

Job Creation and Economic Empowerment through Business Education

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Abstract

Despite the fact that the country has been operating business education system for years; the desires and aspirations of the government and people of Nigeria have remained a mirage. This is with reference to unemployment reduction, job creation, poverty reduction, and self-reliance motive of the government. Further, business education has been included in the curricula of tertiary institutions in Nigeria and yet the situation has not changed. It is in the light of this obvious problem and the imminent danger to the society compounded by the present global economic meltdown that this paper is canvassing for skill oriented and practical based in secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This is different from the presently mounted business education in tertiary institutions which lacked practical components, not goal oriented (theory as usual) and therefore impotent. This paper examines the importance of fully implementation of business education with recommendation that government must therefore wake up from slumber and implement business education as measures to create jobs, an instrument for change/development and a provider of service oriented skills which play a significant role in economic development or at least opportunities so that younger persons can be economically empowered to become self employed and not allowed to be deceived by reactionary forces or use them as agents of societal destruction.

Keywords: Economic Empowerment, Job Creation, Business Education and Nigeria.

Introduction

Several views and opinions have been in the past years argued on the meaning and the place of vocational education both at the levels of primary, secondary and university respectively. These developments have created moves in the inclusion of some vocational subjects and courses in the curriculum of both pre-primary, post-primary and even tertiary institutions all with a view to achieve the needed employable skills in the development of the youths and the society at large. The term business education is a comprehensive term referring to the educational process when it involves, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economy and social life. The broad educational goals of vocational and technical education distinguish it from "vocational training: which is directed to developing the particular skills and related knowledge required by a specific occupation or group of occupations in Anya and Neukar (2004).

The economies of nations which Nigeria is one are experiencing untold hardship that has resulted to shrinking industrial output, low level commercial activities, and loss of employment opportunities for millions of Nigerians. Despite living in a country with vast potential wealth created by the huge oil revenues, which forms 90% of federally generated revenue. A recent report from the federal office of statistics quoted that. "In 1980, an estimated 27% of Nigerians lived in poverty. By 1999, about 70% of the population had income less than US\$1.00 per day and the population has risen since then. However, many people live in abject poverty and unemployment when in actual sense, they could put their hands to work and survive amidst untold hardship in the economy. This component is crucial now than ever in the face of global economic depression, mass graduate unemployment and compulsory retirement and retrenchment of workers in the public and civil service.

Business Education in Nigeria

The National Board for Technical Education as a principal organ of Federal Ministry of Education was established to handle all aspects of Technical and Vocational Education outside university Education. In addition to providing standardized minimum guide curricula for technical and vocational Education and Training, the board supervises and regulates, through an accreditation process, the programmes offered by technical institutions at secondary and post

secondary levels. This organ has the mandate to uphold the ideals of a free, united and egalitarian society and promote good quality Technical and Vocational education, a system that is flexible and accessible to all for the purpose of producing competent and relevant technological manpower needed for sustainable national development. The mission of technical and vocational Education in Nigeria is to promote the production of skilled technical and professional manpower, to revitalize, and sustain the national economy, reduce unemployment and poverty.

Adenubi (1985) agreed that if these laudable objectives and policy pronouncements on vocational education are fully implemented, Nigeria will have an army of skilled manpower; the kind of manpower needed to create, operate, maintain and sustain the economy of a nation. However, Vocational Education in Nigeria has not done much in unemployment reduction and job creation. The system could be adjudged as contributing its quota to army of unemployed graduates, hence the massive youth unemployment in the country. It is true that the strength of any economy depends very significantly on the strength of its actualization of its potentials in entrepreneurial opportunities in our skills area. These skill units have high potential for job creation. To state the obvious, Business Education Programme could be rated wonderful, but lack of qualified manpower and infrastructural amenities that needed for the skills in the programme remain impotent.

Business Education and Empowerment in Nigeria

Technical and vocational education seeks to relate education to employment, job creation and self-reliance. Therefore, Okorie (2001) sees vocational education as that type of education, which develops the mental and physical qualities of people thereby increasing their skills, knowledge and attitudes required for utilizing the natural resources needed for economic development of the nation and for their own self-employment.

The declining economic fortunes and rising waves of unemployment through the years have greatly emphasized the need for entrepreneurship education and Vocational Education. The way forward in Nigeria is to shed the gap in basic education or grammar school type of education. In spite of the huge noise on the National Policy on Education of 1977 which placed so much emphasis on technological education, nothing much has been achieved in that respect. Successive governments tried to address this issue by the establishing of Federal Universities of Technologies and Federal Colleges of Education (Technical) throughout the states of the federation. This Vocationalization of education is a means of providing skilled man power. Besides the provision of manpower, the Federal Government, between 1981 and 1992 provided Technology grants in cash to some states to procure capital equipment in Technology for equipping unity schools. In addition to this the Federal Government also placed order for introductory technology equipment from Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria for all the Secondary schools in the country at a substantial cost. However, it is pertinent to note that the equipment did not arrive this country until the year, 1985, (source: Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja).

Regrettably, all these wonderful ideas and efforts made by the government have not done much in checking unemployment, poverty, joblessness and youth restiveness in the country. This suggests that our education system is ineffective and impotent. The reason is not farfetched. The potential rudimental competences of manpower are presently lacking in Vocational training and education. The entrepreneurial spirit/skills and attitude development are lacking in the business education as presently mounted in our tertiary institutions.

