**BUSINESS EDUCATION AS A VERITABLE TOOL FOR REDUCING**

**UNEMPLOYMENT**

**BY**

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**Abstract.**

*Business education is a program of study and an aspect of vocational education program offered in both secondary and tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria. This program is designed to equip the recipients with both academic and vocational skills needed for both salaried and self employment as entrepreneurs. Unfortunately and ignorantly too, this course is being looked down on by students, parents and society in general, just like every other vocational education program. Students neglect Business education programme and are disenchanted about opting for it, especially at the tertiary institution level. Equally, parents believe that Business education is a course for dullards or for someone else’s child. They seldom encourage their children or wards to study it. The main aim of this piece of work is to highlight the meaning and objectives of Business education program and its importance to its recipients. It also X-rays how Business education equips students for employment. It recommends among other things for a change of the general public’s attitude towards the course since it has capacity to reverse the unemployment challenge of Nigeria. It was concluded that parents should encourage their children and wards to study Business education if they are interested in it, because it will enable them to be job creators rather than job seekers.*

**Key words:** Business education and unemployment.

**Introduction**

Business education is important for everybody. The present economic condition coupled with the high rate of unemployment in the country has greatly justified the existence of Business education in the curriculum of secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Before now, there has been increasing emphasis on discipline areas like Mathematics, English, and Science as the only important subjects in the curriculum, while there was corresponding de-emphasis on subjects like Business education and other vocational courses which were thought to be ‘frills’ Robert (1983 ) in Odike,( 2015).

The attitude of society and parents towards Business education discourages students who would like to study the course in higher institutions from doing so ( Ayub 2016). He noted that most parents still choose the academic stream rather than technical and vocational training. Parents see Business education as a course for someone else’s child while they nudge their own children towards other supposedly lucrative areas such as Medicine, Engineering, Nursing, law and so on. Okocha ( 2010) in his own study discovered that in spite of the fact that parents recognize the employment value inherent in vocational education (which Business education is an aspect of) they still prepared to accept the superiority of socially prestigious and white color professionals over technical related occupations.

Okoye ( 2005) in his own study also found out that **s**ome parents do not desire their children and wards to study Business education because they believe that it is meant for drop-outs or dullards. They rather prefer their children studying such courses like medicine, Law, Engineering, and so on. Most parents therefore employ all manner of inducements to motivate their children to study sciences, which will qualify them to read the prestige courses in the university, without considering the children’s interest and abilities. It is only the students who cannot excel in these courses that grudgingly turn to any other course, including Business education. Government also discourages the students from being interested in any other subjects other than Sciences, English and Mathematics. Emphasis has always been on science and technology. For instance, during the employment of teachers in 1999/2000, in Enugu State only teachers that read science subjects, including English and Mathematics were recruited. The graduates in other disciplines including Business education were rejected. This societal attitude towards Business education discourages most students from studying Business education and this leads to paucity of professional Business education teachers in the schools. As a result of this, many unqualified teachers are employed to teach business subjects such as Commerce, Office practice, Shorthand and typing (word processing) in the secondary schools. Off course, such teachers will only teach the aspect of business study they can teach leaving of the practical aspect of business study such as shorthand and typing( word processing). Ndinechi, Obayi and Igboke (2009) in Odike (2015) noted that in many instances untrained teachers are employed to teach business studies in the secondary schools, such teachers do not posses N.C.E. or first degree in Business education. They might have studied business courses in the higher institutions but lack pedagogy of teaching.

Ironically, most of the students who studied those preferred courses end up engaging in business enterprises after graduating from school or university, unprepared and ill-equipped. It is against this background that this paper is written to highlight the importance of Business education programme in equipping the recipients with both academic and technical skill needed for both salaried and self employment.

Objective of the study.

The main aim of this piece of work is to highlight the meaning, objectives and importance of Business education program and the extent it can equip its recipients for employment.

