



An Evaluation of the Functionality of Business Subjects Curriculum towards Youths' Socio-Economic Empowerment in Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the functionality of business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths in Rivers State, Nigeria with emphasis on the proportion of available specialist teachers, teaching methods adopted and available equipment and infrastructural facilities in Rivers State public secondary schools. Three research questions and a single null hypothesis guided the study. The study adopted evaluation research design. A sample size of 372 Business subject teachers denoting 30 percent of population was drawn randomly from the study population of 1,226. A self made questionnaire containing 42 item-statements was the main instrument for data collection. The test re-test method was used to ascertain the reliability co-efficient of the research instrument at 0.96. The mean, standard deviation and simple percentage were computed and used to answer the research questions while the t-test inferential statistics was used to analyze the null hypothesis. The study revealed that business subjects lack enough specialist teachers and that the methods used in teaching business subjects are more theoretical. Also, it was revealed that infrastructural facilities and equipment used in secondary schools in Rivers State for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths are insufficient. It was recommended among others that students be taught with experimental and participatory approach. Again, government should build and provide adequate equipment and infrastructure in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Keywords: Strategies, Functionality, Business Subjects, Curriculum, Empowerment, Youth.

INTRODUCTION

Education is regarded as the vehicle for sustainable socio-economic development and advancement. As such, nations are concerned with the provision of education for human empowerment and development in order to enhance environmental sustainability. To do this, it involves creating initiative and innovations in education whose focus will be towards nation building and national development by empowering people to tackle their societal problems and be able to face challenges of life, such as: poverty, starvation, illiteracy, terrorism, bribery and corruption, robbery, kidnapping, murder, religions crises, ethnic clashes and rivalry. This will include providing the kind of education that will enhance human capital development and empowerment. The importance of education to human being cannot be overemphasized because its relevance and linkages to the development of any society is well known (Igbuzor, 2006).

Supporting this assertion, Kingibe (2008), pointed out that economic and social prosperity depends on the ability of nations to educate all members of their societies to be prepared to thrive in a rapidly changing world. An innovative society prepares its people to embrace change. It implies the provision and augmentation of skills and capabilities of the people in the country. This is made possible through a well designed and efficiently executed curriculum of business subjects towards socio-economic empowerment of youths.

According to Igboke (2005), business education (Business subjects inclusive) is an aspect of the total educational programme that provides the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to do well in the business world. Business education in the opinion of Okoli (2010) is an important part of general education which emphasizes skills and competency acquisition for use in the office and business related occupation. Similarly, Ibrahim (2008) stated that business education (Business subject inclusive) encompasses knowledge, attitudes and skills needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal businesses and function effectively in their economic systems. More so, business subjects involve wealth creation and employment generation for human sustainability.

Business subject's programme in Nigeria today, is a child of necessity. Okwelle (2006) stated that skill training provided by vocational and technical education (business subjects inclusive) enhances employment and productivity as well as sustains competitiveness in the global economy. Supporting this view, Bordean (2012) pointed out that the aspiration of the government and people of Nigeria was to use this system of education to fight unemployment, economic recession and shortage of skilled manpower. Business education (Business subject inclusive) play an indispensable role in the technological advancement of any nation since according to Ubulom (2006), equipping an individual with technical and vocational skills is like offering a country the hope of technological development. In the same vein, the Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) (2008) stated that the broad aim of secondary education within the overall Nigeria education policy are to prepare secondary education graduates for useful living within the society and for higher education.

Njoku (2006) highlighted the objectives of business education (business subjects inclusive) as:

1. To empower students with desirable skills, knowledge and values to perform specific functions so as to become self reliant.
2. To help students appreciate the world around them and contribute maximally to the social and economic development of the nation.
3. Empower students in such a way that the students will develop intellectual capability that would help them make informed decisions in all spheres of life
4. To help students become judicious spenders and develop proper values for the achievement of healthy living and growth of the nation.
5. To understand the political framework of a nation so that students can contribute to the national and economic development of the nation.

The importance of business education advancement, usefulness and sustainable youth empowerment of any nation in nearly all the fields of human endeavors has been a source of concern to various people and government at various times. The youth learns to accept responsibilities for his well being favorably, he will not accept this by simply accepting information on why business subject is necessary for work or by the mere preparation of factual materials about it in a classroom but, must be provided with opportunities to learn and adapt to a lifestyle that is deeply rooted in business subjects curriculum.