Nigeria and Nigerians have not shifted their attention from theoretical courses to skill entrepreneurial scheme. The half baked system of training with obsolete infrastructures in our school system compounded the problem. Over one million people sit for JAMB every year less than 2% of the population goes for skill based courses. There must be shift in our value orientation. Statistics has it that over 500, 000 youths graduate from NYSC, but less than 10% will acquire job. The remaining is still depending on relatives and parents even after five years of graduation. It is also clear that there is nowhere in the world government will provide jobs for the entire population, but will provide enabling environment for job creation. The reorientation towards business education must be the focus of government at large. A shift must be made from the presently mounted business education in our tertiary institution demands practical skill training for job competencies in the actual work environment. This is where the desirable skills, attitudes and competencies to attract and sustain a job could be developed.

Power and Empowerment

Understanding Power: At the core of the concept of empowerment is the idea of power. The possibility of empowerment depends on two things. First, empowerment requires that power can change. If power cannot change, if it is inherent in positions or people, then empowerment is not possible, nor is empowerment conceivable in any

meaningful way. In other words, if power can change, then empowerment is possible. This aspect means that gaining power actually strengthens the power of others rather than diminishing it such as occurs with domination/power. Kreisberg has suggested that power defined as "the capacity to implement" (Kreisberg, 1992:57) is broad enough to allow power to mean domination, authority, influence, and shared power or "power with." It is this definition of power, as a process that occurs in relationships, that gives us the possibility of empowerment.

Understanding Empowerment: Empowerment is a construct shared by many disciplines and the meaning of the term empowerment is often assumed rather than explained or defined. But that empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important. As a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society by acting on issues that they define as important. In business education; we strive to teach people skills and knowledge that will motivate them to take steps to improve their own lives and to be empowered.

Business Education and Job Creation: The Missing Link.

It is not debatable that training in vocational education is central to self reliance. We have also seen the concerted efforts made by successive governments to check unemployment by setting up of various craft centers and institutes. Government has also inculcated entrepreneurship education in NCE, polytechnics and university curricula. Similarly, schemes such as Industrial Training Fund (ITF) introduced in 1971 and the student industrial works experience scheme (SIWES) introduced in 1976, gives the students the much desired opportunity to work in companies while still in school, allowing a blend of what was learnt in school with what obtains in the work or business environment. Further, worthy of mention is the operation Feed the Nation Programme of the Obasanjo First leadership, Green Revolution of Shagari, The Better Life Programme of IBB years, The Poverty Alleviation Programme of Obasanjo, and most recently, NEEDS (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy) of the present government which is intended to make the private sector the engine of economic growth, by playing the role of enabler, facilitator and regulator, create jobs and generate wealth. All these lofty schemes and programmes are aimed at reducing unemployment, poverty and to serve as vehicle for promoting entrepreneurship and self-reliance. These ideas are wonderful and will produce the wonderful skilled men and women when harnessed.

The need to promote the entrepreneurial spirit /skill and incorporate training for self employment against this backdrop, training in entrepreneurship must be marched with the usual skills in business education, for example, a typist without adequate skills cannot succeed ever when encouraged to open a business center. Conversely a typist with adequate typing skills but without the requisite entrepreneurial training may also not succeed even when enough funds is pumped into opening a business center because of inadequate managerial capability.

What Nigeria needs now is more of production of skilled and self-reliant graduates from the secondary schools to the universities/ colleges of education (technical) polytechnics. In order to achieve the objectives of Technical and vocational education in the present economic realities, massive youth and graduate unemployment, youth restiveness, the country needs to go back to the drawing board to redesign our curriculum from primary, to secondary and tertiary institutions. Curriculum developers need to decide what kinds of skill, knowledge and attitudes are needed by the society. (Dawodu 2005:159)

Recommendations

The implications of this study is that institutions of learning and youth trainers should watch changes and demands of the labour market so that they could rethink, repackage, reposition and re-engineer their missions, messages and methods in line with the changing requirements of the labour market and those of the local communities continue. Nigerian institutions need to prepare a youth for life sustenance in all positive forms. Business educators should re-think their approaches and strategies of training, and possibly consider adopting the competency based mode of educational delivery. Here, training is centered on specific skills and learners are assisted to develop them. Also, the need arises for the equipment and facilities position of the training institution to be revisited. Effective business training requires that, machines and equipment is suitable to learners on a one on one basis to ensure sufficient practice and development of facility and speed. The situation where the student- equipment ratio is 50:1or no equipment at all is unacceptable and will not lead to effective acquisition of needed skills.

Conclusion

The role of grooming middle-level, intermediate and higher-level business graduate by the Nigerian tertiary educational institutions is gradually becoming very challenging. Since there are fewer job openings than graduates, the major challenge facing the institutions is to equip the graduates with appropriate skills and competencies for self-employment, self-reliance and where possible, employment in the formal sector. It is the possession of these skills needed by the labor market that will enable them contribute maximally to national development of the Nigerian nation. Nigeria needs a functional Technical and Vocational education for production of skilled and self-reliant graduates from secondary schools, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. In order to achieve the basic tenets of self-reliance and vocational education require for the Nigeria society, we need to go back to the drawing board and redesign our curriculum from the primary to secondary and tertiary institutions. Curriculum developers need to decide what kinds of skills, knowledge and attitudes are needed by the society.

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