

Business Education: A Tool for Poverty Alleviation in Enugu State

Helen A. Ezeji, Ernest O. Ugwoke, Nathaniel I. Edeh, Oliver O. Okanazu

Department of Vocational Teacher Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria
Email: haezeji@gmail.com, natedeh@yahoo.com, ifeanyi.edeh@unn.edu.ng

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Abstract

The study was carried out to determine the ways Business Education can contribute towards poverty alleviation in Enugu State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design that made use of 24 item structured questionnaire. The population for the study comprised 93 lecturers comprising 46 university lecturers and 47 polytechnics/colleges of education lecturers. The questionnaire was face validated by three experts. Split-half reliability method was used to determine the reliability of the items and a coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. The questionnaire was administered on 93 respondents by the researchers with the help of two research assistants. The entire 93 copies of the questionnaire were returned. The data collected were analysed using mean, standard deviation and the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings were that business education provides good citizenship through preparing students to become intelligent and productive wage-earners, and also train people to acquire skills and knowledge for employment in business related occupations, and help individuals to set up small scale businesses which can alleviate poverty. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Federal Government of Nigeria should set up monitoring agency to track implementation processes of the various poverty alleviation programmes it has introduced.

Keywords

Business Education, Poverty and Poverty Alleviation Measures

1. Introduction

Poverty is one of the debilitating problems faced by people in many countries. Thus, individuals, groups of persons, developed and developing countries of the world have experienced different levels of poverty at different times. Poverty is a term that is familiar to both the affluent and the poor but what varies is the meaning attached

to it by different people. Ndem (2010) [1] stated that poverty is the deprivation of the basic needs such as food, shelter education and employment among others.

In the same vein Greenberg (2005) [2] poverty means lack of power, choice and material resources. Greenberg further stated that the poor lack access to information that is vital to their lives and livelihood and about market prices for the goods they produce. The poor lack access to knowledge, education, and skill development opportunities needed to improve themselves. From the above definitions, it is clear that poverty is far more than financial solvency and can manifest in the form of unemployment, homelessness, and lack of education.

Poverty alleviation could be referred to as the substantive reduction of any of the negative effect of poverty on people; while poverty alleviation strategies refer to the measures adopted to eradicate or reduce poverty. It is a process which seeks to reduce the level of poverty in a community or among a group of persons or nations. Poverty alleviation may also aim at removing the social and legal barriers to income growth among the poor. Ekwuruke, (2013) [3] stated that poverty alleviation involves the efforts made to improve the living standard of people who already are poor and to reduce the magnitude of poverty.

In Nigeria, different measures have been adopted by successive governments to reduce or eradicate poverty and its impact on the people. These measures as identified by Idowu, Gberevbie, Moses, Duruji, and Bankole (2013) [4] include: the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructures (DFFRI); Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW); National Directorate of Employment (NDE); Bank of Industry (BOI); Family Support Programme (FSP); the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and Subsidy-Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (Sure-P), among others. Other initiatives of the Federal Government of Nigeria towards poverty eradication and the revitalization of Vocational Education include the establishment of six centres for staff development at Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe Ogara; Kano State Polytechnic; Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Uwana; Federal Polytechnic Ilaro; Federal Polytechnic Idah and Federal Polytechnic Damaturu. During the same year, the Federal Government also embarked on the training of Core Team Trainers at Bauchi and Yaba; Information Technology Multimedia Simulation Workshop in conjunction with UNESCO and the Chiba Institute of Technology Japan; held Guidance and Councelling Workshop to train Technical and Vocational Education staff on new and innovative techniques in G & C and another workshop on Teaching Material Development for technical teachers (UNESCO, 2008) [5].

In the year 2013, the Federal Government of Nigeria started a programme referred to as the Framework for the integration of Out-of-School Children from the South-East and South-South States into the Basic Education Programme. One of the objectives of this programme was to empower the youths from these areas with functional skills for self-reliance and ability to contribute to the development of the society. When implemented, the initiative is expected to reduce the out-of-school syndrome occasioned by the get rich-quick attitude of youths. The initiative will among other things ensure human capacity development and poverty reduction-UBEC 2013.