Woolman (2001) explained curriculum as all the learning experiences given to the child under the auspices of the teacher. In the opinion of Goodlad (2011), curriculum is defined as a guided learning experiences and outcome developed through reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the support of a school for learners. Ojekunle (2011) viewed curriculum as an engine which propels education to achieve for both the individual and the society what they hold up as prize.

The inability of colonial system of education inherited from our colonial masters to solve Nigeria problem in the 20th century generated a lot of public outcry among stakeholders. This led to the birth of National policy on education which was instrumental to the introduction of business studies in 1981 in public secondary schools in Nigeria. Prior to 1977, no subject was called business studies in Nigeria education

system. It came into existence as a result of the introduction of junior secondary school (JSS) in the 6-3-3-4 system education in 1981, with five specific subject area which includes: office practice, bookkeeping/accounting, typewriting, shorthand and commerce. Business subjects at junior secondary school level comprised subjects taught at pre-vocational level and as an integrated subject. At the senior secondary school level as contained in the new senior secondary school business subjects curriculum launched in September 2011, business subjects includes the followings: financial accounting, store management, insurance, commerce and office practice. Whether a the junior secondary level or senior secondary level, the principal objective of these subjects remain the provision of students with the relevant skills, knowledge and attitude necessary for paid or self-employment as well as for higher education in business area (Ubulom, 2006).

Years after the introduction of business subject curriculum in senior secondary schools in Nigeria, the expectations of the people are yet to be realized. Nevertheless, the curriculum is expected to prepare people for self-reliant. It should prepare people to be self-employed in various enterprises (Ogwunte, 2015). But youths are found involving themselves in one form of social vice or the other as a result of lack of vocational and entrepreneurial skills needed for self-reliant. As such there is growing dependence of our youth on white collar jobs which is difficult to come by these days. Job employers do not emphasize certificate but what one can do and urged youth to seek self-reliance through self-employment. Ezen (2014) examined the influence of practical skill acquisition and socio-economic empowerment of youth in South-South, Nigeria, using random sampling of 260 students. The finding revealed that youth practical skill acquisition significantly influences their socio-economic empowerment in the society. This implies that the joblessness of youth today stems from their non-acquisition of skills.

Authors like Essia (2012) and Nwazor (2012) have decried the failure of the education offered in business programmes (business subject inclusive) to prepare students and school leavers for real life situations. In consonance, Ofoha and Nkedirim (2009) had noted that the causes of increased rate of unemployment amongst post primary school graduates in Nigeria is manifested in lack of functional education that will bring about the training of the abundant human resources in Nigeria to be creative, innovative and business opportunity seekers that will transform opportunities and material resources into goods and services. These views are accentuated by the number of secondary school graduates in Nigeria, especially those from the business education programme (Business subject inclusive) who have failed to gain employment in companies in the business sector of the country. Ohiwerei (2009) specifically noted that the inability of business education graduates to gain employment in various cooperate bodies and organization resulted from incompetence which is traceable to the quality of certificate issued to business education graduates, shortage of business education teachers, lack of maintenance of equipment, inaccessibility of teaching facilities, our teachers and students interest, inadequate text books and work books and other business teaching materials and Nigerian certificate centered mentality. Ohiwerei further alluded that the overbearing emphasis placed on paper qualification is the reason for mismatch between the quality of business education graduates (business subject inclusive) and their employability in the real world of business.

The government in her bid to reduce unemployment and improve on the socio-economic empowerment of youths in Nigeria, introduced a new curriculum in the senior secondary school with effect from the 2011 academic year. The goal of the new curriculum is geared towards wealth creation, entrepreneur development and skill acquisition training for self-employment. Under the present structure, the curriculum has been designed to cover courses such as office practice, insurance, commerce, store management and financial accounting. By the expansion of the business subject curriculum, this has added additional workload on the business teachers as well as business subject students. Problems assumed to constitute constraints to the functionality of business subjects' curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths includes; inadequate teaching methods, lack of equipment/infrastructural facilities and inadequate proportion of specialist teachers available in Rivers State public secondary schools. The above impediments accounted for the reasons why this study is carried out.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the functionality of business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths in Rivers State, Nigeria with emphasis on the proportion of available specialist teachers, teaching methods adopted and available equipment and infrastructural facilities in Rivers State public secondary schools. Three research questions and a single null hypothesis guided the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the proportion of specialist teachers available in Rivers State public secondary schools used for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths?
2. What are the teaching methods used by teachers who teach business subjects in Rivers State public secondary schools for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths?
3. What are the equipment and infrastructural facilities available in Rivers State public secondary schools used for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths?

