

Improving Self-Employment Awareness and Opportunities through the Business Education Programme in Nigeria

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Abstract

The Business Education programme is expected to equip the recipients with necessary awareness and entrepreneurial competencies that can empower the youths for paid or self-employment opportunities. This study was therefore, designed to investigate Business Educators' views on the strategies for improving self-employment awareness and opportunities through the business education programme in Nigeria. The instrument used in collecting data for this study was a 16-item questionnaire. The study sample comprised all the 62 Business Education lecturers in the universities and Colleges of Education in Edo and Delta States in the South-South geo-political zone in Nigeria. The collected data were analysed using the descriptive statistics, while the t-test measure was used for testing the hypothesis. The finding of the study reveals that all the respondents agreed that the 16 competency items are needed by business education graduates. Furthermore, the findings show a no significant difference in the views of male and female business education lecturers on the strategies for developing self-employment awareness and opportunities. Amongst others, it was recommended that all stakeholders in the education industry, curriculum planners and evaluators should continue to create positive awareness on the necessity of developing self-employment culture among Nigerian undergraduates.

Keywords: Self-Employment Awareness, Opportunities, Business Education Programme, Self-Reliance.

Introduction

Education in Nigeria is an instrument “par excellence” for effecting both national and economic development. The nation’s philosophy of education believe amongst others, that education fosters the worth and development of the individual for the general development of the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2014). The national philosophy and goals of Nigeria education amongst others includes the:

- (a) inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; and

- (b) acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities, and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 2014).

The call for a purposeful education for the promotion of a progressive and self-sufficient Nigeria necessitated the introduction of the Business Education programme a few decades back. Business Education is a broad and comprehensive discipline whose instructional programme encompasses the acquisition of appropriate skills and competencies needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal business and contribute to the society. According to Anao (1986) as cited in Ojo and Ekpenyong (2009) the major goals of business education include:

- (i) preparing professionals to teach business subjects in the secondary schools and other related educational institutions;
- (ii) adapting the various business concepts acquired in class to real life situation;
- (iii) acquiring skills and competencies required for the performance of basic business jobs e.g. taking simple administrative decisions and dealing with correspondence; and
- (iv) playing productive roles in a free enterprise economy.

In order to effectively manage one's personal business and contribute to the development of the society, self-employed people work for themselves, and are responsible for generating their source of income, supplying their own work space/place and all services, materials, equipment, sub-contracting etc. They might be financial analysts, business centre operators, business/technology consultants hired by companies, just to mention a few (Osuala, 1999). They might also be entrepreneurs if they started their own business, or developed a product or service. Ukeje (2003) posited that a person is considered self-employed for tax purposes if that person is running a business as a sole proprietorship, independent contractor, as a member of a partnership, or as a member of a limited liability company that does not elect to be treated as a corporation.

Self-employment is working for one's self rather than for another person or company. According to Ayuba (2006), anyone who uses his/her own resources or borrowed funds for income generation in activities other than wage or salaried employment is self-employed. In the view point of Ugiagbe (2007), the essential qualities needed by the self-employed include (a) total commitment to hard work; (b) acceptance of uncertainty; (c) self-discipline; (d) originator/investor characteristics; and (e) planner/organiser characteristics. Ojo and Ekpenyong (2009) opined that the benefits of being self-employed include (i) not having to work for somebody else, (ii) self-fulfilment, (iii) making complete use of one's experience, talents and abilities, (iv) financial freedom and (v) elastic working hours. However, the challenges facing the self-employed in Nigeria include the following amongst others: (a) there is no holiday or sick pay, (b) no pension and no regular income, (c) chances of having to work longer, irregular hours and sometimes weekends and (d) payment of personal income tax accounts (Ayuba, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

One major goal of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) is to prepare the pupils for useful living within the society by developing in the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him function effectively in the society within the limits of his capabilities, and providing basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality (FRN, 2000). To this end, business education as a programme that prepares the recipient with necessary awareness and competencies that can empower the youths for self employment, has been recognized as a major component of the basic and post-basic school curricula as one of the strategies for realizing this noble task. In this vein, business education programme equips her graduates with the right skills that enable them to engage in a life of work in the office as well as for self-employment after graduation from the training institutions. In line with this objective, one may not be able to state how effective the business education programme has been in developing the students for the much needed self-employment awareness and opportunities without subjecting such claims to systematic empirical investigation, hence the need for this study. Consequently, this study has been designed to find the views of educators on the strategies for developing self-employment awareness and opportunities through the business education programme in Nigeria.

The research question used to provide answer to the study was: What are the educators' views on the strategies for developing self-employment awareness and opportunities through the business education programme in Nigeria? The only hypothesis tested was: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the views of male and female business educators on the strategies for developing self-employment awareness and opportunities through the business education programme.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey design. All the business education lecturers (71) in the universities and colleges of Education in Edo and Delta States of Nigeria where the programme is run formed the population of this study. A 16-item questionnaire titled "Self-Employment Awareness and Opportunities Questionnaire" was designed for data collection. Respondents were asked to rate each of the items on a four-point scale as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) 4; Agree (A) 3; Disagree (D) 2; and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1. The instrument was validated through expert judgment. A test-retest method was used with a pilot group of five lecturers within the study population to derive the reliability coefficient of 0.73 using the Pearson Product moment correlation coefficient. The researchers administered the instrument with a research assistant who returned same within 2 weeks of administration. On the whole, only 62 (comprising 34 males and 28 females) pack of questionnaire (representing 81%) was returned and used to carry out the analysis with the mean, standard deviation and t-test. The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question: What are the educators' views on the strategies for developing self-employment awareness and opportunities through the business education programme in Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores of views on developing self-employment awareness and opportunities

