

Business Education as Solution to some of the Contemporary Challenges in Nigeria



Economy

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Abstract

The plague in the economy has its roots from the national leadership problem and corruption cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fibre of the nation's economy since independence. Business Education as a programme if well structured and packaged than what we have now at the Colleges of Education level can contribute positively towards solving leadership problem and corruption at individual level which will dovetail into all the collective efforts in combating the devil – leadership and corruption that impoverish citizens through unemployment. To empower Business education to be much more relevant in this direction, it becomes imperatively necessary to take entrepreneurship programme beyond the classroom business and include business ethical issues into most of the courses being offered in order to give future business educators and practitioners' needed skills, knowledge, attitude and conscience.

Introduction

Does Business Education as an academic programme have import of relevance to solve some of the contemporary challenges Nigeria is facing? If it has or does not currently, how can it provide solution to these challenges that have its root from independence? Before we can make either a passing or affirmative comment on Business Education as having or not solution to some of the contemporary problems Nigeria has, let us peep into history from 1960.

“Nigerian political life has been scarred by conflict along both ethnic and geographic lines and misrule has undermined the authority and legitimacy of the state apparatus.....Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa, with an estimated 135 million people, has faced intermittent political turmoil and economic crisis since gaining independence in October 1960. Nigeria faces serious social and economic challenges. Although Nigeria's oil and natural gas revenues are estimated at over \$40 billion per year, its human development indicators are among the world's lowest, and a majority of the population suffer from extreme poverty. Despite its oil wealth, Nigeria remains highly underdeveloped.... Poor governance has severely limited infrastructure development and the provision of social services, hindering economic development and leaving much of the country mired in poverty..... The Obasanjo Administration won praise for some of its efforts to combat the rampant corruption that has plagued, Investigations by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), a Nigerian law enforcement agency created in 2003 to combat corruption and fraud, have resulted in the arrest of over 2,000 responsible for illegal email scams and in over 130 convictions for fraud.... Due to decades of economic mismanagement, political instability, and widespread corruption, the education and social services systems have suffered from lack of funding, industry has idled, refineries are in poor condition, and the sixth-largest oil-producing country in the world suffers periodically from severe fuel shortages. (CRS Report for Congress on Nigeria, 2008)”

“However, both military and civilian government who have ruled this country, Nigeria have desired to provide a panacea to the problems of poverty since after independence in 1960, without success. Little wonder that Imaekhai (2000) observes that “the fact that poverty is still very much a problem in Nigeria even on a higher magnitude points to the failure of previous attempts made by both civilian and military government to tackle the problem”. Also various programmes like NAPEP, Operation Feed the Nation (OPN),

Live Above Poverty Organisation (LAPO), etc, have been established for the education of the people and to find a lasting solution to this 'sickness' called poverty. But much of these programmes did not succeed as it was basically marred by corruption. (Oriahi and Aitufe (2010))”

From the above two quotations, one can see it glaringly that poverty is regarded as one of the contemporary challenges of Nigeria that defiles solutions as a result of prevalent corruption in the country. The question that we must be prepared to answer is do we have the virus called poverty or unemployment in the country when the state apparatus is already infected with corruption? Given this as it is how Business Education can be a solution to the nation’s number one enemy – corruption that gave birth to youth unemployment and poverty as well as poor leadership in the economy is the concern of this paper.

Business Education Present and Tomorrow

Corruption and Leadership

As it has been rightly said, many of the economic solutions proffered failed to produce results as it were in other nations of the world where similar solutions were offered. It is necessary here to reorder the identified contemporary challenges and pin point the root of it all. Corruption and bad leadership is the main root; unemployment and poverty are just outcome of corruption and bad leadership in the country. The evil of corruption and bad leadership have taken a toll on enterprises mismanagement, which invariably often than not lead to over invoicing, breaking of local purchase order so as to avert following due process, hiring wrong person – employing the one that can pay the price, sapping the enterprise dry – loss of income an active agent of enterprises bankruptcy. Before and after the exit of the business, employment opportunity becomes doubtful and redundancy of labour laid off becomes obvious in both short and long term.

