

**BUSINESS EDUCATION AND INDUSTRIAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE
ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN
NIGERIA**

BY

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Abstract

The global economic meltdown and fluctuation in the prices of crude oil which is the mainstay of the Nigerian economy are in no doubt taking their toll on the economy. Unemployment has been a persistent problem over the years in Nigeria. Government education policy aimed at solving the unemployment problem through entrepreneurial education has had little impact. One of the reasons for the lack of appreciable impact is lack of effective partnership between institutions and industries. This paper highlighted four classifications of Business Partnerships and different partnership activities in Business Education and suggests numerous benefits that can be derived from such partnerships. It proffers recommendations among others that schools and local industries should collaborate with industries to organize seminars and workshops in order to share information for the purpose of reducing unemployment among young school leavers.

Key Words: Industrial Partnership, Sustainable Entrepreneurship Development, Business Education and Tertiary Institutions

Introduction

Entrepreneurship Development aims to enlarge the base of entrepreneurs in order to hasten the pace at which new ventures are created. This accelerates employment generation and economic development. In a developing country like Nigeria, Entrepreneurship Development cannot be overlooked due to the impact on the economy and relevance of the contents in business education in tertiary institutions in the country. Entrepreneurship Development according to United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP) (1999) refers to the

process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution building programmes.

Entrepreneurship Development is about helping people to start and grow dynamic businesses and provide high value added. It also endows entrepreneurs with the ability to identify business opportunities, the ability to harness the necessary resources to use opportunities identified and willingness to initiate and sustain appropriate actions towards the actualization of business objectives.

Government effort towards promoting entrepreneurial development has not recorded much success hence the high level of unemployment. Sulaiman (2013) reported that, Nigeria unemployment rate is growing at 16 percent rate annually. Unemployment rate has been a consistent and persistent problem in Nigeria over the years most especially among school leavers in tertiary institutions. In 2000, unemployment rate was 13.1 percent. It rose to 13.6 percent in 2001. But it was a temporary breather because the rate climbed up to 14.8 percent in 2003. However, since 2006, unemployment rate has maintained an unflagging fly. In 2006, it was 12.3 percent, moving up to 12.7 percent in 2007 and 14.9 percent in 2008. It was 19.7 percent in 2009 rising to 21.1 in 2010 and 23.9 percent in 2011. According to the Statistician General of the Federation, Nigerian youths were worse hit by the high rate of unemployment. About 20.3 million of them are currently not in any form of employment.

The global economic meltdown and the fluctuation in the prices of crude oil, which is the mainstay of the Nigeria economy, are no doubt taking their toll on the economy. The economy was once driven and sustained by agriculture, which contributed about 95 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 75 percent employment in the early 60s. The agricultural sector was relegated, and due to poor government attitude towards the sector, the Nigerian youths abandoned it in search of white-collar jobs and fortune in the oil sector. This

brought about massive rural-urban migration. Of the few that were able to get jobs, some were underemployed. Presently, it is very difficult to get adequate data on the number of unemployed in the country with a population of about 140 million, according to the 2006 census.

University graduate unemployment is on the increase as the universities keep on turning out job seekers every year without new job opportunities being created. Also, the recent sack and on going downsizing of bank workers have worsened the unemployment situation with many breadwinners losing their jobs at the eve of year 2012. Furthermore, the unemployment problem is compounded by the fact that, where the jobs existed, Nigerian graduates do not possess the relevant skills to make themselves employable. All these give rise to the need for partnership between tertiary institutions and world of work. In the face of rapid technological change and increasing global competition, many nations who want to remain relevant and competitive on the world stage have recognized the need to improve the quality of their workforce. Graduates of business education like their counterpart in other fields of learning stand on the threshold of higher education and the real world where harsh economic realities of the Nigeria situation required that their training makes it possible for them to apply a mix of technical knowledge, business acumen and creativity.

The Nature of Business Education Programme in Tertiary Institutions

Business Education is the type of education that assists individuals to acquire skills, which they can apply to solve problems in business occupation such as Secretaryship, Accountancy, Administration, Management, Marketing, Word Processing, etc, (Nwosu, 2006). It is education for and about business also a part of vocational, technical and general educational system which has a comprehensive discipline whose instructional programme encompass:

- a. The knowledge, attitude and skills needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal business and economic systems and;
- b. The vocational knowledge and skills needed for entry level employment and advancement in a broad range of business careers.

