

Shaping The Skills of Business Education Students to Enhance Employment Opportunities in Nigeria

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Abstract

This research work looks at how Business Education skills acquired by students in the course of their study, could be shaped to enhance student's employability in Nigeria. Some of the skills were identified and its' relevance to employment generation were discussed, they include; Business Management skills and Employment generation, Personal Entrepreneurial and Employment generation, Technical skills and Employment generation, Computer Appreciation skills and Employment generation. Other relevant issues such as objectives and goals of business education, structure of business education, employment generation and employment opportunities for business education graduates were thoroughly discussed. It was suggested amongst others that University Authorities should establish a Business Education Skills Acquisition Centre to enable Business Education students have practical sessions of course content to enhance their business management skills and function effectively as graduates in the world of business.

Introduction

Business Education as a course is known to be one of the skilled acquisition courses offered in vocational and technical education programme in the tertiary institutions. Ogidi and Umezulike (2017) asserted that business education is a course that prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business, and it is equally important because it prepares students to handle their own business affairs and to function intelligently as consumers and producers of goods and services as well as better citizens in a business economy. Business Education to Okoye and Udegbonam (2018) is that type of education that gives the individual what they need to succeed either in small scale or large scale business. Amoor and Udoh, (2008), asserted that business education plays a significant role in Nigeria economic growth and development. To Amoor and Udoh, business education improves personal qualities and builds the attitudes of individuals that are necessary for adjustment to personal and employment situations and provide knowledge skills and competencies for individuals to function well in office occupation and also create job for themselves and others. This implies that business education trains and enhances skills and knowledge needed for office employment and management of personal, private and public business organization. Business education motivates students to become hardworking and gives them the drive to move up in the workforce (Okoye and Udegbonam, 2018). Thus business education graduates are efficient and productive due to their exposure to education, administrative, managerial, entrepreneurial, accounting, business, marketing, vocational and technical oriented courses while on training or study.

Concept of Business Education

Business education is a vocational, administrative, managerial, accounting, marketing and secretarial oriented course that could be obtained both at colleges of education and universities. Umeh and Oguejiofor (2018) asserted that business education as a component of vocational education prepares individual for career in business and also be intelligent consumers of economic goods and services. Umezulike in Ogidi and Umezulike (2017) described business education as education that involves teaching students the fundamentals, theories and processes of business and education.

Agwumezie (1999), sees business education as a programme that prepares students for entry into and advancement of jobs within the business. Igboke (2000), view business education as a dynamic field of study that geared towards preparing youths and adults for and about business. Business Education is an important part of the general education which emphasizes on skills and competencies acquisition that can be applied for teaching office administration / management and business related occupations.

Iwuh (2016), sees, business education as a study that equips an individual with the occupation skills and knowledge that will enable him or her fit into and find job satisfaction in the labour market. Njoku (1997), sees business education as that facet of educational training that help the individual to acquire relevant skills needed for a living. Again, Njoku (2006), defined business education as an educational programme that equips an individual with functional skills, knowledge, attitude and value that would enable him/her operates in environment he/she find himself/herself.

Moreover, business education is an administrative, managerial, business, marketing, secretarial and skills acquisition oriented course preparing its recipients to fit into private and public offices and to be self-reliance in any environment they find themselves. Okoye and Udegbonam (2018) opined that Business Education motivates students to become hardworking and gives them the drive to move up in the workforce and raises people's productivity, creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advancement. Business education gives individuals the skills to live, learn and work as productive citizens in a global society.

Objectives and Goals of Business Education

Ekpenyoung (2010) in Umeh and Oguejiofor (2018) listed the following as objectives of business education.

1. to develop individuals who are properly equipped with the pre-requisite knowledge and skills for productive work life.
2. to develop a pool for competent and reliable technical manpower, capable of being mobilized in times of national economic emergency.
3. to develop individuals who will be capable of meeting the modern business and technological challenges.
4. to develop in the youth, the right attitudes and skills towards work.
5. to equip the youth with the requisite knowledge and skills for paid or self-employment.
6. to prepare the youth for meeting community, state and national economic aspirations.
7. to enable the youths, choose and perfect on those areas of business education for which they have interests and aptitude.
8. to equip the learners to develop skills for making national economic decision in various areas of business.
9. to provide student with vocational and technical knowledge.
10. to enable the learners to relate their expertise to the needs of their communities.
11. to prepare business and industrial managers who will be capable of meeting technological and managerial complexities of modern industry, and to provide the vocational and technical knowledge in various areas of business.

