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Business Education a Panacea for Growth of Small and Medium Enterprise and National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract- This paper examined the business education as a panacea for growth of SMEs and national development. The study basically assessed the relationship between SMEs and employment creation as a driving tool for national development as well as the role of business education in national growth and development. The study found that SMEs proffer solution to the lingering problem of poverty and unemployment, while business education plays a vital role in national development in areas of employment generation, industrial development, entrepreneurship strategy, and poverty reduction, promotion of the Nigeria economy, culture and value. The study identified unqualified teachers, obsolete technologies, the size of business classes and poor funding as main challenges of business education and recommended that government should properly and adequately fund business education through increased budgetary allocation and made compulsory at all levels of education with the use of appropriate technologies.

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I. Introduction

National development refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens in terms of human capital, economy, social improvement, democracy building, among others. According to Lawal (2014) it is an exploitation and utilization of both human and material resources to improve the lots of a nation as it embraces the improvement in the social welfare of the people of that nation. Education serves as a cornerstone to any form of development as it lies at the heart of every society. It is a key and a vital element in the broad development of the nation's youth's capacity to address and solve surrounding problems or difficulties. According to Ezeani (2012) education consolidates and holds upon basic education to empower the youth to really live, function as a productive member of the society, earning a living, and contributing to societal progress.

Business education continuously builds on the knowledge, skills, values and attitude learnt at the lower phases of education. Education itself does not only mean schooling even though schooling is essential, yet it is a much wider concept embracing formal and informal methods of learning; traditional and non-traditional teaching processing, self-learning (through various media such as books, Tv, internet, Radio , etc). Business education which encompasses several disciplines enables people to think, speak and behave in ways that support the growth, efficiency and effectiveness of an organization or several organizations. Kaegon (2009) once stated that business education must be ready to offer their recipients functional education that will enhance performance as well as assist them to contribute meaningfully to the economic development of the country, but one who has highly developed business skills honed through years of experience in his field with basic education in business does well in contributing to national goal of poverty alleviation through employment creation. Although they might have some gaps in their understanding, so taking a few classes to shore up their skills in a particular area becomes imperative.

Thus, the demand for business education is on the increase all over the world as it prepares youths to be responsible and entering individuals, who become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers by exposing them in real life experience where they will be required to think, take risks, manage circumstances and incidentally learn from the outcome (Olawolu and Kaegon, 2012). Therefore, business education as a discipline is expected to expose its recipients to diversity curricula, hence, it is that type of education that inculcate in its recipients attitudes, knowledge, skills, values that is required in the business world.

Nigeria's economy is predominantly a small and medium enterprise economy although the business and other services sector recorded a real GDP growth of 9.20% in the third quarter of 2013 compared to 11.33% recorded in the second quarter of 2013, and the 9.11% recorded the third quarter of 2012. The decline in growth recorded in the third quarter of 2013 relative to its performance in the second quarter indicates slow economic growth largely related to infrastructural challenges (NBS, 2014). Thus, it is expected that business education which often digests into business enterprises would help in alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment thereby contributing towards national development. It is instructive therefore to

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investigate the impact of business education on the growth of SMEs as a basic tool to national development.

II. Conceptual Frame Work of Business Education

Business education can be defined as the fundamental theory of business which helps an individual to perform well in the world of business. Business education involves that aspect of education that provide the knowledge, skills, understanding and other attitude needed to perform well in the world of business as producers or consumers of goods and services that business offers. It is a programme that offers knowledge activities and skills needed by citizen in other to effectively manage their resources and participate well in the economic system.

Agwumezie (1999) sees business education as a programme in education that prepares students for entry into and advancement of jobs within the business. Aliyu (1999) have it as a programme one needs to be proud of if properly designed, adequately prepared and religiously harmonized. Aliyu further affirms that business education is an educational programme which involves acquisition of skills, knowledge and competences which makes the recipient/beneficiary proficient. It is an umbrella under which all business programmes take a shield, such as marketing, business administration, secretarial studies and accounting.

Igboke (2000) defined business education as a dynamic field of study geared towards preparing youths and adults for and about business. It is a preparation for a career in business when instruction is designed to prepare youths and adults for actual practice in the world of business. On the other hand, education about business involves preparation of youths and adults for intelligent and effective consumption of economic goods and services offered to society in our free enterprise economy. However, business education ought to produce responsible, productive and self-reliant citizens. This highlights the importance of business education in inculcating in the recipients knowledge, values, attitudes and skills needed in the business world. The objectives of business education cannot be over emphasized, hence, business education generally are borne out of the needs of industry, commerce and society. In addition, it is career oriented that aims at preparing people for gainful employment.

a) Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship has formed the basis for economic growth and development. It refers to programmes that promote and provide skill training for business creation and development (Vesper, 1990). Entrepreneurship education is the type of education which has the ability to impact on the growth and development of an enterprise through technical and vocational training (Tamuo and Ogiji, 1999). According to Atakpa (2011) it is the aspect of education which equips an individual and creates in the person the mindset to undertake the risk of venturing into something new by applying the knowledge and skills acquired in school while Fashua (2006) put it as that which creates the willingness and ability in a person to seek out investment opportunities in the society and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunities. This means that entrepreneurship education helps to provide business education students with the knowledge, skills and innovation to encourage entrepreneurship in variety settings.