**Conceptual Framework of the Study**

Several definitions of Business education have been given, some of which focus on the content of the programme, or on the level at which it s delivered, or both. Business education according to Abdullahi ( 2002) in Suleman and Akaeze (2014) Business education is an aspect of total educational programme which provides the recipients with knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform well in business world as a producer, entrepreneur or consumer of goods and services. Business education according to Obi (2005) is that type of education which helps the students to achieve all the aims of education at any level of learning but has as its primary aim, the preparation of students for a business career and enables those in that career to become more efficient and to advance to higher business positions.

The American Vocational Association (AVA) by Osuala (2004) described Business education as a programme of instruction which consists of two parts which include Office education, which is described as a vocational education program for office careers, through initial and upgrading education leading to employability and advancement in office occupation and General Business education, which is described as programme that provides students with information and competences needed for managing personal business) affairs.

At the tertiary level, the term Business education is sometimes used as synonymous with education in the broad area of business administration in which the objective is primarily preparation for the professional careers in the management and administration of business and economics for both secondary and higher education. At the senior secondary school level, Business education is referred to as business studies which comprise all the business subjects taught in secondary school (National policy on education 2013). These business subjects are aimed at preparing students for initial employment in the general administrative sections of business enterprises and government. They prepare students for further studies in the area of business in tertiary institutions. It also fosters the acquisition of technical knowledge and vocational skills, could lead to agricultural, commercial and economic development (Osuala, 2004).

Precisely, Business education can be seen as a program of study concerned with the teaching and learning of various types of business skills as well as how to practically and successfully engage in them for the purpose of earning a living and the pedagogical training for transmitting such knowledge to others. Hence Udo and Bako (2014) stated that , Business education comprises accounting education, marketing education, office technology education , entrepreneurship education and teaching methodology.

Goals and objectives of Business education according to various authors are state bellow.The policy commission (1977) I n Osuala (2005) stated the objectives of Business education as follows:

• To educate people for and about business;

• To provide students with a learning experience that can equip them to do the following:

* produce and distribute goods and services as workers;
* use the result of production as consumers, and
* make judicious socio-economic decisions as citizens.

• To provide students with career information that will help them to relate their interests, needs and abilities to occupational opportunities in business;

• To provide students preparing for careers in other fields that is not business, with educational opportunities that will equip then with business knowledge and skills that are needed to function effectively in those careers. Osuala (2005) enumerated the objectives of Business education as follows: (1) to afford all students important information that will enable them to search (or explore) and learn about the world of work. Such information will also make them develop interest and relevant skills in the career areas of their choice; (2) to teach students how to become intelligent consumers of goods and services; (3) to provide the students with necessary occupational information to enable them to understand the various occupations found in the world of work; (4) to supply training that will result in developing individuals capable of coping with the world in which they live and also to provide the understanding and appreciation of the actual functioning of the system; (5) to enable students prepare for, choose, enter into and progress in occupations of their choice (6) to enable students to acquire saleable skills in the field of their choice of occupation; (7) to train students for various business activities common to many professional, industrial, agricultural, distributive and home management occupations; 8) to enable secondary school students realize the advantages of business courses within their university preparatory programme.

Unemployment or joblessness, according to Kimberly (2017) is defined by the Burear of Labour Statistics as people who do not have job, have actively looked for work in the past four weeks, and are currently available for work. Also people who are temporarily laid off and were waiting to be called back to that job are included in the unemployment statistics. The consequences of unemployment are numerous. To the individual, unemployment is both financially and emotionally destructive and can lead to many vices such as stealing, armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution just to mention but a few. There are many causes of unemployment of youths in Nigeria. Nigerian Finder ( 2017) noted that one of the causes of unemployment of Nigerian graduates among other things include, lack of skills. It stated that , for many years running, most Nigerian youths have disdained acquisition of skills and opted for the so called” clean-shirt”-and easy ways of making money. With such mentality, these youths grow into adulthood without any skill to fall back to thus becoming liabilities to themselves and others. This explains why Business education and other vocational causes that equip the student s with both employable and technical skills for both salaried and self-employment should be opted for by students. This will make them not only to be employable but to be employers of labour and self-reliant. Instead of looking for job after graduation they will establish their own businesses as entrepreneurs and create jobs for others.