More so Obi and Otamiri (2010) as cited by Olise (2014) outline actual and operative goals of business education as:

1. to produce efficient and effective management, secretarial, accounting and marketing managers.
2. to produce lecturers who will handle business and management courses in our universities and colleges of education.
3. to prepare people for self-employment in situation where there is no available paid employment.
4. to propagate the development of business through the teaching of business and management.
5. to expose the students via the available courses to the limitless horizon of the business world and prepare them for roles as qualified administrators and managers in business organization.
6. to develop in the students' requisite skills and expertise in management of both private and public enterprise and arm them with the analytical ability needed to meet the growing challenges of present and future Nigeria and International environment.

Ubulom (1999) as cited in Obi (2012) outline the goals of Business Education to include:

1. to make available to all students the opportunities to explore and learn about the world of business and the possible interests and potential careers it has to offer.
2. to help develop in all students the ability to choose wisely the goods and services that business has to offer.
3. to assist in developing all intelligent understanding on the part of all students of the various occupation to be found in the world of business.
4. to enable students acquires business knowledge and skills that may be needed for personal use.
5. to prepare students to enter into and follow business as a career.
6. to prepared students to perform business activities common to many professional areas.
7. to prepare students for more effective study in the field of business.
8. to prepare students to be business teachers.

Furthermore, Aina (2002) listed the goals of business education to include the following:

1. to apply the various business concepts acquired in class to real life situation.
2. to acquire skills and the competencies required for the performance of basic business job.
3. to keep simple records of financial and other transactions in the office and operate and cater for office machines and equipments.
4. to identify and discriminate among alternatives available to them in the market given limited resources.

Structure of Business Education

Business education programme is structured in such a way that the courses offered both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels acquaint its recipients or graduates to be efficient, productive, marketable and employable. Business education courses include; principles of management, basic word processing, marketing management education, introduction to computer, principles of instruction, philosophy of education, curriculum development, financial accounting, quantitative financial analysis, leadership behaviour, history and philosophy of science, business education methods, test and measurement, sociology of education, philosophy and logic, office management; educational technology, elements of business administration, practical teaching, educational administration and planning, business education statistics, business law, production management, data processing and management information system, educational psychology, research methods and data processing, business machines, cost accounting, consumer behaviour, data processing and management information system, entrepreneurship development, project evaluation, administration of vocational and technical education, Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), organization of primary and secondary education, comparative education, small business development, professional seminar, business education and industrial relation, sales management, business finance, manpower development, instructional strategies in business education, professional business communication, advanced financial accounting, management accounting, government accounting, contemporary issues in business education, auditing, taxation, business mathematics, business statistics, administrative theory and practice, administrative and supervision in business education, managerial economics, office information system, human resources management etc.

Skills Acquired in Business Education

Looking at the numerous identified designated goals and objectives of business education, one is convinced that business education does not only make its graduates to be professional teachers, it does also nurture and train them to be competent and productive managers and administrators of business organizations.

Business Management Skills and Employment Generation

These skills include finance, control, accounting, management, human relations, decision making, negotiation, planning and goal setting, venture launching, growth management (Epelle, Orlu & Okparanta, 2017). Business management skills include the ability to supervise business effectively, ability to source funds for running of small-scale business, knowledge of business registration, ability to plan for small-scale or medium-scale business, ability to be resourceful and creative, ability to develop skills for the gradual growth and development of firm, ability to develop skills of keeping accounting records of small-scale business, ability to redefine risk as opportunity to make use of the expertise, ability to handle crises whenever they occur, ability to identify and use market opportunities, ability to set appropriate goals, and ability to manage customers and maintain business ethics. Business management skills also encompass decision making, human relations, marketing, planning and goal setting skills (Ogwunte & Ile, 2017). Business management skills are attributes a person running a business should have to ensure its business goals are met. These skills are usually acquired through on - the - job experience or by studying them on your own time. Employers are more likely to hire employees with business management skills because such employees have knowledge on the operations of every department in a business. Business management skills also comprises planning and goal setting, human relations, decision making, management, control, negotiation, finance, marketing, managing growth, accounting and venture launch (Bumalay, Sulabo, & Ragus, 2008).