Table 1: Changes in Employment of Selected Industry after Privatisation

Name of Industry	Sector	Year of Privatisation	Employment before	Job Loss	% of Job Loss
Crusader Insurance Plc	Insurance	1989	207	15	7.25
Baiko Plc	Insurance	1989	542	432	79.70
Aiico Plc	Insurance	1989	320	3	0.94
Ashka Cement Co Plc	Building	1990	1520	185	12.17

Source: Adeleke, Gbadegesin and Adeyinka (2009): Commercialization and Private Participation as a Solution to Nigeria Epileptic Power Supply and Sustainable Development, **The Archives: Multi – Disciplinary Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (MJAHS) of Department of History, Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo**, No. 1 Vol. 1, pp 209 – 217

From table 1 above, the effect of corruption and bad leadership can be seen better in the table below:

Table 2: Summary of the Effect of Corruption and Bad Leadership

Symptom of Corruption and Bad Leadership	Effect of Corruption and Bad Leadership
Reduction/destruction of job creating capacity	Aggravation of poverty level of unemployed individual
Breeds exploiters of human resources	Aggravation of poverty level of individual being exploited
Increases in cost of business	Pricing goods/services out of reach of the poor
Mismanagement	Inefficient utilisation of resources

From the information in the table above, one can see it clearly that one thing that is wrong is that the moral conscience is sick. The currently feasible solution business education proffers is the production of people with high level of business skills that will create or manage created jobs may not be sufficient; if certain fundamental skills are not well articulated into the mind of these people so that it will become unwritten code of behaviours any where they may find themselves. Most leaders lack these skills because they were not taught as part of their leadership calling or they allow the messy situation (ostentatious living, conspicuous spending and eating) of the country to push them into the mould of corruption. These skills well knitted together becomes business conscience for business practice.

The traditional business education curriculum, as presently constituted, may not be adequately preparing individuals for the challenges they experience as professional business teachers and practioners (Pfeffer, 1977). Today one fundamental question comes, whether the curriculum of a business education can produce future business educators and leaders of business with required business education skill to meet contemporary challenges as it is being offered in our Colleges of Education. Currently the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) minimum standard has a newly introduced course called Business Education Practicum. This course entails personal life management skills, work ethics, leadership and motivation, among others. This is the beginning. One expects to find business ethical issues in some of the courses like Principle of Management, Entrepreneurship, and Commerce and possibly add business ethics to the courses being offered. The attended dividends to obtain from including Business Ethical Issues in some of the courses being taught and adding Business Ethics as new course for businessmen and educators are:

- i. To create a deep conviction that a good reputation for fair and honest business is a prime corporate asset that all employees should nurture with the greatest care (The Business Round Table, 1988).
- ii. To improve the reputation of business and a culture in which ethical concerns permeates the whole organization to be able to maintain profitability and develop the necessary competitiveness for effective performance (The Business Round Table, 1988) and determine responsibility in business dealings (Madsen, & Shafritz, 1990).
- iii. To create awareness for insensitivity to ethical appearances this can wind up a company economically untimely (Moore, 1987).
- iv. Good ethics is good business. Unethical behaviour threatens to eat away the core of our credibility, creating in the public mind hostility so volatile and legislation so stifling that markets shrink and government finds itself directing business practices (Genfau, 1987). This is an application of ethics to the corporate community (Madsen, & Shafritz, 1990).
- v. To create a sense of values management. Values management is also highly important in other management practices, e.g., managing diversity, Total Quality Management and strategic planning, giving just value to value sought.

If business ethics is added to the training programme of business education, there is much confidence that Business Education will assist in the establishment of a better Nigeria (Adeleke, 2010). It will help to reduce the tempo of corruption as well as bad leadership that is crippling many businesses and help to sustain if not improve the employment tempo of industry in Nigeria where opportunity will be provided for gainful employment.

Unemployment and Poverty

Simultaneously, as business conscience is being taught entrepreneurship programme becomes inevitable to let people see the need for being business oriented either as employed or employers that will their actions affecting not only themselves, but customers, employees/employers, investors, suppliers, governments, citizens,

and communities. Moreover, abuse of trust the society has in business for use of resources by corporations undermines trust in business and in the markets needed to ensure commercial success. A society where those holding power are neither moral nor accountable creates a state where the strong do what they will and the weak what they must – ethical or social chaos becomes the order. In short, the power of business must be exercised so that it does not punish or exploit those who are dependent on its largesse or vulnerable to its demands. Business must faithfully exercise its responsibility in the use of power.

