

SKILL ACQUISITION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION AS A CATALYST TO SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The study examined skill acquisition in Business Education as a catalyst to sustainable National Development. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 42 business education lecturers in Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka, Lagos. The whole population was studied because it was not too large for the researchers to handle. A 16-item structured questionnaire was validated by two experts in the field of business education and one expert in measurement and evaluation. Reliability of the study was determined using Crombach Alpha which yielded a co-efficient value of 0.88. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings of the study revealed that inadequate funding, laboratories, computer, limited access to internet facilities and a host of others are the challenges to skill acquisition in business education. It was also revealed that skill acquisition in business education has a lot of implications to national development. The study therefore recommended among others that, the government at both federal and state levels should ensure adequate release of funds for the procurement of training facilities for practical teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions and that the curriculum planners should review business education curriculum to enable the students acquire the required skills for the world of work and to establish their own businesses.

Keywords: Skill Acquisition, Business Education, Catalyst, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Skill acquisition is vital for Nigeria to grow economically, particularly in this era of dwindling revenue. The federal government of Nigeria recognized skills acquisition and development as an important factor in the drive to enhance productivity, reduce youth

unemployment and achieve sustainable economic development (Nwaukwa, Iloeje, Nzeh & Nwagu, 2018). Skills refer to abilities, capabilities, aptitude, and expertise acquired through deliberate, systematic and sustained training necessary to adaptively perform job functions effectively. A skill is the learned ability to carry out a task with pre-determined results often within a given amount of time, energy or both (Uchendu, 2015). Skill is the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experience. To clarify this concept, Masumeh (2014) identified nine defining attributes of a skill from a psychological perspective as follows: skill is learned, skills are performed and transferred in the presence of specific stimuli, skill involves problem solving relevant to the context, skill involves relative judgements with individual differences in skill performance evidence, standards of excellence are important, skill involves comparable replication, and considerable periods of time are required to reach high levels of skill.

Skill acquisition refers to ability to be trained on a particular task or function. It is a form of training of individuals or group of individuals to acquire skills needed for self-sustenance (Idoko, 2014). Skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training geared towards instilling in the youths the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development (Douli, 2012). Skill acquisition is a major tool for extreme poverty and hunger eradication with the aim of creating an avenue for jobs and wealth which will bring self-reliance and sufficiency and, contribute to the growth and development of a country's economy (Isaac in Oyerinde and Falade 2016).

Skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular task or function (Mike, 2014). Idoko (2014) posited that skill acquisition requires the gathering of various abilities that enhance task execution through the coordination of both theoretical and practical form of knowledge. It involves the training of people in different fields of trade under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for certain duration and under certain conditions. Nwaukwa, Iloeje, Nzeh and Nwagu (2018) stated that skill acquisition leads to employment generation in small and medium enterprises such as computer business centers, book binding centers, laminating centers, computer sales, computer training, internet centers (cybercafé), business registration, photocopying centers, reprographic, and printing press among others.

According to the Development Education Center (2019), skill acquisition and youth development are emphasized in Nigeria to meet the following needs: reduction in youth unemployment rate, diversification of job opportunities, effective function, crime reduction, employment generation and national development. Equipping students with relevant skills is an important mandate of business education programme at both secondary and tertiary education in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). This is noted in the policy statement of National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) which expressly stated that the primary goal of business education is to produce skillful and dynamic business education graduates for gainful employment or self-employment. In line with this expressed policy objective, Ubulom and Enyoghasim (2012) defined business education as a programme of study that equips students with knowledge, attitudes, skills and

competencies needed to become productive members of the society. Ubulom and Enyoghasim stated that business education programme equips its recipients with skills such as communication skills, computation skills, personal reliability skills, economic adaptability skills and group and organizational effectiveness skills. With numerous opportunities available to business education graduates, the programme is believed to be a veritable tool for sustainable development, and tackling widespread graduate unemployment. Additionally, business education programme develops students' managerial and business decision-making skills through training and practical experiences in form of case studies, group projects, and industrial training (IT) (Macintosh, Mason, Cooke & Denyer, 2017).