All these measures notwithstanding, poverty and its negative impact on the people still persist. A close look at the poverty alleviation measures reveal that they all have one thing in common that is, lack of continuity. They tend to fizzle out with the government that introduced them, suggesting that a better and more permanent approach to poverty alleviation needs to be put in place. Education in all its ramifications is the foundation for all development. Okorie (2000) [6] indicated that most of the richest economies of the world such as the USA, China and Germany make tremendous and expansive use of both general and vocational education. Business Education is an integral part of Vocational Education which is the education for employability. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) [7] recognized it as such and defined it as the aspect of Technical Education which involves in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences; the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economy and social life. According to Azuka, Nwosu, Kanu and Agomuo (2006) [8] and Odah and Ogbaga (2010) [9], unlike general education which is long in theory and short in fact, Business Education is practical oriented and provides individuals with skills in business-related occupations such as accounting, marketing and office occupation.

Furthermore, business education is concerned with the area of knowledge and competences needed by individuals (skills, abilities, understanding and attitudes) that enable students to become a worthy human being and effective member of the society (Etonyeaku, 2012) [10].

It prepares learners for the different roles in business as economically literate and intelligent citizens. As part of vocational education, Business Education is synonymous with skill acquisition (Mc Omish, Elspeth, Mohan and Perera, 2013) [11]. The authors noted that in the absence of paid employment, individuals with vocational

skills can set up small business within the services needed by their communities and this has the capacity to boost the local economy from within, and hence lead to the liberation of the people from the culture of dependence on external assistance. The authors further stated that as an aspect of Vocational Education, Business Education is the key that alleviates poverty, promotes peace, conserves the environment, improves quality of life for all and helps in the achievement of sustainable economic development. Business Education prepares individuals for life-long learning by developing in them the necessary mental tools, technical and entrepreneurial skills and attitudes, capacities for decision-making and other qualities needed for active participation in team work and in the community as a whole. Business education empowers graduates with desired skills, knowledge and values that would make such graduates to be self-employed or employable by others.

Okorie (2000) [6] and Ezeji (2010) [12] attributed the inability to use Business Education as a tool for poverty alleviation to poor public image of Vocational Education, lack of adequate funding, shortage of qualified teaching staff, poor monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and the inability to adopt cooperative/vocational education by schools and industries.

The initiatives of successive Nigerian administrations to alleviate poverty among the people, seem to be ineffective because according to 2014 Statistics on Poverty in Nigeria, 112 million people still live in abject poverty. Additionally, Business Education appears to be relegated to the background as tool for poverty alleviation. Despite this laudable roles of business education in human development, business education still operates with obsolete machines and equipment such that graduates are not relevant to the world of work. The problem of poverty is a global dimension and business education programme should be a potent tool for poverty alleviation. However, for business education to play effective role in wealth creation and poverty eradication, business education should be repositioned for the achievement of its objectives of producing graduates who are not only skilled and employable but individuals who should be self-employed. It is in the light of this that this study is conducted to determine the contributions Business Education as part of Vocational Education can make towards poverty alleviation in Enugu State, Nigeria.

1.1. Research Questions

- 1) In what ways can Business Education contribute towards poverty alleviation in Nigeria?
- 2) What are the factors hinder the use of Business Education as a tool for poverty alleviation?

1.2. Hypothesis

Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- 1) There is no significant difference in the mean response of lecturers in universities and those in polytechnics/colleges of education about the contributions Business Education can make towards poverty alleviation.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the mean response of lecturers in universities and those in polytechnics/colleges of education about the factors that hinder the use of Business Education as a tool for poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

2. Methodology

2.1. Design of the Study

The study adopted a survey research design. Survey research design was considered appropriate because the opinions of the respondents were sought on the contributions of business education as a tool for poverty alleviation.

2.2. Area of the Study

The study was conducted in the tertiary institutions in Enugu State which offer Business Education.

2.3. Population

The population for the study was made up of all the lecturers in the universities and polytechnics/colleges of education that offer business education in Enugu State. The total number of lecturers was 93, distributed as follows: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 7, Enugu State University of Technology 21, Federal College of Education,

Eha-Amufu 15, College of Education (Technical), Enugu 18, Renaissance University Agbani, Enugu 22 and Institute of Ecumenical Education, Enugu 10. No sampling was carried out since the population was manageable.

