

**BUSINESS EDUCATION: A VERITABLE
INSTRUMENT FOR ENHANCING YOUTH
EMPOWERMENT FOR SELF-RELIANCE IN
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Youth empowerment is a potent tool for societal development. The aim of this paper is to portray Business education as a potent instrument for enhancing youth empowerment for self-reliance in Nigeria. The paper looked at the concepts of Business education and youth empowerment and established that Business education could empower Nigerian youths and subsequently make them to be self-reliant through the various investment

opportunities which it gives rise to. Among these are; trading, establishment of business centres, publication of textbooks, provision of educational services, consultancy services, provision of financial services and advertising agency. The paper concluded that Business education could make Nigerian youths to take decisions on issues that relate to them and become self-reliant, thereby leading to peace, tranquility, economic growth and development in the society. Finally, the paper among other things recommended that efforts should be geared towards making Business education be more practical, buildings and facilities that will make its teaching and learning effective and efficient should be adequately provided and the products of Business education should rise up and become self-reliant

Key words:

Business education, veritable, instrument, enhancing, youth empowerment, self-reliance

Introduction

The youth is defined contextually in line with a goal being pursued or decision of the individual or institution giving the definition. In Nigeria, for the purpose of The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and N-power programme, a youth is seen as a person not more than thirty (30) and thirty-five (35) years of age respectively. Furthermore, some people are of the opinion that a youth is an individual whose age ranges between 15-24 or 18-35. It should however, be noted that a forty (40) years old person could also be regarded as a youth. According to Vaurus and Fletcher in Obunadike and Ughamadu (2014), youth empowerment gives young people the capability of taking decisions and making changes that affect their lives and those of others in the society through attitudinal, structural and cultural processes.

Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges which are occasioned by youth disempowerment. This is because most Nigerian youths lack the ability of controlling their own fortunes due to their

inability to control resources and participate actively in decision making on issues that affect them. This results into unemployment and frustration which lead to youth restiveness, thuggery, armed banditry, vandalism, kidnapping, cultism, terrorism and insurgency. These problems are seriously shaking the foundation of the country and as such, require urgent attentions.

Successive governments of Nigeria and development partners have made a lot of efforts toward empowering the youths through putting on ground some empowerment programmes. Some of these programmes include; Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), YOUWIN, N-POWER and in 2017, The United Nations in collaboration with The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development organized an empowerment programme for youths and women tagged “FADAMA III AF GUYS” (FADAMA III Additional Financing Graduate Unemployed Youths and Women Support Programme) which trained youths and women in different agricultural enterprises and gave financial assistance to those with viable business plans in order to enable them to be self-reliant and sufficient.

It should be noted that despite the laudable objectives of the programmes, and the benefits realized from them, many Nigerian youths still need to be emancipated and empowered and made to be self-reliant. This is probably because of the inadequacies of the programmes, strict requirements, low publicity which leads to low level of awareness or corruption which is a serious problem in Nigeria. In line with these, youth empowerment and self-reliance could also be enhanced through other alternatives, among which is functional education. This is because education is a springboard for social and economic change. It also gives people lifelong skills that

could lead to innovation and creativity and enables them to solve problems that might come their ways. Based on these, Business education could be used in empowering the Nigerian youths. This is because the discipline opens windows of awareness and emancipation to those that study it. It is therefore based on the aforementioned, that this paper focuses on Business education: a veritable instrument for enhancing youth empowerment for self-reliance in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Empowerment Education Theoretical Model developed by Freire (1970). The model sees empowering and liberating education as a process involving listening, dialogue, critical reflection and reflective action. This model is taken to be appropriate for this work because Business education is a discipline which could lead to the attainment of the process of empowerment education. For example, Business education encourages listening and dialogue between the teacher and the students. This owes to the fact that listening and dialogue could lead to effective teaching and learning that would lead to acquisition of the desired skills which would lead to youth empowerment through Business education. Business education could also create consciousness on the part of the learners and make them to be highly creative through critical reflection and reflective actions, thereby making them to be empowered and self-reliant.

