

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR JOB CREATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

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Abstract

The paper focused on quality assurance in vocational business education for job creation and national development. In recent times, the quality of graduates from our tertiary institutions in skilled-related courses has been questioned. The quality and standard of skill acquisition by our graduates affects employability. If vocational business education is provided in our tertiary institutions with little or no attention to quality assurance, the goals of job creation and national development will be unattainable. The paper therefore highlights the importance of and some quality assurance factors in vocational business education, challenges of quality assurance, the roles of business education and areas of job creation in vocational business education. The paper concludes by calling on the necessary supervisory bodies in tertiary institutions, (NUC, NBTE, NCCE, etc) to intensify continuous supervision as well as ensure that academic activities, functional equipment and manpower are not compromised.

Introduction

Vocational business education is that aspect of the total educational programmes that provides mastery of office skills needed to perform in the business and technological societies (Osuala, 1995). It can also be described as an aspect of education that consists of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes the student will be expected to exhibit or perform when the student completes the training. This means that Vocational business education is concerned with the abilities, performance, competencies and positive attitude in preparing, presenting, and dealing with all types of business related functions.

Philosophically, vocational business education helps to achieve economic aims because it provides individuals with employable skills and provide the economy with productive citizen. Sociologically, vocational business education is

important because, individuals who possess vocational business education skills become socially useful citizens in their communities either as employees or employers rather than being parasitic. Thus, vocational business education is economic education as it gears to the needs of the job market and thus contributes to national economic strength.

Akpan (1997) considered vocational business education as a programme for social civilization. This, according to him, the ills prevalence in our society today such as armed robbery, cultism, sexual abuses are on the increase due to lack of vocational skills. Therefore, Akpan is of the opinion that with the lean employment opportunity in the country, efficient acquisition of employable skills could make people more productive and self-reliant. This could go a long way to reducing chances of citizens engaging in societal ills.

This paper therefore attempts to motivate students, lecturers, school administrators and the public to appreciate the uniqueness of business opportunities, employment generation and security, reliability, and consistency of productivity that vocational education provides, if quality assurance is entrenched into its programmes.

Hornby (2001) defined quality as the standard of something when compared to other things in terms of how good or bad something is or a high standard or level. According to Onyeachu (2008), quality is anything everyone considers good and wants to have. Quality according to Umoru (2006) refers to goods and services that are reliable, dependable or psychologically satisfying. In the view of Tahir (2006), quality means three interconnected factors: efficiency; relevance and reliability. Sharing the same view with, Oyebade, Oladipo and Adetoro (2012) described the quality of education as dealing with issues of relevance, validity, functionalism and efficiency of education system in the achievement of national goals and objectives. From the above definitions one can say that quality is something that is very relevant of which every member of the society considers good and strives to possess for effective utilization.

The heart of education is quality. Ogunribido (2004) observed that the central issue in the production of any product be it material or human is the quality. This is due to the fact that the quality of a product determines the extent to which the functionality and performance of a product meets the expectation of the users. According to Lockyer in Ogunribido (2004) the quality of a product measures the extent to which the producer conforms to the procedures laid down for its production. The quality of graduates according to Urah (2005) could be measured by how well they have been prepared

for life and for service to society in various spheres of human endeavour.

Assuring the quality of education provision is a fundamental aspect of gaining and maintaining credibility for programmes institutions and national systems of higher education worldwide. Maduewesi and Onyeachu (2010) defined quality assurance as the practice of managing the way goods are produced and services are provided to make sure they are kept at a high standard. Adegbesan (2011) opined that quality assurance is related to accountability both of which are concerned with maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of educational systems and services in relation to their contexts of their mission and their stated objectives. Vocational Business Education and Training being a veritable tool for national development, in Nigeria needs to be managed in such a way that quality is assured. In recent times the quality of graduates produced in our tertiary institutions has been questioned. (Adedeji, 2009).