2.4. Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. In all there were 24 questionnaire items structured on a five-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with assigned scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

2.5. Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was face validated by three lecturers, two from the Department of Vocational Teacher Education, and one from Measurement and Evaluation Department of Education Foundations, University of Nigeria Nsukka. The input of the validates helped in modifying the instrument.

2.6. Reliability of the Instrument

The internal consistency of the instrument was determined with the split-half reliability procedure with a coefficient of 0.85.

2.7. Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered and retrieved by the researchers and two research assistants.

2.8. Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using the Mean to answer the research questions and the null hypotheses were tested with t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

The results are presented in tables in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses.

3.1. Research Question 1

In what ways can Business Education contribute to poverty alleviation in Enugu State?

The Mean ratings on all the items in **Table 1** ranged from 4.16 to 4.43 which showed agreement by the respondents. The standard deviation ranged from 0.45 to 0.74 implying that the respondents were similar in their opinions that all the items in **Table 1** are tools of business education which help for poverty alleviation.

3.2. Research Question 2

What factors hinder the use of Business Education as a tool for poverty alleviation in Enugu State?

The data presented in **Table 2** showed that all items listed above had their mean ratings and grand mean ranging from 4.17 - 4.34. The result further revealed that all the items fall within the response category of strongly agreed. **Table 2** also showed that the standard deviation (SD) of the items ranged from 0.55 to 0.72, indicating that the respondents were not too far from one another in their responses on the items that hinder the use of Business Education as a tool for poverty alleviation.

Hypothesis 1

All the items in **Table 3** had their calculated t-value less than 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance indicating that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of the two groups on the contributions business education can make towards poverty alleviation in Enugu State.

Hypothesis 2

The t-test analysis as shown in **Table 4** also indicated no significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents. This is because the calculated t-value for each item is less than 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance chosen for the study. The null hypothesis on each item was, therefore, not rejected.

Table 1. Mean ratings and standard deviation of responses on what ways business education can contribute to poverty alleviation in Enugu State.

N = 93

S/N	Items Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	Providing good citizenship through preparing students to become intelligent and productive wage-earners.	4.33	0.47	SA
2	Training people to acquire skills and knowledge for employment in business related occupations	4.30	0.46	SA
3	By developing the understanding of careers, job opportunities and employment requirements	4.16	0.45	SA
4	Helping individuals to set up small scale businesses which can liberate them from poverty	4.27	0.47	SA
5	Promoting the understanding of the economic system of the world.	4.21	0.57	SA
6	Training people to understand the economy and to know their responsibilities as citizen	4.28	0.58	SA
7	Preparing individuals for life-long learning by developing in them the necessary mental tools, technical skill, and other qualities needed for active participation in team work	4.41	0.73	SA
8	Developing in the recipients habits and attitudes that make them creative, innovative and resourceful, leading to self-reliance	4.43	0.74	SA
9	Preparing individuals for production, preservation and distribution of goods and services	4.35	0.64	SA
10	Preparing individuals for career that are based on manual and practical activities	4.39	0.59	SA
11	Producing individuals who can effectively work with both heads and hands	4.28	0.65	SA
12	Helping in the reduction of high incidence of school dropout by providing alternatives for students who lack interest in grammar school offerings.	4.37	0.60	SA
13	Turning around the economic fortunes of individuals and countries, thereby reducing the poverty level	4.32	0.60	SA
14	Promoting peace in the community as people with gainful employment will have little or no time to engage in crime and other unlawful activities	4.24	0.70	SA
Grand Mean		4.31		SA

KEY: \bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; SA = Strongly Agree.**Table 2.** Mean scores and standard deviation on the factors that hinder the use of business education as a tool for poverty alleviation in Enugu State?

N = 93

S/N	Items Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	Lack of sincerity of purpose on the part of the educational planners and those who implement the education policy	4.19	0.59	SA
2	Low regard for business education as the education for people with low intelligence.	4.26	0.58	SA
3.	Inadequate funding for business education programme	4.31	0.58	SA
4.	Shortage of qualified teaching staff who can cope with changes in technology	4.18	0.55	SA
5.	Lack of motivation for business education students such as awarding of scholarships like their counterparts in engineering, medicine and the physical sciences	4.34	0.60	SA
6.	Poor monitoring and evaluation mechanism of business education programmes	4.17	0.72	SA
7.	Lack of equipment and infrastructural facilities for the training of business education students	4.25	0.62	SA
8.	Lack of understanding by most school administrators as result they are indifferent towards the requirements of the programme	4.26	0.61	SA
9.	Poor management of the available resources by staff and students	4.25	0.69	SA
10.	Inability to adopt Cooperative Vocational Education by schools and industries	4.32	0.57	SA
Grand Mean		4.25		SA

KEY: \bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; SA = Strongly Agree.

