
VISION 20:2020 AND NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: IMPLICATIONS ON BUSINESS EDUCATION

By

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ABSTRACT

Historically, Business Education started in the U.S.A. in or around 1749, and in Nigeria, in the 1920s with the missionaries and the private sector playing the leading role. Initially, Business Education in Nigeria had the problems of visibility and awareness, but efforts to overcome the difficulties were crowned by the National Policy on Education, 1979, revised, 2004. This policy represents full government recognition of Business Education as an important component of the National education effort. The report of the Vision 20:2020 committee is expected to further consolidate awareness and acceptance of business education in the national education package. Contributions of Business Education to national productivity are glaring, judging from services being rendered by products of the programme, both in the private and public sectors of the economy. The paper made recommendations whose implementation the writer hopes would help realize the Business Education vision as contained in its objectives.

INTRODUCTION

A vision entails looking into the future. It is a sort of clairvoyance, and enables planning and preparedness. It is an integral way used by men in worship of God to reassure their faith. A dream is also an attempt at vision, but a vision is more certain than a dream. It is not a past time of many, as only few have the capacity to see and have real vision. Some are real while others, ideals. Individuals have visions, and so do nations. Some actualize theirs while others do not. Visions are not just realized, they are achieved, and the achievement entails hard work, proper utilization of resources, transparency, sincerity, and tenacity of purpose.

Jonas (1997) opined that an individual or nation without a vision is one without a future, and a national vision is a national responsibility. It is a national goal and aspiration that must be shared by the populace in all its ramifications in terms of concept, content, and

implementation, and there must be the willingness to change our old ways of life.

Before bringing visioning to Business Education, it will be important to know what Business Education is, its objectives, history of business education in Nigeria, its present position, its achievements in terms of contributions to national progress and development, constraints, and prospects.

BUSINESS EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

Osuala (2009) defined business education as a programme of instruction which consists of two parts which are office education, a vocational education programme for office careers, and general business education which provides students with information and competencies needed by all, for managing personal business affairs and using the services of the business world.

Business Education definition, as given, has two aspects which include education about business and education for business. Education about business which is aimed at contributing to the objectives of general education, aims at equipping every citizen of a society with knowledge about business activities in the society and making recipients wise producers and consumers of business products. Education for business prepares beneficiaries for careers in business and this is an advanced stage of the preparation.

Business Education has been carefully designed to meet basic skills, knowledge and capabilities of beneficiaries to function, either as business teachers or business executives.

Ubulom, in Udoh (2014), outlined that the objectives of business education include:

- 1) Making available to all students opportunities to explore and learn about the world of business and the possible interests and careers it has to offer.
- 2) Helping to develop, in all students, the ability to choose wisely the goods and services that business has to offer.
- 3) Assisting in developing intelligent understanding, on the part of all students, of the various occupations to be found in the world of business.
- 4) Develop, in practical ways, an understanding and appreciation of the actual function of our economic system.
- 5) Enabling students acquire business knowledge and skills that may be needed for personal use.
- 6) Preparing students to enter into and follow business as career.
- 7) Preparing students to perform business activities common to many professional areas.
- 8) Preparing students for more effective and advanced study in the field of business.

- 9) Preparing students to be business teachers, and to:
 - a. Apply the various business concepts acquired in the class to real life situations.
 - b. Acquire skills and competencies required for the performance of basic business jobs, i.e. take simple administrative decisions and deal with correspondences.
 - c. Keep simple records of financial and other transactions in the office and operate and care for office machines and equipment.
 - d. Identify and discriminate among alternatives available to them in the market, given limited resources.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION

The earliest form of Business Education, according to Osuala (2009), was apprenticeship training where an experienced book-keeper who needed an assistant would train an apprentice. Gradually when the apprentice qualifies, he finds it necessary to take an apprentice, himself. This was in the U.S.A. As business grew, however, more book-keepers were needed than could be supplied using this method. Itinerant tutors began traveling around the country, giving instructions in book-keeping and allied subjects. Early private grammar schools sometimes included book-keeping, shorthand, and commercial arithmetic in their curricular in response to demands for commercial training. In 1949, a new school organization was introduced at Franklin's academy in Philadelphia which was arranged into three divisions, and one was limited to commercial courses in book-keeping, arithmetic, history of commerce, among others. In the U.S.A., the first federal legislation, making funds available to vocational education, including business education, was the Smiths – Hughess Act (1917).

