach students about business opportunities available to them which they can grasp in order to contribute their own quota to national development and also be better citizens of a given society.

The subject has been carefully designed to help individuals to learn occupational area as well as skills necessary for self-employment to bring about a better life for individuals concerned. Business education programme is aimed at building a strong foundation for those who wish to move on to business areas. It is further stressed that business education deals with the production of the

required manpower that possess the requisite knowledge, skill and the right/ positive attitudes for harnessing resources. This could bind into a cooperative relationship that ultimately yield the goods and services demanded for the satisfaction of the numerous wants and needs of the nation's population.

Business education is of great importance to the socio-economic development and self-reliance of a nation as it provides rich opportunities for relevant, real world learning experiences. These programmes provide pathways to specific apprenticeship and workplace destinations along with valuable information and connections that will help them to explore potential work and business opportunities.

Furthermore, educated individuals have innovative ideas to connect themselves with the probable audience. Hence, they take the message out in a far better way. Also, Business education does invigorate sustainable development of a company in a planned way. This is why companies recruit employees who have problem-solving skills, knowledge of finance and economy with the added knowledge of the fundamentals of marketing and production. The subject is also important as it inculcates the fundamental qualities needed for the proper management of a business. Therefore, the individuals have the quality to manage market, finance and production department in a more



organized way. By this, it is quite evident that a highly educated individual in the area of business education with the right attitude and all things being equal will be successful in business.

Business education, as a secondary school subject, or as a course of study in the higher institutions has four acceptable and defensible aims and objectives as conceived by Ikpe cited in Ikpe & Undie (2014). These objectives are:

- To equip the business students with the capacity to solve practical problems.
- To provide the business students with a detailed knowledge of the intricate performance of a complex economic system.
- To give the business students the capacity to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing and
- To afford him/ her through understanding of the functional areas of business.

Thus, without any doubt, business education is a necessary factor aimed at promoting socio- economic development of individuals. The subject matter also focuses on career opportunities available for the business education students, such as to make them teachers to teach in the secondary schools, to hold administrative positions in the private and public sectors of the economy. Furthermore, it is also out to make the students self-employed having been exposed to business knowledge and to assist them

to undergo higher studies in Business education either at the undergraduate or post-graduate levels.

Concept of Poverty

It has been observed that poverty wields is destructive influence at every stage of human life, from the moment of conception to the grave. It conspires with the most deadly and painful diseases to bring a wretched existence to all who suffer from it (Ayodele, 2005). Poverty however, has no universally accepted definition and this is not unconnected with the various measurements of poverty or different yardsticks used to measure poverty among individuals and nations. The United Nations defined poverty as a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, shelter, health, education and information.

Poverty is generally considered as a social problem and it is also viewed from two different perspectives and something that signifies 'moneylessness' and 'powerlessness'. 'Moneylessness' poverty connotes chronic inadequacy of resources of all types to satisfy basic human needs such as nutrition, rest and bodily care. In other words poverty as powerlessness means lack of opportunities and choices open to the non-poor and being ruled by forces and persons outside their control by people in position of authority or by perceived evil forces' or hard luck' (Ayodele, 2005 and Alonge, 2014).



The culture of poverty is a way of life that perpetuates poverty from one generation to the next generation. Individuals, families, and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the society in which they belong (Townsend, 2017, www.eschooltoday.com).

Forms of Poverty

There are four major forms of poverty under which people and countries can be categorized. These forms are “absolute”, “relative”, “situational or transitory” and generational or chronic”.

- **Absolute Poverty:** This is the extreme form of poverty which is characterized by acute shortage or lack of basic food, clean water, health and housing facilities (Ayodele, 2005). A large number of people are suffering from the absolute poverty and they tend to struggle to live/ and experience a lot of child deaths from preventive diseases like malaria, cholera and water contamination related diseases. Although this is usually not common in developed nations of the world but very rampant in the developing or undeveloped nations of which Nigeria is included.

- **Relative Poverty:** Relative poverty is usually in relation to other members and families in the society. Jensen (2009) posits that relative poverty occurs when economic status of a

family whose income is insufficient to meet its society average standard of living. Meaning that the resources available for the family, is not sufficient when compared with societal acceptable standard of living. People that experience such though they have access to food, water, medicine and free housing among what their government has been able to provide, but they could not do better like their counterparts who could afford vacation and send their wards to better institutions among others.

- **Situational/ Transitory Poverty:** Just as the name indicates, families that are faced with this form are poor because of situational problem that arise in form of some adversities like floods, earthquakes or serious illness. At times, individual and corporate bodies can help them out of this situation quickly if they are given a bit of assistance as the root cause of their poverty was just one unfortunate event (www.eschooltoday.com).