**Business education (Business Studies) Offering for Secondary Schools**

To achieve the above mentioned objectives of Business education various business courses were incorporated in the curriculum of Business education at some levels of education, starting from secondary to university level. According to the National Policy Education (2004), Education at the secondary school level is expected to include both academic and prevocational subjects at the Junior Secondary School (JSS), and academic and vocational subjects at the Senior Secondary School level (SSS). Hence, prevocational business studies are among the pre-vocational subjects introduced in junior secondary school in 1981. In the junior secondary school, Business studies comprise the following subjects - Office practice, Commerce, Bookkeeping, Typewriting (now computer studies/word processing) and Shorthand.

The objective of pre-vocational Business studies as stated in the National Education Policy (2004) is to equip the students with basic business skills. It also aims at preparing them for further studies in Business courses at the senior secondary school level and into tertiary institution. For the purpose of continuing Business education to senior secondary level, separate and more comprehensive courses have been developed for each of these various components at the SSS level.

The Business studies subjects at the 555 level are Commerce, Book-keeping and Accounting, Typewriting (Word processing), Shorthand and Economics.

The main aims of these courses as stated by Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) are highlighted bellow:

Economics: The curriculum content of Economics was designed to inculcate in the students the knowledge and skill that will help them to appreciate the economics problems in any society including our country Nigeria. It will enable students to acquire knowledge that will make them to take wise decisions about their economic problems.

Commerce: This course is designed to expose the students to the world of business and commercial occupation and to prepare their minds for possibility of self employment after graduation (as entrepreneurs). Book-keeping and Accounting: Book-keeping and accounting prepares students for further studies in the area of accounting in the higher institutions. It aims at equipping students with the knowledge that will enable them to work in the offices as account clerks. Those that will engage in business will be able to keep accurate records of their business transaction

Typewriting/Word Processing: Typewriting is designed to equip the students with skills that will enable them to be proficient in typewriting or word processing. It prepares them for office work and also for self employment.

Shorthand: It is designed to equip students with the skills to be proficient in shorthand writing as well as appropriate phrasing and to also train them to transcribe shorthand written word into long hand with the use of typewriter or computer. More importantly, knowledge of shortly-and facilitates students’ learning of grammar, correct spelling and phonetics (correct pronunciation of English words) and improves students’ writing and reading skills. It equally prepares students for note taking and minutes writing during meetings as secretary.

Office practice: It equips the students with office management and procedural skills that will enable them to carry out clerical functions as are performed in an office as clerks, receptionists account clerks or bookkeepers. If the business studies curriculum is properly implemented at the secondary school level, students that studied business courses will be able to engage in their private business enterprises or work in offices as account clerks or stenographers.

**Business education offerings in the Tertiary Institutions**

The objectives of Business education programme at the tertiary level are to train teachers who can occupy teaching and leadership positions in the secondary schools, technical college of education, universities and training programme (UNN students handbook 2014). The program equally aims at producing entrepreneurs in the area of business trades. Osuala (2004) noted that there are four general types of courses offered in the field of Business education at the tertiary level which may be classified as follows: (1), Courses that develop vocational skills such as typewriting, shorthand, Bookkeeping, Business Mathematics and English studies. (2). Courses that contribute to the vocational understanding and efficiency such as bookkeeping, general business, office practice and business law. These are the courses that develop general knowledge, procedures and understanding. (3). Courses that have personal values by themselves and in addition have vocational skills. These courses include typing, (word processing) personal record keeping and general business, Commerce, economics, consumer education and business law. (4). Courses that have social values and not only a part of the general education for business but are also a contribution to the fields of general education. These courses include such subjects as general business, basic business, consumer education, entrepreneurship studies, principles of marketing, principles of management and business Law. Some of these courses perform more than one function. The very nature of some courses makes them have more than one value.