Business Education in Nigeria

The history and development of Business Education in Nigeria is not different from the development in the U.S.A. Business Education in Nigeria owes its origin to the coming of the missionaries who fundamentally wanted to train people who could read the Bible and keep accounts, Aliyu (2011). Business Education, from inception in Nigeria, has been in the hands of private individuals and institutions until the Phelps-Stokes Commission in 1920 recommended to the government the introduction of vocational courses in public schools, and further recommended that vocational schools be created with proper guidelines for the teaching of vocational subjects of which business education is a component.

By 1940, Business Education began to have an awakening interest as several business schools were opened, especially, in the southern parts of the country. Among these were the Oluwa College in Western Nigeria by Odutola in 1942 which later became the Adeola Odutola Comprehensive College in 1947 at Ijebu Ode; United College of Commerce at Warri in 1949; and St. Paul's Commercial School, Soba, Zaria. In the 1950s, with the increase in commerce, government got involved in establishment of such schools like Staff Training Centres, Federal Training Centres where clerical officers were trained for performance of government clerical duties.

Business education in Northern Nigeria can be traced to the establishment of the first generation commercial schools by some private individuals. The schools included Danboyi and Gyel Commercial College, Jos; Common Wealth College of Commerce, Jos; T. Akpata Academic Institute of Commerce, Jos; Dowotola Commercial College, Zaria; Aminu Kano Community Commercial College, Kano; A.B. Garba Arewa Advancement Classes, Kaduna; and Tabe advancement Classes, Kaduna; among others.

As can be seen from the foregoing lists of commercial colleges, both in the North and South, the efforts had been predominantly private. However, government full recognition of, and involvement in, business education was through the National Policy on Education, 1979, revised, 2004. As a result of this recognition by government and visibility acquired over the years, business education is offered, not only in secondary schools (both private and public), but tertiary institutions (the Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Universities) have new various programmes of Business Education.

VISION 20:2020 AND EDUCATION

The report of the Vision 20:2020 National Technical Working Group (2009) on the Education Sector, stated that education was one of the most important factors in Nigeria's quest to become one of the twenty largest economies by the year 2020. The development of Nigeria's human capital, it observed, is the most important key to rapid economic development and the strongest weapon against poverty. However, the report stated, given the current state of education in Nigeria, drastic measures would need to be taken to overhaul the system for it to serve as a reliable and efficient vehicle for attainment of the vision.

Overview of Nigerian Education

According to the Vision 20:2020 National Technical Working Group (2009), Nigerian Education is categorized into three main vertical segments of Basic Education, Post-Basic Education (or Upper Secondary Education) and Tertiary Education. The Technical Working Group added that within basic, post-basic and even tertiary education, technical vocational education (where business education belongs), is a sub-set. Teacher education is also a sub-set of tertiary education, the Working Group added.

Approach to Developing the Nigerian Vision 20:2020 Education Plan

In developing the plan, the Technical Working Group stated, the following parameters were considered for each level of the educational system. These were:

1. Access and Equity
2. Standards and Quality Assurance.
3. Infrastructure.
4. Teacher Quality, Motivation and Development.
5. Curriculum Relevance.
6. Funding.
7. Planning and Management.

Though the teaching and learning of business education begins at the last three years of the 9-year Basic Education (Junior Secondary), through the curriculum for business studies, and runs through the senior secondary to the tertiary education level, the points above would be presented as discussed under the tertiary education level. Also, most of the views raised and discussed by the Vision 20:2020 Technical Working Group at the tertiary level in respect of those points hold, also, for the primary, basic and post-basic education levels.

Tertiary Education

Tertiary education, according to the Technical Working Group, is defined as all forms of post-secondary education that take place in Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Monotechnic education programmes. Over 1.4 million students were enrolled in over 200 such institutions and programmes in Nigeria in 2003; there were 66 colleges of education, with an enrolment of 197,901 students; 55 polytechnics with an estimated enrolment of 331,466 students; and 55 universities, with an estimated enrolment of 700,000 students. In addition, there were 90 monotechnics (i.e technical colleges specializing in one area of study such as agriculture or health technology) and about 100

schools of nursing and midwifery and other professional training institutions, with an estimated enrolment of some 190,330 students. For the nation to succeed in the Vision 20:2020, we must accept that education is the key to national development. It is the panacea to poverty as well as the key for unlocking the natural resources. It opens the mind of the citizen for participation in national activities.