Concept of Business Education

Business education is a union of general education and business components and it is an academic programme offered in tertiary institutions, designed to provide learning situations for skills acquisition among students who could apply such skills in their occupation, managing

personal business, personal living in the society and nation building (Okon and Okon, 2013). This definition implies that Business education could make a person to become a functional member of the society, lead to self-employment as well as development of employable skills that could make the recipient to contribute his quota to societal development. It should however, be noted that Business education is not only studied at the tertiary level of education, it is also studied at the post-primary level of education. To Iwu (2016), Business education gives the learners the required skills and competencies which are needed for self-reliance and employment and as such, it is a discipline which equips an individual with occupational skills and knowledge that will enable him to fit into and find job satisfaction in the labour market. This definition shows that Business education inculcates self-reliance and employable skills unto the recipients. This implies that the discipline has the potential of making its products to be self-reliant and also get opportunities for paid employment in the office (white-collar jobs). It should be noted that those who are able to get white-collar jobs, could also use the acquired skills as means for getting additional income. This is because they could venture into any of the viable business opportunities such as trading, consultancy services and operating business centres which Business education gives rise to.

Furthermore, Iwu (2016) cited Filani as holding the view that Business education is made up of planned activities, which are organized and developed for the purpose of preparing youths for responsible economic participation in the society. Similarly, Aliyu in Simiku and Oru (2016) sees Business education as a field of study whose focus is to enable the learner to acquire skills, competencies, attitudes and attributes which are required for efficiency in the economic system. Finally, Ezeonwurie (2016) points out that Business education is a field of study which equips its

recipients with the required skills, competences, understanding, knowledge and attitude for performing as workers in industries and civil service as well as proprietors of businesses. This definition clearly points out that in relation to acquisition of skills that could be applied for success in paid employment, one can also get skills that could lead to self-reliant entrepreneurial success from Business education. The discipline develops skills and competences in Accounting/Book-keeping, Business management, Computer Studies, Distributive/Marketing education, Office technology and management, Entrepreneurship and Teaching. The objectives of Business education as deduced from Mshelia (2016) include:

1. Educating individuals for and about business.
2. Providing learning experience that enables individuals to, as workers produce and distribute goods, utilize the outcome of production as consumers and to as citizens, take judicious socio-economic decisions.
3. Preparation of people for self-employment.
4. Provision of career information.
5. Manpower skill development.
6. Enhancement of economic development.
7. Development of work habit and attitude.
8. Acquisition of managerial skills.
9. Production of competent teachers who would teach at all levels of education.

Concept of Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment is an important ingredient for maintaining social stability of youths and supporting nation building initiatives in Nigeria. This is because; it aims at making the youths to contribute to the general development of the society (Idakpo, 2013). He also reports that youth empowerment has to do with the process of working with youths, so as to help them in acquiring the needed knowledge and developing necessary skills, competence and attitudes which will make them to become active agents in their societies, instead of becoming victims of societal development and changes. To buttress these, Jato (2013) is of the notion that youth empowerment is taken to be an apparatus for equity and freedom in the society. Furthermore, Jato (2013) holds the view that empowerment of youths would enhance their ability of developing themselves and the entire society in the sense that it could allow them to assume positions of authority through which the desired change for economic development could come up in the society.

Youth empowerment is all about enabling the youths to have influence which could be economic, social or political. According to Lucas, Alaka and Odozi in Obunadike and Ughamadu (2014), youth empowerment has to do with the process of creating and supporting enabling conditions that would enable young ones to act for themselves in relation to their own term(s) in an environment that supports equality, peace, democracy, and access to knowledge, information and skills as well as a positive value system. This implies that youth empowerment focuses on creation of enabling environment that would not relegate the youths to the background, thereby giving them the opportunity of acting for themselves and having access to all the necessary ingredients needed for their empowerment.

Business Education and youth Empowerment for Self-reliance

Business education has the potentials for enhancing youth empowerment for self-reliance. This is because it generates a lot of business opportunities which could empower and make Nigerian youths to be self-sufficient and reliant. The following are some areas through which Business education would lead to youth empowerment and subsequently, self-reliance:

Trading

Business education makes it possible for its products to acquire entrepreneurial skills leading to the capability of identifying the needs and wants of the target market. It also equips them with business and risk management skills as well as marketing skills with which they could encourage people to buy their products. Furthermore, the discipline informs its products on the importance of being self-reliant. Based on these, they could be stimulated to engage in buying and selling at different levels which could be retail, wholesale or distributorship. This is expected to make them to be empowered to control their own fortunes and consequently become self-reliant. This owes to the fact that all things being equal, profit would be generated from the entrepreneurial effort which makes them to be economically self-sustaining and take positive decisions for the betterment of themselves and the society at large.

