



NEED FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT THROUGH BUSINESS EDUCATION EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Youths occupy a prominent place in any society and outnumber the middle aged and the aged. In every society, they play important role for its sustainable development. Training programmes acquired through business education as a sub-set of vocational and technical education has over the years improved the employable skills of the youths. It is for this reason that emphasis should be placed on the need for the youths to be empowered through business education for the youths to be well-equipped with the needed knowledge, attitudes, competencies and skills so that they can be well-fitted for the world of work. There is need to constantly expose the business education students to the practical aspect of the programmes. This will assist them to acquire practical knowledge, competencies and skills in business working environments.

KEYWORDS: *Youths, empowerment, business education, employability, skills sustainability and development.*

Introduction

Education at all levels is a major factor for national development and a means for the empowerment of citizens towards nation building. This is particularly the case in today's globalized information and knowledge based economy (Ekpiken & Ukpabio, 2015). Ojedele and Falokin (2009) opined that no country can expect to be successfully integrated into the, and benefit from the 21st Century's economy without a well-educated and empowered workforce, who in this context is the youths. Armstrong (2008) asserts that within the philosophy of existence, man's first loyalty is to his economic interest. The need therefore for a more purposeful and functional higher education for the youth cannot be overemphasized because, sound higher education is the best empowering tool for youth in sustainable development of the society. Youths all over the world constitute a vital segment of the society in which they live. The youth is understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of interdependence as members of a community, the Nigerian National Youth Policy defined youth as anyone between the age of 18 and 35 years (<https://mzagams.wordpress.com>).



Anasi (2011) asserted that the youths occupy a prominent place in any society and outnumber the middle aged and the aged. Besides, adolescence is an age period when young people have the potential to develop powerful new skills for action: skills to plan a community event, create a multi-level work of art or business plan, or formulate strategy for a lobbying campaign. Nnadi, Madu and Ogadi, (2014) posited that Nigeria like most developing countries of the world has a teeming population of youths who are faced with myriad of problems realities which include poverty, conflicts, disease, and particularly unemployment. In the same vein, Nwagwu (2004) noted that many Nigerian youths are wallowing in miserable penury while many women and children are disease prone and dehumanized as a result of poverty and unemployment. Nwagwu lamented that government often cushions the effect of poverty on vulnerable groups by establishing vocational and technical schools with the objectives to impart employability skills and competences to youths, school leavers, women and others who would be self-reliant and enterprising. Furthermore, the unemployment problem is very pathetic; the situation in Nigeria is of such concern that hundreds of young unemployed university graduates mounted a demonstration in front of the presidential offices to express their concern they requested that government should provide them with jobs (Dabalén, Oni and Adakola, 2000).

With regards to the unemployment problem in the country, Akpan (2011) in Okoli and Okoli (2013) maintained that Nigeria's vision 20:2020 in terms of employment is not achievable at the current rate of poor industrialization in the country. The authors stated that the blessing of natural endowment has not meant much for most Nigerian populace, where the country ranks 6th in world crude oil production but cannot boast of even one workable refinery, the country exports crude oil and imports refined product even in the abundance of every conceivable natural resource including arable land, water resources, good weather, other mineral deposits and a large population, still the nation is among the poorest in the world. In support of this, Ocho (2005) regretted that despite the brevity of the countries curriculum, its implementation becomes ineffective and that the nation's journey towards industrialization and technological advancement got arrested midway between reality and desire. Okpeh (2005) lamented that if youths are not empowered and given a sense of belonging in the society, they are likely to constitute a threat to the survival and stability of the nation, especially, if they are allowed to face hardship and unemployment.

From the foregoing therefore, there seem to be some glimpse of hope through entrepreneurship education for reorientation of the youth towards better national consciousness as a strategy to empower the youths for skills acquisition, which usher in unlimited life-enhancing opportunities. This would automatically change the mindset of present and future youths from a near hopeless economic entity to the level of high



productivity and sustainable development. Youth participation and empowerment through entrepreneurship education will contribute to nation building in its efforts in providing training programmes that will develop the individuals who will adjust because they are capable of coping with the environment and the world in which they live and thereby provide the understanding and appreciation of the actual functioning of the economic system due to its competency-based in nature.

The Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Barringer and Ireland (2013) defined Entrepreneurship as the process by which individuals pursue opportunities without regard to resources they currently control. Ottih (2014) viewed entrepreneurship as the involvement of an individual or group of individuals in innovation, risk bearing and organization, for the purpose of establishing a venture, managing it to fruition and reaping the resultants benefits. Entrepreneurship education as a course has been introduced into Nigerian higher institution particularly in business education programme.