III. SMES and Employment Creation as a Driving Tool for National Growth

Small scale enterprises constitute the bedrock of many economies by providing the impetus for creating employment and value added activities. In most developing countries, the small scale enterprises operate in the informal sector; developing and sustaining this important sub-sector of the economy will engender economic growth and development. To achieve this objective, conditions for dynamic, indigenous economic activities must be created. Nigeria's future therefore rests on its ability to train (business education) and fund local entrepreneurs that can nurture homegrown firms, encourage innovation, risk taking and local investment since unemployment and its attendant effects has become a wrench in the economic transformation of the state.

Wenekers and Thurik (1999) attributes economic growth through entrepreneurship to three (3) main processes or entrepreneurship activities which include; enhancing competition, innovation and employment growth through start-up. They stated that these processes or activities might be overlapping and naturally exclusive while Porter (1990) grants entrepreneurship a crucial role when considering economic growth from a national perspective since innovation and entrepreneurship are the heart of national advantage. But Kurzner (1973) suggested that the connection between entrepreneurship and economic growth is founded on the entrepreneurship spotting and profiting from a situation of disequilibrium by improving on the market deficiency. North and Thomas (1973) on the other hand advanced that economic growth is brought about by innovation, education, capital accumulation among others. Therefore, entrepreneurship creates new business and new business in turn create jobs, intensify competition and many even increase productivity through technological changes. High measured level of economic growth however, a lot of related literatures exists on entrepreneurship development and poverty reduction strategies in an attempt to promote the growth of small

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and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) and also to proffer solution to the lingering problem of poverty and unemployment.

IV. The Role of Business Education in National Development

As earlier noted business education enables the student to explore and learn about the world of work and the relevant interest and career interest of their choice, provide them with the necessary occupational information to enable them understand the various occupation in the world of work and enable them to acquire skills in the field of their choice. Business education contributes its role for educating citizens of a country to run their businesses more successfully which helps to improve economy of a country and thus helps indirectly in national development. Business education played a vital role in national development, especially in areas which include the following: generation of employment/creation of job opportunities, industrial development, entrepreneurship strategy, poverty alleviation, promotion of the Nigerian economy and promotion of Nigerian culture and value. It is a form of vocational education that is directed towards developing the learner to become productive in teaching, paid employment and self-employment (Idialu in Amoor, 2010).

According to Ogwuogo (2013) Business education prepares beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. It is generally seen as education for and about business. Business education for business is that aspect of vocational education which provides instruction and preparation for office occupations such as secretary, shorthand-typist or stenographer, bookkeeper, data processor, word processor, computer analyst and accountant. On the other hand, education about business provides knowledge and understanding of the economic, financial, marketing, accounting, management system and other branches of business endeavour. But in the words of Amoor (2010) business education plays a significant role in the economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the learners, thereby, enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others, and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems. The goal of business education is primarily to produce competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work. It has as its primary aim, the preparation of people for roles in enterprises such roles could be as employee, entrepreneur and employer or simply as self-employed. According to Ogwuogo (2013) a gainfully employed individual contributes to GDP per capita, reduces poverty and unemployment which are some of the indices of development. A well trained business educator can successfully be engaged into the following areas: teaching profession from secondary to university level depending on qualification, business enterprise – as a promoter, manager, marketer, account clerk, secretary, word processor, sales representative, broker etc, proprietorship of private schools – primary, secondary, tertiary, computer training institute and so on. Therefore there is no gain saying the fact that business education is what Nigeria needs most now to help her solve most of her socio-economic and developmental challenges especially in the realm of business. The linkage between business education and national development can be depicted on the diagram below:

