

BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME: A PANACEA FOR NATION BUILDING**COMFORT ONAIGHO NWADIANI¹, CHUKWUDI ANTHONY EGBUNE^{2*}**

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Abstract

This paper discussed the role of Business Education Programme as a panacea to Nation Building. The research manuscript discussed the concept and objectives of Business Education in Nigeria. It also discussed the concept and nature of nation building. The research manuscript also ex-ray the role of Business Education programme as a panacea to nation building, with a specific focus on job creation, entrepreneurial mindset, production of qualified teachers and skilled workers. The paper further dealt with the problems militating against the implementation of Business Education programme in Nigeria. The authors concluded that Business Education programme is the solution to national degradation and economic backwardness as it would help in equipping the recipients with both practical-oriented skills and theoretical knowledge in order to contribute positively to any sphere of human and economic endeavours. The authors recommended, among others, that private sector agencies and actors should endeavour to partner with institutions offering Business Education programme in order to facilitate the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills through effective teaching and learning. This will, in turn, provide opportunity for the recipients to contribute productively to national growth and development.

Keywords: Business Education Programme, Economic Development, Economic Growth, Nation Building, Panacea.

Introduction

Nation building means creating a nation that functions out of a non-functioning one, either because the old one has been destroyed in a war, has fallen apart or never really worked properly. Nation building refers to the process of developing a nation-state by organizing social groups within a defined territory under common political institutions and an effective government. In a country such as ours where millions of students' graduate from higher institutions and yet roam about jobless, development of business education program will help in addressing such anomaly. Business education is that type of education that impacts not only theoretical knowledge, but equips the students with necessary skills to be self-reliant and entrepreneurs.

Okon (2020) explained that Business Education is a programme of study, which provides individuals with practical learning experiences in specific knowledge and skills in identified business areas as well as general education, thus, equipping them with competencies for the business world. Business Education continuously builds on the knowledge, skills, values and attitude learnt at the lower phases of education. Business Education which encompasses several disciplines enables people to think, speak and behave in ways that support the growth, efficiency and effectiveness of any organization they find themselves. Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN, 2017) opined

that Business Education courses prepare students to work in small business and/or setup their own businesses and develop their requisite entrepreneurial attitudes. Thus, the demand for business education is on the increase all over the world as it prepares youths to be responsible, become enterprising individuals or entrepreneurial thinkers by exposing them to real life experience where they will be required to think, take risks, manage circumstances and incidentally learn from the outcome. Business Education as a discipline is expected to expose its recipients to diverse curricula, hence, it is that type of education that inculcate in its recipients' attitudes, knowledge, skills, values that is required in the business world. The focus of Business Education is to give knowledge and skills to its recipients on wealth creation, employment generation and poverty reduction. This will eliminate youth restiveness, promote national development and produce responsible citizens.

The major components of Business Education Programmes, especially in Nigeria are Accounting, Office Technology and Management, Insurance, Marketing and Entrepreneurship (Okwe, 2023). In Office Technology and Management education programme, the focus is on essential workplace skills like effective communication, time management, record keeping and organizational skills. It also imparts on the individual the requisite information and communication technology (ICT) skills needed to compete in the 21st century ICT world. In Accounting component, the individual is equipped with requisite accounting skills needed for proper booking keeping and systematic recording of business transactions in order to determine, or access the performance of the business or organization. These various components of Business Education Programmes outlined equips the individuals with all-round skills and knowledge to contribute economically in any organization as an employee or an entrepreneur. This contributes to nation building and improves the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In entrepreneurship component, it helps the individual in business planning, feasibility studies, start-up strategies as well as encouraging creativity, innovation and ability to identify new business opportunities. Hence, the objectives of business education as outlined by the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS, 2022 are to provide opportunity for practical job preparation or vocational studies in order to make students render effective and efficient services in office, distributive and service occupations; prepare students based on interest and aptitudes needed to enter into a business occupation, advance and profit in it; provide opportunities for students to develop an understanding of business and economic system of the nation so as to enable them to participate actively producers and consumers of goods and services; develop in students the basic awareness of the contribution which business and office employee makes to the nation's economy; develop and improve personal qualities and attitude of students as required in personal and employment situation; serve as a guide for individual student for suitable placement in business and office employment; enable students to have career consciousness and economic understanding of the free enterprise system; and prepare student to assume the role of building a future generation through teaching and knowledge impartation, and prepare students for leadership position in both public and private life.

