

**IMPROVING THE STATE OF BUSINESS STUDIES OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL:
A STEP TOWARDS SOLVING YOUTHS UNEMPLOYMENT IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This paper focused on the pivotal role of Business Studies at secondary school level in solving unemployment problem among youths in Oyo State, Nigeria. It explained the nexus between Unemployment, Education, Business Studies and the role they play in promoting self-employment and reducing unemployment among Nigeria secondary school leavers. The paper also argued that Business Studies has the potentials to develop, teach and inculcate various business skills and competences in secondary school leavers to equip them for self-reliance and employability after their graduation. Types of unemployment were also outlined while self-employment opportunities available for Business Studies Secondary School Leavers were highlighted. Establishment and operation of Business Centres, Establishment of telecommunication service, the use of personal computer, knowledge of reprographic services and buying and selling were identified as some potent opportunities. The paper recommended that Business Studies should be incorporated into all levels of our education system in Nigeria to equip students with necessary skills for self-employment and should be adequately funded and equipped with modern ICT facilities.

Keywords: Education, Business studies, Employment and Youths

Introduction

Many secondary school leavers who are unable to further their education due to one reason or the other are unemployed, and the rate of unemployment is increasing everyday in Oyo State and generally in Nigeria. However, this situation is as pathetic as the rate of unemployment increases daily. The unemployed youths are roaming about the streets in cities and towns looking for white-collar jobs that are not available. Hornby in Asogwa and Dim (2016) defined unemployment as the number of people not having a job; the number of people without job; the state of not having a job. According to Udu and Agu in Binuomote, Oyedele and Ademiluyi (2017), unemployment is a phenomenon in which people who are competent and willing to work are unable to find suitably paid employment.

Unemployment implies non-utilization of labour (people who are strong and ready to work) in productive activity for a reward in terms of wages, salaries or profits. It breeds poverty, social vices like hooliganism, armed robbery, house breaking, political thurgery, prostitution, kidnapping, Yahoo activities among others are the youths restive acts which pervade Oyo State and Nigeria today in general (Oluwadare, 2015).

Education has been widely accepted as a crucial factor for economic and industrial development of any nation (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 1998) and (FRN 2004a). Education is also the key to national development. This is because it unlocks the economic potentials of people, empowers and equips individuals in the society to participate in and benefit from their national economy. It facilitates economic development and provides the basis for transformation. Education therefore, remains a vital transformational tool and formidable instrument for socio economic development, wealth creation, employment generation, poverty alleviation and value orientation which government has clamoured for so long now. Education is the essential tool for national economic sustainability. The present global economic

crisis suggests that the entire world is struggling for qualitative education (Udegbunam, Geius-Okeh and Amh, 2012).

The dire need of the present generation of youths for self-reliance and greater capacity building relevant to the national needs and interests informed the adoption of the National Policy on Education (NPE) by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1981. The NPE stipulated the acquisition of appropriate knowledge and skills necessary for the individual to secure paid employment in offices or to be self-employed and become useful members of the society. This, incidentally, are in tune with the goals of vocational and technical education towards providing necessary skills and competencies to individuals to be self-reliant economically (FRN, 2004a). Business Education being an integral part of Vocational and Technical Education has a major role to play in this regard, in order to equip the students with necessary skills as a step towards reducing unemployment among the youths. Sadly however, the emphasis in Nigeria is more on paper qualification obtained through exposure to theoretical learning which had hitherto permeated the educational system.

Undoubtedly, paper qualification reduces economic opportunities of the holders who are more oriented towards office work which has become non-existent. Thus, leading to rising youth's unemployment. More often than not, the public perceives students (youths) who take Business Studies or Commercial subjects as those who lack the ability to continue with formal academic studies in higher institutions or those with low intelligent quotient that cannot cope with their academic programmes in the institutions of higher learning.

