



POVERTY ERADICATION AND FUTURE TRANSFORMATION IN NIGERIA: THE PLACE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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Abstract

The place of business education programme in poverty eradication and future transformation of the citizens of a nation, Nigeria inclusive, cannot be overemphasized. It is one of the programmes/courses that are recognized for establishing the citizenry entrepreneurial skills that create employment opportunities and drive the recipients to be self-reliant and self-empowered even in the face of economic recession. The course is not only centred on foundation for commercial growth of an individual or a nation but lays great emphasis on global transformation. Thus, this paper discusses the concept of poverty, its types, causes and the measures to palliate it. The paper also probes the hindrances bedevilling business education as a tool for poverty eradication and future transformation. It is recommended, among others, that government should provide more functional equipment as well as the enabling environment that will foster the needed training for business education students at all levels of education. The recipients of Business Education should also be productive and character-wise so as to be able to practicalise what they have learnt while in school in order to become employers of labour rather than job seekers.

Keywords: Business education, Poverty Eradication, Future Transformation, Entrepreneurial Skills, Employment Opportunities.

Word count: 186

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How to cite: Yahya, L.O, Ikuenomore, S.S. & Balogun, A.M. (2024). Poverty Eradication and Future Transformation in Nigeria: The Place of Business Education Programme. *Educational Perspectives*, 10(1), 211-222.



Introduction

The poverty situation across the globe is becoming much pathetic as it is regarded as one of the major developmental hindrances to any economic growth and sustainable development. This connotes that poverty is considered as a global phenomenon and Nigeria happens to be among the victims of this ugly phenomenon. However, there is a strong belief that poverty can be greatly influenced by the type and level of education acquired by the nation's citizens as functional education is achieved through a tool of economic empowerment and transformation.

The World Poverty Clock 2023, a tool used for tracking world poverty progress worldwide revealed that Nigeria has the awful distinction of being the world capital of poverty, with 71 million people living in extreme poverty and a total of 133 million people classed as multi-dimensionally poor according to National Bureau of Statistics data (Punch online, June 2023). However, the poverty situation in Nigeria has become so consequential, as it is regarded as one of the major developmental challenges to her economic and social growth. According to Okafor, Awak and Dalyop-Jah (2019), poverty is antithetical to human right. These authors affirmed that about 50% of Nigerian populations are living in poverty. With this, Nigerians cannot with any degree of comfort afford the basic needs of life which are food, clothing and shelter. Okafor *et al.* (2019) also opined that in the developing economy, more than 1.2 billion people live on less than one dollar per day at purchasing parity and more than 2.8 billion live on less two dollar per day. It therefore means that these sets of people often suffer from malnutrition, poor health and also live in an environmentally degraded areas or battered urban slum.

This premise, based on the aforementioned, according to Idowu, Gberevbie, Moses, Duruji and Bankole (2013), made successive Nigerian government to institute some viable measures in lessening or eliminating poverty and its effects on the country's citizens. These measures included but are not limited to some of the following; setting up of the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI); Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW); National Directorate of Employment (NDE); Bank of Industry (BOI); the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP); Subsidy re-investment and empowerment Programme (Sure-P); National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS), among others. These poverty interventions mentioned here upon their implementation seem not to have achieve their purpose though sustaining them could tackle poverty.

Moreover, the several poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria seem to have failed to achieve due to the overlapping functions among the institutions which led to the destructive



contention and conflicts among these public institutions. It is based on these suggestions that the Federal Government of Nigeria launched a programme in 2013 as the framework for the integration of out-of-school children from the South-East and South-South States into the Basic Education Programme (FGN, 2013). Meanwhile, 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 growth and development of the society. The initiative of this programme was expected to reduce the out-of-school syndrome occasioned by get rich-quick attitude of youths. This initiative would, among others, ensure human capacity development and poverty minimization. However, the initial laudable programmes were never fully implemented by the government and therefore remained no powerful tool in alleviating poverty elimination as was ab initio planned.

Subsequently, in one of the four key strategies of NEEDS, (that is, implementing a social charter which laid emphasis on welfare, health, education, employment, poverty reduction, empowerment, security and participation), business education as a programme plays a vital role in poverty alleviation. With about 50% percent of the population as youths, education is a spot under the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) as one of the most important bridges to the future and a powerful instrument of empowerment (Okafor, *et al.*, 2019). Business education in this regard is perceived as the instrument of empowerment that offers the basic preparation for two of the most important endeavours known to mankind, that is, business and education.

