

**STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE BUSINESS EDUCATION
INSTRUCTION IN POST PANDEMIC PERIOD**

Prof. Anthony U. OBAYI

Department of Entrepreneurial Studies
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture
UMUDIKE, Abia State

and

Abisola Esther HAMZAT & Dickson OGUH

Department of agricultural and vocational education
(Business Education Programme)
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture
UMUDIKE, Abia State

Abstract

This paper through synthesis of literature x-rays strategies for improving the teaching and learning of Business Education in post pandemic era. The paper is structured in sub-heading for easy understanding of the readers. The sections include: the introduction of the paper, concept of Business Education, importance of Business Education to the nation, concepts of COVID-19 and post pandemic era, COVID-19 pandemic and Business Education and challenges of teaching and learning Business Education. In addition, the paper highlights some strategies for improving Business Education instructions in post pandemic era which include: increased funding, improved provision of instructional materials and facilities, establishment of more TVE-based universities, curriculum review, and recruitment of professionally qualified Business Educators, strengthened work-based learning and adopting student-centred approaches to enhance learning. Necessary conclusion is made and the paper recommends among others that Business Education Departments across Nigerian tertiary institutions must embrace new technologies in teaching and learning process of Business education in post-pandemic era.

Introduction

Business Education is one of the occupational areas that are richly provided by vocational and technical education in Nigeria. Business education refers to a programme of instruction that offers various skills in accounting, marketing and Office Technology and Management (Edokpolor and Owenvbiugie, 2017). Major topics include: office practice, book keeping/Accounting, business mathematics, business communication, secretarial duties, word processing, advertising (Ajisafe,

Bolarinwa and Edeh 2015). Hence, Business education is very strategic to the provision of graduates with required saleable skills for self-employment and paid jobs on graduation. Unfortunately, the global outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 has really affected teaching and learning across the world including Nigeria where schools and learning institutions were closed for months.

COVID-19 (Corona virus) is a highly contagious respiratory illness that can spread from person to person through respiratory droplets and poses great threat to human existence. The world economy is generally devastated, as productive activities and operations of learning institutions among others across the globe are greatly threatened. The effects of COVID-19 is further worsened with closed down of schools and learning put to sudden stop to curtail the spread of the deadly virus. After the devastating blow of the pandemic on education sector, lessons had been learnt and teaching and learning must continue in the post-pandemic. Smooth and progressive teaching and learning without interruption can only be achieved in the post-pandemic through adoption of strategic measures to position Vocational education and in particular Business Education against future eventualities. Some of the strategies are discussed in the course of this paper for action of the government.

Concept of Business Education

Business education is an aspect of vocational and technical education that focuses on teaching of skills, attitude and knowledge needed for success in a business career. According to Ekwue, et al (2022), Business education is an educational programme that equips individual recipient with functional and suitable skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that enables him/her to operate in the environment he/she finds himself/herself for self-reliance and in turn national development. Ore, Hassan and Ogungbo (2022) view Business education as a broad and comprehensive field of study whose instructional programme is endowed with the capacity to provide knowledge, skills, vocation and aptitude required to effectively manage personal businesses and at the same time function in the economic system. Suleiman (2017) states that Business education constitute an area of education that deals with the study of the subject related to or dealing with the art of shorthand writing, typewriting, accounting, business mathematics, secretarial duties, and commerce and office practice. In the opinion of Osuala (2004), Business Education is a broad district of knowledge that deals with a nation's fiscal structure and also identifies and explains the rate of business gratification and experience that train persons for valuable involvement as citizens, workers and consumers. Ore (2023) points out that Business education programme is basically designed to prepare graduates to be self-reliant, competent, skilful, technically sound and knowledgeable in order to perform effectively and efficiently in the work place. David and Abiola (2022) note that there is no gain saying that Business Education in the past cannot be compared to the present as the vocational

education discipline is evolving rapidly most especially in the areas of innovation, entrepreneurship, and information technology.