As far as enrolment is concerned, the universities have a total enrolment of 1,131,312; the polytechnics, a total of 360,353 and the Colleges of Education, a total enrolment of 354,387 (TWG, 2009). Already, a distortion is obvious in the enrolment patterns as the universities dominate the scene with nearly twice the combined enrolments of the polytechnics and the colleges of education. Given the critical shortages of teachers and technicians, the two types of institutions ought to have been much larger than the universities but they are not, owing largely to the compensation system in the public service which tends to over-reward university degrees and under-reward other qualifications (NTWG, 2009).

THE CURRENT EDUCATION SECTOR

Access and Equity

One of the indicators of under-provision in the Nigerian higher education system is the admission crisis that occurs every year when the season for admitting students to the higher education institutions arrives. Administrators and senior academics in the universities literally go underground in order to avoid meeting desperate parents and guardians of prospective candidates who come visiting to plead for the favor of having their wards admitted for their chosen courses. Although the pressure in the polytechnics is also considerable, it is nowhere near the intensity of the pressure in the universities, especially in the first

generation federal universities and especially where professional courses such as medicine, law, accountancy, pharmacy, and business administration are involved (NTWG, 2009). Current rate of admission of 6% into tertiary levels of education, as against the generally accepted minimum of 16%, for meaningful economic development, has not been met. This is because of the low carrying capacities of the tertiary institutions. Only 23.78% of candidates meet the criteria of 5 credits, including English and Mathematics at SSCE. At present, in all tertiary education institutions, there is a dearth of infrastructural facilities and equipment to accommodate applicants. The ratio of 60:40 in favor of sciences and the ratio of 70:30 policy in favor of technology based subjects, have denied some students access to education (NTWG, 2009).

Equity

Equity is a situation in which everyone is treated equally. Are Nigerian Citizens treated equally in terms of provision for education? The answer is No (NTWG, 2009), Nomadics are disadvantaged in provision of education. Also those with special needs are disadvantaged in the provision of education; buildings, other infrastructures and equipment do not take into account the physically handicapped individuals, e.g. the blind, the wheel chaired, etc. The policies of quota system and Federal character in admission into tertiary institutions do not give equal treatment to individual citizens.

Standard and Quality Assurance

There are credible and effective quality assurance mechanisms put in place for the tertiary education sub-sector by the three regulatory agencies (NUC, NBTE and NCCE) (NTWG, 2009). However, the results of accreditation exercises released by these agencies revealed the extent of inadequacies in the

system. For example, the last accreditation exercises carried out by the NUC in May and November 2008 showed that only between 52.8% and 62.8% of the programmes secured full accreditation while between 35.5% and 42.2% obtained interim accreditation. Between 1.3% and 5% of the programmes had denied accreditation status. It is also significant that no Nigerian university has been ranked among the best 200 universities in the world by any of the ranking systems. Complaints about poor quality of the average Nigerian graduate from employers and other stakeholders abound (NTWG, 2009).

Infrastructure

Tertiary institutions have been expanding their enrolments in response to demands, but without expanding their classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories and other facilities, owing to the breakdown of national planning in the last two decades. In addition, the traditional challenges of power and water supply, sanitation and ICT infrastructure also confront the tertiary *institutions*. Alarming inadequacies exist in infrastructural facilities in tertiary institutions (NTWG, 2009).

Teacher Quality and Development

According to the NTWG (2009), universities have academic staff shortages of 45%, polytechnics 43.5% and colleges of education 57%. In addition, less than 40% of academic staff in polytechnics possess higher degrees while over 60% of university academic staff belong to the junior category which should not normally exceed 45% of the teaching staff. In other words, there is a critical shortage of senior academics who are also ageing and retiring from the system and are not being replaced fast enough.

Curriculum

Our tertiary education curricular, the NTWG observed, ought to be reviewed regularly and should have strong provision for skills development. The industries should be active stakeholders in reshaping the curriculum. Employability skills need to be integrated into the curricular. Upon graduation, products should have acquired professional certification, in addition to their academic certificates.

Funding

Since most of the higher education institutions are owned by State and Federal Governments, these proprietor governments tend to provide most of the funding for these institutions. In addition to failing to adequately meet the funding needs of these institutions, the governments, especially the Federal Government,

restrict and regulate the institutions' ability to generate revenue from tuition fees and accommodation charges. As a country, Nigeria spends significantly less on education than the countries she aspires to be like. While the UK and US, for instance, allocate 9.8% and 15.3% respectively, of their total expenditures to education; Nigeria sometimes allocates as low a percentage as 7%. Also, while Iran and Korea, for instance, spend 4.1% and 4.9% of their GDPs respectively, on education, Nigeria spends only 0.9% (NTWG, 2009).

