

RESETTING VOCATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM PROVISIONS FOR THE REALIZATION OF NATIONAL NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the need for regular and adequate review of vocational business education curriculum, which serves as a panacea for solving some socio-economic problems in Nigeria among vocational business education graduates. The inadequacy of this programme curriculum has led to an unprecedented increase in unemployment among graduates. This has deprived learners of the opportunity to acquire physical and intellectual skills that enable them to operate maximally and successfully either in self-employment or paid employment. Against this background, this paper examines the concepts of business education, curriculum, and vocational business education curriculum. It explores the need to reset the vocational business education curriculum to address its inadequacies. The paper concludes by recommending that curriculum planners and business educators who are experts in the field should always review the vocational business education curriculum.

Keywords: Resetting, Vocational Business Education, Curriculum, National Need

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is one of the severe socio-economic problems bedevilling Nigeria as a nation, partly due to poor curriculum content, which has minimal capacity to develop students' skills for job opportunities. According to Atakpa (2011), unemployment is prevalent in our society today simply because the curricula of our tertiary institutions have not fully captured the dynamics of the labour market. Thus, it has become apparent that the products of our tertiary institutions are becoming increasingly irrelevant to the changing dynamics of the labour market. The International Bureau of Education (2016) postulates that curriculum represents a conscious and systematic selection of knowledge, skills, and values—a selection that shapes the way teaching, learning, and assessment processes are organised by addressing questions such as what, why, when, and how students should learn.

Vocational business education programmes, whether in Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, or Universities, afford learners the opportunity to acquire the necessary competencies for managing and administering business enterprises and teaching business courses. Vocational business education plays a vital role in imparting the appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies society needs. It is an indispensable tool for alleviating a nation's increasing unemployment rate among business education graduates.

Despite the laudable objectives of vocational business education programmes, many graduates of this programme are still roaming the streets looking for white-collar jobs that are not available. No wonder Ementa and Alonta (2021) opined that the increasing rise in the number of unemployed business education graduates in Nigeria calls for reassessment of business education curriculum content in meeting the skills needed by employers and for self-reliance. For this programme to be relevant and functional for acquiring qualitative skills for everyday life and work, the curriculum must be adequately and regularly reviewed to reflect technological changes, environmental needs, and community needs to realise national needs.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Vocational Business Education Concept

Vocational Business Education is an indispensable programme of instruction designed to provide beneficiaries with skills, knowledge, attitudes, and work habits related to business occupations. According to Ementa and Alonta (2021), vocational business education is that type of education that inculcates in its recipients the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and values required in the business world. Corroborating this view, Onyesom and

Okolocha (2013) opined that vocational business education is an education for acquiring and developing skills, competencies, attitudes, and attributes needed for the economic system's efficiency. They further stressed that it is students' mental and vocational preparedness for generating income in today's industrial and business world. Business education provides a workforce with the knowledge, skills, and understanding needed for business careers (FRN, 2004). Atakpa (2011) views business education as an embodiment of vocational knowledge and skills needed for employment and advancement in a broad range of business careers.

Objectives of Vocational Business Education

The primary objectives of Vocational Business Education in the area of manpower production, as stated in the National Policy on Education, are as follows:

- i. To provide trained workforce in business, particularly at craft, advanced craft, and technical levels
- ii. To provide vocational skills necessary for commercial and economic development
- iii. To give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically

Aina (2010) also states that the primary objective of business education is to develop vocational knowledge and skills necessary for initial employment and advancement in business careers. By way of emphasis, he further stressed that vocational business education should, in addition, perform the following functions:

- i. To provide general business education to youths in the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to be effective in economic understanding and communication
- ii. To provide knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes that will enable beneficiaries to use sound reasoning in making personal business decisions as wise consumers and producers of goods and services
- iii. To provide an understanding and appreciation of the nation's business enterprise system
- iv. To raise the level of economic literacy sufficient to enable individuals to analyse alternatives, make reasoned judgments, sound decisions, and take intelligent action

Furthermore, Akinola (2006) also identifies other objectives of business education as follows:

- i. To prepare students for employment after graduation
- ii. To meet the workforce needs of society
- iii. To increase the options available to each student and serve as motivation in order to enhance all types of learning
- iv. To present a laboratory in which students practice skills, knowledge, and attitudes learned to make classroom instruction more meaningful and relevant
- v. To provide an opportunity, through the use of local businesses, for students to acquire additional skills and knowledge not possible practically in the classroom
- vi. To give students background training that will contribute rapidly to advancement on the job
- vii. To help students develop good work habits and attitudes to aid in the development of such personality traits as punctuality, dependability, accuracy, tact, adaptability, and a sense of responsibility that make for efficient work
- viii. To help develop the right attitude towards work and the habit of mind conducive to the proper use of technology
- ix. To provide the knowledge and skills necessary for industrial, commercial, and economic development
- x. To provide personnel who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement, solution, and convenience of humanity
- xi. To give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the promotion of artisans, technicians, and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant
- xii. To stimulate and encourage creativity and to enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology

Competencies Provided by Vocational Business Education

Vocational business education programmes can provide critical competencies for sustainable economic development and meet national needs. According to Friday, Okorie, and Eyo (2021), Policy Statement Number 71 of the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education identified competencies provided by business education as critical elements for sustainable economic development. These competencies are:

- i. Accounting competencies
- ii. Business law competencies
- iii. Career development competencies
- iv. Secretarial competencies
- v. Communication competencies
- vi. Computation Competencies
- vii. Economic and personal finance competencies
- viii. Entrepreneurial competencies
- ix. Information technology competencies
- x. Management Competencies
- xi. Marketing competencies

From the above-stated policy statement, vocational business education programmes are crucial for providing functional competencies indispensable for national needs. Therefore, it is imperative for curriculum planners and business educators to regularly review this curriculum in line with national needs. This will go a long way toward adding value to a nation, which invariably meets the needs of society.

Concept of Curriculum

Curriculum can be seen as the sum of all the activities planned for the engagement of students to be educated in education-related disciplines. Mulenga (2018) defines curriculum as the expectation for what will be taught and what students will do in a programme of study. It includes teacher-made materials, textbooks, and national and state standards. The gathered information has been considered relevant to a specific topic. Ementa et al. (2021) also define curriculum as a vehicle through which the school strives to achieve educational objectives. It is the lifeline of a school programme and a track that prepares students for their future life in school and colleges. They further view curriculum as the heart of any educational endeavour, as it determines what and how educational content should be taught.

According to Lake and Winterbottom (2010), in Kattington (2010), curriculum is a set of rules that benefits students by providing them with practice in both content and social curriculum through the use of active learning, exploration of interests, civic responsibility, character building, and recognising and helping the community. Again, Okiti-Okagbare (2010) in Ementa and Alonta (2021) postulate that curriculum consists of carefully mapped-out programmes of what to teach and how to teach, and that it is through curriculum that the values, dreams, and desires of a nation are better interpreted. Elaborating further, he argued that it has been alluded that the wealth or poverty of a nation depends on the content of the curriculum. It is further seen as a roadmap of programmes of activities to be followed in the teaching and learning in a formal school system.

Vocational Business Education Curriculum

Dike (2019) defines vocational business education curriculum as an educational process of action about opportunities for students to be educated in business and education-related disciplines. He further stresses that it is responsible for equipping students with skills, attributes, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours required for teaching, entrepreneurship, administrative, and clerical work.

According to Nwanko and Obuah (2021), vocational business education curriculum can be described as a planned sequence of formal courses and other activities and learning experiences a student follows to achieve a particular educational objective. He also opined that the business education curriculum endows students with the appropriate skills and attitudes that enable them to improve their quality of life and the environment in

which they find themselves. Ementa and Alonta (2021) also maintained that the vocational business education curriculum is part of a continuous process of planning and development, which involves the selection of learning experiences calculated to help in the attainment of goals and objectives of the programme.

Stressing the relevance of vocational business education curriculum, Agwu (2018) postulates that vocational business education curriculum enables students to acquire the skills necessary for entrepreneurship and also equips them with the right skills to engage in a life of work in offices and for self-employment upon graduation.

Umo and Okon (2023) averred that vocational business education curriculum for undergraduate programmes must reflect the following components:

- i. theoretical components,
- ii. practical components,
- iii. general education component,
- iv. general business education component, and
- v. specialised (occupational) business component

Ementa and Alonta (2021) advocate that the curriculum must seek to address students' needs for competency in such areas as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, management, appreciation of diversity, and learning to learn. Unarguably, the business education curriculum aims to develop these competencies in graduates of its programme. In a nutshell, the writer views vocational business education curriculum as standards, benchmarks, or planned activities of learning opportunities for a period of time guided towards changing students' behaviour.

Resetting Vocational Business Education Curriculum for the Realisation of National Needs

Vocational business education curriculum requires regular review to realise societal needs. According to Olusesan and Lawal (2021), vocational business education curriculum must be data-based, dynamic, fully articulated, realistic, student-oriented, have explicit outcomes, evaluation consciousness, and future orientation. Isiyaku (1999) in Okike (2021) identified the characteristics of a good vocational business education curriculum as follows:

i) Focus

Business education courses must cater to developing knowledge, manipulation competencies, attitudes, and values that can be applied in real working settings.

ii) Justification

Business education curriculum must be based on societal needs. It must be prepared for learners and teachers and should derive from employment opportunities available to graduates.

iii) School-Community Relationship

Vocational business education curricula must be responsive to societal needs, as the graduates of the programme must be employed by the community.

iv). Responsiveness

Vocational business education curricula must be responsive to technological changes in society. They must address new areas of development so that graduates can be better equipped for the jobs for which they are being trained.

v) Logistics

Logistics in business education programmes, such as modern equipment, facilities, and other instructional resources, must be captured in the curriculum for its successful implementation.