The current entrepreneurship education balanced theory with practice unlike the past. But there is still much to be done if entrepreneurship programme of Business Education will be much more adequate to equip the graduates of business education with needed skills, knowledge and attitude to set up ventures and manage it successfully; the beneficiaries well armed with these competence ingredients can face the challenges of 21st century technology and scientific know-how on one hand and fulfil the letters of National Policy on Education (2004) which aim at making individuals to be self-reliant and useful member of the society. Acting rightly and timely (skills), knowing precisely, rightly and timely (knowledge), and be the right decision makers (attitude) depicts the expected behaviours to solve the some of the contemporary challenges – poverty and unemployment in Nigeria.

Olaleye (2009) noted that the various Federal Government programmes on eradication of poverty have failed because graduates of the education system lack the practical skills which can be acquired through Entrepreneurship Education Programme. To make entrepreneurship relevant the followings must be done:

- i. the school theory and class practical base need to be complimented with the skills needed to write, implement and manage a strategic business plan by business education students;
- ii. business clinics needs to be established for business education department so as to complement theory and class practicals and give learners the opportunity of carrying out industry assessments, marketing research studies, business plans, feasibility studies, and internships where mentoring would be most relevant and
- iii. lastly facilitating financial linkage for sourcing of venturing capital.

The above listed conditions become relevant because entrepreneurship goes beyond classroom business. Falkang and Alberti (2000) see "entrepreneurs as people with entrepreneurial spirit ; they are likely to have knowledge and skill requirements unique, different from other kinds of entrepreneurial . Entrepreneurial are action oriented and much of their learning is experimentally based" (Rae & Carswell, 2000). They also learn by doing which comprises, trial and error activities, problem solving and discovery (Deakins & Freel, 1998; Young & Sexton, 1997). And also from the evidence obtained from Olaleye (2009) in his study of three universities in South-West Nigeria on entrepreneurship education , revealed that "92.2% of the students were aware of the programme in their universities and ready to set up their own businesses . They however complained of fund to establish their businesses". Therefore, the sought solution is in the change entrepreneurship brings to the economy to address unemployment and poverty. Entrepreneurship programme of business education can not be said to have such power to tackle the aforementioned challenges if the above listed conditions are not met.

Unemployment 2011

National	23.9%
Rural	25.6%
Urban	17.1%
Male	23.5%
Female	24.3%

Source: National bureau of Statistics

Model Effect

With these powerful programmes of Business Education, we can gain a better understanding of Business Education potential power in providing solution to corruption and bad leadership through observed ethical standards, which has the power to rejuvenate business organisations moral conscience that will influence business transaction in accordance with set ethical standard that will reduce mismanagement, monetary deception, verbal deception, exploitation of people and many more; and by and large cord of corruption becomes broken. As long as business transactions are governed by business conscience, corruption suffers terrible blow. As Entrepreneurship continue to provide needed skills for business organisation (employers and employees), the tempo of business transactions becomes ignited with innovations which will not violate ethical standard but capable of meeting peoples needs. The effect of both ethical standard and entrepreneurship is changed leadership and provision of change in the economic performance where society’s resources are maximally being used to generate income to providers of resources. There is indeed a critical link between corruption and leadership. The experience in Nigeria today is top down direction of corruption. In every area and section of government, the scale, manner and impunity of junior officer corruption is directly linked to the scale, manner and impunity of the senior offices corruption. The end result of which empower individual to be gainfully employed and move out of the state of not being able to live moderately fine.