The objective of a functional Business education programme to nation building is overwhelming. For instance, Amoor and Udoh (2008) have reported that Business education programme plays significant roles in economic growth and development as it improves personal qualities and builds the attitudes of individuals that are necessary for adjustment to personal and employment situations. Aliyu (2013) specifically highlighted some of the objectives of Business education in Nigeria school system as: provision of specialized instruction to prepare students for career in business, developing in learners fundamental instruction to help them assume their economic roles as consumers, workers and citizens and equipping learners with background instruction to assist them in preparing for professional careers interest for advanced study. Similarly, the objectives of Business education according to Edokpolor and Egbri (2017) include: to prepare students for specific career in office occupations, equip students with the requisite skills for job creation and entrepreneurship and expose students with knowledge about business, including a good blend of computer technology, which incorporates Information and Communication Technology.

Importance of Business Education to the Nation

A well-structured Business Education has some notable importance and significances to the nation. Some of the importance of a functional Business Education according to Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Edeh (2015) are that:

- Business Education as a vocational discipline is important to the nation building because more people would have skills that can make them ready employers of labour. Over dependence of the teeming Nigerian youths on the nation for white collar jobs would be minimized as people become job creators.
- As people acquire proper values and saleable skillsthrough Business education and training towards work they tend to contribute more economically to the nation. For instance, the nation is divorced from violence, sexual immorality, pride, corruption and examination malpractice among others.
- Business education makes the recipients become judicious spenders, the country gains by way of investing excess resources on meaningful projects that would lead to economic development.
- Quality Business education promotes understanding of the rights of the citizens and if one understands one's right as a citizen of a country and enforces them, the country would have less to worry about but would rather devote more time and resources on development.
- Business education has made it possible for those who want to be retrained in order to upgrade their skills and have access to education. In this way,

people who finish secondary grammar school with no saleable opportunity skills will have to acquire skills that make them become functional, through retraining programmes.

Concepts of COVID-19 and Post Pandemic Era

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that spread from persons to persons who are in close contact with one another and through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. COVID-19 is highly contagious and so any residual contamination, no matter how small, can pose a threat to healthcare workers and patients (Armellino, 2020). The majority of infection transmissions are by droplets spray from talking, coughing and sneezing and by direct contact or contact with fomites. The symptoms of COVID-19 range from mild (or no symptoms) to severe illness with associated cough, sneeze and difficulty in breathing which may result to death in extreme cases.

The era of the pandemic and its associated restrictions has considerably reduced. This is the concept of the post-pandemic which is the period or phase of human activities after the pandemic. L'Estrange(2021) states that post-pandemic business design and activities offer the chance to redefine the tasks as another tool to increase employee efficiency. By eliminating the concept of the workstation as property, organizations encourage employees to consider more deeply what they are doing with their hours in the workplace. During the post-pandemic, organizations and institutions must plan their activities better, communicate more frequently and clearly and be more accountable for their time to ensure institutional higher productivity and greater efficiency. **Collier, Apodaca and Nolly(2021)** state that the post-pandemic new normal for schooling presents the opportunity to revisit high-stakes testing and make proper use of it so that preparation for the state test does not become the curriculum. In the post-pandemic, educational institutions must ensure that necessary actions are taken to avoid nothing takes the society back to the pandemic but instead catapult the education system to a more equitable, student-centered, high quality, thinking curriculum. Grossmann and Twardus (2021) suggest three post-pandemic approaches for smooth running of education system which are as follows:

- 1. Solidarity:** Education experts predicted that the shared struggles and experiences that are faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic could foster solidarity and bring humanity closer together, both within communities and globally. The pandemic could be an opportunity for the world to become more committed to supporting and helping one another. Social identities such as group memberships, nationality that responded positively to the pandemics or natural disasters play an important role in fostering collective action. The shared experience of the pandemic could help foster a more global, inclusive identity that could promote international solidarity (Grossmann and Twardus, 2021).

2. Structural and political changes: Early in the pandemic, experts also believed that the world might see proactive efforts and societal will to bring about structural and political changes toward a more just and diversity-inclusive society. Experts observed that the pandemic had exposed inequalities and injustices in human societies and hoped that their visibility might encourage societies to address them.

3. Renewed social connections: The most common positive consequence at the post-pandemic is increased awareness of the importance of our social connections. The pandemic has limited human ability to connect face to face with friends and families, and it has highlighted just how vulnerable some family members and neighbors might be. The pandemic has taught humanity the absolute sacred relationships and that the value of these relationships would be much higher in the post-pandemic world (Grossmann and Twardus, 2021).