In view of the place of Business Studies in the National Policy of Education, the academic snobbery against the subject is no longer the case. In Nigeria social recognition and advancement in work place/office depends to a large extent, on the level of academic qualification one has acquired. This explains why the youths are not interested in pursuing Business Studies which will make them employable or become self-reliant. Therefore, secondary schools that are operating Business Studies curriculum in the country lack professionally qualified teachers. The teachers are not exposed to workshops, seminars and conferences. Poor funding, inadequate equipment and facilities to perform, to teach effectively also constitute additional constraints. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to examine the nature of Business Education at the secondary school level of the Nigerian educational system with a view of identifying its objectives, its challenges and its job creation potentials. In doing this, the nexus between Business Studies, unemployment (causes and solutions) and opportunities available to recipients of Business studies, will be discussed. Consequently, the schools produce half-baked school leavers who cannot fit into labour market and who lack the skills to make their self-reliant.

Concept of Business Studies

Business Education is called Business Studies at Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) and in Senior Secondary Schools (SSS), the courses are separated and chosen as trade subjects/ commercial subjects. The courses are shorthand, book-keeping, commerce, office practice and keyboarding. They are courses that requires 'hands on' and 'minds on' activities (Enemuo and Ifeakor, 2010). They are learnt by practice, manipulation, critical thinking and creativity as some parts of computer are built into the schemes. Ikegwnani (2015) sees the subject as the one that teaches acquisition of skills and competencies necessary for either for the mold of work or for further education. Specifically, he opines that the subject helps the recipient to learn facts, acquire skills, develop abilities and solve personal economic problems aired at promoting national growth and development.

Nwokike in Jumbo and Nwokocha (2015) noted that Business Studies is one of prevocational subjects introduced in junior secondary school system in 1982 as part of subjects offered at basic 7-9 of the universal basic education under the 9-3-4 educational structure. Business studies therefore emphasize the practical acquisition of skills for trade and office occupations. Igboke in Jumbo and Nwokocha (2015) lists the general objectives of Business Studies as:

- a. To enable the students acquire basic knowledge of Business Studies.
- b. To develop basic skills in office occupations;
- c. To prepare students for further training in business courses;
- d. To prepare orientation and skills with which to start a life of work for those who may not undergo further training;
- e. To provide basic skills for further training in future;
- f. To relate the knowledge and skills to the national economy.

Unemployment is an undesirable economic and social problem particularly in a developing nation like Nigeria; therefore, efforts should be intensified through skills oriented subject to curtail its influence. This explains why the curriculum planners had introduced vocational studies in the school curriculum by making business studies a core subject. It is believed that this is done with the aim of reducing the level of unemployment and hunger in Nigeria.

Concept of Unemployment

Unemployment is the situation of actively looking for employment but not being currently employed. The unemployment rate is a measure of prevalence of unemployment and it is calculated as a percentage by dividing the number of unemployed individuals by all individuals currently in the labour force. That is, unemployment can be defined as a condition when a paid job is not available for those who are willing to work (Crowther, 2006). It is a situation where people who seek for jobs cannot find any. Lortyer and Udoye in Ann (2017) refer to unemployment as non-utilization of labour in any productive activity for a reward in terms of wages, salaries or profit.

According to Oyebade (2003) Nigeria's unemployment can be grouped into categories: first, the older unemployed who lost their jobs through retrenchment, redundancy, or bankruptcy; and second, the younger unemployed most of whom have never been employed. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 1996) in Binuomote (2010) views unemployment as the number of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work.

Although, there seems to be convergence on this concept, its applications have been bedeviled with series of problems across countries. First, most published unemployment rates are recorded as open unemployment. People's attitude on this, varies from country to country. While this may be high in developed countries and where government is committed to resolving unemployment problems, it is likely to be very low in countries with the opposite attributes.

Generally, most people simply understand unemployment to be a situation whereby people do not have a job". However, the concept of unemployment is far more complex than this situation. Generally, international community defines unemployment according to a resolution of International Labour Organization in 1982. One can only be regarded as "unemployed" if he/she is:

- "Without work", that means he/she was not in paid employment or self employment during a particular period.
- "Currently available for work", that means he/she was ready for a paid employment or self employment during the reference period.
- "Seeking work", that means he/she had taken specific steps in a specified recent period to seek paid unemployment of self-employment.