Business Education which is an integral part of Vocational Education is the kind of education for employability. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) 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. As maintained by Ezeji, Ugwoke, Edeh and Okanazu (2015), Business Education is practically oriented and provides individuals with skills in business-related occupations such as accounting, marketing and office occupation. It is in this wise that business education is regarded as education for business and education about business.

Concept of Poverty

The term “Poverty” is a multidimensional phenomenon and these dimensions could be summarized as lack of opportunities, lack of empowerment and lack of security. However, what these statements connote is that the window of opportunity remains closed to the poor



masses and makes them practically inactive in the society. Also, their lack of empowerment limit their choices in almost everything while their lack of security makes them more vulnerable to diseases, violence among others. This summarizes the United Nations statement as cited in Ucha (2010) that:

Poverty is a denial of choices, opportunities and a violation of human dignity. This means that there is lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in the society; not having enough to feed and clothe a family; not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living and not having access to credit. It also include insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities, susceptibility to violence which implies that one is living on marginal or fragile environments without access to clean water or sanitation (p46).

However, it has been perceived that poverty yields are catastrophic at every stage of human life starting from the moment of conception to the grave. It conspires with the most deadly and painful diseases to bring a wretched existence to those who suffer from it (Ucha, 2010). Concurrently, poverty has no universally accepted definition and this does not connect with the various yardsticks used in measuring poverty among individuals and nations. This made the United Nations defined poverty as a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs which includes food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, shelter, health, education and information.

Nonetheless, it is generally considered as a social problem which is viewed from the perspective of “moneylessness and powerlessness”. The moneylessness signifies chronic inadequacy of resources of all types to satisfy basic human needs such as nutrition, rest and bodily care while that of powerlessness denotes lack of opportunities and choices open to the non-poor and being ruled by forces and persons outside their control by people in position of authority or by perceived evil forces or hard luck (Alonge, 2014).

In Nigeria today, the widespread of severe poverty is a reality. It is a reality in the sense that the poor people faces a lot of hardship in the area of basic amenities such as lack of food that are nutritional, good clothing, education and other basic amenities. These poor people lack the basic necessities of life to the extent that one could be wondering how these people coped, managed and survived in this hardship period. They are, however, exposed to several health issues due to lack of basic health amenities and competent medical practitioners. The poor children of these poor Nigerians do not have the opportunity of being immunized thereby leading to certain physical defects in some children. Their health concern becomes their low priority as they have little or no choices with what they have or see.



Forms of Poverty

Poverty as it may be could be classified into four categories. They are absolute poverty, relative poverty, situational poverty and chronic or generational poverty.

- i. **Absolute Poverty:** This can be defined as the state in which a person lacks the means to meet the basic needs of life. This basic need is attributed to food, water, shelter, basic education and basic medical care. However, a large number of people are suffering from this absolute poverty because they tend to struggle to live and experience a lot of child deaths as the parents could not prevent them from the diseases like malaria, cholera and water contamination related diseases. Meanwhile, this type of poverty is not really common in most developed countries but are very rampant in both developing and undeveloped countries of which Nigeria is part of them.
- ii. **Relative Poverty:** This can be described as when an economic status of a household's income is not sufficient enough to meet its society's average standard of living. It therefore connotes that the resources available for the family are insufficient when compared with the societal acceptable standard of living. People under this category do have access to food, water, medicine and free housing among others in which their government has been able to provide. However, what these categories of people suffer from is that they could not do better than their counterparts who could send their wards to better institutions, provides better medical care, go on vacation among others.
- iii. **Situational Poverty:** This form of poverty is generally caused by sudden death, crises or loss of a household to some disasters which are often temporal. They are usually caused by environmental disaster, severe health challenge or divorce. The household or individual who falls under this category do get an assistance from friends, relatives or corporate bodies who help them out of this ugly situation as the root course of their poverty was just one unfortunate event.
- iv. **Chronic/Generational Poverty:** This can be described as a phenomenon whereby an individual or group of individuals is in a state of poverty over an extended period of time. As the name implies, this kind of poverty is handed over to individuals or families from generations before them. People who fall under this category are usually trapped and may not really have access to the tools that would help them get out of it (Olu-Alonge and Alonge, 2020).

Causes of Poverty

Poverty can be attributed to a lot of factors. These include:



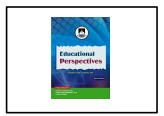
1. Income inequality
2. Conflicts and unrest in the land
3. Natural disasters
4. Health and disability of the people
5. Gender discrimination
6. Inheritance of poverty
7. Lack of education, training and skills.

Conceptual Clarification of Business Education

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 and Anyanwu, 2012). 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). 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.