COVID-19 Pandemic and Business Education

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted about 94 per cent of the world's student population, up to 99 per cent in low and lower-middle income countries of the world (United Nations, 2020). The devastating effect of COVID-19 and the unparalleled education disruption is far from over. As many countries across the globe have yet to announce a date for schools reopening while some countries that have opened schools are considering close down in response to the second wave of the virus. The devastating effect of COVID-19 and the unparalleled education disruption is far from over. As many countries across the globe have yet to announce a date for schools reopening while some countries that have opened schools are considering close down in response to the second wave of the virus. Business Education had equally taken its toll from the effects of COVID-19 outbreak as vocational and technical training institutes had been closed down thereby stagnating the production of skills man power through vocational and technical education.

The outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic has affected almost all countries of the world including Nigeria and its education system. Countries around the world put in place different measures to curtail the spread of the virus. Such measures include social distancing, hand-washing, wearing of face marks among others. To ensure compliance with these rules, lockdown and stay at home strategies have been adopted to flatten the curve and contain the transmission of the disease (Sintema, 2020). Restrictions of movement led to closure of schools and offices. Primary, post-primary and higher institutions have discontinued face-toface teaching and learning while most of the schools remain under lock and key. The Educational sector has never witnessed such disruption in a colossal manner before (UNESCO, 2020a). Over 1.5 billion students globally which represents 87% of the

global student population, were deprived of education. More worrisome is the threat of extended closures which paved way for the need to rethink traditional teaching (UNESCO, 2020b). The COVID-19 further exposed the worsening educational sector of Nigeria and provided the need to improve on the system which serves as the only panacea to the public amidst corona virus pandemic. COVID 19 pandemic took the whole world by surprise including Nigeria. The sudden outbreak of the deadly and a highly contagious virus called COVID-19 overwhelmed the entire world such that World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a public health emergency of international concern (Anake, Aloye, Achuen and Egbe, 2020). The educational sector was largely affected as the imposition of lockdown became prominent in containing the virus. United Nations (2020) further stated that the impact of COVID-19 on the job market showed how volatile the job market is. This is because, within few months of the global lockdown, unemployment skyrocketed significantly. Although many vocational and technical skill workers, Business education inclusive are returning to their jobs but getting the right career and technical education can help people future-proof their career.

Challenges of Teaching and Learning Business Education

The teaching and learning of Business Education in Nigeria is bedeviled with some challenges some of these challenges according to Ajisafe, et al, (2015) include:

- i. Inadequacies in the Curriculum Content of Business Education:** The contents of Business education curriculum have been reported as inadequate at all levels. The highly needed courses such as Typewriting, Administrative office management and Transcription are not included in the curricula of some institutions (Ajisafe, et al, 2015). Such inadequacies in the curriculum could lead to the production of half-baked graduates.
- ii. Non-Relevance of the Course Contents:** Business education programme should include courses that would prepare the student for saleable skills, help them understand the economic system and how a business operates. It was also to be geared towards helping people to acquire knowledge, and attitude/value that would enable them function in the world they live. Hence, subjects that would meet the objectives set or goals must be in the content of the curriculum.
- iii. Poor Implementation of the Curriculum:** The training of Business educators tends to deviate from what is contained in the curriculum. Therefore, industrial training of Business education graduates is no longer carried out the way it was originally done.
- iv. Inadequate time allocation:** Inadequate number of hours allotted to the teaching and learning of Business education subjects at all levels is a major issue that needed proper attention (Nwosu, 1999). With the current inadequate attention to Business education in terms of more allocation of times to its instruction, the quality of Business education graduates will continue to reduce.

