

BUSINESS EDUCATION REFORMS: A KEY TO ACHIEVEMENT OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL OF ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN NIGERIA BY 2015.

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Abstract

To achieve the Millennium Development Goal of Eradicating Poverty and Hunger, Nation States must lay emphasis on education of their citizens. The educational programmes which will help in empowering people and creating wealth is Business Education. The paper highlighted the various ways business education helps individuals to acquire skills, be producers and wise consumers of goods and services in the society, hence, eradicating poverty. The paper concluded that new policy initiatives have to be put in place to widen the capacity and scope of business education to equip great number of the populace with necessary skills and competencies. It also proffered a number of suggestions that will enable business education be an effective tool for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of eradication of poverty by the year 2015.

Introduction.

The United Nations (UN) in their Millennium summit held in September 2000 brought the main world development challenges under eight headings known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 149 heads of states and the representatives from 180 countries earmarked 2015 as the year of achieving the MDGs. The first goal is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

Reform means to change into an improved form. On the other hand, poverty means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society, that is not having enough to feed and cloth a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn a living. It means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. The major cause of poverty is scarcity of basic needs. The major indices of poverty are hunger, disease and less education.

To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in African countries by 2015, Nation States must lay adequate emphasis on education of their citizens because education according to Nworgu (2006) provides the human capital and the will to initiate, plan, direct and execute the development processes and activities. A country that is unable to develop the knowledge and skills of its citizens through education and utilize them effectively in the development of the National economy will be unable to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (Ibe, 2008). Education according to Osagie (2008) is at the every centre of development, hence, government, individuals and various organisations should make it their priority. One of the major human activities in any nation's economy is business. The educational programme which would accelerate human empowerment and wealth creation must, therefore, include business education.

Business education is concerned with the teaching of skills, attitudes, competencies and knowledge necessary for a successful business career. Business education is also designed to develop special emphasis on marketable business skills and techniques in fields like accounting, secretarial, clerical, stenographic, sales or distributive occupations. (Etuk, 2005).

It was the realization by government that education without vocational content limits an individual and informed the introduction of vocational technical education which includes

business education in Nigerian schools. Business education according to Azuka, Nwosu, Kanu, and Agomuo (2009) has provided training that has allowed unskilled workers to become skilled in a particular vocation or trade. When workers make the transition from unskilled to skilled, they increase their earning potential. Through business education, youths can develop and acquire entrepreneurial skills which will enable them establish businesses. These skills include: entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies to enable the individual to be self employed in the absence of paid employment and to be self reliant which then leads to sustainable growth and consequently poverty reduction.

To achieve the extreme poverty and hunger reduction as stipulated in MDGs, there is urgent need to empower the youths, train the market men and women by inculcating in them the sense of vocationalism which equips them adequately to face challenges in the business world.

Constraints to Business Education in Achieving the Millennium Goal of Extreme Poverty and Hunger Eradication in Nigeria by 2015.

The United Nations member countries agreed to work towards achieving the MDGs in which eradication of extreme poverty and hunger is one of them. Nigeria has put in place a number of reforms in all sectors including education aimed at achieving these goals (Nworgu 2006). Though these reforms are on the way, there are indicators that they are very slow. Akosile (2008) reported that official corruption and lack of political will among the country's leaders have been identified as the major reasons for the seemingly slow realization of this goal. These have resulted in the widespread expression of alarm by various stakeholders that the country may not be able to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

Reforms aimed at enhancing the capacity of Business education programme to achieve its mission includes for instance the most recent NBTE/UNESCO partnership targeted at revitalising technical education which includes Business education, the establishment of Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) and the Invocational Enterprise Institutions (IEIs). These reforms are aimed at widening access to vocational education and serving the needs of the industry and empowering Nigerians.

There are still some issues that constrain the capacity of Business education programmes in Nigeria to contribute maximally to the achievement of the MDG of eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. These include:

- 1) Inadequate resources needed to provide functional formal and informal business education in our tertiary and secondary institutions. This underscores the following.
 - a. Inadequate funding of business education programme. This is evident in the paucity portion of the budget usually allocated to education, between 7-8% far below the 26% recommended by UNESCO.
 - b. Inadequate instructional materials like appropriate textbooks, computers, etc.
 - c. Insufficient qualified teachers to teach the various courses/subjects that make up Business education
 - d. Insufficient motivation in form of remuneration for Business education students on industrial attachment.
- 2) Insufficient proper orientation of people on the mission and vision of Business education
- 3) Insufficient recognition of Business educators as important contributors in the society.

Needed Reforms in Business Education in Order to Reduce Poverty and Hunger in Nigeria by 2015.

Business education as enunciated by the national Policy on Education (2006) is a component of vocational education, the goal of which includes:

- a. provide trained manpower in Business
- b. provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
- c. give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self reliant economically.

For business education to be able to achieve the above, certain reforms need to be put in place. The reforms are as follows:

1. Government should initiate policies and strategies for taking Business education down to the grassroots. These strategies should involve organizing formal and informal business education training for the market men and women, farmers, fishermen and artisans. This programme must first of all carry out need evaluation for each of the groups so as to determine what their educational background and their requirements for their business are in order to tailor the educational programmes to their needs. The suggested programme should be structured like the nomadic education programme such that the instructions are given to them in semi-formal units within their market places, farm areas, etc.
2. Government and private organisations should endeavour to provide enough funds for the business education programme. If there is enough fund.
 - a. Teachers can always go through retraining programmes and refresher courses in order to keep in tune with the current happenings in the area.
 - b. Business education laboratories in the secondary and tertiary institutions can adequately be equipped with the modern teaching, document production and communication equipment.
 - c. Students will be highly motivated by giving them monthly stipends while on industrial training
 - d. Business educators/teachers will be adequately remunerated. This will bring out the best from them.
3. Common standards should be used by all tertiary institutions in the training and preparation of Business education teachers.

Conclusion.

Any country that fails to develop knowledge and skills of her citizens through education will be unable to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The educational programme which would accelerate human empowerment and wealth creation should include Business education, hence, Business education is one of the keys to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of reducing extreme poverty and hunger by the year 2015. In order to do this, new policy initiatives have to be put in place to widen the capacity and scope of Business education to equip great number of the populace of the nation.

Recommendations

To be able to use Business education as a tool to reduce extreme poverty and hunger; the following are recommended for immediate implementation:

1. Policies and strategies should be initiated by the government to take Business education down to the grassroots. This is to enable the Business education programme to train the Business men and women in the market, the fishermen, farmers and artisans on the basic business skills and management to enable them enhance their business capacity.
2. There should be adequate funding of the Business education programmes
3. Tertiary institutions should harness recent technological development in Information and communication technology (ICT) to improve the capacity of their trainees to deliver the Business education programmes more effectively.

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