Establishment of Business Centres

Business education equips the recipients with skills for operating different office machines such as computer, scanning machine, photocopying machine, as well as binding and laminating machines. It also equips them with Information and communication technology skills. These

skills could lead to youth empowerment and consequently self-reliance in the sense that they could be stimulated to set up business centres which according to Sani (2010) is among the investment opportunities in Business education. Those who choose to set up business centres could therefore, render to people, services that could generate income to them. Among these services are; typing, photocopying, laminating and spiral binding of documents. They also have the opportunity of rendering internet based services to people. These include opening and checking of emails, filling on-line forms, students' registration and checking of examination results.

Publication of Textbooks

The products of Business Education can use their wealth of knowledge and experience to publish books on the different areas of the discipline. The proceeds from the sales of the books would help in boosting the economic status of the writers and make them to control resources. This would thus, make them to become empowered and self-reliant.

Provision of Educational services

Business education could enable Nigerian youths to provide educational services that would make them to become empowered and self-reliant. This is because Aliyu (2013) states that Business education leads to production of professional teachers. These educators can therefore be organizing home lessons or set up extra-mural lesson centres and private schools. They also stand a better chance of using their professional training in business and education to ensure proper management of the school(s) and giving qualitative education to their customers. In addition to

these, they may be training and developing businessmen and women in areas that would enhance their performances. Those in the academia could also benefit from the graduates of Business education in the sense that they could be organizing conferences in business related fields for them. All these would things being equal, lead to youth empowerment and self-reliance. This owes to the fact that these entrepreneurial efforts are potent tools for independence and control over issues that have to do with them.

Consultancy Services

Business education could empower the Nigerian youths by making them to become consultants in different areas of business and education. Through this, government, educational service providers and business organizations may come to them for professional advice and as such they will help them in analyzing the business and market situations and come up with concrete policies and programmes that will lead to business success. They are also in better position for proffering solutions to educational problems brought by their clients. Through these efforts, some money would be generated which would enhance youth empowerment and self-reliance.

Provision of financial services

Business education could empower Nigerian youths and enhance their self-reliance through enabling them to identify and utilize opportunities in provision of financial services. This implies that they could use their wealth of knowledge in setting up daily thrift collection business, money lending and setting up private auditing firms which will afford them the opportunity of winning

auditing contracts from both the public and private sectors. These efforts could therefore make them to be independent and economically empowered.

Advertising Agency

Nigerian youths can through Business education skills become advertising agents. In line with this, Gidado and Babakura (2014) point out that advertising agency is a business opportunity in Business education. Based on these, the products of Business education stand the chance of being able to use the acquired skills in helping organisations to come up with advertising programmes that would make their goods and services to be appealing to people. This would therefore, make the youths to be empowered and self-reliant since the proceeds would make them to stand on their own and control their own fortunes.

Conclusion

Youth empowerment is a basic requirement for sustainable development in all human societies. The Nigerian youths are not well empowered which leads to frustration and some social problems. This paper established that Business education is a potent tool for enhancing youth empowerment and self-reliance in Nigeria. The implication of this is that Business education could make the Nigerian youths to control resources, take decisions on issues that relate to them and become self-reliant, thereby leading to peace, tranquility, economic growth and development in the society.

Recommendations

In line with the issues raised in this paper and the conclusion which was drawn, the following recommendations are suggested as the way forward:

1. There should be societal re-orientation on Business education.
2. Youths should be ready to take up careers in Business education.
3. Quality assurance units in all academic institutions should enhance proper monitoring and supervision of the programme.
4. The principle of total quality management should be adopted in order to make all stakeholders to participate actively in monitoring and supervision of the programme.
5. Business education should be more practically oriented.
6. Business education graduates should strive towards self-reliance instead of seeking for white-collar jobs.
7. There should be adequate provision of building and equipments that would make the teaching and learning of Business education to be effective and efficient.

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