S/ No	Description of Strategy	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	Availability and effective utilisation of instructional materials	2.74	0.77	Agree
2	Instructional approaches should encourage creativity and innovation	2.65	0.72	Agree
3	The use of appropriate career guidance and counseling	2.60	1.03	Agree
4	Learner-friendly instructional methods and techniques	2.87	0.70	Agree
5	Exposure to and acquisition of knowledge of relevant and up-to-date job and social skills	2.97	1.31	Agree
6	Availability of an enabling academic environment	2.58	1.01	Agree
7	Effective collaboration between industries and institutions of learning	2.63	0.64	Agree
8	Community participation in funding the business education programme	2.70	1.00	Agree
9	Improving the public image of the business education programme	2.97	1.05	Agree
10	Attracting and retaining qualified business educators	2.76	0.75	Agree
11	Provision of modern office technology equipment	2.91	0.87	Agree
12	Redesigning the current entrepreneurial content in the business education programme	2.69	1.16	Agree
13	Regular and prompt maintenance of office technology equipment and facilities	2.85	0.97	Agree
14	Availability of accessible soft loans to successful students on graduation	2.76	1.13	Agree
15	Addressing the challenges posed by the information and communication technologies (ICTs)	2.97	0.72	Agree
16	Access to e-learning facilities by business education students	2.84	0.89	Agree

In response to the research question, data on table 1 shows that all the respondents agreed that the 16 identified strategies are necessary for developing self-employment awareness and opportunities through the business education programme in Nigeria. The mean scores ranged from 2.58 to 2.97.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the views of male and female educators on the strategies for developing self-employment awareness and opportunities through the business education programme in Nigeria.

Table 2: t-test of significant difference between male and female business educators

Groups	N	X	SD	DF	Calculated t-test value	Table t-test value	Decision
Business Educators – Male	34	1.35	1.09	60	0.0062	1.960	Not Significant
Business Educators - Female	28	1.31	0.75				

Data on table 2 shows that the calculated t-test value of 0.0062 is less than the criterion figure of 1.960 at 0.05 level of significance to accept the null hypothesis of no significant difference. This in other words, means that the views of both the male and female business educators on the self-employment awareness and opportunities through the business education programme in Nigeria do not differ significantly.

Discussion

The analysis of data on table 1 indicates that the respondents agreed that the 16 identified strategy statements are viewed as areas where training is required for effective business teacher programme. This finding is supported by the nations' policy that seeks to use education as tool for (i) improving the quality of life through skills acquisition and job creation for poverty reduction; (ii) ensuring that Nigerians who have completed basic education acquire the literacy, numeric and basic life skills needed to live meaningful lives and contribute to national development; (iii) ensuring that 50% of secondary school students have access to good quality vocational and entrepreneurial education; (iv) establishing an efficient institutional framework for monitoring learning and teaching processes at all levels; (v) empowering people by providing for the acquisition of relevant skills to prepare them for the future. This is further corroborated by the position of The Joint Committee of the National Business Office Education Division of the American Vocational Association (1990), that business education is a broad, comprehensive discipline whose instructional programme among others, encompasses the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal business and economic system which must be inculcated through the school curriculum. According to Ojo and Uwameiye (2005), such early exposure to self employment skills

by the youths and business education graduates can develop a mind set for creating jobs instead of seeking for the non-existent white collar jobs.

In the same vein, the Federal Government of Nigeria in order to reposition the country and ensure rapid development in all spheres of life has come with a quality document – the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The document addressed four key strategies: (i) re-orientation, (ii) values, (iii) poverty reduction, and (iv) creating wealth and generating employment. The NEEDS programme is based on the notion that these goals can be realised only by creating an enabling environment in which these goals can thrive. Consequently, government is redirected to providing basic services for her citizens and people are empowered to take advantage of the new livelihood opportunities the plan will stimulate (National Planning Commission, 2004). This view is supported by Njoku and Nwosu (2005) who posited that with business education, citizens would have a thorough focus of life, acquire skills and technical knowledge either to become self-reliant or be empowered (reducing poverty, creating wealth and generating employment).

Data in table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between the views held by male and female educators on the strategies for self employment awareness and opportunities through the business education programme. This is as a result of the fact that business education is both present and future-oriented, comprising knowledge, competencies and values which will enable the students understand himself/herself in relation to his/her society (Inegbenebor, 2006; Ojo and Ekpenyong, 2009).

Conclusion

This study reveals the business educators' view on the fact that the development of strategies for self-employment awareness and opportunities through the business education programme is the panacea to solving the problem of unemployment and poverty among youths in the nation. The timely intervention of all the stakeholders in the development of the identified strategies will improve the self employment awareness and opportunities for the teeming Nigerian youth population. Through this means, Business education graduates in Nigeria will be enabled to become more interested in setting up their own businesses. That this approach will reduce unemployment and underemployment as the graduates can set up business outfits and make sufficient income has been established in this paper.

Recommendations

- 1 All stakeholders in the education industry, curriculum planners and evaluators should continue to create positive awareness on the necessity of developing self-employment culture among Nigerian undergraduates.
- 2 As a matter of urgency, adequate and relevant instructional equipment and facilities should be provided by the government and effectively utilised during instructional process in business education. This will facilitate mastery in the various competency areas.
- 3 Government should grant soft loans to the graduates to enable them establish their various businesses

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