Unemployment is one of the key indicators of the economy. Preventing mass unemployment has universally been considered a primary goal of government. This is because employment indeed has great influence on both economic and social development. Unemployment may take the following different form as identified by the World Bank's World Development Report (2013).

Frictional Unemployment: This refers to the period between job transitions. People are regarded as unemployed while they are attempting to find a new job.

Cyclical Unemployment: This occurs during recessions of economic cycle. As a matter of facts, it is not surprising that during economic recessions, the demand for goods and services falls. Employers may respond by reducing the units of labour. When supply of labour is greater than the demand unemployment results. However, it is believed that such unemployment will disappear when the economy recovers.

Voluntary Unemployment: Under the economists' view, people tend to participate in workforce. Unemployment is usually regarded as involuntary. However, there are scenarios that people choose not to work. Voluntary unemployment describes such phenomenon. It is frictionally another type of frictional unemployment. It happens when people are not able to find employment that matches their expectations.

Structural Unemployment: This occurs when the skills, experience, and education of workers do not match job openings. Structural unemployment is a form of frictional unemployment, but it usually lasts longer. It may encourage voluntary unemployment.

Institutional Unemployment: This explains how interference in the labour market can create unemployment. The government is the most common instigator of institutional unemployment. Government can set taxes, create price floors or price ceilings, and indirectly support other factors of institutional unemployment such as labour unions (World Bank, 2013). It must be stressed that unemployment does not just occur; it is caused by various circumstances as discussed hereunder.

Causes of Unemployment

Citing Lanloye (2006), Binuomote (2010), highlighted the following as causes of unemployment in Nigeria:

- i. **Faulty Educational System:** The educational system inherited from former colonial rulers lays emphasis on writing reading and arithmetic, which prepare people to be job seekers rather than job creators. Courses like Business Education (Business Studies), Home Economics Education, Agricultural Education, Technical Education, Health Education, Fine and Applied Arts Education, Computer Science Education etc that can prepare the individual for self-employment were not given priority of place in the educational system and any type of education that does not prepare the individual for the world of work has no place in the modern world.
- ii. **High Cost of Education:** The exorbitant cost of higher education in West Africa prevents many school leavers from furthering their education thereby the youths therefore roaming about the streets of going for further studies.
- iii. **Supply and Demand for Labour:** In Nigeria, the education industry is rapidly expanding at all levels. There is therefore the disturbing situation of over production of school leavers that do not match the demand for them by both public and private enterprises. When one also considers the low quality of the school leavers in terms of skills, knowledge and attitude, there is a parade whereby unqualified people are seeking jobs whereas jobs are seeking qualified people.
- iv. **Economic Recession:** Many industries were forced to fold up as a result of the recent global economic recession. The concomitant effect was that there was retrenchment in business enterprises and the investors lost out. Manufacturing sectors were troubled and had no option other than to carry out mass retrenchment of workers that were thrown into the unemployment market.
- v. **Over Population:** The population increases without proportional increase in the rate of employment. This puts a strain on social amenities, the effects of which are urban congestion, increase in crime rate, various form of environmental pollution and other social vices.
- vi. **Faulty Development Plans:** The leaders plan for the establishment of more schools and colleges without a corresponding increase in places to absorb the upsurge of graduates from these schools and colleges. The concomitant effect if this situation is the mismatch between the output of the schools and the needs of the society. This implies that Business Studies is faced in the challenges which must be addressed to make the subject relevant to the needs of the individual and the society.

Challenges to the Teaching and Learning of Business Studies

Business Studies programme in our secondary schools is confronted with a lot of challenges which has made the attainment of its objectives difficult. These challenges have hindered the secondary schools' leavers to enjoy the benefits derivable from the subject as expected during their studentship and after their graduation. Some of the challenges have been identified by some eminent scholars such as Gana (2000) and Maina, (2013) to include but not limited to:

- Poor funding by government.
- Poor or ineffective planning and supervision of the programme.
- Inadequate teaching materials, equipment and infrastructural facilities.
- Inadequate motivation of teaching and non-teaching staff resulting in their inefficiency and ineffectiveness.
- Inadequate number of qualified teaching as well as supporting staff.
- Emphasis on theoretical knowledge rather than practical demonstration owing to lack of laboratory and workshop.
- High level of corruption and very poor maintenance culture.
- Poor societal attitude to technical and vocational education.