The need for skill acquisition in business education as a catalyst to sustainable national development cannot be overemphasized. Unemployment among the youths today is on the increase and the situation is particularly pathetic as the number of youths graduating from our tertiary institutions looking for employment opportunities increase day by day (Oluwadare, Taiwo and Adekinle, 2016). This is why education remains the key to empowerment of the youth and the nation as a whole. (Omolola in Shaibu, Okpe and Kaduru (2020). Skill acquisition in Business Education has become necessary in that it helps to shape and reshape the mentality of the youths. Skill refers to a special ability or expertise to do something well which is gained by learning and having undergone a particular training exercise (Tajudeen, 2014). Therefore, effective skill acquisition in business education is an indispensable tool towards producing a self-reliant national and dynamic economy. There is also need for continuous assessment of technological needs of the nation so that educational curriculum and policy can be tailored towards meeting the emerging needs for national development.

Skill acquisition can be viewed as the process of making superlative output, a general characteristics of one's behaviour in a given field. It also involves a gradual change from less effective behaviour to extremely proficient one. 'Business education is seen as education for and about business (Aliyu, 2013). Business education as a subject and essential part of Vocational and Technical Education has remained relevant in producing the needs of the individuals and that of the society through skill acquisition. Business education is also seen as an aspect of Vocational and Technical Education which is designed to develop competencies in management, marketing, book-keeping, accounting, Office Technology and Information and Communication Technology (Udoh, 2016). The said skills are those that equip and empower learners to live, learn and work as productive citizens of their various nations.

The objectives and goals of business education at all levels of education as posited by Igboke in Onyesom and Ashibogwu (2013) are to develop basic skills for personal use in the future, to acquire the basic knowledge and skills for business education, to relate the knowledge and skills acquired for national development, to develop basic skills in office occupation, to provide the needed background for teaching in business subjects etc. The acquisition of skills by business education graduates will help to enrich the Nigerian

economy as well as making it possible for sustainable national development, practical skills will enable the recipient to impact positively to boost sustainable national development (Udoh, 2016). Business education is a major element used to ensure that there is sustainable national development in a developing country such as Nigeria. For business education to achieve its goals, there must be appropriate strategies for promoting skill acquisition for the production of quality graduates for sustainable national development (Olufunwa, Waziri and Olonmagoh, 2013). Skill acquisition is a practical instrument that is used in developing knowledge and skills in the learner in such a way that he/she can use it to improve the society.

Statement of the Problem

A recent development in which Nigerian business education graduates roam the streets looking for very scarce white collar jobs instead of creating their own jobs seems to indicate that all is not well with the standard of the delivery of the programme and our economic development. Business education is an aspect of vocational and technical education meant to equip the learners with skills and competencies required to be gainfully employed or self employed in order to contribute their own quota to the economic development of the nation. But it is worrisome to find out that most business education graduates lack necessary skills for paid and self employment. This scenario prompted the researcher to carry out the study, to investigate skill acquisition as a catalyst to sustainable national development.

Research Questions

1. What are the implications of skill acquisition in business education as a catalyst to sustainable national development?
2. What are the challenges to skill acquisition in business education as a catalyst to sustainable national development?

Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised of 42 business education lecturers in Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka, Lagos. The whole population was studied because it was not too large for the researcher to handle. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Skill Acquisition in Business Education for Sustainable National Development" (SABESND). The questionnaire was divided into two-parts A and B. Part A was designed to elicit demographic information of the respondents while part B consists of 16 items which are structured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) - 4, Agree (A) - 3, Disagree (D) - 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1. The face and content validity of the instrument was established by two experts in the field of business education and one expert in measurement and evaluation. To determine the reliability of the instrument, validated

copies of the instrument were administered to 20 business education lecturers from other tertiary institutions in Lagos State who were not part of the study population. Reliability test was done using Crombach Alpha which yielded coefficient value of 0.88. The researcher personally administered copies of the questionnaire on the respondents with the help of one research assistant who was adequately briefed. All copies of the questionnaire distributed were retrieved and used for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity of the respondents opinions. The decision rule of any mean score below 2.4 being regarded as disagreed and any mean score of 2.5 and above is regarded as agreed was adopted.

Results

Research Question One

What are the implications of skill acquisition in business education as a catalyst to sustainable national development?

