STRENGTHENING BUSINESS EDUCATION FOR A GREEN ECONOMY IN NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

The paper highlighted the need to strengthen Business Education for a green economy in Nigeria. Green economy is a concept that creates a sustainable low-emission world beneficial to both the society and planet. It involves a sustainable development that guarantees GDP increase and at the same time preserves and protects nature and secures human and social well-being. It is however an undeniable fact that Business Education has a role in the achievement of a green economy. It is an aspect of Vocational Education that provides educational training, skills, attitudes and adjustment towards business orientation and academic challenge. It helps to equip students with green skills for green jobs. It is observed that for this to be achieved Business Education need to be strengthen in such areas as curriculum development, employment of manpower with green skills, adequate funding, practical experience, staff motivation and provision of infrastructure and facilities for learning. It is suggested among others that for Business Education to play a key role in creating a green economy, government at all levels and other stakeholders should provide adequate funding to strengthen the existing Business Education programmes.

Key Words: Business Education, Green Economy, Green Job, Green Skills, Strengthening

Introduction

The role of green economy in building a healthy nation cannot be overemphasized. The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) representing global business described 'Green Economy' as an economy in which economic growth and environmental responsibility work together in a mutually reinforcing fashion while supporting progress on social development.In 2012, ICC published the Green Economy Roadmap, containing contributions from international experts consulted bi-yearly. The Roadmap represents a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary effort to clarify and frame the concept of "Green Economy". It highlights the role of business in bringing solutions to global challenges. It sets conditions which relates to business/intra-industry and collaborative actions for a transition towards a green economy (ICC, 2012).

A green economy is thought to be based on three pillars- People, profits and planet. An economy needs to have healthy communities and thereby healthy workforce. Businesses that are part of the green economy need to commit

themselves to providing products and services which are ethical. It should also be made sure that the businesses do not exploit labour or decrease the quality of life by any means.Businesses need to raise profits, making sure that the concept and ideas of sustainability are followed unfailingly. However, no business should in any way degrade the nature of its components due to its quest for profits. A business that is part of a green economy should offer products and services which contribute to the regeneration to the planet. Efficient measures of waste disposal and energy management should be followed.

In order to establish a green economy, the place of Business Education is essential. This is because Business Education is an educational programme through which students learn the principles of green economy in the promotion of cleaner production and consumption of goods and services. It is against this background that this paper was written to address the need to strengthen Business Education skills for green economy in Nigeria.

Concept of Green Economy

A green economy is an economy that aims at reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities, and that aims for sustainable development without degrading the environment. It is closely related with ecological economies, but has a more politically applied focus (Kahle and Gurel-Atay, 2014). The 2011 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Green Economy Report argues that to be green, an economy must not only be efficient, but also fair. Fairness implies recognizing global and country level equity dimensions, particularly in assuring a just transition to an economy that is low-carbon, resource efficient, and socially inclusive (UNEP, 2011).

The importance of green economy is that it encourages economies to become more sustainable and low-carbon, and ensures that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services for the continued well-being of humans. In a green economy, growth in employment and income are driven by public and private investment into such economic activities, infrastructure and assets that allow reduced carbon emissions and pollution, enhanced energy and resource efficiency and prevention of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services (UNEP, 2011).

Different international institutionssuch as United Nation Center for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Internationa lLabour Organisation (ILO), International Chamber of Commerce, World bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Green Economy Coalition, Stakeholder Forum, the Green Growth leaders and many others in a bid to address the knowledge gaps and demystifying the conceptual cobwebs of

the term Green Economyhave identified various characteristics and nature of the green economy (Chali, 2020). Some of these characteristics are: capacity to facilitate sustainable development, resourcefulness and energy-efficient, prospect to create decent work and green jobs. Green economy also has respectfor planetary boundaries or ecological limits or scarcity, integrated decision making, appropriate indicators and metrics to measures progress beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP), protection for biodiversity and ecosystems, effective delivery of poverty reduction, well-being, livelihoods, social protection and access to essential services, capacity to improves governance and the rule of law. It is inclusive; democratic, participatory; accountable; transparent, stable and internalizes externalities.

