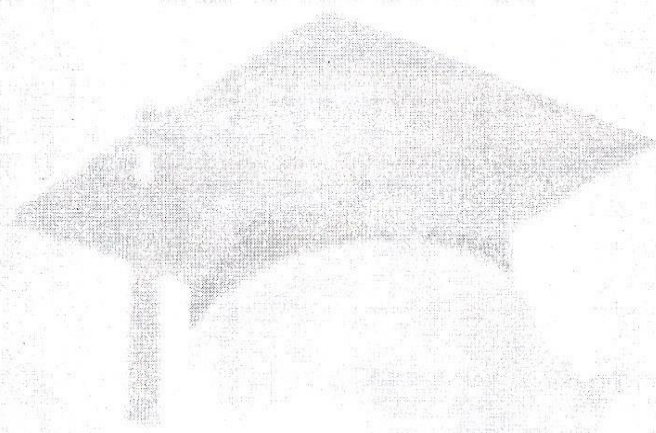


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DEVELOPING HUMAN RESOURCES IN TERTIARY BUSINESS EDUCATION FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper observes that Nigeria's higher educational institutions have fallen short of expectations- their products (graduates) lack the skills required by the labour market and this trend results in mass graduate unemployment, since they would have assisted them to be self-reliant. The study investigated the relevance of higher-level business education human resources development for youth empowerment and national development in Nigeria. The ever-increasing pace of technological changes in the fields of business and economy generally has rendered the teaching of business skills and the training of skilled manpower ever more challenging. The problem posed by this development is the search for graduates and competent business educators with the knowledge and skills needed by employers of labour in business offices, industry and public sector. The task of producing skilled human resources development for youth empowerment, productivity, and efficiency in society lies with skilled trainers and the quality of the training institutions. The implications of the development of a virile higher-level skilled work force for the economy is critically analysed and recommendations are made to relevant publics, especially the universities and its tutors.

Introduction:

The rapid development of any nation depends largely on the caliber of its youths, since every sector of a nation's economy is managed by competent personnel who are mostly young people. The introduction of microelectronics, telecommunication equipment, internet and computers into modern offices calls for training and development of competent youths who are equipped with the various skills needed by the market. One of the goals of Nigerian tertiary education is the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society (FRN, 2004, p. 36). It is the statutory duty of the Nigerian higher education to groom the required human capital through relevant manpower training, abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge (Babalola, 2007). An outstanding human capital assumption is that after finishing formal tertiary

education, graduates should be able to make a successful transition from these institutions of higher learning to become productive workers, self-reliant entrepreneurs, responsible parents, good citizens, selfless leaders, and live healthy lives. It is assumed, also that after graduation, young people can then develop additional skills through training and experience that could further enhance their opportunities, capabilities and second chances in life.

The 2003-2005 rolling plan of Nigeria indicated that the labour force would grow from 35.4 million to 40.2 million in 2005. The absorption capacity for the economy was expected to rise from 42.25 million in 2003 to 44.28 million in 2005 implying that 2.03 million employment opportunities were expected to be generated from the implementation of the plan, thereby, reducing unemployment rate from 12.70% in 2003 to 11.79% in 2005. Yet the situation for Nigeria's youth in the labour market today seems disappointing with many of these young people failing to gain employment or ending up working in poor conditions in the informal economy. Youth unemployment rate in Nigeria appears to be the highest in Africa with indicators at primary school leavers 14.70%; secondary school leavers 53.60% and tertiary graduates 12.40% (FME, 2006).

Table 1- Youth Unemployment Rates for Selected African Countries

Country (group-year)	Unemployment rate (%)
Lesotho (total- 1997)	47.40
Lesotho (male –1997)	37.90
Lesotho (female –1997)	58.50
Malawi (total-1987)	0.80
Malawi (male – 1987)	1.60
Malawi (female –1987)	0.30
Namibia (total – 2002)	10.90
South Africa (total- 2000)	55.80
South Africa (male- 2000)	57.90
South Africa (female – 2000)	53.30
Swaziland (total- 1997)	55.20
Swaziland (male – 1997)	41.70
Swaziland (female- 1997)	48.30
Zimbabwe (total – 1999)	14.00
Zimbabwe (male- 1999)	17.00
Zimbabwe (female – 1999)	10.90
Nigeria (all ages- 2003)	2.30

Nigeria (pry School Leavers-2003)	14.70
Nigeria (sec. School Leavers 2003)	53.60
Nigeria (tertiary graduates 2003)	12.40

Sources: ILO (Al-Samarriai, S. And Brighton, P. B. 2003); Nigeria data from CBN *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts* for the year ended 31st December, 2003; and FME (2006) retrieved from <http://www.fme.gov.ng>

There are 96 universities in Nigeria as at October, 2008, and over 41 polytechnics and 62 colleges of education. Despite the effort of the government to create about two million jobs per annum, most tertiary graduates stay far above the age of 34 years before entering their first job. Bello (2003) in (Babalola (2007) reveals that unemployment incidence in Nigeria affects energetic youths within the ages of 20, 24 and 25 years more than any other age groups in Nigeria. This implies that many youths with dynamic resources wonder around without being gainfully engaged. With this huge human capital waste, the question which this study will attempt to answer is.

