

## Societal Perception of Business Education Graduates in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

This paper focused on the societal perception of Business Education graduates in Nigeria. Business Education programme is purposely designed to produce competent, knowledgeable, skilful and efficient workforce who can favourably compete with the dynamics of work environment and also become self-reliant. However, most Business Education graduates in Nigeria are not well recognised by the society because of their negative perception towards Business Education as a course of study. The study thus recommended among others that Business Education curriculum should be made more relevant, updated and tailored towards the development of graduates' entrepreneurial and employability skills, government should make the programme more lucrative and highly prestigious, teaching and learning should be re-directed from theoretical to practical as this will make graduates of the programme more capable to perform wherever they find themselves and there should be serious public enlightenment on the relevance and prospects of Business Education in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Business Education, Social Appraisal, Societal Perception*

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Business Education provides specific business-related skills and education which are crucial to succeeding in the corporate world. In Nigeria, Business Education is taught across various educational levels, up to the tertiary level. Business Education is important to the country as it makes Nigerians inculcate skills that make them employers of labor, thus adding to the economic development and growth of the country (Nigerian finder). However, the society is oblivious of the importance of this programme in Nigeria as the programme is not well recognise like other disciplines such as Medicine, Law, Engineering and Nursing.

### 2.0 CONCEPT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION

It could be deduced from the introduction that Business Education is an education for and about business. A Business Education graduate

is one who major in Business Education at a higher institution and has a degree after successful completion of the course with a verifiable grade. Business Education majors learn the fundamentals of business, such as accounting, and marketing, macroeconomics, microeconomics, business finance and business environment while also studying the fundamentals of education, such as the history and philosophy of education, as well as the psychology of education. They are prepared to teach business classes to those who join the competitive society. Business Education majors have an important role in teaching high school and post-secondary students the fundamentals of business that will, perhaps, lead to business careers of their own or at least some business expertise (The Princeton Review, ND).

Therefore, Business Education is education for business or training in business skills, which are required for use in business offices and clerical occupation and business policy analysis. It is a deliberate intent to teach

students about economics and business concepts and skills that might be used in later life (Ahmadu and Idoko, 2013). Business Education is the preparation of an individual to gain employment or for self-employment. Onu (2012) define Business Education as the field of training in business practices and in specific skills such as accounting, information processing, keyboarding/typewriting and shorthand. Business Education represents a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all types of educational delivery systems- elementary, secondary and post-secondary. Business Education includes education for an office occupation, distribution and marketing occupations, accounting, business teaching, secretarial studies, business administration and economic understanding (Amasi and Nnadi, 2015).

Business Education programme is an important part of the general education which emphasizes on skills and competency acquisition (Okoli 2010). It is that programme of study which encompasses education for office occupations business teaching administration and economic understanding. One remarkable characteristic of business education program is that its products can function independently as self-employed and employers of labour (Aquah, 2014). As a result, there exists a broad spectrum of job prospects for products of business education even from the junior secondary level to the graduate level. Included in this spectrum are: teaching careers, entrepreneurship, office environment, vocational practices (Aquah, 2014). Titiloye and Muhammed (2016) see Business Education as a programme that prepares the three domains of learning (mind, the brain, and the physical body) towards positive contribution to societal development.

The goal of business education is primarily to produce competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work. It has as its primary aim, the preparation of people for roles in enterprises such roles could be as employee, entrepreneur and employer or simply as self-employed (Ugwuogo, 2013).

The philosophy of the Business Education curriculums as stated in Aquah (2014) includes:-

- i. To lay a foundation and / or build on the foundation at National Certificate Examination (NCE) level in the pedagogy education system.
- ii. To equip the learner with saleable skills i.e. skills which will enable them
- iii. Acquire, sustain and grow on their jobs: create jobs, be self- employed, and be employers, of labour, become better and wiser consumers of goods and services.
- iv. To prepare the individuals for higher studies in Business Education

While the objectives of the programme are geared towards the preparation of individuals who are skilled in:

- i. Pedagogy in Business Education
- ii. Principles and practice in Accounting, Management: Marketing; and Information and communication Technology (ICT)
- iii. Curriculum design and evaluation in Business Education
- iv. Development of instructional materials for Business Education
- v. Supervision and administration of the Business Education programme in secondary schools.