From the foregoing characteristics, it is crystal clear that green economy promotes resourcefulness, efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and sustainable growth and development of the people, businesses and the society. These characteristics are closely related to, if not similar, to the objectives of Business Education. Therefore, strengthening Business Education would aid the attainment and sustainability of green economy in Nigeria.

Concept of Business Education

Business Educationprogramme is a major component of vocational and technical education that provides students with education for and about business. Etifit, Eminue and Udoh (2016), Business Education is an aspect of Vocational Education programme that gives training and imparts necessary skills that will provide the recipients with the intellectual and professional background, adequate for their assignment and makes the recipients adaptable to changing situations in the world of work.Bilyaminu in Etifit, *et al*. (2016) viewed Business Education as an aspect of total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding needed to perform in the business world as a producer and/or consumer of goods and services.

Business Educationis also viewed as a specialized area of vocational education that provides educational training, skills development, attitudes and adjustment towards business orientation and academic challenges (Jubril, 2010). It is an important part of the general education which emphasizes on skills and competency acquisition (Okoli, 2013). Extensively, Business Education is that aspect of general education that prepares students for employment and advancement in a broad range of office occupations, accountingprofessions, marketing occupations, teaching profession and entrepreneurship venture (Onokpaunu, 2016).

Business Education is responsible for equipping students with skills, attributes, knowledge and behavior required for teaching, entrepreneurship, administrative and clerical work (Akpan and Eminue).According to Igbokein Akpan and Eminue (2020), the objectives of Business Education programmes at all levels of education enable recipients to develop basic skills for personal use in the future; acquire basic knowledge and skills of Business Education, relate the knowledge and skills acquired to national development, develop basic skills in office occupation, prepare students for further training and provide orientation and basic skills with which to start a life of work for those who may not undergo further training.

Concept of Green Skills and Jobs

Green skills are those skills needed to adapt products, services and processes to climate change and the related environmental requirements and regulations. Green skills could be seen as the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live in, develop andsupport a sustainable and resource-efficient society (European Center for the Development of Vocational Training, 2013). Green skills are needed by all sectors and at all levels in the workforce.

Demand for green skills is driven by a range of factors, including public policies and the global market. In all occupations and industries, greening requires upgrading skills and adjusting qualification requirements, because new or emerging economic activities create new or renewed occupations and related qualifications and skills profiles, hence a need to realign sectors that will decline as a result of the greening of the economy and retrain workers accordingly. The successful transition to a low carbon economy will only be possible by ensuring that workers are able to adapt and transfer from areas of decreasing employment to other industries and that human capital exists and is maximised to develop new industries.

Green jobs are jobs that maintain the eco-systems, minimize environmental pollution and resources and conserve natural energies to a sustainable level healthy for human existence. International Labour Organization (ILO) (2008) defined green jobs as work in agricultural, manufacturing, research and development, administration and service activities that contribute substantially to preserving or restoring environmental quality. The International Labour organization explained that the jobs are green when they contribute to reducing negative environmental impact ultimately leading to businesses and economy being environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

From the foregoing, it is therefore necessary to strengthen Business Education so that students can acquire green skills, such as business plan

development, operational analysis, financial forecasting and market research skills for green production of good and services.This would help them to seize the opportunities available in the green economy by tapping into the business of low-carbon technologies, bio-fuels industry, renewable energy industry and waste management ventures. Green jobs are found in many sectors of the economy from energy supply to recycling. Hence, acquisition of green skills stands to better Business Education graduates with self-employment opportunities to develop and establish green-job oriented businesses.