Hypothesis

This study was guided by a single null hypothesis tested at 0.05 alpha level:

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the experienced business teachers (above 5 years) and the less experienced business teachers (below 5 years) concerning the teaching methods used in secondary schools in Rivers State for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths.

METHOD

The study adopted evaluation research design. A sample size of 372 business teachers representing 30% of the entire population was drawn randomly from the study population. Three research questions and a null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire containing 42 item-statements. The consistency and reliability of the instrument was assured using the test re-test method to determine the degree of reliability which yielded a correlation co-efficiency of 0.96. Data collected were analyzed by the use of mean and standard deviations for research questions, and z-test for the test of hypotheses.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the proportion of specialist teachers available in Rivers State public secondary schools used for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths?

Table 1: Proportion of specialist teachers available in Rivers State public secondary schools

S/No.	Subject	No. of Teachers	Percentage (%)
1	Agricultural Science	50	13.33
2	Financial Accounting	29	7.73
3	Home Economics	31	8.26
4	Office Practice	17	4.53
5	Typing and Short Hand	36	9.6
6	Commerce	30	8.1
7	Computer Science	38	10.13
8	Applied Electricity	36	9.6
9	Store Management	15	4.0
10	Technical Drawing	33	8.8
11	Insurance	21	5.6
12	Auto Mechanic	39	10.4
	Aggregate	375	100

Table 1 indicates that the subjects that predominantly enjoyed the services of specialist teachers in Rivers State public secondary schools were Agricultural Science, Home Economics, Typing and Shorthand, Commerce, Computer Science, Applied Electricity, Technical Drawing and Auto Mechanics. On the contrary, the following subjects appeared to lack enough specialist teachers: Financial Accounting, Office practice, store management and Insurance. This means that specialist teachers in these areas in the sample schools which were used for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths are not sufficient.

Research Question 2

What are the teaching methods used by teachers who teach business subjects in Rivers State public secondary schools used for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths?

Table 2: Teaching methods used by Business subject teachers

S/N	Teaching methods used by Business Teachers	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
13	Demonstration	4.10	1.46	Agreed
14	Brain storming	3.44	1.8	Disagree
15	Questioning	3.96	1.67	Agree
16	Local resource materials	3.31	1.15	Disagree
17	Lecture	3.97	1.82	Agreed
18	Computer aided instructional strategy	3.92	1.74	Agreed
19	Case report	3.32	1.16	Disagreed
20	Inquiry	4.11	1.62	Agreed
21	Project method	3.33	1.17	Disagree
22	Co-operative	3.82	1.36	Agreed
23	Team teaching	3.39	1.14	Disagree
24	Discovery method	3.41	1.11	Disagree
25	Field trip	3.61	2.01	Agreed
26	Assignment method	3.45	1.9	Disagree
27	Conference/seminar/workshop	3.51	2.00	Agreed
28	Internship	4.6	1.76	Agreed
29	Guest speaker method	3.48	1.18	Disagree
	Grand mean	3.88	1.67	

Table 2 shows that items 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25, 27 and 28 received mean scores of 3.50 and above while items 14, 16, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26 and 29 recorded mean scores of 3.48 and below with the standard deviation (SD) scores of between 1.8 and 2.01 respectively. The conclusion is that the teachers used for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths in Rivers State public secondary schools do not use student-oriented teaching methods that would make students acquire vocational skills for self employment.

Research Question 3

What are the equipments and infrastructural facilities available in Rivers State public secondary schools used for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths?

Table 3: infrastructural facilities available in Rivers State public secondary schools.

