

## **T**ECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF BUSINESS EDUCATION FOR ACQUISITION OF FUNCTIONAL SKILLS AND SELF EMPLOYMENT

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The important role which business educators play as a veritable tool for the growth and sustainable development of the global world cannot be over emphasized. There has been an action for more qualitative and functional education all over the global world. Business education which is skills oriented for self efficiency and acquisition of functional skills hold the key to Nigeria becoming technologically relevant and economically prosperous if systematically packaged and adequately delivered. Business Education prepares students for occupations in administrations office systems, accounting, finance, marketing management and computer information system, business education equip youths with appropriate skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies that can enable the individuals to be self employed and self-reliant, leading to sustainable economic development. This paper adopted descriptive survey,*

### **Introduction:**

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, interest, abilities, competencies and norms of a society by people and transmitting same to the coming generations so as to enhance perpetual development of the society (Yekini, 2013). According to Akinpelu (1981) cited in Chukwarah (2013), education is a life-long process through which individuals acquire relevant knowledge and value which enable them to become useful to themselves and the society in which they live. Education opens the door for all citizens to

*observation and interview method from both primary and secondary sources to provide the basis for the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. This approach is best for the paper because it sought the opinions of wide range of scholars on technological innovative and professional competencies required of business education for acquisition of functional skills for self employment. This paper therefore focused on technological innovation and professional competencies required for acquisition of functional skills. Recommendations were made towards achieving functional skills by means of self employment motivation through business education.*

**Keywords:** *Teaching Innovation, Business Education, Professional Competencies, Skills Acquisitions, Functional Skills and Self Employment*

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**P**articipate in development activities and when citizens are derived education, they are excluded from the development process especially in the emerging knowledge society (Okereke & Okorafor, 2011).

Similarly, education can be described as a process through which individuals acquire necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that will enable them handle the challenges of life as they come in order to be able to contribute their own quota towards national development. There are various disciplines in vocational and technical education such as technical education, agricultural education, health and home education, engineering education. Business education and lots of others. This paper tries to identify business education as a type of education by analyzing its roles in the realization of technological relevant and economical prosperity for skill oriented and self-reliant.

### **Concept of Technology Innovation**

Technology, according to Nwoji (2012) could be defined as the application of the scientific method to solving problems of daily life. Put in the perspective of business education, however, technology is the application of scientific method to solving problems regarding inculcation of skills to

learners to meet the changing needs and demands of the society. In business education, there existed technology in a crude form but there has been a dramatic and significant change in the methods used by Business Education to address the changing needs of the society.

The technology advancement in business education is basically in the form of information and communication technology (ICT) perspective. The society generally is ICT-driven and in order to keep abreast of this, there must be a restructuring in the knowledge and skills given to learners/students in Business Education. Electronic office (e-office) is one of the phenomena of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which is done with the use of computer. It is based on this, that most business education department across Nigeria's tertiary institution are building ICT centres, improved computer laboratories and as well offering professional courses in computer studies to produce students/graduates that can easily adopt in their every changing business environment. The use of typewriter is almost going into extinction as the computer is fast taking over ( Okon in Nwoji, 2012).

Technology is regarded as the key driver of total factor productivity and one of the main promoters of long-term economic growth (Warner, 2001). Although expensive and risky, developing and adapting new technologies is instrumental for countries to achieve business competitiveness. However, a large number of countries are far from being at the forefront of technical change to become core technological innovators in the creation of goods and services (The Economist, 2000). Many countries simply do not possess the main ingredients to create successful environment that supports innovation and is conducive to technology development. Chief among those ingredients are collaboration between businesses and universities, the presence of strong, high-quality, public research institutes, and private financial support for research and development (Coyle, 2001). Naturally, the World Bank (2001) argues that a market economy would provide a large number of incentives to induce a cadre of entrepreneurs to seek technological solutions for concrete managerial and manufacturing problems than any other economic system.

