

ROLE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS AND EMPLOYABILITY IN THE NEW NORMAL

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Abstract

All sectors of the economy are experiencing rapid development. Worthy of note is the education sector which is the bedrock of human development. Education can equip learners with agency and a sense of purpose, and the competencies they need, to shape their own lives and contribute to the lives of others. The paper examined business education, global competitiveness, employability, new normal, challenges and role of business educators during the pandemic era. The researcher concluded that from all indications, business educators encountered lesser problems during Covid-19 pandemic due to their proficiency in the knowledge of technology. The researcher also recommended that internet connectivity should be of paramount importance to all stakeholders in education sector; peradventure the pandemic or similar crises resurface.

Keywords: Business Education, Global Competitiveness, Employability and New Normal

Introduction

All sectors of the economy are experiencing rapid development. Worthy of note is the education sector which is the bedrock of human development. Education according to Aslanbek (2017) is the socially organized and regulated process of continuous transference of socially significant experience from previous to following generations. Education can equip learners with adequate knowledge and a sense of purpose, and the competencies they need, to shape their own lives and contribute to the lives of others. Educational training can be formal or informal. But this study focused on formal education, which is acquired in primary schools, secondary schools, polytechnics, monotechnics and universities.

University is an institution of learning of the highest level having a college of liberal arts and a programme of graduate studies together with several professional schools and faculties having the authority to confer degrees in various fields of study. Universities have a broad curriculum in courses of study related to day-to-day educational, social and economic needs of the society. The objectives of the university among others things are to hold forth to all classes and communities whatsoever encouragement for pursuing a regular and liberal course of education; promote research and the advancement of science and learning, and organize, improve and extend university education standards. Universities offer a lot of programmes which include business education.

Odike and Nnaekwe (2019), opined that business education is seen as a programme of study

that is concerned with the teaching and learning of various types of business skills as well as how to practically and successfully engage in them for the purpose of earning a living and the pedagogical training for transmitting such knowledge to others. Hence Udo and Bako (2014) stated that, business education comprised accounting education, marketing education, office technology education, and entrepreneurship education and teaching methodology. Business education programme is concerned with teaching the skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary for a successful career in office and business world. In the view of Onajite (2016), business education encompasses education programmes for business, office occupation, economic understanding, entrepreneurship and it seeks to develop in the learners basic skills for personal use in the future. Anyaeneh and Nzegwu (2015) describe business education as education that enriches basic education for teaching career, entrepreneurship, business understanding, office understanding, office environment and vocational practices. The authors further stressed that the teaching career is done by business educators. Aliyu (2016) perceived business educator as a person who has undergone training in business teacher education programme including certificate to teach business courses at the secondary school and post secondary school level. The author further posited that one can be referred to as a business educator only when one has a basic knowledge of all the three options (programme areas) of the business teacher education programme. Business educators are mainly from vocational education, which is among the 12 titles classified by World Economic Forum (WEF) as a pillar that sets the competition power of the companies. Hence, business educators are trained to produce and use knowledge technology; they provide competitiveness and maintain it.

Competitiveness according to WEF (2015) are the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine level of productivity of a country, the level of productivity, in turn sets the level of prosperity that can be reached by an economy. However, in determining the competitiveness of an economy, the macro economic, political, legal and social as well as micro economic context needs to be considered. In global competitiveness, economic theory suggests that globalization will lead to greater convergence in economic performance including competitiveness performance between open economics (Walaheeduzzaman & Ryans in Abdul Hakeen, Abubakar and Tsoho, 2016).

Global competitiveness is the degree to which a nation can, under free and fair market conditions, produce goods and services that meet the test of international market while simultaneously maintaining or expanding the real incomes of its, citizens (Scott & Lodge in AbdulHakeen, Abubakar & Tsoho, 2016). According to Porter in AbdulHakeen, Abubakar& Tsoho (2016), global competitiveness is measured by two sets of indicators: the presence of substantial and sustained exports to a wide array of other nations, Significant outbound of foreign investment based on skills and assets created in home country. Education sector for both developed and developing nation are striving to acquire high standard of employability skills that would enable them attain an acceptable level in the global markets.

Altarawneh (2016) opined that employability are sets of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations which benefits themselves, the workforce, the

community and the economy. Employability is a multidimensional concept about individual capabilities of retaining a self-rewarding job, in employers' organizations as human resource requirements for fulfilling operational tasks to function effectively in order to meet up in the society (Oluwalola, 2019). Consequently, employability is the capability of an individual based on available competencies that can bring about successful engagement in organizations. Oduma and Ile in Adebola and Oluyinka (2021) noted that applicants must have specific employability competencies to fit into available job vacancies and firms' positions. Employers expect prospective employees to possess the rightful competencies that will help them achieve their organizational objectives. International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2013) opined that employers are looking for core skills for employability and that these skills benefit those newly embarking in the labour market and existing employees which make them respond more readily to changes in the workplace. Employability skills focus on graduates' abilities to adapt and use their personal and academic skills to create more tangible educational outcomes that associate graduate employability with employment. Based on these employability skills acquired by business education students, they are able to cope easily during Covid-19 pandemic crises.