Table 3. There is no significant difference in the mean response of lecturers in universities and those in polytechnics/colleges of education about the contributions business education can make towards poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

N = 93

S/N	Items Statement	University Lecturers n = 46		Polytechnics/Colleges of Education Lecturers n = 47		t-Value	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Remark
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂			
1	Providing good citizenship through preparing students to become intelligent and productive wage-earners.	4.26	0.44	4.42	0.49	1.62	0.10	NS
2	Training people to acquire skills and knowledge for employment in business related occupations	4.24	0.43	4.37	0.48	1.61	0.11	NS
3	By developing the understanding of careers, job opportunities and employment requirements	4.10	0.46	4.23	0.42	1.38	0.17	NS
4	Helping individuals to set up small scale businesses which can liberate them from poverty	4.28	0.45	4.26	0.49	1.37	0.17	NS
5	Promoting the understanding of the economic system of the world.	4.28	0.53	4.14	0.53	1.43	0.15	NS
6	Training people to understand the economy and to know their responsibilities as citizen	4.26	0.60	4.30	0.56	1.44	0.16	NS
7	Preparing individuals for life-long learning by developing in them the necessary mental tools, technical skill, and other qualities needed for active participation in team work	4.34	0.59	4.49	0.71	0.25	0.80	NS
8	Developing in the recipients habits and attitudes that make them creative, innovative and resourceful, leading to self-reliance	4.40	0.73	4.47	0.75	0.25	0.81	NS
9	Preparing individuals for production, preservation and distribution of goods and services	4.32	0.73	4.40	0.68	1.19	0.24	NS
10	Preparing individuals for career that are based on manual and practical activities	4.40	0.58	4.37	0.57	1.18	0.24	NS
11	Producing individuals who can effectively work with both heads and hands	4.26	0.61	4.30	0.66	0.35	0.72	NS
12	Helping in the reduction of high incidence of school dropout by providing alternatives for students who lack interest in grammar school offerings.	4.42	0.63	4.30	0.57	0.35	0.73	NS
13	Turning around the economic fortunes of individuals and countries, thereby reducing the poverty level	4.38	0.63	4.26	0.53	0.98	0.32	NS
14	Promoting peace in the community as people with gainful employment will have little or no time to engage in crime and other unlawful activities	4.28	0.65	4.19	0.57	0.98	0.33	NS
Grand Mean		4.30		4.32				

KEY: \bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; SA = Strongly Agree and NS = Not Significant.

Table 4. There is no significant difference in the mean response of lecturers in universities and those in polytechnics/colleges of education about what factors hinder the use of Business Education as a tool for poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

N = 93

S/N	Items Statement	University Lecturers n = 46		Polytechnics/Colleges of Education Lecturers n = 47		t-Value	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Remark
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂			
1	Lack of sincerity of purpose on the part of the educational planners and those who implement the education policy	4.24	0.82	4.14	0.51	0.42	0.67	NS
2	Low regard for business education as the education for people with low intelligence.	4.30	0.67	4.21	0.54	0.42	0.68	NS
3	Inadequate funding for business education programme	4.26	0.63	4.37	0.52	0.57	0.57	NS
4	Shortage of qualified teaching staff who can cope with changes in technology	4.18	0.65	4.19	0.56	0.57	0.57	NS
5	Lack of motivation for business education students such as awarding of scholarships like their counterparts in engineering, medicine and the physical sciences	4.30	0.54	4.40	0.58	0.23	0.82	NS
6	Poor monitoring and evaluation mechanism of business education programmes	4.20	0.62	4.14	7	0.23	0.82	NS
7	Lack of equipment and infrastructural facilities for the training of business education students	4.24	0.77	4.28	0.59	0.31	0.75	NS
8	Lack of understanding by most school administrators as result they are indifferent towards the requirements of the programme	4.26	0.66	4.26	0.56	0.31	0.76	NS
9	Poor management of the available resources by staff and students	4.30	0.65	4.19	0.58	0.94	0.35	NS
10	Inability to adopt Cooperative Vocational Education by schools and industries	4.30	0.79	4.35	0.54	0.93	0.36	NS
Grand Mean		4.25		4.25				

KEY: \bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; SA = Strongly Agree and NS = Not Significant.