It is important for business education students to understand that technology penetrations vary widely among countries. Hence, such a great variability in technical progress affects the capability of countries to implement specific processes and operational task (The Economist, 2000). Innovation is forcefully a continuous process that takes time to occur and offers between countries and within industries. Besides, it may not automatically lead to the creation of competitive advantages (Umuned, 2010). However, developing and adapting new technologies help those countries to counteract the pervasive effects of diminishing returns and obsolescence. Capitalizing on the learning effects and seeking economies of scale allow businesses to achieve efficiency gains and widen product differentiation options that ultimately, translate into profit maximization (Warner, 2001). Future international business managers must take on increasing interest in the way technological events occur and their impact on different countries, as well as the role of their governments in shaping a culture of innovation.

### **Business education as a programme of study**

Azuka (2000) defined business education as a programme of study which offers students who wish to pursue a career in business an opportunity to develop those skills, abilities and understanding that will enable them to enter, perform and progress in business occupation after graduating from high school or the university. Abdulkarim (2000) see business education as a programme of instruction designed with the deliberate intent of equipping students with the following:

- (a) Requisite knowledge for making rational decisions in the business world
- (b) The skill of interpersonal relationship for effective management and communication of business operations and the attitude of creativity.
- (c) The innovation and adaptation contingent with changes in the world of business that leads to proficiency and efficiency in analyzing and operating business activities.

Okoli (2010) described business education as an important part of the general education which emphasizes on skills and competencies acquisition for use in offices and business-related occupations. Nwanewesi (2010) viewed business education as encompassing education for office occupation, business teaching, business administration and economic understanding. Thus, the primary goal of business education is to produce competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the job market.

According to Aliyu (2006), the goals of business education at the school level are:

- To develop a mature understanding of the general nature of business
- To provide training in specialized phases of business activity
- To provide training for leadership in business
- To lay a cultural and ethnical foundation for the development of the three forgoing purposes

The above objectives are in line with Obi and Otamiri (2010) who stated that business education includes the following objectives

- ❖ To produce efficient and effective management, office technology and management (secretarial), accounting and marketing managers
- ❖ To produce lecturers who will handle business related courses in our colleges and universities
- ❖ Expose the students via the available courses to limitless horizon of the business organization
- ❖ To propagate the development of business thought and philosophy in business and management
- ❖ To produce people for self-employment in situations where there is no available paid employment
- ❖ To develop in the students requisite skills and expertise in management of both private and public enterprise and armed with the analytical ability needed to meet the growing challenges of present and future Nigeria and international environment

- ❖ To prepare and equip those who pass through the programme to be able to establish and run their own private business venture as self-employed citizens of the society.

Studies conducted indicated that business education is facing a variety of issues ranging from lack of relevance to business practice, shortage of qualified teachers with terminal degree and the role of business educators in the society. Okwunanaso & Nwasor (2000) in Ndinedu (2001) enumerated the difficulties which business education encountered in its efforts to achieve the objectives as insufficient fund, low status rating, antagonism by competitors, insufficient supply of books, lack of consistent drive among business educators to have a functioning union for business teachers, flexible curriculum, issue of nomenclature, irregular and poor remuneration for teaching and employers' ignorance of the benefits from studying business education. Nwaokola (2002) affirmed that poor teacher quality especially in the skills, lack of professional pride on the part of business educators, essence of business education laboratories (e.g shorthand laboratory, computer laboratory, office equipment laboratory and model offices) poses problem to the growth of business education in the society.

New technologies in business education have also posed many challenges to business educators globally. It was revealed by researchers that schools do not adequately embrace the acquisition and utilization of new technologies in business education (Ido & Asuquo, 2013); the schools lack computer laboratory, computer system, internet facilities, modern teaching aids, scanning machine, media typewriter, electricity, projector or existence of any cyber-café around the school premises. Therefore, lack of these technological tools makes it difficult to teach and prepare students for the use of these technologies now and in the future world of work.