- **Generational/ Chronic Poverty:** Generational and chronic poverty is more complicated. This is when poverty is handed over to individual and families from generations before them. There is usually no escape from it, as people are trapped in its causes and have no access to tools that will help them get out of it (Ayodele, 2005).

Causes of Poverty

Poverty can be attributed to a lot of factors. These include:

- Income inequality
- Conflicts and unrest in the land



- Natural disasters
- Ill health and disability of the people
- Gender discrimination
- Inheritance of poverty
- Lack of education, training and skills.

Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Some of the measures that can be used to check the menace of poverty in the society as identified by Ayodele, Alonge and Adanikin, (2017) include; adequate provision of health facilities, food, portable water and other social amenities; affordable quality education and provision of skills and training for the youths and lastly, income redistribution and the inauguration of social security schemes.

In view of the debilitating effects of poverty on the individual and the nation at large, there is need for people and the government of most developing nations like Nigeria to strive hard in solving the problem of poverty. Education, training and skills acquisition are all good as people that are educated or had some training and skills are in a better position to apply the ideas and knowledge acquired into fixing basic problems and enhancing their livelihood in return. Education, especially the knowledge of business education will assist the students or graduates of business education to be able to plan, follow instructions and get reach out to access information, tools and support that can improve their livelihood. On the contrary, absence of

education skills acquisition, skills and training, individuals cannot help themselves and in so doing their poverty level is worse of as they are even more vulnerable than before.

Sustainable development is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and economic system services upon which the economy and society depends. It is an offshoot of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that nations of the world agreed to in the year 2001 under the auspices of United Nations. Sustainable development which is also referred to as universal set of goals, targets and indicators that countries in the world are expected to use as templates for the developmental agenda and political policies for the next 13 years. Since the document was agreed to in the year 2016 when MDG expired in 2015 (Okere Roseline in The Guardian, 2015).

The document is aimed at ending poverty among member nations. To achieve this, education must be revisited in light of a renewed vision of sustainable human and social development that is both equitable and viable. This vision of sustainability must take into consideration the social, environment and economic dimensions of human development and the various ways in which these are relate to education. In line with the tune of policing that established sustainable development, an empowering



education is one that builds the human resources we need to be productive to continue to learn, to solve problems, to be creative and to live together and with nature in peace and harmony. When countries ensure that such as education (Business Education) is accessible to all throughout their lives, a quiet revolution is set in motion, meaning that education becomes the engine for sustainable development and the key to a better world where poverty is totally rooted out and people enjoy abundance.

Among the globally accepted seventeen goals for sustainable development include, good health and well being, zero hunger, decent work and economic growth. These can only be achieved when one is gainfully employed or economically engaged even though, everybody has the right to a good standard of living with better job opportunities that are more or less available in business education programmes (<http://wikipedia.com>).

Role of Business Education in Addressing Poverty

Business education, as stated earlier, plays a significant role in curbing the challenges or menace of poverty in the society. In the contemporary Nigeria, the problem of unemployment which has led many into poverty can be addressed through the implementation of appropriate policies and programmes as contained in the business education curriculum.

Business education, as earlier defined, talks about the building of a strong

foundation for those who wish to move on to business activities rather than relying on government jobs that are not even available. It therefore contributes immensely to the eradication of poverty among Nigeria citizens in order to bring about economic development in the following ways:

i. Business education helps individuals to set up small scale business enterprises. Those who acquired the required knowledge and skills in Business education tends to set up micro industries and other small scale enterprises to liberate themselves from poverty rather than seeking for white collar jobs like their counterpart from other disciplines (Gana, 2016). When this is done, it will bring about a turnaround in the economic future of individual and the country, thereby reducing the poverty level in the society.

ii It also plays the role of providing good citizenship by preparing students to become intelligent productive wage earners. The knowledge of business education enhanced the employability of graduates of the discipline since the subject/course focuses on the training of people to acquire skills and knowledge that adequately prepare them for employment in business related occupations as it therefore disallows them from engaging in unlawful acts that could negate the ideals of good citizenship (Oyerinde, 2017).

iii. Business education helps in the reduction of high incidence of school



dropouts by providing alternatives for students of secondary school who lack interest in furthering their education to higher institution level (Gana, 2005). Furthermore, higher institution students can also engage in business ventures simultaneously without disrupting their academics and this will prepare them for a better future.

iv. It helps in preparing individuals for career that are based on manual and practical activities rather than certification. There is need to shift our focus of education from certificate base to skill oriented. This would assist individuals to make use of their hands and brain to better their lots and checkmate the incidence of poverty in their lives and the society at large (Sani, 2011). The saying “devil finds work for an idle hand” does not arise for those who have acquired skills and knowledge in Business education who are also ready to practicalise it.