Bases and Principles of Quality Assurance in Vocational Business Education

Akpan (1997) summarized bases and principles as follows:

- The extent that curriculum for the Vocational Business programme reflects the performance skills required by present workers on a specific job determines its quality assurance.
- When Vocational business education programme develops a worker who reaches maximum production at least or reduced cost to employers and with the least waste of national resources, it is efficient.
- When the student get the job for which he was trained, it is efficient.
- Vocational business education is assured in proportion as the environment in which the learner is trained in a replica of the

environment in which he will subsequently work.

- Quality assurance in vocational education and training can only be noticed where the training jobs are carried on in the same way with the same operations, with the same tools and the same machines as in the occupation itself.
- Vocational education is assured in quality in proportion as it trains the individuals directly and specifically in the thinking and the manipulative habits required in the occupation itself.

Quality Assurance Measuring Indices and their Importance in Vocational Business Education and Training

The purpose of quality assurance in vocational business education is to prevent or minimize wastage and enhance productivity at this level of education. Quality assurance also seeks to prevent wastage before it occurs. It is therefore better and less costly to prevent wastage before it occurs. Therefore, quality assurance in vocational business education would seek to ensure that specific goals of education are achieved and these words translate to laying the proper foundation for the development of vocational business education in Nigeria.

The importance of standards informed the federal government to establish minimum academic standards for higher institutions of learning in the country through Decree 16 of 1985 (Amaewhule, 2004). This gave rise to the regulatory bodies in different institutions. For instance, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) is the body for regulation of polytechnics and colleges of technology. In the performance of its role, the NBTE gives directives in the quality of products expected by setting up minimum standards which polytechnics in Nigeria must adhere to. Among the items contained in the minimum standard are objectives of programmes, philosophy,

personnel, equipment vis-a-vis number of students, curriculum, and examination and admission requirements. To establish and maintain high quality standards, the polytechnics and the NBTE have a share responsibility in addressing the following key areas, according to (Adedipe, 2007).

1. Minimum academic standard
2. Carrying capacity
3. Accreditation
4. Impact assessment
5. Structures, infrastructures and utilities

However, Makoju, Nwangwu, Abolade and Newton (2004) in their own view, highlighted the following as quality assurance checklist:

- Institution/programme mission and objectives
- Teaching programmes
- Students selection
- Course structure
- Teaching arrangement
- Assessment/evaluation
- Grievance procedures
- Monitoring of outcomes
- Staffing issues
- Infrastructure/resources

To ensure quality assurance in the training of students of vocational business education, the following issues should be given attention:

- Strict adherence to admission requirements
- Adequate staffing
- Wide coverage of syllabus
- Quality teaching
- Strict administration of examination
- Adequate equipment and facilities

Certain measuring indices essential for measuring quality assurance in vocational business education are:

Quality of Resource Input: The teachers and the learners are the main human resource input in the education system. It is often said that no education can rise above the quality of its

teachers (Nnoli & Sulaiman 2001). Teachers are the most important of all the inputs that go into educational provision. This is because education of the highest quality requires teachers of highest quality. But education in Nigeria seems to lack, not only quality programmes but also quality and dedicated teachers. Also special attention needs to be paid to the quality of candidates being admitted into all programmes in educational institutions. For it is obvious that the output in any production system will, all things being equal reflect the output.

Quality of Output: The quality of education does not depend only on resource inputs, but also on the output, which include academic achievement on test, scores, progression and pass rates. This would invariably lead to the efficiency of the products of vocational business education in and outside the institution. These could only be achieved if only the most qualified candidates are admitted so that quality entrants would be transformed into quality graduates.

Quality of Process: This implies student/teacher interaction, level of learner participation and engagement in learning. In a study by Ali and Akubu (1998), it was found that teachers dominated the lessons and posed few open ended questions. Group work which encourages discussion is rarely encountered, and only 10% of teachers used continuous assessment. Most teachers who administer continuous assessment rarely mark them to enable students know their performance and thus effect corrections.

