

SKILL ACQUISITION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR COMBATING UNEMPLOYMENT

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Abstract

Unemployment has become an issue of major concern in different countries of the world. Thus, this problem can be combated through skill acquisition especially in business education. Skill acquisition is the systematic and sequential development of skills that promotes efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of a specific job. The paper discussed the concept of unemployment, business education and skill acquisition. It also highlighted the types of employment, roles of business education in creating job opportunities, importance of skill acquisition and factors responsible for the rising unemployment in Nigeria. It was concluded that in order to combat unemployment in the country, there is need for students of business education to be acquainted with the skills in business education programme. Also, that the unemployed youths should undergo training in other vocational areas for them to acquire the skills that will enable them to be self employed and that the government should devise means of tackling all the factors responsible for the rising unemployment in the country. Recommendations among others were that business education students should be willing to cultivate keen interest in acquiring the skills and competencies in the business education programme; Students should be committed and dedicated to the practical contents of business education programme; and that the government should try and improve in the power sector knowing fully that power sector is one of the most sensitive and essential sectors of the nation's economy.

Keywords: Unemployment, Business Education and Skill Acquisition.

Introduction

The state of being without any work yet looking for work is called unemployment. Unemployment in Nigeria is one of the most critical problems the country is facing. Unfortunately, the government has not found any immediate solution to the scenario. According to Bosah in Oduma (2012) unemployment is a state of joblessness and idleness of one with labour requirements, potentials, skills, attitudes and competencies. Unemployment can also be seen as a phenomenon that arises when members of a country's labour force are unable to obtain their goals of participation in gainful occupation due to a situation in which supply of labour significantly exceeds demand for it (Okafor, 2005).

Unemployment is one of the causes of social vices in many parts of the world especially in Nigeria. Business education is that aspect of vocational education which provides skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes necessary for effective employment in a specific business occupation. So, business education been an aspect of vocational education emphasized a lot in teaching of skill acquisition. According to Udo (2015) business education is a comprehensive activity-based occupational education programme that is concerned with the acquisition of practical skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in any chosen business occupation. Skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular task or function till you become an expert on the skill. According to Udo and Babangide (2007) skill acquisition is the capacity to be trained on a particular business occupation and become a proficient professional in it. In the view of Mshelia (2019), Omidiji and Ogwu (2019) skill acquisition in business education include communication skill, reading skill, manipulative skill, shorthand skill, keyboarding skill, computer skill book keeping skill etc.

Unemployment

Anyaele (2003) defined unemployment as a situation where some people who fall within the ages of the working population, capable and willing to work, are unable to obtain befitting work to do. The state of being without any work yet looking for work is called unemployment. Unemployment is defined by the Bureau of Labour Statistics as people who do not have a job, have actively looked for work in the past for weeks and are currently available for work. Also people who were temporarily laid off and were waiting to be called back to that job are included in the unemployment statistics <https://www.thebalance.com.>what>.

The International Labour Organisation (2008) saw unemployment as when people are without jobs and they have actively looked for work within the past four months. Unemployed individuals are unable to earn money to meet financial obligations. Unemployment is the term referring to individuals who are unemployable and seeking a job but are unable to find a job <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com>>. Unemployment occurs when one does not have a job. According to Udu and Agu as cited in Asaju, Arome and Anyio (2014) unemployment is a situation in which persons capable and willing to work are unable to find suitable paid employment.

Unemployment rate is the proportion or percentage of the labour force or working population which is not employed at any given point in time. Unemployment rate is usually represented using the symbol “U”, and it is usually calculated as follows:

$$U = \frac{\text{Number of people unemployed}}{\text{Labour force}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Business Education

According to Iwu (2016) business education is the study that equips the individual with the occupational skills and knowledge that will enable him/her fit into, and finds job satisfaction in the labour market. Business education as a component of vocational education prepares individuals for career in business and also to be intelligent consumers

of economic goods and services. It is a programme that prepares its students with skills and competencies needed for self-reliance and employment. Agbionu as cited in Nwogu (2015), defined business education as that form of instruction that both directly and indirectly prepares the businessman for his calling. This definition confirms with the vocational nature of business education. Afolabi (2003) saw business education as a type of training with the main goal of making people ready for entrance into a business career, and on having entered upon such a career making them capable of rendering efficient services therein, with the ability to advance their present levels of employment to high levels. Udo and Babangida (2017) business education is that aspect of vocational education which provides skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes necessary for effective employment in any specific business occupations. Aliyu in Umezulike (2015) defined business education as education for the development of skills/competencies, attitudes and attributes which are necessary for the efficiency of the economic system.