Why do large numbers of University graduates go jobless for months or even years, while labour complain of lack of skilled workers; and how can the Universities assist in training skilled business graduates for the Nigerian economy?

According to FME (2006) and other employers of labour are:

- That there is a mismatch between teaching in the institutions of learning and the needs of the labour market.
- It also shows that majority of students learn through lectures and academic textbooks and are academically sound but they have limited opportunities of acquiring practical experience by using machinery, equipment and practical techniques associated with the professions,
- There is lack of qualified teachers to teach vocational, innovative, entrepreneurship and job skills.
- Finally, there is lack of consultation with private sector which has led to teaching of outdated curriculum, outdated resources and outdated teaching methods.

The findings from Federal Ministry of Education confirms the earlier assertion by World Bank (2002) that the growing unemployment among recent graduates, especially at the tertiary level, stems in part, from the mismatch between educational output and requirements of the labour market. There is a high level demand for skills workers in oil, industrial and services sectors, yet the supply is far below expectation.

Skill mismatch is a major concern in Nigeria where tertiary education graduates acquire skills that are not demanded by the labour market. While there is the societal bias for popular

courses like Economic Law, Medicine, there seems to be a skill mismatch problem with respect to area of petroleum, gas, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, solid minerals, and ICT. This problem seems to stem from the structure of the advertised vacancies or lack of official labour market information that could serve as a signal in making schooling and career decisions.

Dabalén and Oni (2000) in probing the levels of graduate preparedness for productive employment in Nigeria answered the following questions: are university graduates in Nigeria adequately educated? How do employers assess the qualifications of current degree-holders? How well do graduates perform when they are able to obtain employment? Based on the analysis of available statistics and interviews with managers from 55 public enterprises, the study shows that prospects for employment among graduates worsened over time as the share of graduates going into the public sector fell drastically. It further reveals that university graduates are poorly trained and unproductive on the job; graduate skills have steadily deteriorated over the decade (1990-2000); shortcomings are severe on oral and written communication, and in applied technical skills; and in many cases, employers compensate for insufficient academic preparation by organizing remedial courses for new employees. This increases the firm's operating costs, and reduces their profitability and competitiveness. Another important factor for unemployment in Nigeria is the wrong impression of students about the place of technical and vocational education. There is an enduring societal bias against technical and vocational education. Consequently, a large number of job seekers lack practical skills that could enhance self-employment. That is why, rather than providing jobs for others, the graduate unemployed persons keep depending on the government and the non vibrant private sector for job offers (Usoro, 2000).

Concept of Business Education

Many educators and authors have different views about business education. Anao (1986) conceived business education to include the sum total of knowledge, skills and aptitudes that are required for successfully promoting and administering a business enterprise. He gave the goal of business education as the production of manpower who possess the requisite knowledge, skills and aptitude for harnessing other resources and bringing them into a cooperative relationship that yields the goods and services demanded by society for the satisfaction of their wants and needs. Popham, Schragand and Blochus (1975) in Nwaokolo (1999) on their part conceptualize business education as that education that prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business and prepares them to handle their own business affairs and function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. They opined that in education for business, business education is vocational for business majors; while in education about business it is general

education for all students. Business education can be defined as a composite of skills, which aim at training people who will have the competencies of being employed or be self-reliant in marketing, management, accounting, office and secretarial skills. It is career oriented that aims at preparing people for gainful employment.

Business education at the tertiary level is much more specialized, for instance, while business graduates from a College of Education or faculty of education in a University are prepared as educators and/or trainers, business graduates from polytechnics and business/social science faculties of universities are groomed for positions in the public and private sectors. Some graduates from both sectors may go into research and self employment.