v. Business education prepares individuals for life- long learning by developing in them the necessary mental tools, technical skills and other qualities needed for active participation in team work which increases the productive manpower of the nation (Ahmadu, 2003). This would help the government to assist people of like- minds to come together into different productive ventures even as they engage in production venture, preservation and distribution of goods and services that can better the lots of the citizens and also add value to their own live in return.

vi. Business education assists in promoting peace in the society as people with gainful employment will have little or no time to engage in crime and other unlawful activities. (Oyerinde, 2017) posits that if militants and insurgents that have surrendered are trained vocational skills of which Business education is an aspect, there will be peace in the land and they will contribute maximally to the growth of Nigeria economy. Recently, Alhaji Dagote referred to those Arewa youth that gave the Igbos in the North quit notice as a group of unemployed youths who could have been engaged somewhere rather than fomenting troubles.

vii. Business education provides training ground for people to understand the nation's economy and to know their responsibilities as citizens. The economic responsibility of any citizen is to improve the per capita income of the people by contributing maximally to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the nation, which will also improve the standard of living of the citizens.

Challenges facing Business Education as a Tool to Eradicate Poverty

The neglect of functional education in Nigeria is robbing the country of the benefits that would have been derived from it. Though there are many other problems that have culminated into the poverty level of the citizens, but neglect of Business education as an aspect of education could be said to be responsible for the increasing rate of



unemployment as a casual factor of poverty. The following are some of the challenges facing Business education as a tool to eradicate poverty as posited by Oyerinde, (2017), Uwanze, (2016), and Sani, (2011).

1. Misconception of Business education as the education for people with low intelligence. Many believe that people that go for Business education are people or no or little intelligence and this affect the morale and attitudes of the students, towards the subject.

2. Closely related to the low regards for Business education students, is the lack of motivation for business education students such as awarding of scholarships, like their counterparts in engineering, medicine and the physical sciences. This could be related to the state of its in acceptability as a discipline that is able to solve the problem of poverty in the society.

3. Another challenge facing Business education as a tool to curb poverty is the shortage of equipment and infrastructural facilities for the training of Business educations students. Non-availability or shortage of equipment hinder the impartation of the right knowledge to the students to become more knowledgeable in their chosen fields that could assists them to stand on their own facilities might be available but shortage of qualified teaching staff who can cope with changes in technology apparent especially in public sector.

4. Lack of understanding by most school administrators as a result they are indifferent towards the requirements of the programmes. This simply works against the procurement of the required facilities and equipment aimed at bringing learning into reality. Also, poor management of the available resources and facilities by both the staff and students do hinder Business education from being a tool to fight against poverty.

5. Finally, lack of sincerity of purpose on the part of the educational planners and those who are to implement the education policy. Since there is no good synergy between the programme designers and the programmes implementers, there is bound to be problem. This does not augur well for the emancipation of business education to curb the problem of poverty in the society because the resultant effects will be borne by the students as the institutions only end up in graduating half- baked graduates.

Conclusion

The paper examined the role of business education in poverty eradication and sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper also examined the concept of poverty, its types, its causes and how to curb it in the society. The paper further examined how to use business education as a strong tool to curb the menace of unemployment which has resulted into poverty in Nigeria. Unemployment in Nigeria has become endemic and therefore requires a functional therapy that will make



people employers of labour rather than job seekers. The role of business education in poverty eradication and sustainable development in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. It is an important type of professional education which aims at preparing students for the future. As a school subject, it plays a significant role in creating employments to a good number of unemployed school leavers and graduates especially during this time that the nation is faced with economic recession. It was further concluded that business education would help immensely in sustaining development in the country's business and economic development.

Recommendations

Based on the numerous potentials inherent in business education, the following recommendations are made:

1) Youths should be encouraged to have a change of attitude and perception towards the subject matter of Business education. They should see it as a subject that can bring them out of poverty and make them to be self-reliant.

2) Modern technological equipment and other facilities should be made available and trainers should be trained in the use of modern technological equipment so as to aid their delivery to the students. Teachers/Lecturers should be given special training in teaching and research for improved instructional delivery. Practical training must be taken as a priority and training and retraining through seminars and

conference would be added advantages.

3) There must be synergy between programmes initiators and those who are to implement the programme so that there would not be crisis between the major stakeholders. The body that is concerned with the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of Business education should be through their assignment as stipulated in the law that established the discipline and other guiding principles.

4) Government investment in education especially in Nigeria is very disheartening as the budgetary allocation to the education sector is nothing to write home about. Government functionaries and law makers must strive to increase the budgetary allocation to the education sector, and doing that it would bring great improvement and meaningful development to the nation.

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