Comparative Benchmarking Analysis

Nigeria appears to be lagging behind countries that it aspires to be like in most of the important indices of education such as gross enrolment ratios for all levels, proportion of GDP and national budgets spent on education, among others, as indicated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Comparative Education Indicators: Club of 20 Vs Nigeria

Country	Secondary GER	Tertiary GER	% TVe Enrolment	Adult Literacy	Expenditure on Education as %GDP	Education Expenditure as % of total Govt Exp
UK	170	60	51	100	5.3	9.6
US	95	82	NA	100	5.7	15.3
Japan	102		13	100	3.6	11
China	NA		13			
Brazil	75		2	88.6		112.1
Korea			15		4.1	110.9
Iran			8		4.9	
Nigeria	35			69.1	0.9	

Source: National Technical Working Group (2009)

Planning and Management

The Federal Ministry of Education has about 20 parastatals and agencies under its supervision. The tertiary sector is regulated by agencies like the National Board for Technical Education (for the Polytechnics), the

National Commission for Colleges of Education (for the Colleges of Education) and the National Universities Commission (for the Universities). Those agencies co-ordinate and consolidate the budgets of the institutions under them so as to make the budgeting process less

cumbersome. However, in recent times, the National Assembly Committee on Education has often insisted that individual institutions should appear before it to defend their budgets, thereby complicating the process further. The budget office also plays an increasingly visible role in the budgeting process.

However, the tertiary institutions could not access their full funds from the Education Trust Fund (ETF). The Universities could not access N8,343,000,000, while Polytechnics could not access N2,884,030,919, and the Colleges of Education could not access 1,272,738,750. This development is due to poor planning and management, either by the ETF or the concerned tertiary institutions (NTWG, 2009). In addition, the practice where tertiary institutions sometimes divert funds for capital projects for recurrent expenditure is due to lack of proper planning and management of resources. Also the problem of incessant strikes by tertiary institutions is largely due to inappropriate conflict management strategies.

Education Services

Nigerian tertiary institutions suffer from shortages of ICT infrastructure and skilled personnel. Nigeria has a weak ICT backbone and subsequently, poor ICT infrastructure. There is also noticeable lack of educational technology centres for providing projects, slides, power-point presentation facilities for lectures, as well as lack of fully-organized virtual libraries (NTWG, 2009).

VISION, OBJECTIVES, GOALS AND INITIATIVES FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR

The NTWG (2009) stated that the vision, goals and objectives of the Vision 20:2020 are achieving a modern and vibrant education system that ensures the maximum development of the potentials of individuals and promotes a knowledge-driven society that propels

the nation's development. Strategies for achieving the objectives, from basic education, through post basic (secondary education) to tertiary education were stated and discussed under the appropriate headings. Those for tertiary education (where business education majorly operates) were discussed as follows; among others.

Table 2: Strategies for Achieving the Objectives of Tertiary Education

Objectives	Goals	Strategies	Initiatives
Expand Access to higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the current capacity of the universities (from the present 10%) of the age cohort to 15% in 2015 and ultimately, 20% by 2020, and double the carrying capacities for the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, from their present levels of 158,370 and 116,170, respectively, by 2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and improve infrastructural facilities in existing tertiary institutions. Upgrade some Polytechnics and Colleges of Education to Autonomous degree awarding status. Increase the carrying capacities of tertiary institutions by a) 50% by 2015 and b) 100% by 2020 without compromising standards. Promote and expand open and distance learning system in tertiary institutions. Promote private sector and state government participation in the provision of tertiary education. Attract secondary school leavers to train as teachers and TVET by providing special incentives. <p>TVET - Technical Vocational Education and Training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a 100% increase in number of infrastructure including sporting facilities. Increase the public private partnership in the development of facilities. Enact enabling legal framework to attract international involvement in the development of facilities. Gazette and implement approved policies on parity between HND and Bachelor Degree. Immediate implementation of the Yabani's 1999 report on modalities for mounting degree programmes in selected polytechnics and Colleges of education Source for sustained funding to constantly upgrade facilities and increase human resources. Introduce virtual libraries in more institutions. Popularize distance learning and use the media to publicize the non conventional institutions. Encourage the establishment of dual mode delivery systems in tertiary institutions. Review conditions for