Table 1: Respondents' mean ratings and standard deviation on implications of skill acquisition in business education.

S/N	Item on Implications	X	SD	Remark
1	Promotion of entrepreneurship within the nation.	3.61	0.76	Agreed
2	Establishment of small and medium scale businesses.	3.30	0.77	Agreed
3	Reduction in the rate of unemployment, poverty and other vices.	3.45	0.75	Agreed
4	Improved standard of living.	2.60	0.89	Agreed
5	Ability to utilize the available local resources.	2.52	0.83	Agreed
6	Development of rural societies.	3.20	0.78	Agreed
7	Creation of employment opportunities.	3.22	0.85	Agreed
8	Enhancement of foreign investment.	3.10	0.86	Agreed
Cluster Mean		3.1		

Data in table 1 show that all the eight items on the implications of skill acquisition in business education as a catalyst to sustainable development were agreed to by the respondents. The mean scores ranges between 2.52 and 3.61. The cluster mean of 3.1 also revealed that skill acquisition in business education has implications to sustainable national

development. The standard deviation shows that there is homogeneity in the respondents' responses.

Research Question Two

What are the challenges to skill acquisition in business education as a catalyst to sustainable national development?

Table 2: Respondents' mean ratings and standard deviation on challenges to skill acquisition in business education

S/N	Item on Challenges	X	SD	Remark
9	Inadequate funding of business education programme.	3.64	0.71	Agreed
10	Laboratories for teaching skill-oriented courses are inadequate.	3.60	0.76	Agreed
11	Inadequate computers for teaching and learning.	3.45	0.80	Agreed
12	Multimedia projectors to transmit skills and competencies are adequate.	2.41	0.82	Disagreed
13	Students' poor attitude to skill acquisition.	3.40	0.87	Agreed
14	Facilitators with relevant skills are few.	2.25	0.64	Disagreed
15	Limited access to internet facilities	3.36	0.86	Agreed
16	Power supply is grossly inadequate.	3.20	0.86	Agreed
Cluster Mean		3.2		

Data in table 2 show that out of the eight items on the challenges to skill acquisition in business education, the respondents agreed to items 1,2,3,5,7, and 8 with mean scores ranging between 3.20 and 3.64 as challenges to skill acquisition in business education. The respondents disagreed to items 4 and 6 with mean scores ranging between 2.25 and 2.41. The cluster mean score of 3.2 shows that on the whole, there are serious challenges to skill acquisition in business education which cannot encourage sustainable national development. The standard deviation shows that there is homogeneity in the respondents' responses.

Discussion of Findings

The study, from the finding of research question one revealed that skill development is fundamental for national development, and the acquisition of this relevant skill is a tool for increasing and boosting the productive power-base of the nation and thus promotes economic stability. Once an economy has developed basic modern skills, the wheel would have been set rolling to achieve the minimum standard of living. This supports the findings of (Gloria, 2015) which says that development of skilled manpower would subsequently enhance a wholesome national development.

The findings of the study also revealed that there are serious challenges to skill acquisition in business education programme. Funding, computers, laboratories and other teaching and learning facilities are inadequate. This situation hinders skill acquisition in business education which eventually cannot encourage sustainable development in Nigeria. These findings corroborate that of Okolocha and Ihionkhan (2015), that in some business education programmes in Nigeria, there is inadequacy of human and material resources for teaching of courses. This support the earlier findings of Amiaya (2013) which revealed that business education programme faces the problem of inadequacy of resources which hamper acquisition of skills needed for self reliance.

Conclusion

Skill acquisition in business education is fundamental to national development. The findings of the study revealed that skill acquisition in business education will lead to reduction in the rate of unemployment, poverty and other vices, establishment of small and medium scale businesses which will enhance sustainable national development. It was also revealed that skill acquisition in business education is faced with a lot of challenges which may affect its contribution to national development. The researchers therefore, concluded that there is still a lot to be done by the government in the area of providing facilities and equipment for teaching skill-oriented courses in business education towards sustainable national development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government at both federal and state levels should ensure adequate release of fund for the procurement of facilities and equipment for practical teaching of business education courses in tertiary institutions.
2. The curriculum planners should review business education curriculum to enable the students acquire the required skills for the world of work and to establish their own businesses.

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