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. Coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. The new virus was subsequently named the "COVID-19 virus" (CoV) are, previously identified in humans <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019>. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country brought about changes around the world. All sectors of the economy, health, business, agricultural, social, cultural and education sectors were all affected. The education sector affected seriously by the pandemic. The lockdown imposed in the countries resulted in the closure of schools. All the schools sought to devise institutional response to the shock of the pandemic. Business education was not left alone; they were faced with the challenge of changing overnight their approaches in teaching and learning. Online learning seems to be the only measure at that time. Even today, not all educational institutions around the world can return to "normal" campus life. Against this backdrop, there is increasing interest in what the new normal in education should be like.

Berwick (2020) stated that new normal is a change in behavior to continue carrying out normal activities plus implementing health protocols to prevent Covid-19 transmission. A way whereby education is expected to take place in the post COVID-19 age which will be different from the way education was commonly practiced in the pre-COVID-19 days. In simple terms, this new normal only continues the habits that had been carried out during the implementation of regional quarantine or Large-Scale Social Restrictions. With the introduction of the new normal, we begin to carry out activities outside the home while adhering to health protocols that have been regulated by the government, namely wearing masks when leaving the house, washing hands frequently with soap, and maintaining social distancing and avoiding crowds to prevent transmission of the corona virus. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, most activities have been carried out online such as meeting activities that have been held together in a room, now using the Zoom application, as well as teaching and learning activities. With the new normal protocol, students inevitably returned to school,

of course, with health and safety protocols that guarantee them from contracting the virus. This was made possible due to the global presence of technology.

Eslamian (2014) observed that technology is the continually developing result of accumulated knowledge and application in all techniques, skills, methods, and processes used in industrial production and scientific research. Technology is embedded in the operation of all machines, with or without detailed knowledge of their function, for the intended purpose of an organization. Seufert, Guggemos, and Sailer (2020) conducted a study on technology-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes of pre-and in-service teachers: The current situation and emerging trends. Computers in Human Behaviour and the result revealed that the use of technology in teaching and learning could increase students' achievement, as well as, their cognitive and affective domains. According to Jamon, Boholano, Cabanes-Jamon & Pardillo (2018), teachers who do not know how to use technology cannot be fully effective and efficient. Teachers in the 21st-century are empowered to use technology and must be technologically literate to survive in the present education era and they will no longer survive the present education era if they do not know how to use technology (Boholano, Balo, Pogoy, & Alda, 2020). During this pandemic situation, one of the most important skills that teachers must have is the skill of using technology. Without this skill, it is unimaginable if they can be able to survive in these unprecedented situations. Business educators are important when it comes to the effective use of technology in education.

Challenges Faced by Business Educators during the Pandemic Era

The sudden shift from traditional education system to online education system causes a lot of problems. Business educators alongside with universities cancelled large and public-facing events, job fairs, conferences, and speech events. Technological issues, internet connectivity, isolation, lack of face to face interaction, time management, load shading, lack of teachers training and use of ICT tools, students assessment challenges, environmental and behavioral problems, unpreparedness of students for online teaching and learning and so on were some of the critical challenges envisaged during the pandemic period. UNESCO at that time recommended that educational institutions be equipped with online learning tools (Crawford et al., 2020). Business educators were forced to utilize the technology within their reach as tools and platforms for teaching and learning activities. In addition to that, business educators were also forced to quickly create an enabling environment that is creative and innovative,

Role of Business Educators in the New Normal

The role of business educators in the new normal are as follows:

- ❖ To observe all Covid-19 protocols such as wearing face mask maintaining social distancing, washing of hand regularly and so on.
- ❖ To ensure that business educators made sufficient use of digital technologies and internet at all times.
- ❖ To update their knowledge and skills and ensure proper computer literacy as a basic necessity and preparatory for full adoption of online teaching and learning.
- ❖ To make proper acquisition of proficiency knowledge and skills used in the digital tools and resources to help all students achieve high academic standard.
- ❖ To make adequate use of internet in online search for information.

- ❖ To monitor the trend of development in the area of e-learning, which is sacrosanct in business education programme.

Conclusion

Business educators encountered fewer problems during Covid-19 pandemic due to their proficiency in the knowledge of technology. Online teaching plays a pivotal role in the educational sector and also supports teaching activities in Nigeria within the period. Online teaching permits flexible system and also management of cost is effective during COVID-19 pandemic period. Universities in Nigeria automatically shifted from traditional teaching method to online teaching for the students to continue with their educational activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Governments should make internet connectivity to be of paramount importance to all stakeholders in education sector; peradventure the pandemic or similar crises resurface.
2. Government should vote more funds to vocational education for training and retraining of business educators on the use of technology.
3. Business educators should adopt the new method of teaching the course to enable their products benefit and play active role in the new normal.

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