The writer believes that vocational business education curricula must be flexible, authentic, diverse, inclusive, and focused on continuous improvement. They must also contain research-based teaching techniques, encourage collaboration, and establish quantifiable objectives.

Challenges of Vocational Business Education Curriculum

The most disturbing challenge is the growing unemployment of vocational business education graduates owing to the fact that the curriculum content is inadequate. Okoro (2013), Adamu and Sani (2023), and Mohammed and Hassan (2013) observed that the business education curriculum as of the present day is inadequate and has very little capacity to develop students' skills for job opportunities and entrepreneurship consciousness in the country.

Furthermore, Isineyi (2009) observed that the content of the vocational business education curriculum does not meet employers' demands. She reiterated that the present curriculum is outdated, theoretically based, lacks correlation of subjects, and has no uniformity in the courses taught, which has led to the content not meeting society's needs.

Onajite (2010), elaborating more on the problems of vocational business education curriculum, stated that for effective implementation of vocational business education curriculum, Nigerians need to emulate the example of developed countries of the world. He stressed that in countries like the United States of America and Britain, many industrial concerns provide schools with valuable teaching aids, literature, films, visiting speakers to give career talks to students, and restricted teacher-industry fellowships, as well as allowing students and teachers to visit industries to see various industrial processes, which is rarely practised in Nigeria. He also emphasised that the link between tertiary institutions and industries in Nigeria is very weak and that there are several research reports on the lack of necessary resources to carry out practical exercises.

Again, Ofuha, Uchendu, and Nkendum (2010) reported that there is a weak method of implementation of the curriculum. The teaching method used in implementing the curriculum was mainly theoretical, and the students' entrepreneurial capacity was significantly low, as there was no significant production of marketable goods and services to show for their practical knowledge. Still emphasising the problems of vocational business education curriculum in Nigerian universities, Njoku (2008) observed that business education curriculum in most universities has not been adequately reviewed to benefit the beneficiaries effectively.

Other Challenges

- a) **Lack of adequate funding:** Most universities, colleges of education, and polytechnics offering business education programmes have not been adequately funded to acquire curriculum materials or instructional resources.
- b) **Wrong application of business education curriculum:** Instructor misapplication can significantly hinder the curriculum's effective implementation.
- c) **Lack of staff development:** This is also a hindrance to effective and efficient teaching and learning in business education programmes, along with their non-professionalisation.

CONCLUSION

With modern society's technological advancement and dynamism, the world continues to advance day after day. In order to fit into the system and for a nation to successfully meet some of its challenges regarding the unemployability of graduates of vocational business education, curriculum planners and business educators (experts) need to take proactive steps towards reviewing the content of the business education curriculum. This will enable business educators to impart the right skills, knowledge, attributes, and attitudes to meet societal needs. With the right curriculum, vocational business education—a skill-oriented discipline designed to equip students with saleable skills—will help address the horrendous unemployment problem among vocational business education graduates in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the aforementioned issues, the following recommendations are put forward for consideration:

- d. Vocational business education curricula should be comprehensive and encompassing, including all the other components of business education curricula, so that students can acquire the relevant and most needed knowledge and skills.
- e. Vocational business education curricula should be responsive to technological changes that are permeating the world of work. All tertiary institutions offering vocational business education programmes need to restructure their curricula to reflect these changes.
- f. Vocational business education curriculum should be regularly and adequately reviewed so that new topics, technologies, and other relevant issues can be incorporated.
- g. All courses offered in vocational business education have practical components. Therefore, the curriculum should be theoretically based and should include sufficient practical elements. This will offer students the opportunity to acquire practical skills for real work situations.
- h. A link between tertiary institutions and industries should exist so that students can acquire more relevant experiences during Students' Industrial Work Experience Schemes (SIWES).
- i. The method of curriculum implementation should be improved upon by the relevant authorities concerned with its implementation.
- j. All tiers of government, private individuals, and philanthropists should provide financial assistance to business education programme graduates to start up their businesses. Adewole (2010) recommended adequate funding for universities, cooperative ventures among graduates, soft loans, and arrangements by the government through the National Directorate of Employment.
- k. Only professional business educators should be allowed to train students, for fear of non-professionals wrongly applying the curriculum content.
- l. Teachers should be regularly trained and retrained to enhance skill acquisition in business education programmes, and modern facilities should be made available.

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