The statements above identify all the components of business education, the skills needed and the type of people that benefit from it. The statement also agrees with the views of Ademola (2000) who described business education as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding and attitude to perform in the world of business as a producer and/or consumer of goods and services the business offers. Azuka (2000) viewed business education as a programme of study which offers students who wish to pursue a career in business an opportunity to develop those skills, abilities and understanding that will enable them to enter, perform and progress in a business occupation after graduation from high school or the

university. Business education is a component of the overall educational system. It is also a part and parcel of technical education, which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as a basic scientific knowledge. As a course, it is very comprehensive.

According to NPE (2004), Business education is offered at the tertiary level of the Nigerian educational system. This comprises the polytechnics, monotechnics, Colleges of Science and Technology, Technical Teacher Colleges and the Universities. Business education can be studied in order to acquire skills in vocational subjects and to acquire managerial skills. The objectives of business education under each programme is well stated in the institution's programmes. At the tertiary level, it is education about business in which both students and teachers are trained. Business education is about business system that aid decision-making processes.

School – Industry Partnership: Business Education Perspective

A partnership is an arrangement where parties, known as partners, agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests. The partners in a partnership may be individuals, businesses, interest-based organizations, schools, government and non-governmental organizations may partner together to increase the likelihood of each achieving their mission and to amplify their reach. Using the principle of modeling, the relationship between

students, society, schools, industries and teachers as pivots in the teaching – learning process. Invariably, society encompasses schools, students and industries each trying to enhance social economic prosperity (Ojimba, 2013)

School industrial partnership is a collaboration between the school and an industrial business, group of firms, chamber of commerce, industry association or sector partnership with the purpose of using combined resources to create alternative education programmes that are tightly linked to economic development and labour force needs (Soares, 2010).

Partners can contribute human resources, finances, facilities and equipment and leadership to help accomplish the agreed goals and outcomes (Ojimba, 2013). The bottom line is to have business education students who will have skills that meet the needs of businesses, improve their entrepreneurial potentials and help them earn a decent living. Furthermore, partnership can cause meaningful changes to traditional curriculum and instructional practices. A workable model for business education will include a contextualized, modularized and competency based curriculum, work place-based learning and learn-and-earn models.

Nwosu (2006) advised that partnership between school and industry should be seen as a core component of technical education. If accorded the right level of significance such partnership can be a winning experience for all involved. In this regard Ejiogu (2013) postulates that such

collaboration affords student opportunity to try out a profession to ascertain if it is beneficial to them. It also exposes them on how to conduct themselves in the business world and make connections that may lead to future employment. As for the schools, according to Adebisi and Kehinde (2014) such partnerships afford them the opportunity to get well grounded and seasoned professionals who will advise the students, arrange training and sometimes provide financial support. All of these can be achieved by always seeking meaningful partnership and cooperation of the industries which are well established and are ready to provide industrial training to business students and on-the-job training to the business educators. Mentoring contracts, students internship evaluation, strictly supervised industrial training programs, work site visits and learning tours and industry volunteer mentors are some of the resources that can be exploited to achieve meaningful collaboration between schools and industry as posited by Nwosu (2006).

According to Ojimba (2013) students and industries support each other in knowledge acquisition, research and development. After graduation some students end up in some of the industries as staff. Teachers and industries are indispensable to each other. Teachers need awareness of the latest development in industries whereas to industries, teachers are the trainers of their future workforce. Schools are run by teachers, so both schools and teachers are indispensable to one another. Students' fields of academic activities and skill

acquisition are schools. School prepares the students by imparting the relevant skills that will enable them to fit into existing industries and businesses.

Teachers are catalysts that will facilitate the desired cooperation between schools and industries (Ojimba, 2013). Such cooperation can serve to strengthen the quality of instruction given by teachers to their students in academic skills and enrich the educational process through the talent and ideas of the personnel of participating industries for business. Industry personnel will include administrators, managers, secretaries, supervisors, etc. This means that industries can send experienced staff who are actually practicalizing the theories and elements of practice that students are still learning in the tertiary institutions.

Invariably, the present Business Education curriculum in tertiary institutions may not be exhaustive on such cooperation, yet as we live in a high-tech world driven by modern science, it is imperative to accord more recognition in the curriculum for the need to expand such linkage as part of the students' training programme. Frank and Smith (1997), suggested four classifications for business-education partnerships based on the process the partnership employs. They found that most business-education partnerships could be categorized into one of the four classifications and these are:

Consultative Partnerships: These are for the purpose of receiving public input around change or to gather ideas for policies.

Contributory Partnerships: These are formed to benefit an organization or the community.

Operational Partnerships: These are work-sharing arrangements in which the components of a given task are delegated to specific parties.

Collaborative Partnerships: These are set up to share resources, risks and decision-making.