Personal Entrepreneurial Skills and Employment Generation

These skills include flexibility, risk taking, persistence, driver, imagination, competitiveness, innovativeness, inner control discipline, change orientation (Epelle, Orlu & Okparanta, 2017). In the same vein, Ogwunte and Ile (2017) identified personal entrepreneurial skills as the ability to identify challenges of personal entrepreneurship, ability to understand personal entrepreneurial regulations, ability to evaluate business ideas, ability to identify business resources, ability to understand the roles of commercial and development banks, knowledge of relevant markets and having self-confidence, knowledge of relevant machines, aggressiveness and resourcefulness, knowledge of relevant products, technical skills in specific areas, negotiating and marketing skills, persuasive, leadership and financial management skills and being answerable to oneself. According to Muhyi (2017), personal entrepreneurial skills include inner control, risk taker, innovative, change oriented, persistent, visionary leader and ability to manage change.

Personal entrepreneurial skills can encompass a large range of both soft and hard skills. Because of the many business roles entrepreneurs may take on, they may also develop a variety of different skill sets to accommodate the growth of their businesses and brands.

Developing the following skill sets can also help one develop entrepreneurial skills.

- Teamwork and leadership skills
- Communication and Listening
- Customer service skills
- Financial skills
- Analytical and problem-solving skills
- Management and organizational skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Strategic thinking and planning skills
- Branding, marketing and networking skills

To be a successful business owner, one may need to develop one's personal entrepreneurial skills (Indeed Career Guide, 2020).

Technical Skills and Employment Generation

These skills include team work, coaching skills, listening skill, technology skills, oral communication skills, writing skills, interpersonal skills, environmental monitoring skills and organizing skills (Epelle, Orlu & Okparanta, 2017). Technical skills can refer to the ability to perform tasks that require the use of certain tools, whether tangible or intangible, and the technology required to master their intended use in a variety of scenarios. Obviously, the knowledge in technical skills ability is seen as practical in nature because it allows an individual to complete a chosen task in a real not theoretical, manner. Given the growth of technology within worldwide and local economies, the need for diverse technical skills and knowledge is likely to continue to grow into the foreseeable future.

The acquisition of advanced technical skills requires specific education or training, often with practical learning components and many advanced topical elements. Technical skill requirements are listed for the majority of career fields, with the highest concentrations on engagement in areas involving scientific, technological, engineering, computational and business capabilities. Technical skills could also refer to the technical know-how and expertise needed to carry out or accomplish complex actions, tasks and processes relating to computational and physical technology as well as a varied group of other enterprises. Those who possess technical skills are often referred to as "technicians", with the expression referring to audio technicians, electronics technicians, market technicians, computer technicians, engineering technicians, those who possess technology skills and a variety of other designations. Technical skills are practical in nature, typically related to various fields (Farley, 2019).

Technical skills also refer to skills acquired by using and gaining expertise in performing physical or digital tasks. There are many different kinds of technical skills. Customarily, people working in mathematics, computer science, mechanics and information technology have used many technical skills. Today, however, many more industries rely on employees with technical knowledge. For instance, retail workers often need to know how to use point-of-sale (POS) software to do their business. Some specific examples of technical skills might include: Programming languages, Common operating systems, Project management, Technical writing, Software proficiency and data analysis.

Technical skills vary widely between businesses and job type. For computer programmers, knowledge of various coding languages is considered a technical skill. Customer service representatives may need technical skills relating to customer management and telephone systems. Teachers might need technical skills related to instructional technologies and software applications ranging from student behavior monitoring to grading. Because of the availability of software programs for financial analysis, marketing, planning and other business processes, it can be enormously beneficial to develop one's technical skills. Entrepreneurs with efficient technical skills can use software and other digital approaches for managing projects, tracking sales and revenue and measuring the performance of business growth. This skill also aids in employment generation (Indeed Career Guide, 2020).

Computer Appreciation Skills and Employment Generation

A computer basic skill involves the use of computers efficiently. Skills on the other hand can simply be put as the ability to do things well. Computer appreciation skill can be regarded as the potentials one acquires that makes him or her capable of operating and using the computer efficiently. Performing basic operations like starting a computer, using the mouse, managing various windows, etc. may seem like a puzzle to one who has never seen a computer. Allison (2016) stated that skills such as turning computer on and off, copying, deleting and renaming files are required in performing basic operations. The researcher further stressed that a computer literate teacher must be familiar with computer terms; know how computers work; be able to enter and retrieve data; know the uses of computers; able to programme a computer; know the future general direction of computers; artificial intelligence, and robotics and understand the abuse and misuse of the computer so that students will realize that such problems exists. Acquisition of these skills will enable the business studies teacher impact instructions on computer appreciation effectively.