The actualization of the above objectives and the developmental changes it brings along, is important to state that such may only be possible through adequate provision of funds, adequate provision of infrastructure, proper curriculum content, qualification and quality of teachers and so on. These goals if carefully implemented will provide opportunities for the institutions and teachers to impart the requisite knowledge and skills needed by students and graduates to improve their economic, social and political environment and consequently translate to nation building. The academic exposure enables the students to interact with successful business men in the community and share the benefits of their successes in the comity of their business empires. This in turn will enhance job creation and entrepreneurship development (Rufai, 2013). One of the issues of great controversy among Business Educators in tertiary institutions today is the issue of unemployability and lack of adequate skills of today's university graduates that would have assist in fostering national development. Business Education graduates are now roaming the streets seeking for white collar job that is no longer available

instead of being job creators. It is therefore believed that inadequate facilities for teaching and learning of business education, lack of maintenance of equipment, inaccessibility of Business Education teachers and students to digital technology are the reasons for poor performance of students and lack of ideas to impart the business world. Researchers and scholars have also been emphasizing on the non-availability of qualified teachers to teach Business Education subjects in tertiary Institutions (Edokpolor & Owenvbuigie, 2017; Edokpolor & Oduma, 2018). However, if there are qualified Business Education teachers and there are no adequate textbooks, workbooks, 21st century equipment for practical teaching and business education teaching and learning materials and proper funding, what impact will quality teachers make? This over the years has made graduates of Business Education to become job seekers instead of job creators that will help in nation building and unemployment reduction. The nation is dependent on graduates who can create a business and become employers of labour that will take the youths off the streets and reduce social vices but unfortunately, our graduates of today lack the requisite knowledge and skills required to surmount the problems pointed out above. Therefore, to change this negative narratives, some strategies like review of Business Education curriculum, provision of quality facilities for training, effective students mentoring services and equitable distribution of funds among others will help to improve the quality of teaching and learning and consequently foster nation building.

Nation building involves the process whereby a society with diverse origins, histories, languages, cultures and religions come together within the boundaries of a sovereign state with a unified constitutional and legal dispensation, a national public education system, an integrated national economy, shared symbols and values as equals, to work towards eradicating the divisions and injustices of the past; foster unity; and promote a countrywide conscious sense of being proudly Nigerian, and open to the contribution of her economic, social, cultural and political values. The goal of nation building is to unify the people within the country so that it remains economically and politically viable and stable over the long term. Nation building is a very difficult undertaking, especially in a country such as Nigeria with deep religious, ethnic and political divisions within the population. The task of building Nigeria appears to be possible through effective implementation of Business Education if the country never really functioned effectively. People involved in nation building are called nation builders, they take the initiative and try to foster a feeling through government programs. Nation building can take many forms, including major infrastructure development or propaganda to encourage social harmony and trigger economic growth. By and large, Business Education plays an important role in nation building through empowering students with skills to create jobs for themselves and others after graduation. More so, it is necessary to note that the objectives of business education according to the CCMAS is for adequate knowledge and preparedness of students to face the labour market and contribute to the growth of the economy.

Concept of Business Education

Business Education is an academic programme that equips undergraduate students with entrepreneurial skills in order to be self-reliant in today's globalized and competitive economy. However, this mandate can only be achieved when the curriculum of Business Education is in line with societal needs and realities at national, regional and international levels. According to Okon (2020), Business Education is a programme of study, which provides opportunity for individuals to be exposed to practical learning experiences in specific knowledge and skills in identified business areas as well as general education, thereby, equipping them with skills and competencies for the business world. The ABEN (2017) explained that Business Education courses prepare students to work in small business and/or set up their own businesses and develop the requisite entrepreneurial attitudes.

The National Universities Commission (NUC), a regulatory body for undergraduate programmes, provides the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) with a review in 2023 as Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS) for undergraduates' business education programme in Nigerian Universities. The BMAS or CCMAS provides opportunity for Business Education undergraduates to be exposed to entrepreneurship education and other practical-oriented courses that meet the need of the 21st Century. Again, the ABEN (2017) pointed out that business education courses promote creative thinking in students and develop their requisite entrepreneurial attitudes. Okon (2015) averred that Business Education represents a broad field of study (classified under Vocational Education in the Formal Education system and often described as Vocational Training in the Informal Education setting) which offers to every individual the opportunity to develop functional skills, abilities and understanding the necessary to handle competently his personal business affairs and occupational life. Therefore, Business Education curriculum developed for the undergraduate programme must reflect the following components: Theoretical concept, Practical concept, and General education concept. It is therefore imperative to determine how these concepts help in the development of entrepreneurial skills among undergraduates. The theoretical concept of Business Education covers the concepts that students must be exposed towards. All courses in Business Education have the theoretical concept. Students must have the understanding of these concepts and be able to relate them to the contemporary business world.

