Re-Engineering the Business Education Programme in Universities for Enhanced Human Resources Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper reviewed business education programme in Nigeria Vis-a-Vis its role in human resource development and highlighted deficiencies in programme curricular and delivery changes needed in remodeling of the programme to enhance learning outcomes, in crease skill acquisition, meet world's standards and current labour demands in business organizations were suggested. The paper recommended the use of hybrid e-learning and traditional teaching process as appropriate for optimizing programme delivery and learning outcomes. It further recommended that Nigerian government should adopt a policy of massive retraining of teachers in E-learning /s e- teaching, provision of ICT infrastructure and other equipment needed for proper teaching of business education in secondary schools and tertiary institutions.
Keywords: Business education , Human resources development, ICT.

Introduction

Human resource development (HRD) is the process of helping employees to develop their personal and organizational skills, knowledge and abilities. It includes employee training , employee career development, performance management and development, coaching, mentoring etc. The focus of all aspects of human resource development is on developing the most superior work force so that the organization and the employees can accomplish their work goals in service to their customers.

Business education is a conglomerate of courses that is concerned with the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper values for the survival of the individual and the survival of the individual and the society (FRN, 2004). Aliyu (2006) explained that business education is the education for the acquisition and development of skills and competencies, attitudes and attributes which are necessary for efficiency of the economic system. Thus, business education helps individuals to acquire saleable skills that will enable them fit into various business organizations or be self employed in the absence of paid employment.

Employers, as Donna (1996) observed continually cry for skilled and knowledgeable workers but due to the new and increasingly complex demands being placed upon the educational system, it is not preparing students adequately to enter the work force. Thus, organizations are simultaneously experiencing increased demand to provide employees at all levels with adequate learning. A well articulated business education, if properly implemented and instructions efficiently delivered can help bridge the skill gaps existing between the school graduates and the requirements of the corporate business organizations and thus, reduce the huge cost of human resource development in business organizations.

The introduction of Micro electronics, telecommunication equipment, internet and computers to modern offices have changed the ways offices perform their function (Usaro, 2010). This, calls for training and development of competent people who will be equipped with the needed skills to face the current office challenges. Babalola (2007) noted that it is pertinent to groom graduates to possess the desired training, abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge to work in business organizations.

The Changing office Environment

Technology is moving at an unprecedented pace and is presenting organizations with massive opportunity to optimize their workplace, thereby, reducing cost. The modern office has become a habitat of various computerized functions (Agomuo, 2005). Today's business offices provide varied support service ranging from word processing of reports, letters and many other document, to the provision of specialization services.

Today's office in every organization employing the E- office operations is charged with the responsibility of information handling which include information processing , information system, information resource management , information systems planning, information architecture, human resource information processing, information resource centre, information systems development and information systems analysis. Office standards change every year as new technological innovations make their way into the lives of people. It is pertinent that today's office workers posses the aforementioned competencies to be able to function well in the new office environment.

Competencies gaps emanating from current business education curriculum in Nigeria.

The office according to Azih (2011) over the years has witnessed a tremendous transformation in the way office workers perform their duties. Thus, the innovations in office technology brought about the use of computers, internet, e-mail, video conferencing etc. in the office environment. The current business education curriculum must be adjusted to face the current demands in the office.

The current business education curriculum in Nigeria as observed by Okoli(2011) is highly theoretical and rhetorical in nature. Thus, the graduates of business education programme lack the skills and competencies needed for actual performance in the office. Furthermore, business education in Nigeria is saddled with the following problems.

    i.   Inadequate funding
    ii. Inadequate resource personnel
    iii. Poor curriculum content
    iv. Inadequate instructional materials
    v.   Poor societal perceptions.

Since business education is concerned with development of individuals, personal skills and attitudes, communication and occupational skills, technological literacy, employability skills, broad specific occupational skills and knowledge (Aina, 2002). The products such deficient curriculum cannot function effectively and efficiently in today's changing work environment.

A look at the performance of business education in many Nigerian Universities reveals that Microsoft Excel, database management, basic computer networking, desktop publishing, web page design etc. are not included in their business education curriculum (Azih, 2011). One then wonders how the graduates from such deficient programme can face the current office challenges.