**Importance of Business Education:**

Any educational programme is effective and functional to the extent that it is able to meet the needs of it recipients as well as the needs of society in general. According to the Nigerian national policy on education (2013) the federal government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development. Any educational programme that is not relevant to the needs of the individuals and that of society is not functional and therefore ought not to be included in the curriculum of education.

The above enumerated objectives of Business education have buttressed its importance both to individuals and society in general. Business education therefore plays dual roles. It develops students academically and at the same time equips them with work skills and competencies that will enable them to seek obtain and retain their jobs.

Kadiri (2010) noted that Business education prepares individuals for gainful employment through acquisition of skills and knowledge that are relevant for the business world. Emendu (2014) in his findings reported that entrepreneurship education which is an aspect of Business education helps in the realization of the goals of education. According to him Business education contributes to poverty alleviation and economic growth.

Interestingly, the present unemployment problem of graduates in the country has made everyone including the educational planners to recognize the importance of entrepreneurship studies which is an aspect of Business education programme. This explains why entrepreneurship study is now being introduced in the university curriculum by the National University Commission (NUC), as one of the General studies courses. The aim is to equip all the students, irrespective of their disciplines, with the necessary business knowledge and skills that will enable them to start and manage their own businesses if need be. Hence today Entrepreneurship study is likened to the biblical stone that was rejected by the builders but which has become the cornerstone. Entrepreneurship studies has been in the school curriculum, but was treated with contempt and neglect, because it is part of Business education programme. Most of the business courses taught in Business education programme equip students with entrepreneurial skills. Business education prepares students for entrepreneurship, office occupation and for the teaching of business by equipping the recipients with the equip the appropriate skills. According to Udo and Bako (2014) Business education programme is designed to inculcate following skills in its recipients:

Accounting Education Skills.

Accounting is one of the major occupational areas of vocational Business education (VBE) that can prepare the Nigerian workers and students for a job or employment within a wide range of business career such as pay-roll clerks, purchasing clerks, audit clerks, book-keepers, cashiers and business teachers who undertake the teaching of accounting to other learners

***Economics Education Skills***

This component provides VBE students with the skills and competencies which they are able to use to enhance sustainable development in the country. In brief, the Economics curriculum objectives emphasize economic literacy, prudent management of resources,

respect for the dignity of labour and acquisition of economic knowledge for solving the economic problems of the society.

**Distributive Education Skills**

Udo (2012) noted that distributive education is a programme of vocational instruction in marketing, merchandising and related management, which is designed to meet the needs of persons who have entered or a preparing to enter a distributive occupation. According to Osuala

( 2004), the general objective of distributive education is to prepare students for gainful employment in distribution and marketing.

**Office Technology and Management (OTME) Education Skills**

The general objective of office technology education is to prepare students for work as secretaries in the offices. According to Udo and Bako, (2012 ), it was formerly known as secretarial education . The present day secretaries are exposed to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in their day-to-day training and working lives. Students are equipped with the ICT skills to enable them know how to successfully operate (ICT) facilities.

***Entrepreneurship Education Skills Component:*** the general objective of entrepreneurship education is to prepare students for gainful self employment and employer of labour. With entrepreneurial skill the students can establish small or medium scale businesses. These skills of entrepreneur are inculcated in Business education students through the various course offered in the Business education programme of schools, colleges and the universities.

**Teaching skills:** The objectives of vocational Business education programme at the tertiary level are to train teachers who can occupy teaching and leadership positions in the secondary schools, technical colleges of education, universities and training programme. The Business education students also acquire skills in pedagogy of teaching that will enable them effectively impart the knowledge they acquired in their students as teachers.