The practical concept on the other hand form an integral part of the Business Education curriculum. Most courses offered in business education has practical concept. The practical concept gives students opportunity to acquire practical skills for the real work situation. The general education concept involves those courses that are offered by all students in the university system despite the programme of study. The general education concept aims to equip students with general knowledge in specific areas of human endeavor outside of the student's area of specialty. By and large, all Business Education courses have integrated entrepreneurial orientation since the programme promotes self-reliance.

Overview of Nation Building

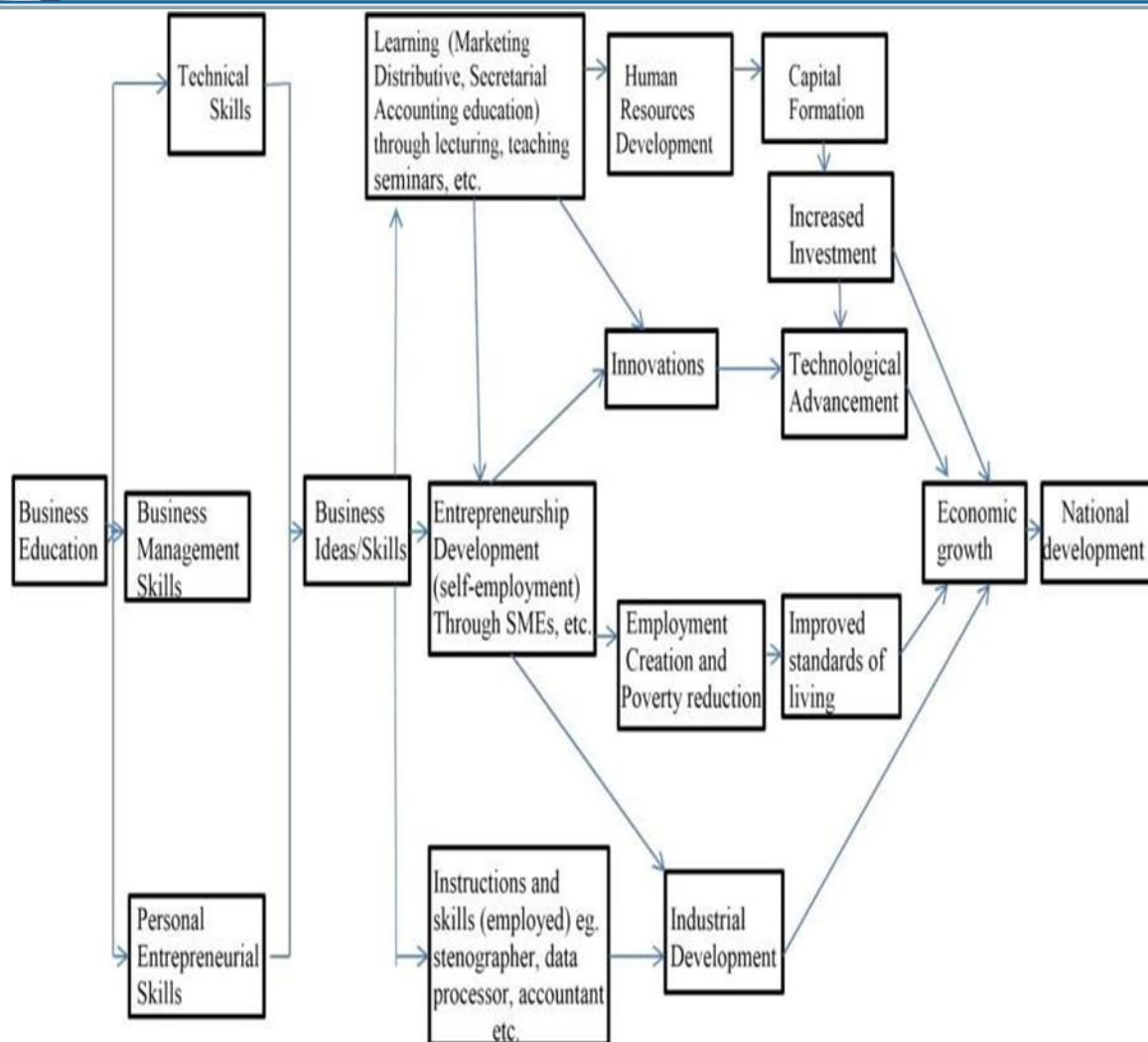
As earlier pointed out, business education enables the students to explore and learn about the world of work and the relevant career interest of their choice, provide them with the necessary occupational information to enable them understand the various occupation in the world of work and enable them to acquire skills in the field of their choice. Business Education contributes its role for educating citizens of a country to run their own personal businesses more successfully which helps to improve the economy of a country and thus helps directly in nation building economically. Business Education played an important role in the development of Nigerian economy, especially in the areas of employment generation, job creation, industrial development, entrepreneurial strategy, poverty alleviation, promotion of Nigerian economy, culture and value. It is a form of Vocational Education directed towards developing the learner to become productive in teaching, paid-employment and self-employment (Idialu & Amoor, 2010).