Unarguably, prompt solution to these problems and challenges might reposition Business Studies to adequately equip its recipient with employable skills.

Self-Employment Opportunities Available for Recipients of Secondary School Business Studies Curriculum

It is now a common knowledge that wage employment is hard to come by in recent times in Nigeria today. Hence, the current clarion calls for alternative school curriculum that can engender self employment. The following opportunities are open to recipient of Business Studies to ensure their self sustainability as well as the development of the society at large. To this end, Binuomote (2010) and Oluwadare (2015) listed the following opportunities:

- **Operation of Business Centres:** The individual could establish a business centre using the typewriters and the computer to serve the general public for data processing, word processing, laminating of documents, binding service as well as fax operations to send and receive messages in an electronic form through telephone wires and print them accordingly. This activity requires little capital and many can become employers of labour through this process as the business grows.
- **Telecommunication Business (Services):** Secondary school leavers could also engage in telecommunication services such as GSM unlocking; handsets repairs, handsets sales, prepaid calling operation, recharge cards sales and production, etc.
- **Self Employment with Personal Computer:** The individual can earn a living using a personal computer to serve the general public for a fee along a busy road, post office, banks or any where people are involved in information processing.
- **Reprographic Service:** This service includes but not limited to duplicating, photocopying, computer typesetting, printing and laminating, sales installation and repair of office equipment. All these require little capital outlay and their operations are simple and manageable.
- **Buying and Selling:** A secondary school leaver can make living from buying and selling of commodities. He can sell assortments of goods like books, foot-wears and as may be desired, to people within and outside his/her immediate locality. He however needs to carry out a market survey to identify the needs of the people and endeavour to market the products to satisfy the needs. He/she must obtain the goods from the right source, at the right price and in the right quantity and quality so that he/she can sell at the price affordable by the prospective buyers. In doing this, the individual can make profits for self-sustainability where to obtain or buy the goods cheaply in order to get profit.

Conclusion

Business Studies has been identified as a tool that can be used to equip the students and school leavers with appropriate skills, competencies, abilities and knowledge for self employment. It is expected that the knowledge skills and competencies acquired by the youths could enable them establish small and medium scale enterprises, thereby reducing the rate of employment among the youths.

However, business studies do not seem to have been accorded the required status aimed at achieving the objectives of the subject. This is because it is bedeviled by myriads of problems such poor funding, lackadaisical attitude towards the subject, inadequacy of qualified teaching personnel and poor instructional materials, among others. There is therefore the need by the Oyo State Government to address these challenges so that the subject can be given the rightful status so that the subject can achieve its major objective of enhancing employability and self-reliance.

Recommendations

Against the foregoing discussions, the following recommendations are made to improve the status of Business Studies in the secondary school curriculum so that it can achieve its core objective of inculcating the right kind of knowledge, skills, attitude and understanding required to enable its recipient to be employable and self-reliant.

1. Business studies should be incorporated in all levels of the Nigeria education system to equip students with necessary skills for self employment.
2. Business Studies programme in Oyo State secondary schools should be adequately funded and equipped with modern information technology facilities to enable the students acquire adequate practical skills for self-employment.
3. Government and school authorities should employ sufficient number of qualified teachers with adequate knowledge, skills and attitude to teach Business Studies.
4. Government should also motivate the teachers by paying them good salaries as at when due.
5. The National Orientation Agency, Oyo State office, should be mandated to provide mass orientation to the people to develop a positive attitude towards Business Studies, so that their wards could be encouraged to offer Business Studies at the secondary school level.
6. Government should provide schools with adequate instructional delivery in the three domains of cognitive, psychomotor and affective development of the students.

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