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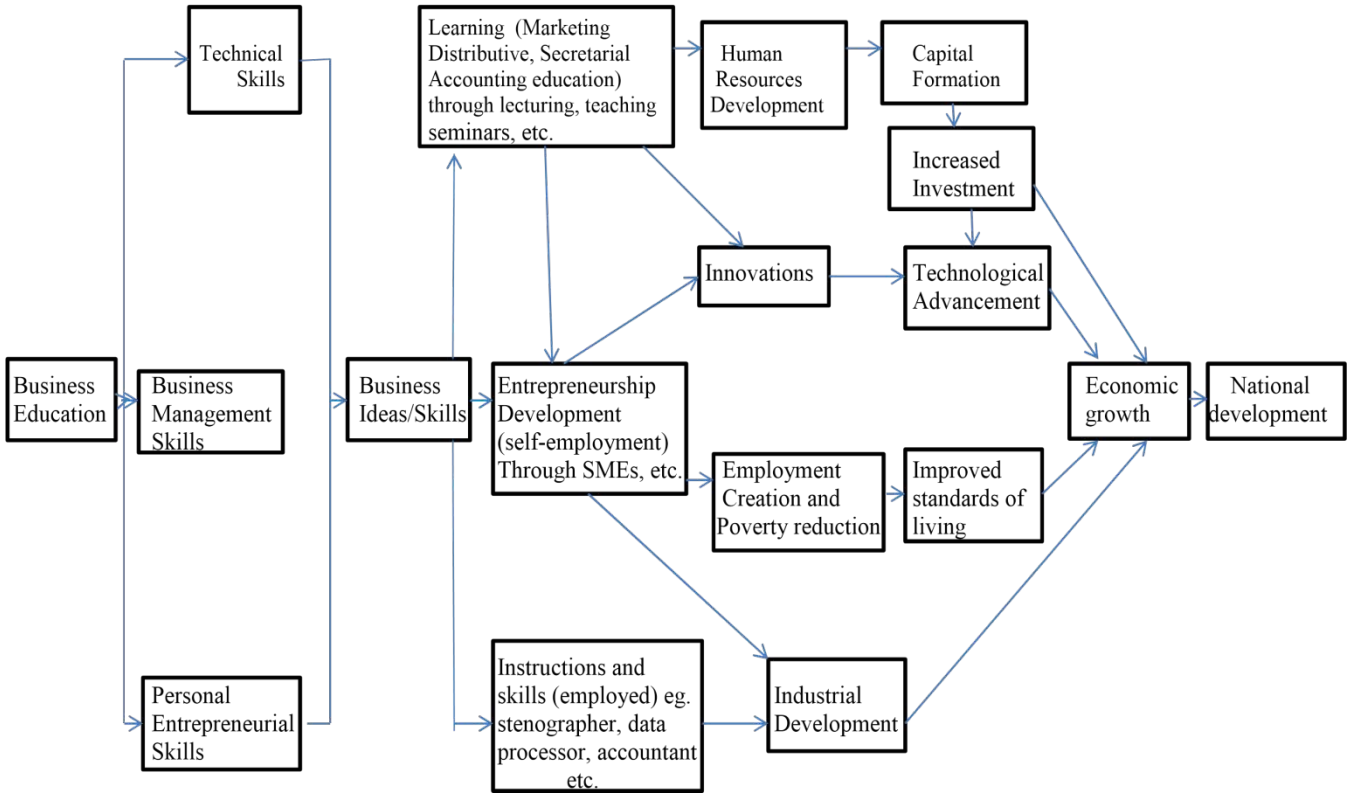

Source: Authors' Computation

Figure 1: Linkage between Business Education and National Development

V. Challenges Facing Business Education

Oyelaran-Oyeyinka (2007) has identified four major challenges facing business education today, viz: lack of state mandates for our curriculum, funding and budgeting issues, support from local administration and Board of education and educating our community. Business education provides the knowledge, kills, attitudes and understanding needed to perform in the business world as a producer and or consumer of goods and services that business offers. It includes virtually all the knowledge which holds prospect for gainful employment. The realization of lofty aims of business education depends on how much the following challenges are tackled. In the same view with Ogwuogo (2013), the challenges are:

Unqualified Teachers: The employment of unqualified teachers to teach business courses is a great obstacle to quality of business education graduates. Most of the institutions that offer business education programme suffer from shortage of qualified teachers (Amoor in Ugwuogo, 2012).

Obsolete Technologies: Manual typewriters are still largely in use in the computer age. This serves as a challenge to the graduate who intends to put in practices the business ideas. Some available modern ICTs are grossly inadequate in terms of efficiency and productivity.

The size of Business Classes: Due to the increasing demand for education especially social and vocational courses amidst the insufficiency of the facilities and human labour, there is always high teacher-student ratio which turns to affect the quality of delivery of some practical courses like word processing, data processing, shorthand, among others.

Poor Funding: Many administrators fail to understand that business education programme is capital intensive. It is a well-known fact that one of the major problems bedeviling education in Nigeria today is inadequate funding and business education is no exception.

a) The Way Forward

Considering the impeding challenges facing business education militating against the driving force of national growth, the following recommendations are made:

i. All levels of education should do away with the obsolete technologies imbedded in their curriculum and thus adjust it to the current technological age and cultivate a certain scientific and technological standard and ensuring the adequate provision of such facilities.

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ii. Government should properly and adequately fund business education. This can be achieved through increase in the budgetary allocation to the level of education by the government.
iii. Business and/or entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory at all levels of education.
iv. Multinational agencies/companies should support learning of business education as it serves a basis for economic revival and a main stream activity to enable transformations to take place very fast in the nation.
v. On the job training programmes such as workshops, seminars should be made free and compulsory to lecturers in the field to acquaint themselves with these skills so that they can in turn impact in students effectively.
vi. Credit facilities should be made available to the willing entrepreneurs with the necessary skills who are eager to explore them in achieving national development.

VI. Conclusion

Business education is the bedrock of any national development since Business education students can benefit from school education when they are exposed to entrepreneurship, equipped with different skills that are education saleable in the labour market or world of business and the society at large. This assertion is supported by studies which showed significant relationship between business education and national development inclusive of this research work. Business education therefore has the potential of engendering development if the identified impediments are tackled.

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