According to Ogbuogo (2013), Business Education prepares beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. It is generally seen as education for and about business. Education "for" business is that aspect of Vocational Education, which provides instruction and preparation for office occupations such as secretary, shorthand-typist or stenographer, bookkeeper, data processor, word processor, computer analyst and accountant. On the other hand, education "about" business provides the knowledge and understanding of the economic, financial, marketing, accounting, management system and other branches of business endeavour. But in the words of Amoor (2010), Business Education plays a significant role in the economic development by providing the knowledge and skills to learners, thereby, enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others,

and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems. The goal of Business Education is primarily to produce competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work. It has as its primary aim, the preparation of people for roles in enterprises which includes: employees, entrepreneurs, employers or self-employers. According to Ogburn (2013), a gainfully employed individual contributes to the GDP, reduces poverty, alleviate unemployment and underemployment, which are some of the indices of development, especially in the context of a business venture.

The current economic crisis confronting the nation is creating severe conflict in education and other sectors of the economy. The teaching and learning of creative and innovative skills can be better done and handled in Business Education classrooms in our higher institutions. Education all over the world faces challenges from different angles, which may be personal, social, economic, technological and political, these calls for a change. This change needs a high level of flexibility and adaptability which can be actualized through Business Education. Business Education is an aspect of education or training process which an individual receives with the primary motive of enabling him or her to acquire adequate attitude, concepts, knowledge, understanding and skills in business activities for personal or vocational usage; and also, for career as an administrator or manager and for career as a business teacher wherever he may find himself in the world of work. It is an aspect of educational process which gives an individual the pedagogy and business competencies necessary for teaching and practicing business attitudes, concepts, skills and knowledge for personal use, for entry into the business world as employer or employee and for participation as a business teacher. Based on the above definition, Okiridu (2016) opined that Business Education can be represented with an acronym 'TOS' where 'T' stand for a teacher, 'O' stand for an operator and 'S' stand for a self-reliant; that is Business Education is a tripartite programme of instruction, which enables the recipient to be trained as a teacher in an institution, operator or employee in an industry and to be self-employed or be an entrepreneur or an employer of labour.

In the labour market, because of not having the knowledge and skills required to have gainful employment in the industries, our business education programs in our tertiary institutions should be developed properly to fill the vacuum. There is need to carefully observe from the foregoing that a well-developed Business Education programme will produce a well-equipped graduate who will create job and contribute to the GDP of the country which will help in nation building. The link between Business Education and national development has been depicted on the diagram below:



Business Education programme and Nation Building Employment Generation

According to Petterson et al (2016), unemployment is one problem that face every developing country such as Nigeria. Business Education is a course that enables a student to have an idea of how to acquire requisite knowledge and skills that are relevant in job creation. These knowledge and skills would be geared towards making them employable in the labour market after graduation. Hundreds of thousands of graduates of different disciplines are roaming the streets or seeking for paid-employment, but the graduates of Business Education who are well grounded and equipped with requisite knowledge and skills, attitudes and competencies that are necessary to earn a living and be self-reliant are less affected. Business Education empowers her graduates with the ability to establish a Small Business Enterprise (SME) and become an employer of labour or captains of industries. To this end, Killinger (2019) opined that to ensure economic vitality, all stakeholders must work together to produce the best educated citizens.