Computer appreciation skills can be used effectively as a cognitive tool as well as an instructional media. They can be helpful in classroom by encouraging inquiry, helping communication, constructing teaching products, and assisting students' self-expression. It is impossible not to pay attention to the significant impact of technology when discussing instruction, education, or training issues. The use of computers in education opens a new area of knowledge and offers a tool that has the potential to change some of the existing educational methods. The teacher is the key to the effective exploitation of this resource in the educational system. As computer usage continues to increase in society, teachers must also prepare for the use of computers within the classroom (Gilakjanim, 2013).

Ibelegbu (2013) asserted that a computer literate graduate should have the following skills: the ability to programme and control a computer for personal, academic and professional goals; the ability to use a variety of computer applications software within a personal, academic and professional context; the ability to understand the increasing social, economic and psychological impacts that computers are having on groups and individuals; the ability to make use of ideas from computer programme and computer applications as part of an individual's strategy retrieving information, communication and problem solving. The adoption and integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into the educational programme of a country cannot be overemphasized. It has been discovered that knowledge of (ICT) usage improves human capacity in every field of human endeavour, including business transaction, industrial operations, educational programmes and activities and life in general (Achibong, Ogbeji, & Obildem, 2010). Hence, without ICT or Computer appreciation skills in this era of technology, employment generation cannot be achieved.

Employment Generation

Employment generation is the process involved in engaging the labour force in productive activities in the economy. The desired employment condition in the economy today is full employment. But in the developing country like Nigeria, it is a ruse because the dream is yet to be achieved. Full employment is a situation where there are more jobs than men. It does not mean that everybody in the labour force is employed. A condition of full employment can be said to exist if the number of unfilled vacancies is equal to the number of people who are out of work (Yusuf, 2014). Unemployment rate of 4 and 5% will be compatible with the aims of full employment in any dynamic economy. The problem of unemployment in Nigeria has given the stakeholders (government, employers of labour) sleepless nights. The phenomenon of Nigeria is unemployment which has degenerated the living condition of the masses. In realization of this, several bodies, state, federal government, UN and others, multilateral agencies have incorporated employment generation as their key target.

Employment Opportunities for Business Education Graduates

The Master of Science Degree (M.Sc) in Business Education Handbook of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (2017), outlines some employment opportunities for business education graduates. They include:

1. Teacher of Business subjects in Secondary School.
2. Administrators of Vocational / Technical Programme at Federal, State and Local Government Level.
3. Lecturers in NCE Programme in Colleges of Education or Polytechnics.
4. Lecturers in ND or HND in Secretarial Studies / Office Technology and Management (OTM), Accounting, Marketing, Business Administration in Polytechnics.
5. Lecturers (Graduates Assistant) in First Degree Programme in Business Education in Universities.

Other areas business education graduates can secure employment opportunities include:

- a. As Administrative Officers in Tertiary Institutions.
- b. As Administrative Officers in Federal and State Ministries, Agencies and Commissions.
- c. As Administrative Officers in Oil & Gas Sector, Maritime Sector, Health Sector and Banking Industries.
- d. As Managers to Business Organizations.
- e. As Public Relation Officers of Multi-National Companies.
- f. As a Bursar in Secondary Schools.
- g. As a Clearing and Forwarding Agent.
- h. As Sales Manager.
- i. As Account Officer.
- j. As Officers (Administrative Section) in the Army Force, Navy, Custom, Immigration etc.
- k. As Financial Officer
- l. As Market Research Analyst
- m. As Advertising manager

Source: Association of Business Education Students Handbook, Delta State University Chapter (2017)

Conclusion

Business Education skills such as Business management skills, Personal entrepreneurial skills, Technical skills and Computer appreciation skills are possessed by Business Education graduates for employment generation to an extent. There is significant relationship between Business Education skills and Employment generation in Nigeria. Therefore, it is pertinent that these skills acquired by business education students, should be constantly shaped in a bid to continue to enhance the student's employability in the dynamic business environs of Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the research so far conducted, the following recommendations are made:

1. University Authorities should establish a Business Education Skills Acquisition Centre to enable Business Education Students have practical sessions of course content to enhance their business management skills to function effectively as graduates in the world of business.
2. Employers of labour should ensure that Business Education graduates are adequately utilized and their technical skills measured. This will motivate them to improve their skills to function more skilfully in the world of business.
3. Curriculum Designers of Business Education should include a compulsory six months personal entrepreneurial skills training programme for under graduates of Business Education to enable them become highly-skilled individuals in their future work place.

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