- v. **Qualification and quality of teachers:** A Business education teacher is a person who holds a degree in Business education from a recognized University or an NCE (National Certificate of Education). The growing number of non-professionally qualified Business education teachers that are not professionally trained constitute some of the challenges of Business education in Nigeria.
- vi. **Inadequate Facilities:** Facilities for teaching and learning in any programme are usually given a prominent position in the field of instructional technology. Unfortunately, the Nigerian public-school system is bedeviled with inadequate instructional facilities. Ajisafe, et al, (2015) assert that it is not possible to achieve the objectives of a well-designed programme without adequate facilities

Strategies for improving Business Education Instructions in Post Pandemic Era

After the devastating effects of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic on global education, Business education can be strategically positioned in the post pandemic era through the following measures:

- i. **Increased Funding:** Adequate financing and funding of Business Education is very crucial to the success of the programmes in Nigerian schools. In order to address the challenge posed to general education system and Business Education in particular, there should be allocation of more funds to Business Education. Kehinde and Adewuyi (2015) have advocated increase in funding and budgetary allocation to Vocational and technical education by government at all levels.
- ii. **Improved Provision of Instructional Materials and Facilities:** The provision of required modern instructional materials and facilities is central to the clamour for quality graduates of Business Education in the post-pandemic era. This will help to provide a more responsive and functional Business Education system to the need of the nation in the face of the pandemic. Business Education laboratories and workshops should be open to servicing and rendering maintenance needs to clients within the institutions and the community outside the school (Nwosu and Micah, 2017). This will help to close the gap of skill man power shortage due to job loss occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic.
- iii. **Establishment of More TVE-based Universities:** The establishment of more Technical and Vocational Education based universities with Business Education programme across the country is required in the country now if the nation must fair well in the post COVID-19 pandemic. As at the present time, there is only one University of Technical Education in Nigeria established by Oyo State government. Nwosu and Micah (2017) affirmed that new specialized Technical and Vocational Education schools with Business Education programme are needed at state and federal level. This will ensure mass enrolment and production of the needed man power and training of youths in choosing Business Education for work in the face of increasing unemployment.

- iv. Curriculum Review:* The outbreak of the novel COVID-19 pandemic has called for adjustment in operations of virtually all sectors including education sector. Therefore, there is need for the Business Education to make necessary adjustment to the new reality at hand both in the curriculum and implementation of the curriculum. Hence, effort must be made by education policy makers, NERDC, NUC, NCCE, NABTEB among others to make required review in Nigerian Business Education curriculum to reflect the new normal occasioned by the pandemic.
- v. Recruitment of Professionally Qualified Business Educators:* Quality manpower need of Business Education is crucial to the success of Nigerian government effort to produce employable graduates in the post-pandemic era. Regular recruitment of qualified personnel in both classrooms and laboratories/workshop should be encouraged to sustain quality of Business Education that can respond to the needs of the society in the post COVID-19.
- vi. Strengthened Work-based Learning:* Work-based learning is a learning approach in which learners are full-time employees in industries and also going through academic training in Business Education with the intention of meeting the learning needs of the employees and the objectives of their organization. This approach is capable of stimulating skill acquisition, knowledge, competence and employability of Business Education graduates in the post-pandemic era.
- vii. Adopting Student-centered approaches to advance learning: Adopting a core set of proven student-centered approaches that teachers and learners can rely on over time can establish a foundation for deep learning and open opportunities for more equitable access and engagement.* When students experience learning through student-centered approaches geared to their cognitive, social, and emotional needs, they are more likely to succeed across a variety of measures, including standardized tests.

Conclusion

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic has brought a remarkable challenge to global education system delivery and Business Education inclusive. Effective Business Education in a post-pandemic era should be remodeled through adoption of the discussed strategies for it to be responsive to continuous provision of desired skills and knowledge of Nigerian teeming youths' population. The suggested strategies are fundamental to the survival of the education sector and Business Education in particular in the new learning order. To supply the world market ravaged by COVID-19 pandemic with needed human resources, the teaching and learning of Business Education require appropriate re-modelling to produce versatile and dynamic Business educators.

Recommendations

1. Business Education Departments across Nigerian tertiary institutions must embrace new technologies in teaching and learning process Business education. Hence, adequate effort must be made by the management of the schools to ensure the required technologies are provided
2. There should be adequate effort to promote online teaching and learning or distance learning of Business education that will minimise face-to-face interactions and promote learning without distance barrier.
3. Learning contents of Business education curriculum should be reviewed by the Ministry of Education to include new skills for students to be relevant and employable in post-pandemic era.
4. Infrastructural facilities should be expanded by the relevant government agencies and proprietors of concerned tertiary institutions to accommodate safe Business education teachers-students interaction for quality teaching and learning.

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