The objectives of business education generally are borne out of the needs of industry, commerce and society. These objectives are highlighted in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) the inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian Society; and the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, both mental and physical, as requirements for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

As a result of inadequate number of qualified teachers, not much of the above goals have been achieved. The teaching cadre according to Aleyideino (2000) is still riddled with a vast army of professionally unqualified staff, and severe shortages especially in some crucial subject areas have continued to plague our educational system. Business education is one of such subject areas. Very few federal and state universities offer business education in Nigeria in its full programmes. Also, the quality of equipment and facility in the universities have both deteriorated and the existing ones and grossly inadequate for the large number of students admitted per programme. This trend accounts for the shortage of manpower in business education as Aina (1986) at the onset found that only five thousand (5000) vocational teachers (including business educators) were available out of the one hundred and five thousand (105,000) needed for the effective implementation of the vocational aspect of the new policy on education which provided for the vocationalization of all secondary schools.

Office Technologies and Youth Empowerment

Office technologies are those machines and equipments used in carrying out office functions. These include computers, communication gadgets and word processors. Technological advancement in business education refers to the improvements in office machines and in the methods of their use and application in business, commerce and industry in order to increase productivity and facilitate effective management. Detailed, accurate and more up-to-date information is made available at a faster pace than ever be

fore by compute. Software packages which make certain functions possible are now available. Examples include expert system (that tries to imitate the way human beings think, using rules of influence captured in a knowledge base) speech recognition software such as via voice which enables textbooks to be easily converted to electronic form by using the human voice and also allows computers to read out books or texts already stored in electronic form to an audience of one or more persons using PC sound card and speakers; the internet which allows one access to current information on different subject matters e.g internet e-mail used for sending and receiving electronic messages.

There are many telecommunication gadgets which are in use in offices today and which business educators and the students must be familiar with. Agomuo (2005) opined that the ability to use modern communication and information technologies are some of the competencies needed in today's business environment. All the business skills and competencies required for use in business offices, clerical occupation's and economic affairs especially in the areas of accounting, business management, data processing, office education, marketing and communications are now being performed through the use of computer. This emphasizes the role of the computer in performing business functions. The use of office technologies, therefore, is a challenge to accounting officers and secretaries who need to update their knowledge and skills if they are to remain in business world. It is even a greater challenge to the trainers who are charged with the responsibility of training for business and about business.

The demands of the modern office today are highly technological. In other words, the acquisition of office technology skills and their use in offices and personal lives would definitely lead to self reliance and eventual development of the economy. Youths would be skilled in word processing, data processing, telecommunication, reprographic, micrographic, computer and communication competencies. These are core areas of office technology that would make the youthful graduate to be gainfully employed or self- employed thus becoming another employer of labour.

Tertiary Education Human Resources Development (HRD) and Youth Empowerment.

The resources employed in the management process are both materials and human. Ohakwe (1988) In Usono (2000) saw human resources as the people with different specializations, roles and capabilities who are an integral part of the organization. Human resources constitute all people resident in the nation or organization who are not incapacitated beyond the possibility of contributing to the social and economic well being of that nation or organization. They may be direct employees, clients or customers, temporary employees or consultant, part-time persons or any person, with different types of other relationships to the organization. Physical/mental resources include: computer, audio

video recording, infrastructural facilities stationeries, vehicles, television, sports equipment, models etc. However, resources in education can also include a piece of evidence, any piece of information, and idea and any contribution of these items which can help the young earner to develop his ability to learn, think, feel, discriminate and create, thereby being empowered. In organizational settings, human resources constitute the ultimate basis of a nation's wealth. This implies that youths are active catalysts who constitute wealth creators, materials resources exploiters, builders of social, economic and political organizations and agents that stimulate national development; while capital and material resources are passive productive factors.

Efforts in developing human resources for higher-level manpower by institutions of learning come in levels. Colleges of Education award certificates for middle level training- Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). Some of these colleges award degrees in affiliation with Federal Universities. Polytechnics and colleges of technology award OND- Ordinary National Diploma and HND – Higher National Diploma; while Nigerian Universities award B.Sc., M.Sc, and Ph.D in business education and business management programmes. The acquisition of these qualifications is expected to equip a graduate in skills that should make him employable or self-employed thereby becoming an employer of labour to better the economy of the nation.

Human resources employment can be described as the process of supporting the attainment of societal objectives by continually acquiring developing and effectively utilizing available human resources in society. Livi (1993) views personnel empowerment as that function of all enterprises which provides for effective utilization of human resources to achieve both the objectives of the enterprises and the satisfaction and development of the employees. Livi sees human resources empowerment as “the practice of managing people at work. Since business education programmes require the services of well-qualified personnel, technical experts of varying grades to operate the different equipment materials and facilities available, it is necessary that their preparation for the world of work should be carefully planned and executed by higher educational institutions to achieve the desire goals of youth empowerment.