Skill Acquisition

Skill acquisition is the main focus of business education programme for self reliance and more employable motives. Omidiji and Ogwu (2019) defined skill acquisition as a systematic and sequential development of skills that promotes efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of a specified job. Skill acquisition is the process of developing capacities through all levels of education and training, occurring in formal, non-formal, and on-the-job settings, which enable individuals in all areas of the economy to be fully and productively engaged in livelihoods and to have the capacity to adapt their skills to meet the changing demands and opportunities of the economy and labour market especially in the e-world (Enang and Okute, 2019). Skill acquisition is the ability to be trained on a particular task or function and become expert in it. Some of the needed skills in business education for one to be self reliant include communication skills, reading skills, and manipulative skills. Skill acquisition has been describe by many as the recipe for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by creating avenue for employment, thereby creating job opportunities and wealth creation. Gumbari in Mshelia (2019) asserts that skill acquisition in Nigeria should be perceived as a catalyst to increase the rate of economic growth, create job opportunities, reduce import of manufactured goods and decrease trade deficits that result from such import.

Ezeji and Okorie as cited in Nwanaka and Amaehule (2011) assert that while stressing the importance of skill acquisition in the national growth, emphatically contended, “that Nigeria’s social and economic problems will drastically reduced if people are given adequate vocational training in skills, raw materials, machineries and equipment”. It is only with skilled men that materials can be harnessed, manipulated and transformed into products with quality skill acquisition programme. Oluwadare (2019) saw skill acquisition as the ability to learn a skill, which can be intellectual such as learning to listen, speak, read and write or manual such as learning to build or make something.

Types of Unemployment

1. Cyclical unemployment occurs when there is not enough aggregate demand in the economy to provide jobs for everyone who wants to work. Demand for most goods and services falls, less production is needed and consequently fewer

workers are needed, wages are sticky and do not fall to meet the equilibrium level, and unemployment results. Its name is derived from the frequent ups and downs in the business cycle (Wikipedia 2020).

2. Frictional unemployment arises when people leave their present job with the hope of getting a new and better one but fail to do so. It may or may not be a temporary unemployment depending on the prevailing economic situation. So, this is the period between the time the worker left his former work and the time of getting a new work (Anyaele 2003).
3. Structural unemployment arises as a result of slight changes in the industrial structure of a country. Workers will be retrenched as a result of economic recession and it happened in Nigeria in 1984, when many firms folded up as a result of this. It may also occur as a result of changes in production techniques (Anyaele, 2003).
4. Seasonal unemployment is caused by seasonal changes that affect some type of work. Construction workers are laid off during rainy season. Also, farmers stay idle in-between harvesting and planting period (Kimberly, 2020).
5. Classical or real-wage unemployment, occurs when real wages for a job are set above the market-clearing level causing the number of job-seekers to exceed the number of vacancies.

Role of Business Education in Creating Job Opportunities

Owojori in Omidiji and Ogwu (2019) opined that the three options in business education programme had the following vocational opportunities which can be acquired through practical oriented programme implementation:

- a Graduates of Marketing and Distribution education are expected to be very versatile as they can be engaged in.
 - 1 Buying and selling of any product whether agricultural, technical, business, arts, etc
 - 2 Sales promotion of all products for organizations;
 - 3 Promotion and advertisement of service occupations or organizations e.g. radio, television, cinema house etc.
- b Graduates of Accounting education can establish;
 - 1 They can write and publish books in accounting and
 - 2 They can organize workshops and seminars for organization;
- c Graduates of Office Technology and Management are secretaries who can engage themselves in the establishment of;
 - 1 Business centers (have computers for production of documents, e-mail; browsing; typewriters for typing; fax machines for sending out documents; telephone services; photocopying; binding) and cyber café centers.
 - 2 Secretarial institutes where typists, stenographers and secretaries are been trained.
 - 3 Writing and publish books in the field.
 - 4 They can also organize workshops and seminars for secretarial workers.
 - 5 They can also provide consultancy services for organization in recruiting activities.

Busola (2016) stated other vocational skill acquisition one can practice generally to include

- i Farming skills – In farming, there are many people who practice the skill of rearing day old chickens, broilers, cockerels, and eggs, sheep, goats, pigs, and cows, fish and shrimps. Some others have the skill in producing cereals, legumes, fruits and vegetables. All these are some of the skills processed by farmers.
- ii Photography – Photography is the technique of capturing an event, a scene or a thing on a picture. This would be printed or viewed on card or a projected screen. A picture is an image. Photography is now an accepted method of keeping records of events such as parties, wedding, birthdays, seminars, etc. Originally, it involves lenses and the photographic films, but with the technology, the digital computer generates what can be stored and reproduced in the computer memory.
- iii Desktop publishing and networking - This has to do with the use of computer for compiling, producing, and disseminating information and reading materials without going through the rigour of passing through a publisher. Computer processing has reduced drastically the vigorous work of publishing such as script editing, typing, artworks and designs. Networking entails linking of the computers through local area connection via cables or servers through the satellite to servers in other parts of the world. Local area networks link computers on the net together so that they share information or work simultaneously on the same or different aspects of a project.
- iv Bead making – Bead making has become a very profitable venture in the society today. If you have taken your time to look around, especially on wedding and different ceremonies, you will discover that so many ladies make use of it. Bead is simple and easy to learn how to make. Your ability to innovate and be creative will help you stand out in this venture.
- v Fashion designing – Fashion designing is the art or application of design and aesthetics or natural beauty to clothing and accessories. Fashion design is influenced by cultural and social attitudes, and has varied over time and place. Fashion designers work in a number of ways in designing clothing and accessories such as bracelets and necklace.