Quality of Content: The content of our education curriculum has to reflect and meet the demands of employers of labour in commerce and industry. This will enable the products of vocational business education contribute

effectively to the achievement of organizational goals.

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Challenges of Quality Assurance in Vocational Business Education and Training

Recent development in Business Education system seems to indicate that all is not well as expected with quality assurance in the system. Such challenges of quality include:

Inadequate Funding: One of the greatest challenges that face vocational business education in Nigeria is that of under-funding. Finance is so crucial to any organization as it continues and dominates discussions on the state of vocational business in Nigeria. In line with these, Iweajunwa and Lekwa (2010) opined that one of the greatest challenges to the successful implementation of vocational education curriculum is lack of fund. The higher institutions are poorly funded especially at the state level. With the current economic melt-down, the situation is worse.

Enrolment Explosion: In virtually every institution in Nigeria and especially, those owned by State Governments, students' population is very high. Many of the facilities on ground are being over stretched. This is due to the nonchalant attitude of state government. In order to make ends meet, the institution management resorts to over enrolment.

Inadequate Physical Facilities: The state of physical facilities in many of the Nigerian institutions is very deplorable. The shortage of equipment and facilities can affect quality of teaching and learning. Quality diminishes when the facilities required for imparting and learning are inadequate or at times not available (Atueyi, 2010). There are poor infrastructural facilities for teaching and research as one of the factors militating against quality assurance in education (Oladipo, Adeosun and Oni, (2012).

Inadequate Staffing: One of the reasons for low level of quality assurance in polytechnic education is shortage of teaching staff. Lack of technical support and teacher's lack of knowledge and skills have counted as one of the problems to quality assurance of vocational business education (Ojukwu, 2008).

Role of Business Education Programmes in Job Creation and Poverty Alleviation

Business education is critical in job creation and alleviating extreme poverty and hunger; by focusing on the following four key strategies (Olaniyan and Titiloye 2012).

- i. **Reducing Poverty:** Poverty is one of the social problems not only for developing societies like Nigeria but all over the world, it simply connotes deprivation. Isyaku (2003) observed that poverty manifests in widespread hunger, disease, malnutrition, illiteracy and hopelessness. Governments all over the world have serious challenge from their citizens to match words with action in a true demonstration of their commitment to the fight against poverty. In order to make poverty history and also remain competitive in the world economy, education for and about business is a major link between people and productivity (Oyedele, 2000) Vocational business education is a sustainable instrument that can bail people out of poverty. The role of business education is to empower individuals with the skills to survive in all ramifications. The skills inherent in any area of Business education like Office Technology Education, Distributive and Accounting education and Marketing will enable business students to think out of the box, learn to take entrepreneurial risks and effective by utilize their potentials in creating wealth rather than seeking jobs (Isyaku 2003). A self-reliant business education graduate has the potential to create job thereby sharing in the poverty burden of Nigeria. Olediran (2005) in his
- ii. **Creating Wealth:** Olaniyan and Titiloye (2012) reported that wealth creation is a systematic approach of making the business students or graduates productive through judicious use of both their brain and hands to achieve self-reliance. It involves translating thought into action. These attributes will go a long way in pushing business students out of the enslaved local market to the global market. Agabi (2008) also said that the educational system must be geared towards the practical, as students must be taught not only the use of their minds but also the use of their hands as well. The goals of wealth creation can be efficiently pursued, attained, and sustained only through an efficient, relevant and functional vocational business education programmes. If effectively tapped, can lead to the eradication of poverty and hunger there by promoting sustainable development and impacting on the availability of job opportunities as well as the production or provision of various goods and services by the various enterprises in the country.
- iii. **Enhancing Value Re-orientation:** The role of business education programmes in this age of moral decadence cannot be over