Strategies Available for Human Resources Development and Youth Empowerment

As technology changes and advances rapidly, it necessitates corresponding rapid changes in human resources needed. The prevailing business condition at any time determines the number and type of workers needed. In recognition of these above facts, there is need for training and retraining of business youths to meet the challenges of newer technologies to man Nigeria's vehicle of industrialization.

The teacher single handedly cannot carry out the transformation process of achieving quality output (graduates) delivery without enabling environment the need for Universities to be well-equipped with modern up-to date machines, gadgets and related information technology initiatives. These equipment should be on a one-on-one basis to afford learners opportunity for prolonged and sufficient practice-training sessions.

There is need for practical skills that would reduce unemployment among youths and raise the tone of social and economic structure in Higher Education. Human resources managers should strive to assure that youth empowerment employment programmes have a high stability. The effective and intensive development of human resources among youths will solve the menacing unemployment problems. Intensive skills development is needed.

There is need for early introduction of technological knowledge in the secondary and tertiary institutions, providing and maintaining technology too in these institutions. Developing educational programmes to emphasize critical thinking and knowledge discovery and link them to technical/vocational development and youths empowerment.

Mentorization is another strategy available for human resources development. Mentoring is a practice in which a more experienced youth takes on a less experienced one for the purpose of guiding, supporting, advising and assisting him/her towards professional development or efficiency. "It is based on the fact that the more experienced youth is supposed to be more professionally matured and therefore more capable of helping the less experienced one" (Mkpa, 1999). The strategy prepares the business youth for the challenges of the new millennium. The less experienced youth who is attached to the mentor consults the later on all matters and is properly guided in his/her professional activities. The innovation of mentoring is a very useful human resources development strategy because the youth learns from his/her mentor all that he/she could have gone elsewhere to learn.

Another strategy is the need to set up a department of training and development in every youths institution. This department will be responsible for identifying training needs of staff, designing and implementing training and development programmes which will raise the performance level of youths in general and of business youth in particular.

There is need for consultancy units to organize short-term courses to improve the skills and competencies of business youths in the area of computer studies, use of modern audio-visual equipment and general maintenance of the computer and other office equipment.

Finally, there is need to mount regular workshops, symposia, conferences, short courses and seminars, and attendance at these seminars, conferences, workshops, etc., be made compulsory for business youths, in order to update their knowledge and keep abreast

with new devices, technological changes and innovations coming up in their area of specialization.

Implications

The implications of this study is that institutions of learning and youth trainers should watch changes and demands of the labour market so that they could rethink, repackage, reposition and re-engineer their missions, messages and methods in line with the changing requirements of the labour market and those of the local communities continue.

Nigerian institutions need to prepare a youth for life sustenance in all positive forms. Business educators should re-think their approaches and strategies of training, and possibly consider adopting the competency based mode of educational delivery. Here, training is centered on specific skills and learners are assisted to develop them. Also, the need arises for the equipment and facilities position of the training institution to be revisited. Effective business training requires, inter alia, that machines and equipment be suitable to learners on a one on one basis to ensure sufficient practice and development of facility and speed. The situation where the student- equipment ratio is 10:1 is unacceptable and will not lead to effective acquisition of needed skills.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The role of grooming middle-level, intermediate and higher-level business graduate by the Nigerian tertiary educational institutions is gradually becoming very challenging. Since there are fewer job openings than graduates, the major challenge facing the institutions is to equip the graduates with appropriate skills and competencies for self-employment, self-reliance and where possible, employment in the formal sector. It is the possession of these skills needed by the labour market that will enable them contribute maximally to national development of the Nigerian nation.

In line with the conclusion above, it is recommended that:-

- A department of training and development should be set up in every higher educational institution. This department will be responsible for identifying training needs of youths, designing and implementing training and development programmes which should ensure high performance level of youths on graduation.
- Consultancy units in conjunction with computer departments as well as the centre for educational services in our institutions of higher learning should be charged with the responsibility of organizing short term courses to improve the skills and competency level of business youths in areas of computer studies and information communication technology (ICT).

- Skills acquisition programmes should be organized for new youths in the field of business to train and empower them. This will enable them develop a positive attitude towards work and labour.
- Modern office machines comparable to those used in modern business offices should be provided for business education departments in higher institutions. This will ensure that business youths are adequately equipped for the challenges of office automation. The student- equipment ratio must be 1:1.
- Business educators should be encouraged to register their membership in professional associations such as Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN), Nigerian Technical and Vocational Instruction Department (NTVID), and the Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning (NADAP). Professional Associations will provide them with the medium for interaction with professional colleagues as well as exchange of ideas and the Cultivation of professional ethics. Nigeria youths need to be given adequate awareness on soft loans for entrepreneurship development activities. This is to encourage self- reliance and self-employment on graduation from the formal institutions of learning.

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