Entrepreneurial Mindset

According to Hisrich, Brush & Aliyu (2010), Entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, accompanying financial and social risk, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary, personal satisfaction and independence. Business Education is an academic field of study that equips graduates with entrepreneurial mindset

and skills that would enable them to identify viable investment opportunities in the society. Due to their practical training, entrepreneurs see opportunities where others see chaos. Business Education equips entrepreneurs with the skills that would make it possible for them to use the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunity and threats) analysis to function well as entrepreneurs. Business Education also promote entrepreneurship by prompting its graduates to strive toward the utilization of the identified opportunities through taking calculative risks.

Production of Qualified Teachers

Effective teaching, in turn, influences effective learning (Singh et al., 2020). Business Education programme produces quality teachers. A quality teacher is that teacher that has mastery of the courses he/she teaches, and know how to teach it to the students, understand how the students learn and what to do when they are having difficulty; to be able to use effective teaching methods for those who are learning easily as well as those who have special needs. The quality of a teacher is an important aspect of students' output. In a nutshell, the following are the qualities of a Business Education teacher: (1) A business education teacher must have mastery of the subject he/she teaches; (2) A business education teacher must be able to inspire students to learn; (3) A business education teacher must assume the role of a leader and develop leadership qualities in students; (4) A business education teacher must be a person of integrity, and adviser, a guardian and custodian of discipline; and (5) A business education teacher must show good example and maintain good and healthy relationship with business students.

Production of Skilled Workers

According to Jarkas (2017), skilled labour forces are the key productive human resources in the production industry, and for that reason, production performance mostly depends on skilled workforce. Graduates of Business Education have strong written, oral, and entrepreneurial skills and a broad knowledge of management and marketing. They have an amazing array of options as they enter the business world. Our nation is no longer looking for graduates with paper qualification but those with requisite skill to improve and contribute to the growth of the economy and the nation. The relevant skills in ICT, OTM, Accounting, Management, etcetera. equips the graduates of business education to function and contribute anywhere they find themselves. These skills will enable them to identify business opportunities, become creative and innovative, bear risks to utilize opportunities/implement a new plan, good management skills and wealth creation.

Challenges Facing Business Education programme

The realization of the overall aims of Business Education depends on how much the following challenges are tackled. Ogwuogo (2013) outlined the challenges facing Business Education programme to include:

1. *Unqualified Teachers*: The employment of unqualified teachers to teach business courses is a great obstacle to the quality of Business Education graduates. Most of the institutions that offer business education programme suffer from shortage of qualified teachers.
2. *Obsolete Technologies*: Manual typewriters are still largely in use in the computer age. This serves as a challenge to the graduate who intends to put in and practices the business ideas. Some available modern computers are grossly inadequate in terms of teaching and learning.
3. *The Size of Business Education Classes*: Due to the increasing demand for education especially Business and vocational courses amidst the insufficiency of the facilities and human labour, there is always high teacher-student ratio which turns to affect the quality of delivery of some practical courses like word processing, data processing, shorthand, among others.
4. *Poor or Inadequate Funding*: Many administrators fail to understand that Business Education programme is capital intensive. It is a well-known fact that one of the major problems

bedeviling education in Nigeria today is inadequate funding and Business Education is no exception.

Conclusion

From the aforementioned discussions, the authors concluded that Business Education is an indispensable tool in achieving nation building because of its relevance in providing the needed manpower in industries, offices and entrepreneurship. The skills and knowledge acquired by the recipients and graduates could help them to be self-employed by establishing small scale business. By doing so, the national development goals of ending poverty and promoting the well-being of individuals could be achieved through the effective implementation of Business Education programme in Nigeria, which will eventually lead to nation building. Business Education is a sub-set of Vocational Education. It is a programme that has the potentialities to produce qualified and skilled manpower who are capable and prepared to contribute maximally to the development and growth of nations. Based on these logical conclusions, emphasis to the teaching and learning of Business Education in Nigeria will not only solve societal problems but boost immeasurably the economic development of Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Government and all other relevant stakeholders should endeavor to provide adequate funds for Business Education programme. This can be achieved through increase in the budgetary allocation to education by the government.
2. Entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory at all levels of education.
3. Private sectors should partner with tertiary institutions in order to provide skills gap training and facilities that will enhance quality teaching of Business Education.
4. Opportunities for on-the-job-training programmes such as workshops, seminars should be made free and compulsory for lecturers in the field to acquaint themselves with contemporary skills so that they can, in turn, have impact on students.
5. Credit facilities should be made available to the willing entrepreneurs with the necessary skills who are eager to explore them in achieving national development

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