Identification of Viable Business Opportunities to Business Education Graduates

Business education furnishes its recipients with numerous skills that would enable them to identify viable investment opportunities in the society. In this regard, the beneficiaries of this programme see viable opportunities where others could not identify any. It provides its recipients with the right skills that would make it possible for them to use the SWOT



(strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis to function well as entrepreneurs. With this context in mind, it is observed that business education promotes entrepreneurship by promoting people to strive towards the utilization of the identified opportunities through taking calculative risks (Gidado and Akaeze, 2014).

In the phase of skills for financial management, accounting education, which is an integral part of business education is thus, a potent tool for promoting financial prudence and business success. Supporting this assertion, Adamu (2009) stated that the inability of some small and medium-scale entrepreneurs to keep financial records negatively affects the growth of their businesses, their ability to secure loans from financial institutions and determination of cost and profit. To this end, the knowledge of business education would therefore help toward proper keeping of financial records as it would guide the entrepreneur in cost analysis, inventory control and profit determination.

In the phase of utilization of proper marketing skills, the inculcation of marketing skills is also among the focus of business education. According to Gidado (2011), marketers conduct surveys leading to the identification of people's needs and wants and develop products that would meet those needs and wants. It therefore implies that business education promotes entrepreneurship by making entrepreneurs to properly perform their entrepreneurial functions. This is because the knowledge of marketing would prompt them to make good use of the 7P's of marketing namely; product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence, thereby leading to the development of sound product idea which is translated into an acceptable product mix and making the entrepreneur to procure products that will be appealing to the customers. Finally, acquisition and utilization of the right marketing skills will promote entrepreneurship by leading to proper and acceptable pricing of the product, making it available at the right place and time as well as using the right promotional technique(s) to stimulate customers to buy the product.

In the phase of skills for proper business management, management however, is crucial to the success of any entrepreneurial effort. Corroborating this statement, Ezeji, Ugwoke, Edeh and Okanazu (2015) opined that managerial incompetence of some Nigerian entrepreneurs is among the problems of entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Business education can therefore help in tackling this problem and thus become a tool for promoting entrepreneurial skills. This is because the proficient skills attained in economics and management would make both current and potential entrepreneurs to successfully manage their ventures through the processes of planning, organizing, directing and controlling the available human and material resources.



Similarly, their knowledge of economics is expected to make them to be rational and also ensure proper allocation and utilization of the available resources.

Role of Business Education in Poverty Eradication

Business education, as stated earlier, plays a significant role in curbing the menace of poverty in the society. In the contemporary Nigeria, the problem of unemployment which has led many into poverty can be addressed through the implementation of appropriate policies and programmes as contained in the curriculum of business education.

The meaning of business education, as earlier defined, speaks about building of a strong foundation for those who wish to move into business activities rather than relying on white-collar jobs or government jobs that seem not available. This programme, 'business education' therefore contributes immensely to the eradication of poverty among Nigerian citizens in order to foster economic development in the following ways:

1. It helps individuals to set up small scale business enterprises. It implies that those who acquired the required knowledge and skills in business education tend to set up micro industries and other smallscale enterprises to liberate themselves from poverty rather than seeking white-collar jobs like their counterparts from other disciplines. In this regard, it will bring about a turnaround in the economic future of the individual and the country, thereby reducing the poverty level in the society.
2. Business education also plays the role of providing good citizenship by preparing students to become intelligent productive wage earners. Corroborating this statement, Oyerinde (2017) asserted that the knowledge gained from this course enhances the employability skills of graduates since the subject/course focuses on the training of people to acquire skills and knowledge that adequately prepare them for employment in business related occupations as it therefore disallows them from engaging in unlawful acts that could negate the ideals of good citizenship.
3. It also helps in the reduction of high incidence of school dropouts by providing alternatives for students of secondary school who lack interest in furthering their education to higher institution level. Furthermore, higher institution students can also engage in business ventures simultaneously without disrupting their academics and this will prepare them for a better future.
4. It also helps in preparing individuals for career that are based on manual and practical activities rather than certification. In this regard, Sani (2011) insisted that business



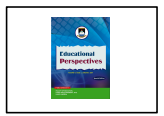
education assist individuals to make use of their hands and brain to better their deal and countermove the incidence of poverty in their lives and the society at large.

5. Business education also prepares individuals for life-long learning by developing in them the necessary mental tools, technical skills and other qualities needed for active participation as a team thereby increasing the productive manpower of the nation.