Importance of Skill Acquisition

Busola (2016) indicated the following as the importance of skill acquisition

1. Crime rate reduction – Skill acquisition reduces the crime rate in various countries. People with skills often think about how to make money and not how to steal. They are engaged with something rather than being idle. When someone has a skill to trade, he misses the chances of engaging in anti-social behaviours.
2. Employment opportunities – Many governments are still finding it difficult to provide jobs for their citizens because the citizens are lacking important skills they need. Anyone with a skill is able to employ and provide jobs opportunities for others.
3. Improved quality of life
 - i People become increasingly aware of practices that help to improve life expectancy.
 - ii People learn how to obtain help information quickly.

- iii Easy and convenient communication through phone calls, emails and money transfer.
- Iv The feat performed by the computer and relative items helps man to appreciate the immense potential of the human capacity.
- 4 Self employment – A skill acquired man is a self-employed man. A self-employed person can never go hungry because the skill he acquired provides food for him on daily basis. But one who lacks skill acquisition will find it difficult to be self-employed because he has nothing to offer. Skills acquired by website designers are what they use on their daily feeding instead of indulging in cyber-threat or online theft which is also related to internet.

Factors Responsible for the Rising Unemployment in Nigeria

Umana (2018) stated the following as the factors responsible for the rising unemployment in Nigeria.

1. Corruption

Corruption is a dishonest or illegal behaviour, especially by the people in authority. It is an abuse of public office for private gain, which usually involves embezzlement of public funds, nepotism and falsification of data etc. Corruption has no doubt done an incalculable damage to every facets of the country. It has undermines democratic institutions, retarded economic growth and development; and cause poverty in the mist of plenty, it has prevented the country from making political, social and economic progress and ultimately brought about high level of mass unemployment in the country. It has denied millions of Nigerians access to education, housing, health, food and infrastructure (Umana, 2018)

2. Poor Management Practice

Nigerians are known for lack of good management culture. According to Umana (2018) the country is blessed with abundant natural resources. It is believed that if the resources are well harnessed, fully developed and well managed, Nigeria is capable of surmounting the problem of high unemployment and its attendant effects. Harnessing the nation's economy involves assessment of one's resources at present and allocating them to different competing sectors so as to meet certain goals. Nigeria does not lack good economic plans, what is lacking is proper implementation. The process of implementation has been taken over by corrupt and incompetent persons and failed results.

3. Neglect of Agricultural sector

Umana (2018) asserts that until early 1970s, agriculture was the mainstay of Nigeria economy. It constituted the major income earning for the country and the largest employer of labour as over 90 percent of the populace worked and earn their daily income from this sector. Following the rise in the price of petroleum (oil boom) in 1970s, and the attendance huge foreign income, the agricultural sector suffered a substantial decline till today.

Many analysts argue that there is a strong relationship between the neglect of agricultural sector and high rate of unemployment in the country. Agriculture remains a panacea for reducing the high rate of unemployment and poverty in Nigeria.

4. Infrastructural Decay

This is yet another dismal factor that has rendered millions of Nigerians unemployed. If the infrastructure is improved and empowered policies are put in place, people will have opportunity to employment and use their talent in sectors like textile which is capable of absorbing both skilled and semi-skilled workers.

No doubt that the inability of successive administration to tackle the problem in power sector has done an incalculable harm to all facets of the economy especially the manufacturing enterprises in the country.

5. Lack of Purposeful Leadership and Good Governance

There is a general agreement among political observers of Nigerian politics especially in recent times that the nation has never been lacking in terms of initiating good ideas towards enhancing the welfare of the citizens, what was lacking is the political will to turn these ideas into concrete results. Indeed, hardly had any administration come on board without a virgin plan professionally packaged to ease the agonizing pains of the masses, although these plans which come with great expectations are found to be more active on papers.

Successive administrations' effort to combat the menace of unemployment and its attendant effects over the years ended up in a deadlock and the reason is not far from corruption, lack of political- will to implement government projects, lack of good governance etc which also aggravates political instability.

Conclusion

It was concluded that in order to combat unemployment in the country, there is need for students of business education to be acquainted with the skills in business education programme. Also, the unemployed youths should undergo training in other vocational areas for them to acquire the skills that will enable them to be self employed. The government should devise means of tackling all the factors responsible for the rising unemployment in country. The government should know that performing their constitutional duties should be their utmost priority in doing so the level of unemployment in the country will be reduced drastically.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made

1. Business education students should be willing to cultivate keen interest in acquiring the skills and competencies in the business education programme.
2. Students should be committed and dedicated to the practical contents of business education programme.
3. The government should try and improve in the power sector knowing fully that power sector is one of the most sensitive and essential sectors of the nation's economy. Adequate power supply ensures a productive economy that is capable of creating significant employment to local artisans and manufacturing industries.

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