Uzoka and Bayode (2010) added that business educators do not adequately measure if their students are actually learning new relevant skills and behaviors and place enough emphasis on building critical skills and abilities such as self-awareness, integrity, cross cultural competency team execution, comfort with ambiguity and uncertainty etc and the

overemphasis laid by business education theory instead of concentrating more on stimulating real-world experiences. This implies that business educators should be capable of inculcating in the students what is actually needed by the employers in the labour markets rather than teaching the students' theory or object ideas. Take light of the above, Business education embraces basic education teaching career, entrepreneurship, business understanding, office environment and vocational practices, business education occurs at several levels, such as primary, secondary and tertiary, with the greatest activity in the latest 2.3, objectives of business education. At the tertiary level of education in Nigeria, the philosophy of business education is to make the students understand the concept and philosophy of the national policy on education because of its importance in national development. It was based on this premise that Igboke (2005) enumerated the objectives of business education as follows;

- To develop basic skills for personal use in the future
- To acquire the basic knowledge and skills of business education
- To relate the basic knowledge and skills acquired to national development
- To develop basic skills in office occupation
- To provide the needed background for teaching in business subjects
- To prepare students for further training in business studies
- To provide orientation and basic skills with which to start a life or work for those who may not undergo further training

From the objectives mentioned business education is expected to produce graduate with the right skills, knowledge, attitude and competencies required for employment either in public or private company or become job creators thereby, contributing to national development

### **Professional Competencies**

Professional competency means the ability to perform a certain table released to a job, with the skill of good quality. It means the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clerical reasoning, emotions, values and reflection in daily practice for the benefit

of the individual and community being served, ([www.yama.co.at.uesf/Library](http://www.yama.co.at.uesf/Library)). The office manager who is at the centre of information has the duty of providing comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date information promptly to enable them take quality management decisions. Office automatic and organizational restructuring have led secretaries to assume a wider range of new responsibilities once reserved for managerial and professional staff. New technologies in office have evolved the functions of the office to rely on different types of improved and standardized equipment.

To assist business education graduates to attain their primary objectives of enrolling for the programme, Abdulkarim (2018) opined that they must be assisted to develop competencies in different business courses and technology application in business through effective instruction, since competency drives the performance of tasks in accordance with laid down standards. Judy and Chris in James (2014) defined competency as the combination of knowledge, attitude, values and skills required to perform tasks in determined situations. Mitchelmine and Rowley (2010) described business competencies as generic and specific knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to create, sustain and grow business ventures successfully. Thus, e-business competencies are knowledge, attitudes and skills required to effectively and efficiency carry on e-business operations such as e-e-commerce, e-payment and e-marketing.

Ozumoike and Abdulkarim (2016) noted that with the advancement of technology and its integration in doing business, traditional methods of instruction such as; lecture and demonstration methods alone cannot be utilized to assist business education students to develop e-business competencies. Therefore, the authors suggested that the development of e-business competencies such as: the knowledge of technological tools utilized in business operations and ethnical issues related to the utilization of technological tools in performing business operations can be guaranteed through the utilization of other instructional strategies.

### **Skill acquisition**

Skill, as basic ability, is the means by which man adjusts to life. Person's attitude and work functions are required and necessary antidotes suggesting the suitable skills performance and acquisition of same by going



through a given work sample. In the work place, skill is what the workers give in exchange for remuneration. If the skill given is satisfactory in correspondence. This process, if sustained culminates in promotion, retraining and prolonged tenure that leads to productivity (Adeyemo, 2009).

Skill does not depend solely upon a person's fundamental, innate capacities but must be developed through training, practice and experience. Skill according to Bolt-lee and Foster (2003) is the art of possessing the ability to power, authority, or competency etc. to do the task required of an individual on the job. Two fundamental issues are used when a skill is to be acquired. According to Okoro and Ursula (2012), the first is the condition which promotes acquisition and the second is the change that will occur when the skill is acquired. However, when an individual sets out to learn a new skill, he usually starts with a communicable programme of instruction. Good learners do not jump into an operation without first receiving the necessary verbal modules in stages, that must be fused together to form a skilled performance.

### **Stages of Skill Acquisition**

Pleshette (2009) quoting Okoro and Ursula (2002) outlined the four main stages of acquisition and development of business education skills to include:

- ✓ Analyze and identify the current and foreseeable skill needed in business, in terms of management, administrative and technical skills
- ✓ Identify the entrepreneur's own personal goals, objectives and analyze and evaluate his/her own skills and resources
- ✓ Produce a realistic personal development plan for the potential entrepreneur
- ✓ Monitor on-going performance on follow up of the entrepreneur once the business has started and progress made towards developing the new skills that had been previously identified as necessary for the success of the business.

Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job. These are the skills, attitudes and actions that enable workers to get along with their fellow workers and supervisors and to make sound and critical decisions. A skill can be seen as a talent or ability an individual possesses and this could be acquired through deliberate personal experiences, training, observation and practice. Skill acquisition on the other hand involves the development of a new skill, practice or a way of doing things usually gained through training or experience. Skill acquisition has been described as the recipe for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by creating avenues for employment, thereby creating an avenue for jobs and wealth creation while instilling self-sufficiency and relevance (Isaac, 2011). The whole idea is that, students should be given skill training in addition to their regular academic programme/curriculum in the crucial sectors as being demanded by the industry. Gambari (2011) declared that skill acquisition is the key in the fight for the elimination of hunger and poverty, reduction or elimination of joblessness in the society and reduction of crime through effective engagement of youths. He further stressed that no issue should be addressed as a matter of urgent national importance than that of skill acquisition by the youth considering the failure of our basic education to yield the expected positive results with its attendant consequences such as armed robbery, military, kidnapping etc. Relationship between business education and professional competency is a result of the impact of business education on the development of human resources, productivity and economic growth it has become inherent in the national development strategies in many societies. To achieve professional competency, attention should be drawn to strengthening the bridge between education and schooling for the preparation for the world of work.

Business education finds expression of entrepreneurial activities in areas like stenography, petty trading, small scale business, account clerk, transportation business, thrift loan business, teaching, office occupation etc. in the Nigerian environment, business education plays a vital role in the social, political, and economic development of any nation. This is

possible when jobs are created for the citizenry through the establishment of a lot of business that will accommodate the unemployed youth in the country. A qualified graduate of business education is expected to have acquired enough skills relevant to the management of small business centre or creation of self employment. Amar and Udoh (2008) noted that business education plays a significant role in the economic development by providing knowledge to others and handle sophisticated office technologies and information system. An entrepreneur does not only provide job for himself/herself alone but rather provides for others too. This in turn, helps the individual to increase per capita income as well as the standard of living.

Supporting this, Ugwuogo (2013) opined that business education holds the prospect of contributing, through its job creation and self-employment packages for the attainment of vision 2020. Thus, he stated that a gainfully employed individual contributes to GDP per capita, which in turn reduces poverty and unemployment which are some of the indices of development.

### Conclusion

Having examined the trends in new technologies in business education which covers the need, adaptation and prospects this paper averred, that globalization era has necessitated individuals and organizations to key into the on-going technological race in order to compete favourably. This will require today's business workers, managers and educators to have functional skills and professional competencies in interacting with the vast world of knowledge and specifically the skills and know-how in handling and working with these evolving technologies.

No meaningful achievement can be derived by any nation without effective and efficient technological advancement and professional competency since the level or nature of development in a country is often considered to be an offshoot of the nature of her educational programme and system. Nigeria's growing economy requires professional competency and functional skills to provide the needed skilled manpower to propel it into the forefront of economically buoyant nations, and to enhance the quest for

technological advancement in the world because many new occupations today involve modern technology and require up-to-date knowledge and skills to maintain and improve on them, hence, serious emphasis, must be placed on acquisition of functional skills in business education.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in line with the preceding discourse

1. Business education has a close links with the world of work, several possible approaches to improve the linkage is by improving the practical skills and knowledge of those undergoing technological advancement and involving all those concerned in the planning development of curricular in order to meet the needs of the labour market.
2. To meet with technological advancement and in order to improve the professional competence of business educators measures need to be taken to widen the scope of business education and that the industry should provide in-service training to upgrade skills which would lead to better career opportunities.
3. To ensure technological advancement and professional competence through business education, the curriculum of business education programme should be reviewed and restructured to incorporate emphasis on practical teaching and to reflect the current development and technological charges in the country.
4. Business educators should make learners, parents and employers more aware of the career potentials for acquisition of functional skills through business education. This will increase employment opportunities by providing better information system on the need of current labour market.
5. The government should create awareness on the importance of new technological advancement and acquisition of functional skills through business education programme to individual, society and the country at large, through seminars, conferences and workshops.

This will help to boost the supply of competent and qualified business educators in the country.

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