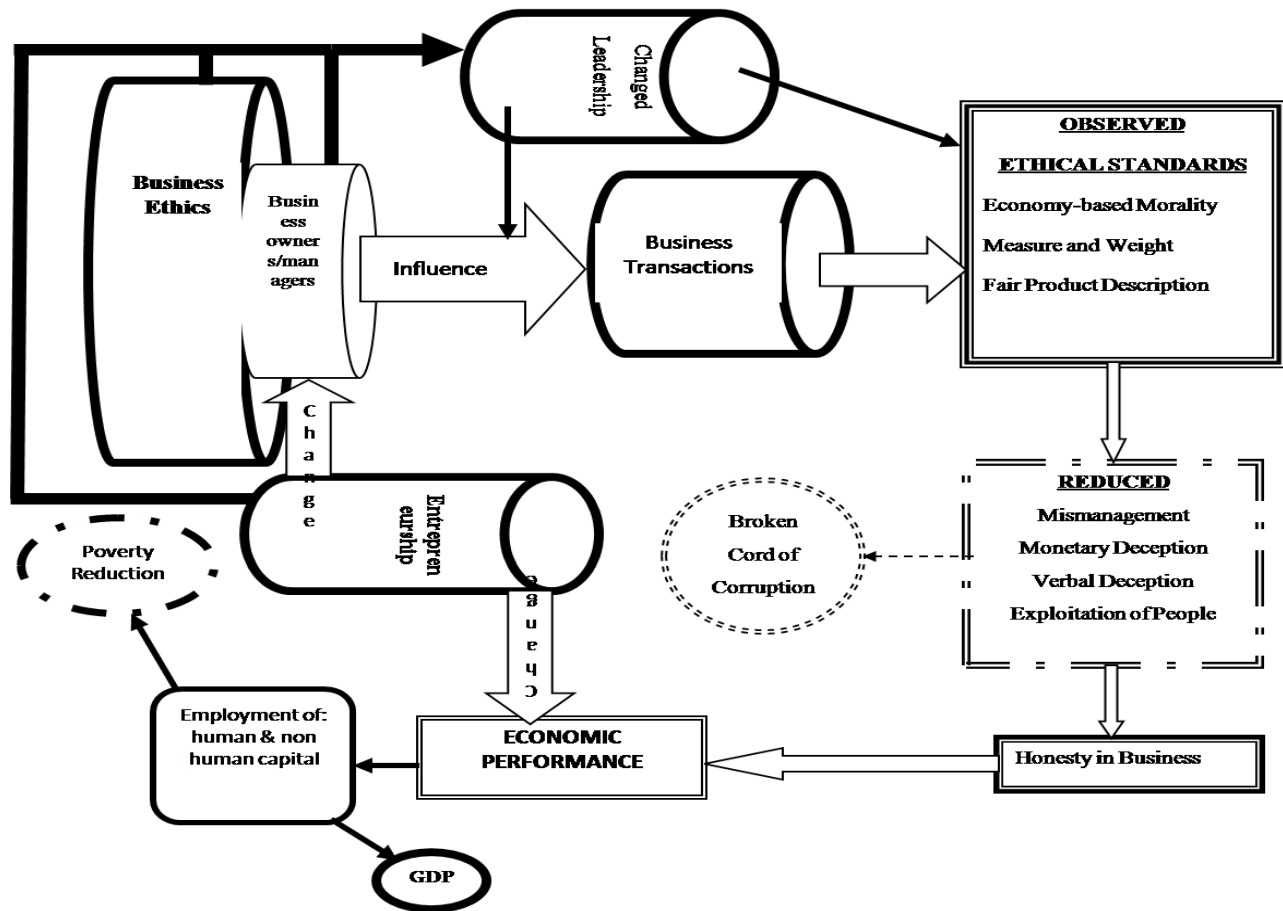


Fig 1: Business Ethics and Entrepreneurship Programmes of Business Education as Solution to Nigeria Contemporary Challenges

Source: Self Developed by the author, Adeleke, M. S. (2012)

	Civil servants	Political Leaders	Religious Leaders	Business men	Students	Others
Gender	Male, Female	Male, Female	Male, Female	Male, Female	Male, Female	Male, Female
Degree of Leadership Corruption	Very High	High	Moderately High	Moderately Low	Low	Very Low
Current Level of Leadership Moral Conscience	Very High	High	Moderately High	Moderately Low	Low	Very Low
Possible Effect of Ethical Education	Very High	High	Moderately High	Moderately Low	Low	Very Low
Willingness to observe ethical standard without enforcement	Very High	High	Moderately High	Moderately Low	Low	Very Low
Willingness to observe ethical standard without enforcement						
Ethical standard enforcement agency						

Concluding Remark

From the foregoing, it is evident that the right solution inherent in business education can only be annex through proper implementation of:

- i. Business Ethics Education in the Colleges of Education curriculum, and
- ii. Entrepreneurship programme that will go beyond classroom teaching

That will change the growth of leadership education and development pattern that will be relevant in addressing the leadership problem that dotted all the crane and nook of the economy. Also give them business conscience that will help our business leaders to develop and drive the business economy.

Another benefit for implementing the above highlighted programmes into business education curriculum will not only complement Government programme in addressing poverty, unemployment, diseases, hunger that have plagued the masses but assist individual to wear expected behaviour needed in solving these problems at individual levels. As Julius Nyerere, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania put it

“education is not a way to escape poverty - It is a way of fighting it” (UNESCO, 2001a). Business Education will not help us to escape these menaces but it will equip us to fight it rightly.

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