4. Discussion of the Findings

The findings revealed that all the (14) items in **Table 1** are ways Business Education can contribute to poverty alleviation in Enugu State. These ways include: Providing good citizenship through preparing students to become intelligent and productive wage-earners, Training people to acquire skills and knowledge for employment in business related occupations, By developing the understanding of careers, job opportunities and employment requirements, helping individuals to set up small scale businesses which can liberate them from poverty, promoting the understanding of the economic system of the world, training people to understand the economy and to know their responsibilities as citizen, preparing individuals for life-long learning by developing in them the necessary mental tools, technical skill, and other qualities needed for active participation in team work, developing in the recipients habits and attitudes that make them creative, innovative and resourceful, leading to self-reliance, Preparing individuals for production, preservation and distribution of goods and services, Preparing individuals for career that are based on manual and practical activities, Producing individuals who can effectively work with both heads and hands, Helping in the reduction of high incidence of school dropout by providing alternatives for students who lack interest in grammar school offerings, Turning around the economic fortunes of individuals and countries, thereby reducing the poverty levelw, and Promoting peace in the community as people with gainful employment will have little or no time to engage in crime and other unlawful activities. The finding on the fact that Vocational Education develops in the recipients habits, attitudes and skill that make them creative innovative and resourceful is in agreement with Ndem (2010) [1] who said that individuals with

vocational skills can comfortably engage in marketing and distribution of goods and services as entrepreneurs.

The finding on the ability of Vocational Education to help the recipients to set up small scale businesses which can liberate them from poverty agrees with Okorie (2000) [6] who stated that individuals with Vocational skills can be self-sufficient, self-reliant and can contribute effectively in societal development, reduction in poverty and unemployment among others.

The findings on the shortage of qualified teaching staff who can cope with changes in technology is in line with that of Aja (2010) [12] which found that the number of qualified teachers for the teaching of Vocational Education and other courses in Nigerian educational institutions are grossly inadequate.

The findings on poor monitoring and evaluation mechanism of business education programmes is also corroborated by Aja (2010) [13] who stated that instructional staff, programmes of instruction and facilities for the teaching of business courses are not supervised and monitored regularly for necessary improvement to be made as needed.

5. Conclusion

Business Education is a practical oriented programme, thus, it is a tool for poverty alleviation. Some of the ways it can help in poverty alleviation include: providing good citizenship through preparing students to become intelligent and productive wage-earners, train people to acquire skills and knowledge for employment in business related occupations, and help individuals to set up small scale businesses which can liberate them from poverty among others. However, there are many factors that hinder the use of Business Education as a tool for poverty alleviation in Nigeria. They are: lack of sincerity of purpose on the part of the educational planners and those who implement the education policy, low regard for business education as the education for people with low intelligence, inadequate funding for business education programme, shortage of qualified teaching staff who can cope with changes in technology to mention but a few. Proactive actions are, therefore, required by government, tertiary institutions and financial institutions in Nigeria to improve business education so as to maximize the economic and poverty alleviation opportunities which business education programme has for its beneficiaries and the society at large.

6. Recommendations

1) Federal Government of Nigeria should set up monitoring agency to track the implementation process of the various poverty alleviations programmes it has introduced.

2) Business Education graduates should be allowed to benefit from scholarship schemes initiated by different Financial Institutions.

3) Seminars, workshops and training should be organized by the Federal Government through its educational agencies for business educators so that business educators will acquire modern skills that will help them impart the students with technological skills that will help them to overcome poverty.

4) Business Education curriculum should be reviewed on a regular basis so as to incorporate into it the needed skill courses at any given time following the technological trend.

5) Adequate fund should be made available for effective implementation of business education programmes.

6) Government and school administrator should emphasize more on the benefits of Vocational/Technical Education to individuals and the public as a whole in order to improve the negative image of it.

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