Business Education and Industrial Partnerships for Sustainable Entrepreneurship Development

Nigerian government has been clamouring for Entrepreneurship development which will enhance self-reliance among graduates and as such reduce the unemployment rate which negatively have affected the economic situation of the country. This contingency has become a source of concern to business educators in tertiary institutions in the country so as to strategically develop innovative means of providing solutions. Therefore, business education and industry can partner for sustainable entrepreneurial development.

According to Watt (2003), Business Education Partnership activities may include: workshops, conferences, tours, exchange programmes, classroom visits, work place visits, science fairs, guest speakers, seminars presentation; work-experience programmes, internships, tutoring, skills training, career development activities; mentoring, apprenticeship, job shadowing and on-the-job training; curriculum support, teacher development

and teacher placement; grants, scholarships, equipment, money, fund raising, starting an educational foundation; and recruiting, training school to career information and guidance and legal counselling.

In every higher institution in Nigeria where Business education is offered partnerships can be established and achieved with industries and business corporations which are within the reach. Business education and industrial partnerships may involve entire school boards and hundreds of students. Others pair private partners with a single class or individual students. Business education and industrial partnerships serve the institution and industry by providing activities such as in-service training to business educators through the use of facilities in the industry i.e. world of work, student directed projects in the course of study and SIWES (Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme), software development for business management, and marketing research. Such training are too brief and involve low level of investment. They seldom run long enough to make a long term difference in the trainees' ability to receive on the job training.

Benefits of Business Education-Industrial Partnerships

The partnerships would:

1. Improve the quality of the workplace
2. Provide lecturers and students with learning experiences and a new understanding of the educational

system as related to current trends in business world.

3. Provide opportunities for student's career exploration.
4. Bring resources to enrich the curriculum.
5. Improve the education setting through upgrading facilities or equipment.
6. Integrate young people into the labour market by involving them in cooperative education experiences which develop entrepreneurial skills in them.
7. Connect schools with local businesses.
8. Assist with curriculum development, new learning opportunities and skill development.
9. Meet the labour market needs of business and industry. By these, all that the students acquired will be tailored towards self-reliance.

Constraints to Business Education and Industry Partnerships in Nigeria

Irrelevance of curriculum contents to industry: Nwosu (2006) opines that industry will not be able to render necessary assistance in terms of training business education students due to some old and irrelevant skills which have been replaced with the use of modern office technologies. Lack of modern technologies: modern office technologies as perceived by Nwosu are not readily available in some tertiary institutions and industries where business education skills are practiced most especially in the business world. Some industries are still used to old office equipment and facilities and this can make them to render outdated skill acquisition to

the business education students most especially during industry.

Poor appreciation of the benefits of the partnership: industry will continue to find it difficult partnering with tertiary institution which offers business education courses as long as they are not well enlightened about the benefits they stand to gain as partners which can enhance profit-making and turnovers.

Strategies for Enhancing Business Education and Industry Partnerships in Nigeria

The business education curriculum should be made relevant to the work at the industry in terms of objectives, operations, services rendered to customers through the use of modern office technologies which are used in the industry. (Nwosu 2006)

Managers of business education programme in tertiary institutions should ensure that necessary office technologies are acquired and made available for teaching and learning and that industry supports should be sought for in terms of resources (financial and human) so as to foster the spirit of partnership between business education and industry. (Adebiyi and Kehinde 2014). The place of awareness according to Adebiyi and Kehinde cannot be overestimated in terms of benefits of partnership. Industries should be enlightened on what they stand to gain when they agree to partner with business education department in tertiary institutions. Some of these benefits will enhance marketing, brand awareness, human capital development, increase in consumer base and turnovers.

Conclusion

The need for business education department of tertiary institutions to be affiliated to various industries in partnerships cannot be overemphasized. Efforts should be taken by the management of the department through the institutions to seek partnership and agreement from industries and business corporations so as to enhance academic activities, skills and knowledge made available for the students in the course of studying in the department.

Recommendations

1. Business Education in Institutions should have liaison offices and employ people who are well versed in public relations and industrial practices to help create meaningful links.
2. Seminars, field trips and excursions should be incorporated into the academic curriculum, so that it will help expose students to real working environments while still undergoing academic training.
3. Schools and local industries should collaborate to organize seminars and workshops where they will share information on the changing trends in industrial practices and how these changes can be incorporated into the curriculum of the schools.
4. It is also recommended that in the course of the development of curricula for the department, the local industry must be involved for industry to have input into the curricula regarding their training towards entrepreneurial development in the institutions and as

such solve unemployment problem in the long run.

5. Students should have knowledge of fundamental legal principles which affect day to day business activities.

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