Thus at the end of the programme of study the learners are expected:-

- i. To acquire the basic knowledge and skills of business education
- ii. To relate the knowledge and skills acquired to national development
- iii. To develop basic skills in office occupations
- iv. To provide the needed background for teaching business subjects.
- v. To prepare students for further training/studies in Business Education
- vi. To provide orientation and basic skill with which to start a life work for those who many not further educational training.

However, the societal lacks the in-depth understanding of the importance of this programme and this has contributed to the

negative perception they have towards the programme.

### 3.0 SOCIETAL PERSPECTIVE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

Societal perspective is a point of view that includes a broad range of ideas, opinions, and positions from society. According to the Oxford dictionary, society is a long-standing group of people sharing cultural aspects such as language, dress, norms of behavior, and artistic forms.

The poor perception of Business Education programme or total ignorance on the advantages of this type of education from the general public is worrisome as some described it as education meant for the poor, drop outs, less privileged, not clever enough for academic work, does not provide jobs seen as 'prestigious' in the society, seen to provide only 'dead-end-jobs' that cannot lead to further self-development and does not offer substantial managerial skills for higher jobs. This position was emphasized by a survey of public technical and vocational education and training (TVET) teachers carried out by Ayub (2015) in Ghana as reported in Okae-Adjei (2017) which found that none of the respondents wanted their own children to study technical and vocational education and training programmes. This same attitude applies to Nigeria where the seemed general perception is affecting students' enrolment in VTE programmes.

#### 3.1 Low Public Interest Factor

Despite the potentials of Business Education towards addressing the challenges of skill gaps and reduce unemployment among graduates in Nigeria, students, parents and the larger society show little interest in this type of education as compared to the high enrolment of university degrees, even when some universities offer this course, the enrolment still remains low as observation has shown that majority of the students studying Business Education did not make the course their first choice but failed to secure admission in their

preferred choice course areas (Edokpolor and Egbiri, 2017).

In the opinion of Edokpolor and Owenvbiugie (2017), Business education is still generally perceived as a form of education for the ungifted and under-privileged child. This situation has made parents and elites to shun this type of education for they erroneously believed that it is meant for the less academically endowed.

#### 3.2 Less Prestigious Factor

Business Education most times is considered inferior or less prestigious compared to academically oriented programmes offered by the universities. This public perception accounts for the low self-esteem of some Business Education graduates. Also, the non-commitment of students already on the programme to learn skills and also putting skills they acquire to practice after graduation had contributed to this factor (Esekheigbe, 2019). The perception of the public about Business Education is that it is aimed at preparing the youths for low status jobs and an education for less able students.

Business Education is being handled with levity in Nigeria and this results in loss of prestige and diminishing morale which has greatly affected the teaching and learning of business education (Oyewole and Ihionkhan, 2020; Edokpolor and Egbiri, 2017 and Oladunjoye, 2016).

#### 3.3 Social Appraisal of Business Education

It is unfortunate fate of Business Education in Nigeria that its products are held in low esteem by both individual and society. There is no denying the fact that many parents do not prefer their children to study Business Education except when they are not able to secure admission into universities (Adebisi, 2016). Society perceives Business Education graduate as a mere teacher who has a degree in education (B.Ed.) just like other education courses hence, they have low regard for them though they contribute to national development. Society generally believes that the knowledge acquired in the programme is

not worthy or enough to be a business teacher or secure a high prestige white collar job.

### 3.4 Dumping Ground for Dropouts

Business Education has become a dumping ground for graduates from different disciplines employed in the name of Business Educators as the employment of unqualified teachers to teach business courses is a great disservice to quality of Business Education graduates (Ugwuogo, 2013). Teaching has been hijacked by all comers, making it almost a dumping ground for every bird of passage holding on to teaching for just a while as they seek jobs of their choice, or persons who failed to succeed in other vocations and perhaps those who wish to combine teaching with other businesses (Ekaette, 2019). Also, Business Education graduate has been looked down upon and treated unfairly because of the general belief that there is nothing special and paramount in the course unlike courses like law, accounting, medicine and surgery, engineering and nursing.