emphasized. Today, a lot of youths are engaging in illicit act of robbery, financial crimes, corruption, examination malpractices, indecent dressing, cultism, prostitution, political thuggery, sexual harassment, ethnic militancy and oil bunkering to mention but a few. All these unholy acts result in economic and political insecurity capable of undermining the progress of the country. Youth should be given the appropriate quality vocational training and an environment that would enable them to reach their full potentials. As can be seen, Nigerian youth, for the past few years have increasingly adopted habits and tendencies that are destructive to social harmony because the values in society tend to push them in that direction. Most of these habits and tenancies are eating deeply into the philosophy and moral foundation of education in the country (Priye, 2008). A society without morals is a dead society. The goal of vocational business education and training is to protect and guide business students in the pursuit of knowledge and skills that will help them to develop healthy attitudes which will enable them to become happy, useful and responsible citizens not to themselves alone but to the nation at large (Olaniyan and Titiloye, 2012).

- iv. **Generating employment:** Business education is a job-oriented programme with the primary aim of preparing students for self-reliance through the acquisition of marketable skills and right attitude that will enable them to handle their own business affairs and to function intelligently as consumers and employers of labour after graduating from the school, thereby reduces poverty in the society. It is through this type of education that youth can be provided with essential knowledge and experience needed to meet life challenges.

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Areas Which Vocational Business Education and Training Ensures Job Creation

A graduate of Business Education is trained in public relations duties, secretarial duties, financial management duties, business managerial duties, entrepreneurial attitude and sales representative duties, because he is a middle man between the manager, the worker and the general public. Therefore a graduate must be vast in these areas in addition to possessing good character. In the absence of a paid employment, these qualities should assist him or her in running his business. An entrepreneur is a person who has the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities by gathering the necessary resources, taking advantages of them by initiating appropriate action that would ensure her business success. In the following business areas:

1. A small business centre near a high institution with just a manual typewriter for typing documents for students.
2. A medium business centre with few computers, photocopiers, spiral binding machines and scanners.
3. Opening a computer training centre where people are trained in various, ICT skills.
4. Establishing a stationary store where all materials and stationeries needed for servicing the machines and equipment are sold.
5. With entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, he or she can establish any type of trade including selling drinks and provision stores.
6. Business centre for telephone operation, both external/internal and internet business is another thriving area of business.
7. Teaching of business subjects in both private and public institutions.

Establishing these kinds of enterprises does not require huge amount of capital to start. If knowledge and skills acquired in schools are applied into the business, it could grow beyond the owner's personal estimation by requiring more hands.

Conclusion

In recent times vocational business education in Nigeria has witnessed significant growth in terms of expansion of access through increase in enrolment and the establishment of additional higher education institutions, but is saddening to note that many of the indices that can guarantee quality vocational business education are not taken into consideration in the nation's quest to meet the quantitative and qualitative target. It is worthy to note that expansion in the institutions of learning puts pressure on the need for increase provision of facilities and manpower to balance the expansion needs. The heart of any education is quality. If business education is properly operated and fully exploited the innate potential of business education graduate will be transformed as a means of creating wealth for the country.

Recommendations

1. Federal and state governments of Nigeria should give adequate fund to federal and state institutions to ensure quality performance.
2. There is need for continuous and effective supervision of the educational activities in vocational business education department by both internal and external supervisory bodies for effective academic delivery.
3. Both internal and external authorities in charge of admissions of candidates into vocational business education department should see that only the best candidates are given admissions.
4. Those in charge of admission should resist the temptation of admitting students over and above the carrying capacity allowed by the supervisory bodies of higher institutions
5. There is need for constant retraining of lecturers to imbibe current knowledge and experience in Information and Communication technology and

entrepreneurship to enable them train the students effectively.

6. Facilities needed for practical teaching and learning should be adequately provided to ensure skill acquisition.
7. Examination processes in vocational business education should be closely monitored by the school academic board to avoid academic misconduct by teachers and students.

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