**Job Opportunities for Business Graduates**

If Business education programme is well implemented at the various levels of education, it will help in ameliorating the present unemployment problems of graduates in the country. Business education university graduates can conveniently take up employment with any ministry, industry or other business enterprises as marketers, accountants, secretaries and managers. More importantly, they can engage in their own businesses as entrepreneurs, and manage them effectively and grow to become employers of labour. They can equally engage in teaching business courses both at the secondary and tertiary levels of education. NCE graduates of Business education can also be employed or be self employed. They can engage in office occupation as cashiers, secretaries, marketers. They can also teach business studies in junior secondary school and also can start and manage their own small businesses as entrepreneurs.

Business courses taught in secondary school equip the students with the technical knowledge needed to work in an office as clerical officers, typists, confidential secretaries IV, account clerks, salesmen, store keepers, cashiers and receptionists. Business knowledge acquired in secondary school equally enables the recipient to start his own small business and manage it effectively. Ahukannah, Ndinaechi and Arukwe (1997) in Mohammed (2008) noted that senior secondary school commerce provides the students with commercial skills necessary for entry into the world of work. They explained that on leaving school, some students may decide to set up their own business and make a living as sole proprietors or as partners in a partnership or private company. Other students may prefer to seek paid employment either in public or civil service, or in the firms and companies in the private sector.

However, Nwaekete (2013) holds a contrary view; he opined that Business education students are not being trained to exploit business opportunities, because Business education programmes do not reflect elements of critical success factors in starting small business. The statement is out of place because the curriculum content of Business education programmes includes all that is necessary to inculcate in its recipients the skills and knowledge to successfully start any small and medium business.

All the business courses in the curriculum, if adequately taught to students using the same facilities as are obtainable in the real work environment, are enough to enable any student that is not risk averse to successfully start off a business and manage it effectively. Therefore, the inability of any Business education graduate to engage in entrepreneurship should be blamed on the poor implementation of the programme or on the student’s unwillingness to take risks associated with every business venture, and not on the Business education programme itself.

**Conclusion**

In view of the above stated objectives of Business education and its importance, it is obvious that Business education is a laudable programme in the Nigeria educational programme.. It contributes immensely in equipping its recipients with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable them to function effectively in the business world as employees and as entrepreneurs (employers of labour) and as intelligent consumers too. Business education is very important to everybody, especially in this period of high rate of unemployment in society.

Nigeria today is facing economic problems, which have culminated in high rate of unemployment, poverty and hunger. This situation calls for entrepreneurship education that will equip the citizens with employable skills needed for self-reliance (Ukannaya, 2012). Therefore, considering the objectives, importance and course contents of Business education in Nigerian society, one could conclude that it will go a long way in solving the unemployment problem of the Nigerian youths and also provide the manpower needed in the country. The Business education graduates should be able to teach business subjects in the junior and senior secondary schools and at the colleges of education. They can also take up administrative jobs in the private and public organizations and more importantly establish their own business and create job opportunities for others. Many graduates, irrespective of their disciplines, and without preparation resort to engaging in business activities for lack of employment opportunities.

**Recommendations**

**Based on the above, the following recommendations were made**

1. Parents should encourage their wards that have interest in Business education to study it and be better equipped to engage in their own businesses if they desire to.

2. Parents should not force their children to read a course because it has prestige. The students’ ability and interest should be taken into consideration when advising them on the course to study in the tertiary institution; or on the trade to learn to avoid their being frustrated due to lack of job satisfaction.

3. The government should encourage students to enrol in Business education programme by highlighting the importance in preparing individuals for self employment.

4. The government should also encourage effective implementation of Business education programme by creating an enabling environment for teaching and learning business courses both in the secondary schools and the tertiary institutions.

5. Students should be mandated to study business courses at the secondary school level to enable them to acquire saleable skills in the field of business even if they cannot further their education after graduating from the secondary school.

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