Business Education is regarded by majority of the population in Nigeria as an education with less reputation or education that can only provide blue collar jobs. That this, this type of education is meant for school drop outs, under achievers, people with low intelligence, the physically challenged or for those candidates who could not secure admission into their choice course of study (Esekheigbe, 2019). Sulayman (2014) opined that people are of the notion that Business Education aims at preparing youths for low status jobs and it is a dumping ground for the less able students. Some parents/guardians do not want their children/wards to study Business Education as they believe that it is meant for drop outs, dullards and less brilliant individuals. Instead, they opt for courses like Law, Medicine, Pharmaceuticals, Engineering, Architecture and Political Science (Adebisi, 2016).

### 3.5 Poor Curriculum Content

The word business is a dynamic one in the 21st century due to the advancement in

technology. Society, at large believes that Business Education graduates are not equipped with the necessary 21st-century skills and are not qualified to be business instructors rather than normal teachers whose job is to teach at the primary and secondary levels. Business education is equally faced with the challenge of the use of outdated curriculum. The curricula of most business education are outdated, as such, needs overhauling. Aworanti (2015) opines that it is regrettable that most vocational education curricula which Business Education is a subset, are outdated having been in use for over fifteen years. Observing this situation closely, it is clear that current Business Education may not be able to meet the need of industries or employers of labour genuinely (Edokpolor and Owenvbiugie, 2017).

According to Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh Tuke (2015), highly needed courses are not available in the curriculum. Typewriting, Administrative office management, word processing and Transcription are not included in the curricula of some institutions. Such inadequacies in the curriculum could lead to the production of half-baked graduates. A probable reason for these inadequacies may be that Business Education experts and relevant stakeholders are not often invited to participate during the planning and development of the curriculum. Business Education programme should include courses that would prepare the student for saleable skills, help them have an understanding of the economic system and how a business operates. It should also gear towards helping people to acquire knowledge, and attitude/value that would enable them function in the world they live. A good curriculum should also be geared towards helping the students to acquire knowledge, attitudes and values that would enable them function efficiently in the world of work. To this end, subjects that would meet the objectives or set goals must be included in the curriculum (Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh Tuke, 2015).

### 3.6 Lack of Adequate Qualified and Committed Teachers

There is a gross inadequacy of qualified business teachers and the few available ones are always overloaded with teaching tasks which render them inefficient and non-committed to the goals of teaching. In some cases, untrained or unqualified teachers are mobilized to teach and business courses. Of course, the result is obvious of the kind of graduates produced out of the programme course. Human resources are the most important assets of any nation (Obi, 2015).

If there are many sophisticated equipment/facilities, funds and other materials available for teaching but if they are not effectively utilized by efficient and dedicated teachers the aim for which they are meant tend to be defeated. Inadequate number of trained teachers of Business Education is prevalent in most of our educational institution offering this noble course.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

In Nigeria, societal perception of Business Education graduates has greatly influenced many people about this programme and it has merely become a second option. Today, parents even students, only study the course for certificate and not for learning. The few who are sincere and become Business Education graduates are not given the honour they deserve.

Education therefore, remains the foundation of human resources development required for national development. Vocational and Technical Education, which Business Education is part of, has been identified as a means of tackling poverty and unemployment. Business Education has the potential to engendering development if the obstacles facing it are tackled. The impact will in turn change the negative societal perspective. Hence, Business Education graduates will be appreciated for their impact.

### 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

- i. Government should provide funds and equipment for the smooth running of Business Education programme as this will encourage parents, teachers, and students and make the programme attractive to the citizens.
- ii. Graduates of Business Education should desist from the habit of waiting for only white-collar jobs. An entrepreneurship orientation programme should be arranged for graduates of Business Education to redirect their minds while government and financial houses should be of assistance to business educators' graduates by financing their business take off.
- iii. Non-professional Business Education lecturers should not be allowed to teach any of the Business Education courses.
- iv. Government should make Business Education programme more lucrative. It is a known fact that inconsistency in government policies contribute to the poor perception the public holds towards Business Education programme in Nigeria.
- v. Teaching and learning should be re-directed from theoretical to practical. This will make them stronger to perform wherever they find themselves.
- vi. There should be serious public enlightenment on the relevance and prospects of Business Education this may be carried out through career talks and counselling in primary and secondary schools.
- vii. There should be advocacy to promote Business Education from all stakeholders and encourage the public to stop looking at Business Education graduates with prejudice and disdain.
- viii. Business Education curriculum should be reviewed, because of the dynamic nature of business and advancement in technology which has a great impact on education.
- ix. The private sector should be encouraged to contribute input into the financing of



Business Education as they are the end users of the graduates produced by the universities.

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