Challenges Facing Business Education Programme as a Tool in Eradicating Poverty

The shabbiness of functional education in Nigeria is denying the country of the benefits that would have been achieved or derived from it. Though there are many other problems that have culminated into the poverty level of the citizens, neglecting business education which is an aspect of vocational education could be said to be responsible for the increasing rate of unemployment as a casual factor of poverty. Some of the following are the challenges facing business education as a tool in eradicating poverty as posited by Olu-Alonge and Alonge (2020):

- i. Misconception of business education as the education for people with low intelligence. In the minds of many in societies, they believe that students who studied business education are students with little or no intelligence and this affects the morale and attitudes of the students towards the subject.
- ii. Lack of motivation for business education students such as award of scholarships, like their counterparts in engineering, medicine and the physical sciences also contribute to the challenges bedevilling the programme. This could be related to the state of its unacceptability as a discipline that is able to solve the problem of poverty in the society.
- iii. Another menace facing business education as a tool in curbing poverty is the shortage of equipment and infrastructural facilities for the training of business education students. Non-availability or shortage of equipment hinder the impartation of the right knowledge on the students to become more knowledgeable in their chosen field that could assist them to stand on their own.
- iv. Also, non-availability or shortage of qualified business educators who can teach business education curriculum effectively as well as cope with the changes in technology apparently poses a serious threat to the programme.
- v. Finally, lack of sincerity of purpose on the part of educational planners and those who are to implement the education policy also affect the programme. However, when there is no good synergy between the programme designers and the programme implementers, there is high tendency that the programme will be backwardly affected. Meanwhile, this does



not augur well for the emancipation of business education programme to curb the menace of poverty in the society as the resultant effects will be borne by the students as the institutions only end up in graduating half-baked graduates.

Conclusion

Business Education is a practical oriented programme, thus, it is a tool for poverty alleviation. In this paper, it was discussed that business education is a vital tool that equips students with the needed knowledge and skills to be self-reliant. In another vein, business education students can also be productive individuals who will become factors or drivers of the economy by applying the skills and ability learnt in the classroom situation into becoming entrepreneurs. However, the issue of unemployment in Nigeria is becoming more endemic and, therefore, requires a functional therapy that would make people employers of labour rather than job seekers. The role of business education in poverty eradication and sustainable development in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. It is an important type of professional education which aims at preparing students for the world of work and employers of labour. As a school subject, it plays a significant role in creating employments for a good number of unemployed school leavers and graduates especially during this time that the nation is faced with economic recession.

However, there are many factors that hinder the use of business education as a tool for poverty eradication in Nigeria. They include 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.

It is therefore concluded that government at all levels through appropriate agencies should actively create policies that will positively enhance the participation of graduates who are equipped with business competence (skills and knowledge) to actively engage in entrepreneurial business by providing facilities such as accessibility and minimal interest rate on loans, provision of adequate infrastructure and conducive business environment to operate in. It is further concluded that business education would help immensely in sustaining development in the country's business and economic development. Thus, business education is the proper education for poverty alleviation.

Recommendations

Based on the numerous potentials inherent in business education, the following recommendations are made:



1. Youths should be encouraged to have a change of attitude and perception towards the subject matter 'Business Education'. They should see it as a subject that can bring them out of poverty and make them to be self-reliant.
2. Recipients of business education should also be given the opportunity to benefit from scholarship scheme initiated by different financial institutions as well as other government and non-governmental agencies.
3. Modern technological equipment and other facilities should be made available and trainers should be trained in the use of modern technological equipment so as to aid their knowledge delivery to their students. Teachers/Lecturers should be given special training in teaching and research for improved instructional delivery. Practical training should be taken as a priority and training and retraining through seminars and conferences would be an added advantage.
4. Business Education curriculum should be reviewed on a regular basis so as to incorporate into it the needed skilled courses at any given time following the technological trend.
5. A synergy between educational planners and those that will implement the curriculum should be a top priority. This, however, would help to curb the crisis between the major stakeholders. In this regard, the body that is concerned with the monitoring and evaluation mechanism of business education should be tough with their assignment as stipulated in the law that established the discipline and other guiding principles.
6. Adequate fund should be made available for effective implementation of business education programmes.
7. Government and school administrators should emphasize more on the benefits of Vocational/Technical Education to individuals and the public as a whole in order to ameliorate the negative image of it.
8. Government investment in education, especially in Nigeria is discouraging as the budgetary allocation to the education sector is short of expectation. Government functionaries and law makers must strive to increase the budgetary allocation to the education sector and, doing that, it would bring great improvement and meaningful development to the nation.



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