In response to the above Utoware and Kren-Ikidi (2013) stated that one form of education that prepares its recipients to adapt to the changing world of work is business education. Utoware and Kren-Ikidi, maintained that business education is a programme of instruction which consists of two parts: (i) office education (ii) general business education. In support of this, Gidado and Akaeze (2014) defined business education as an education for business and about business, which can make a beneficiary to function well as an entrepreneur. This is due to the fact that it equips the recipients with skills which are needed to succeed in the business world.

Arguably therefore, it is a fact that based on the content of business education; such as the potential of equipping the recipients with skills in book-keeping/accounting, business management, marketing, business communication, office technology and management and so on which are all necessary for the promotion and survival of business enterprises, that business education could lead to the development of entrepreneurship in Nigeria (Gidado and Akaeze, 2014). It is on this premise that this study attempts to examine the need for youth to acquire the empowerment and employability skills through business education for sustainable development in Rivers State.

The Concept of Business Education

Business education is a sub-set of vocational education, which is offered both at the secondary and tertiary levels of education. Business education is an aspect of total educational programme which provides the recipient with knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude needed to perform well in the business world as a producer or consumer of goods and services (Gidado and Akaeze, 2014). It is the sum total of the knowledge, skills and attitude required for successful promotion and administration of



business enterprises (Oliver, 2011). Okoli (2013) sees skills as the economic tools with which entrepreneur confront and solve societal problems. For the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) (2008), it is an aspect of vocational education that equips people with necessary skills and theoretical knowledge needed for performance in the business world either for job occupation or self-employment. This implies that business education is an education for and about business by the combination of both theoretical and practical knowledge. Aliyu (2013) outlined the purpose of business education to include:

- (a). Fundamental instruction to help students assume their economic roles as consumers, workers and citizens.
- (b). Specialized instruction to prepare students for career in business.
- (c). Background instruction to assist students in preparing for professional careers requiring advanced study.

The Nature of Youth Empowerment

Due to technical innovation and other changes in the work place, today's business education graduates require a broader set of transferable skills and content knowledge than in the past (Reckers, 2006). The need for university education to produce high quality, employable graduates has been a consistent societal need and the education curricula are highly required in this direction in order to accommodate this demand for competency-based, vocational education. In this light, the objective of university education has shifted in recent decades towards what Tindale, Evans, Cable and Mead (2005) referred to as 'vocationalism' where emphasis is on professional knowledge to meet the demands of the workplace.

Employability skills are group of essential abilities that involve the development of a knowledge base, expertise level and mindset that is increasingly necessary for success in the modern workplace. They are classically essential credentials for many job positions and hence have become necessary for an individual's employment success at just about any level within a business environment (Jon and Anna, 2015). It is the transferable skills that allow individuals to function effectively in any work environment.

Employability Skills in Business Education

The under mentioned are employability skill in business education

1. Entrepreneurship as an Employability Skill in Business Education

The concept of entrepreneurship has been defined by many authors and their views range from the roles they play in our lives socially, politically and economically. According to Gana in Nwaoga, Ezeibe and Omeke (2013) entrepreneurship refers to the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an



environment, and being able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on identified opportunities. Also, Iwok and Akpanuko (2014) defined entrepreneurship as the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. The wealth is created only by those who assume the major risks in terms of time, equity or in a career commitment to provide value for some product or service. The product or service may be completely new or an innovation out of an existing one; a clear manifestation of effective manipulation of human intelligence as demonstrated in creative performance (Iheonunekwu, 2003). It is the purposeful activity of an individual or a group of associated individuals, undertaken to initiate, maintain or aggrandize profit by production or distribution of economic goods and services (Ottih, 2014). Oduma (2012) noted that entrepreneurship education seeks to prepare people especially youths to be responsible, enterprising individual who become entrepreneurs and contribute to economic development and sustainability of their societies or communities.

Oduma (2012) maintained that the inclusion of entrepreneurial development in higher institutions will inject a new life and change the mindset of the graduate beneficiaries of the entrepreneurial course. This will no doubt help to make the students to become self-sufficient, self-reliant and be economically engaged upon graduation. It is a programme of instruction that enables the beneficiary to be properly equipped to establish and operate a profit oriented business. Entrepreneurial instruction involves a specialized training given to students of business education to enable them acquire the necessary skills and managerial abilities for self-employment instead of taking a paid job.

2. Information and Communication Technology as an Employability Skill in Business Education

These are technological skills and competency required to be possessed by business education graduates to make him/her employable and as well relevant in the ever-changing business world. They need ICT employability skills as Microsoft office. Almost all workers have some similarity with Microsoft word, but in interview scenario individuals who can carry out mail merges, format documents, modify micro script and execute other complex functions are highly favoured for recruitment. Another employability skill needs include the use of spreadsheets, amenities with spreadsheets programs, especially Microsoft excel, is referenced in many job placement, therefore, candidates who can manipulate and create complex Microsoft to organize spreadsheet information will automatically have an advantage over others who do not. Power point is another important aspect of ICT employability skill required of business education graduates.