			<p>establishing private institution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Government Service Commission to be encouraged to employ teachers into all grade levels.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Popularize the non conventional segment of tertiary education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate and improve the programmes of NOUN and NTI. NOUN=National Open University of Nigeria; NTI – National Teachers Institute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate of NDUN and Academic Board of NTI to consolidate their programmes. Establish Educational Resource Centres in each Local Government Area with internet connectivity and power stability for effective e-learning. Hold sensitization workshops/seminars to create public awareness of the non conventional tertiary institutions as well as GOES and polytechnics.

These are among other strategies to be adopted to achieve the objectives of the Vision 20:2020 (NTWG, 2009):

IMPLICATION OF VISION 20-2020 IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

Visioning in Business Education has to do with providing answers to three questions:

- i) Where are we?
- ii) Where do we want to be?
- iii) How do we get there?

WHERE ARE WE?

In answering the first question, one needs to identify the place of Business Education today in the

Nigerian education System. The importance of any type of education could be seen from its contributions to societal and national productivity and development. In this area, business education is in the fore-front as its contributions can be very glaring. This glaringness could be seen from the contributions of its graduates.

The business education graduate is an all-round and functionally educated person who can both perform secretarial and accounting functions in the office. Better productivity results, partly, from time saving, and a business education graduate who can both

type messages and keep accounting records is able to get an organization going even if a secretary is absent from work or busy elsewhere. In addition to contributing to National productivity in public offices where our products function as teachers, accounting officers, secretaries, and performing other management functions, business education graduates are engaged as entrepreneurs in private establishments, owning business centres in strategic locations in Nigerian towns. Their clients are given fast and satisfactory services.

At the early stage, business education in Nigeria had to battle with the problem of visibility and awareness, not only on the part of people outside the education system, but even among the educated community. However, over the years, the battle for visibility has been worn, and what it is, its contributions to societal progress, among others, are no longer in doubt, hence enrolment in the programme is on the increase. The new understanding is that, with business education, and vocational education generally, there is, relatively, no unemployment, as the graduates function as teachers, workers in the industries, or own businesses in various towns. In this realization, one cannot hesitate saying that business education is in the forefront in the race to help realize the objectives for establishing the National Directorate of Employment, especially that of not relying on government for employment.

The problem of inadequate staff in the institutions offering business education militates realizing the objectives enumerated earlier. While the institutions turn out graduates annually, because of expansion of educational institutions and competition from the private sector and other public sector organizations, there is the dearth of teachers at the various levels of education, resulting in over-loading the few available. It is also, undeniable that a farmer, without good farming implements, cannot farm satisfactorily. We

in business education have office machines which are computers, typewriters, photocopying machines, scanners, power-point presentation equipment, among others, as our working implements. However, when these items of equipment are not there or even if they are there, but are not serviceable, we cannot function effectively. The availability and serviceability positions of the equipment need to be improved tremendously.

Finance plays an important role in realizing objectives. This fact is also true in realizing the laudable objectives of business education. This was highlighted by Adukwu (2003). Finances to education generally, and especially business education, fall short of the much needed to realize objectives appreciably.

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

Having identified where we are, in the spirit of the Vision 20:2020, we need to answer the above question, positively, well. Allen and Marden (2011) observed: "whatever your present position may be, you will fall, remain, or rise with your thoughts, your vision, your ideal. You will be as small as your controlling desire, as great as your dominant aspiration". We in business education want to be as great as our dominant aspirations. While we recognize that we have progressed appreciably, our vision is realizing, fully, the laudable objectives of business education by the year 2020.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Our getting there would be aided by considering and implementing the following recommendations.

- 1) Campaign, aimed at more enlightenment of the public, on the role of business education should be undertaken through seminars, workshops, among others.
- 2) Conditions of business education teachers should be enhanced to ward-off the

competition from the private sector where graduates of business education go for greener pastures.

- 3) Business education laboratories should be better equipped for more effective teaching and learning.
- 4) Funding to Vocational Education, where business education belongs, should be improved to enhance higher productivity.
- 5) Student's excursion, in addition to existing SIWES programme, should be pursued more vigorously to give more practical knowledge to students before graduation.
- 6) Funding of tertiary institutions by the Federal Government, should not be limited to federally owned institutions.

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