S/N	Equipment and infrastructural facilities	Freq	%
30	Typing room	28	7.05
31	Perforating machines	41	10.32
32	Office carbonates	28	7.05
33	Photocopying machines	45	11.33
34	Business textbooks	24	6.04
35	Slide projectors	59	14.86
36	Computers science room	60	15.11
37	Dictation machines	24	6.04
38	Audio recorders	21	5.28
39	Video recording machines	21	5.28
40	Metal workshop	17	4.24
41	Auto mechanic workshop	15	4.00
42	Agricultural science farmland	14	3.52
43	Aggregate	397	100

From Table 3, it is apparent that only computer science room and slide projectors with frequency distribution scores of 60 and 59 with percentage scores of 15.11 and 14.86 respectively were fairly equipped as basic facilities in public secondary schools in Rivers State were available. Others with frequency distribution scores of 28, 41, 28, 45, 24, 24, 21, 21, 17, 15 and 14 with percentage scores of 7.05, 10.32, 7.05, 11.33, 6.04, 6.04, 5.28, 5.28, 4.24, 4.00 and 3.52 respectively were indicated to have been poorly equipped. The decision here is that public secondary schools in Rivers State lack sufficient infrastructural facilities needed for practical work on the skilled based subjects used for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the experienced business teachers (above 5 years) and the less experienced business teachers (below 5 years) concerning the teaching methods used in secondary schools in Rivers State for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths.

Table 4: t-test analysis of more experienced business teachers and less experienced business teachers in their mean ratings of the teaching methods used in teaching business subjects

Experience	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	α	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
More experienced business teachers	158	3.81	1.38	323	0.05	2.91	1.960	Significant
Less experienced business teachers	167	3.68	1.55					

Table 4 revealed that experienced business subject teachers differ significantly with their less experienced counterparts in their mean ratings on the teaching methods used in teaching business subjects in Rivers State public secondary schools (t-crit = 1.960, z-cal = 2.91, Df = 323, p = 0.05). Consequently, the researchers conclude that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of the experienced business teachers (above 5 years) and the less experienced business teachers (below 5 years) concerning the teaching methods used in secondary schools in Rivers State for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths.

DISCUSSION

This study evaluated the functionality of business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths in Rivers State, Nigeria. Results of the study showed that the subjects that predominantly enjoyed the services of specialist teachers in Rivers State public secondary schools were Agricultural science, Home economics, typing and shorthand, commerce, and computer sciences, Applied Electricity, Technical Drawing and Auto Mechanics. Other subjects such as financial accounting, office practices, store management and insurance appeared to lack enough specialist teachers. Incidentally, these subjects are the core vocational subjects. As such, the result was not encouraging because teachers are seen as the heart and soul of the education process. Judging from the result, there are more vocational than technical subjects that lack specialist teachers, suggesting the need for Nigerian vocational institutions to adequately train vocational teachers so that such trained teachers can in turn provide necessary training for students who are required for sustenance of manpower and self-reliant. Amugo (1997) in his study of relationship between availability of expert teachers and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Nigeria discovered that lack of expert teachers hampers the smooth implementation of curriculum in Nigerian secondary schools.

The result of the study revealed that the teaching method used in implementing the business subject curriculum in Rivers State public secondary schools was mainly theoretical. This implies that the teachers who taught business subjects in Rivers State public secondary schools do not use student orientated teaching methods that would make students acquire vocational skills for self-reliant. Nwodo (2006) and Njoku (1992) as cited by Ogwunte (2016), discovered in their studies that mere giving instructional information to students is not enough for students to acquire the needed vocational skills for self-employment.

The study revealed that public secondary schools in Rivers State lack sufficient infrastructural facilities needed for used in secondary schools in Rivers State for the implementation of functional business subject's curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths. This finding is supported by the finding of Ayeduso (2003) which stated that the teaching equipments and facilities used in business education (business subjects inclusive) are not only inadequate, but outdated and obsolete.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

1. The Federal and State government should make it a point of duty to build infrastructural facilities including functional workshops in all public secondary schools in Rivers State with adequate provision of equipments and instructional materials to make teaching and learning of business subjects meaningful.
2. The best of theories in education has opined that no educational system could rise above the level of quality of its teachers. Business subjects' teachers must be highly trained and deployed to public secondary schools across the state to enhance effective delivery of the needed vocational and entrepreneurial skills, attitude and knowledge needed by the student to for self-reliant.
3. Business subject students should be taught with experimental and participatory approaches to enable students acquire the right skills, knowledge and attitudes that are needed for self-employment.
4. School authorities should provide enough time in the school time table for teaching the practical aspects of business subjects for mastery learning and sustainable acquisition.
5. Business teachers should be supported through continuing professional development and motivation to enable them prepare the youth for success in the competitive global economy.
6. Parents, teachers, principals, students, policy makers and other education stakeholders should be made aware of the findings of this study, during such fora as parent-teachers association meetings, seminars, conferences and workshops.

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