Strengthening Business Education for Green Economy in Nigeria

Strengthening Business Education means to make it vibrant and strong in order to realise its goal of equipping students with green skills for sustainable economic and national development. The traditional design of Business Education programme needs to be revamped to expose its recipients to the potentials of green jobs.In order to achieve this aim, thereis need to strengthen Business Education in the following ways.

i. **Curriculum development:** In order to make Business Education remain relevant as always in the business world, its curriculum must not only recognize but also integrate trending workplace practices. Okoro (3013) explained that the extent to which a curriculum assists students to enter and succeed in the business world of work is what matters most. A worthwhile Business Education curriculum should be dynamic and relevant, possessing the following characteristics as outlined by Isyaku in Okoro (2013) such as;

a) Business Education courses should provide for students' development of knowledge, manipulation competencies, attitudes and skills which should be applied in real work setting.
b) Business Education courses should be based on societal needs, hence the curriculum should be oriented towards both the students and the support the curriculum would derive from employment opportunities that exists to the graduates.
c) A Business Education curriculum must be responsive to technological changes in the society. New development in the area should be incorporated into the curriculum, so that graduates can be better equipped with green skills to compete for jobs.
d) Equipment, facilities, supplies and instructional resources must be obtained for effective implementation of the curriculum
e) The ultimate success of Business Education curriculum must address students' academic achievement and the result of that achievement should translate to high performance and productivity in the workplace.

ii. Employment of Business Educators with Green Skills: The

transformation of Business Education curriculum into reality at all levels of education is at the instance of Business Educators. According to Osuala (2004), a Business Educator is any person who plays a critical role in making Business Education viable and visible in the community; plays the critical role of agent of change in Business Education; delivers high quality instruction in Business Education and is able to identify problems facing teaching and learning in the field as well as speculate solutions to such problems. The instructional responsibilities of Business Educators in the 21st century business world cannot be over emphasized because they are expected not only to expose students to current workplace practices but also help them acquire skills to create business enterprises that are essential to the creation of sustainable society. Hence, employment of Business Educators with green skills is a sine qua non.

iii. **Adequate Funding:** Eminue, Foster, Nwialuand Yebufura, (2017) suggested that in a bid to strengthen Business Education, alternative sources of financing should be adopted such as; partnership, enterprise and business-oriented financing. Partnership financing includes; federal government-industries-schools, all tiers of government-schools, institutions-community, public-private sector and schools-non-governmental organizations partnerships.Enterprise financing includes; vocational tax fund (VTF) paid by enterprise, payroll levy, single employer financing, revenue-generating-levies and training development funds (TDF). Business-oriented financing on the other hand includes; apprentice's training fees, consultancy fees, profits from sales of goods produced, proceeds from exhibition and sales of training packages to commercial ventures.

iv. **Practical experience:** There is need to strengthen practical experience through exchange programme and collaboration with industries. Business Education which is an aspect of Vocational and technical education in Nigeria and globally is a unique area in educational sector that should teach not only occupational clusters and general conceptual knowledge but also foster adaptability, build technical literacy and provide green skills for green economy.

v. **Staff motivation:** Motivation of Business Educators in form of enhanced salary, promotion and staff development will make them more interested and dedicated to their work and it will help to strengthen Business Education for green economy.

vi. **Infrastructure and facilities for learning:** Business Education like other Vocational Education in Nigeria is more of practical than theoretical and educational and training

environment should be a replica of working environment, with the same tools, machine and techniques. Therefore, there is need to provide work-based infrastructure and facilities for Business Education programme in every institution.

Conclusion

The impact of Business Education in the promotion of green economy cannot be over-emphasized. Business Education is needed to produce students that will set innovative business firms and pursue self-employment ventures in green economy to facilitate the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria. Therefore, there is need to strengthen Business Education by ensuring curriculum development, employment of manpower with green skills, adequate funding, practical experience, staff motivation and provision of infrastructure and facilities for learning, if green economy is desired in Nigeria,

Suggestions / The Way Forward

1. For Business Education to play a key role in creating a green economy, government at all levels and other stakeholders should provide adequate funding to strengthen the existing Business Educationprogrammes.
2. The National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should integrate environmental and green education coursesinto Business Education to enable students think of greener society.
3. All companies operating in Nigeria should have technical and vocational training section called "industrial training school" for the purpose of apprenticeship training and for industrial based training of students under students' industrial work experienced scheme (SIWES).
4. There should be a mass employment of manpower with green skills into Business Education to compliment the effort of the existing workforce, which is not sufficient compare to the ever increasing population of students.

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