A solid grasp of PowerPoint for workers who will conduct some dynamic presentations or prepare materials for bosses and colleagues is very important. It is



expedient that business education graduates should acquire and show employers some attribute examples of preparations of this skill. Furthermore, Microsoft access and quick books data manipulation and accounting payroll invoicing and financial reporting are highly needed for accounting transactions and other administrative duties. Lastly emailing, graphic writing, privacy protection and web and social skills should be included in business education curricula because most organizations are looking to enhance their foot prints on the web and within the domain of social media.

3. Accountancy Education as an Employability Skill in Business Education

Siegel & Sorensen in Ghada, (2016) reported that to have a successful career in accounting education, the graduates should have communication skills, the capability to work as a team, they should possess critical thinking and a solid knowledge of accounting. Similarly, Jackling and DeLange (2009) posited that team skills are very important, as well as leadership potential, verbal communication and interpersonal skills. The two most important skills are oral and written communication (DeLange, Jackling and Gut, 2006; Borzi and Mills, 2001). Borzi and Mills suggest the need for better curricula to develop communication skills, as they exposed a significant level of communication difficulties in accounting students.

4. Distributive Education as an Employability Skill in Business Education

In this specialization, business education graduates need to acquire the necessary distributive skills and terminology needed to be successful in the competitive world of marketing. Areas of interest should include but are not limited to: advertising skills such as the ability to communicate effectively, persuasiveness and planning, retailing and merchandising skill as negotiation, commitment to make things happen and coping with and enjoying uncertainty, business operations skill like decision making, opportunity seeking and flexible responding to challenges, promotion and inventory control in terms of computer literate ability to relate well to customers, pricing and so on.

5. Office Management Education as an Employability Skill in Business Education

Employability skills of business education graduate can be effective where the specific skill and its application is described in course materials and learning objectives and where it is clearly located within the context of a given discipline. Good employability skills describes how well students are thought and will be addressed. Office management and technology skills entail good communication, time management, data capturing, report writing, minute taking, bookkeeping, filing management amongst others office, administrators are required in all sectors of the economy and there is a demand for their expertise in the workplace.

6. Sales Management Education as an Employability Skill in Business Education



Kelebogile (2014) defined employability as the acquisition set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make and more likely to choose and secure occupations in which the person can be satisfied and successful. Kelebogile, posited that graduate employability is the ability of graduates to secure jobs in the labour market, being equipped with most of the skills most envisaged by the employers and the ability to participate and contribute to the knowledge economy by applying what they learned in higher education and also improve their social standing and the country's economy.

The business education graduates have to learn to adapt to the changes in the work environment which was necessitated by globalization and technology in the country's economy. The business education upon graduations would work as a company representative and should have good knowledge of computer, internet and other electronic devices. Continuous learning and development of generic skills increase their employability prospects. Career resilience plays an important part in one's employability. Kelebogile (2014) defined career resilience as "the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, even when the circumstances are discouraging or disruptive". Those who are career resilient reflect the characteristics identified with employability. Effective communication, adaptability to change, positive and flexible attitudes, continuous learning, self-confidence, willingness to take risks, and a commitment to personal excellence are all characteristics of sales manager employability skill

Conclusion

Empowerment of Nigeria youth is necessary. Business education has been described as an aspect of vocational and technical education that is concerned with the acquisition of pedagogical and professional competencies in industry and education necessary for personal use, for entry into the business world as an employer or employee or self-employed and for effective participation in the educational industry as a professional business teacher, Business education has prominent role to play in the empowerment of the youths in Nigeria. The knowledge, attitudes and skills acquired through business education is adequate to empower the youths. From the foregoing, it is clear that the employability skills acquired through business education such as that of entrepreneurship, information and communication technology, accountancy education, distributive education, office management education and sales management education are needed for the youths to be able to live a useful life in society.

Recommendations

- In this paper the following recommendations are made:
- 1, Efforts should be intensified to constantly review business education curriculum to meet the current trends of advancement in technology.



2. There is need to constantly expose the business education students to the practical aspect of the programmes. This will assist them to acquire practical knowledge, competencies and skills in business working environments.
3. Government, philanthropic organization and individuals as well as non-governmental agencies should be encouraged to fund business education programmes.
4. There is need for collaborative programme between the institutions and the industry. This will assist to reshape students' knowledge, attitudes and competencies in completion of their studies.

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