Furthermore, Okereke & Ndinechi (2005) in their study found that business education graduates were unfamiliar with networking, computer assisted retrieval system, Micro-graphic, electronic mails , organizer, micro graphics, teleconferencing equipment etc. There seems to be lack of innovation in the current business education curriculum and the Nigerian school system has remained conservative, thus, being too slow to adapt to new technologies.

Infact, Anioke (2012) observed that there is a wide gap between what is studied in Nigerian tertiary institutions and the requirements of the industries in today's corporate organizations.

Re-engineering the Business Education curriculum to meet the skill gap.

The discussion above underscores the need to restructure the current business education curriculum in Nigeria to meet the changing work environment in business organizations such that the business education programme can play enhanced role in human resource development in Nigeria. Maduabuchi (2009) opined that the future business education curriculum should:

i.   Be competency based, that is functual
ii.   Critical and be able to inculcate problem solving skills in the business education graduates.
iii.   Incorporate practical work training and self reliance.
iv.   Incorporate ICT based teaching and learning approaches.

These innovations are very important so that the contents and the equipment which students are exposed to in their various institutions to match with what they meet in the world of work. A look at the business education curriculum for secondary school in United States of America as stipulated by the National Business Education Association (NBEA) reveals that the body maintained curriculum standards in accounting, business law, career development, communication, computation, economics and personal finance, entrepreneurship, information technology, international business, management and marketing. NBEA did this in order to sustain secondary education as a vital component of the future vocational and career education.

Business education curriculum in Nigerian secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions must be beefed-up to incorporate these aspects of study which are currently lacking in the curriculum. The introduction of these topics at the secondary school level makes the secondary schools graduates better prepared for work and further training in tertiary institutions. Changing the business education curriculum in the line suggested is a key to the business education re-engineering process. This is because the curriculum as opined by Lewis (1999) has to do with the content and conceptual structure and how it is taught. Business education has a strong real life evidence base and if the curriculum is well articulated and implemented, it is capable of producing high skilled man power that is needed in business organizations.

Re-engineering the Business Education Delivery system process:-

Due to the advancement in information and communication Technology (ICT), it has become imperative that e-learning must be integrated in the teaching of business education courses both in secondary and tertiary institutions. As this technology has been found to be very effective in enhancing teaching and learning

outcomes and promises to be viable means of using teaching resources which ordinarily may not be available in the institutions. Besides e- learning has the potential benefit of instilling deeper learning of topics by virtue of repeated and convenient access to content presented in a range of media.

Ojeaga & Igbinedion (2012) revealed that the use of e-learning in Nigerian educational system is still slow or even imaginary. This may be as a result of inadequate computer availability and internet accessibility. Reform of teaching service delivery must include the following:-

i. Massive computer literacy to be embarked by the Nigerian government especially for teachers   and learners at all levels.
ii. Classrooms and auditoriums should be connected to the internet.
iii. Computer and Multimedia projectors should be provided in adequate numbers for effective e-learning.
iv. E-libraries should be put in place and free for teachers and students.

v. There should be provision for uninterrupted power supply in the school environment.

vi Re-training of teachers on e- teaching platform.

CONCLUSIONS:

Re-engineering business education programme for effective human resource development requires reforms in both the curriculum and teaching delivery system in Nigeria. Reform of the curriculum must be such that:-
1. The curriculum will focus on the current labour trends and students' interest.
2. The curriculum must integrate business education content into a comprehensive framework.
3. Use of Hybrid e-learning and traditional teaching method in the delivery of business education programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS:-

For a functional business education programme to be in place in Nigeria, there is need to do the following:-
1. Programme   restructuring and review of content to meet skill demand in business organizations.
2. Adoption of hybrid e-learning and traditional teaching methods to enhance skill acquisition.
3. Government to adopt policy of massive computer education and retraining of teachers in e-learning and teaching.
4. Massive Acquisition of ICT infrastructure with a view to increase significant internet penetration in the country.

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