

**POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND CRIME THROUGH BUSINESS EDUCATION  
RESOURCES IN NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*This study was carried out to find out how business education resources can be harnessed to curb poverty and crimes in Nigeria. Crimes are increasing on daily basis in Nigeria because majority of her youths are unemployed and without any skill that will make them self reliant. As a result of this, poverty rate has increased drastically forcing some of the youths to involve themselves in any unlawful means available for them to make a living. Business education as a skill course will help in reducing poverty/crimes rate because it instils in her graduates saleable skills that will make them to be self-reliant by either being employed in an establishment or become employers of labour. The paper discussed the major concepts in the topic, objectives of business education, the role of business education in curbing poverty and crimes in Nigeria, some of the problems faced by business education despite the laudable objective and relevance of business education, among others. It was recommended among others that more functional equipment should be provided in every institution offering business education. This will enhance proper training of the students which is geared towards acquisition of the right skills.*

**Keywords: Poverty, Alleviation, Business Education, Crime.**

**Introduction**

For some years now, Nigeria has been confronted with crises in almost all parts of the country. Some of the crises are ethnic division in nature, some are political, economic and some with religious connotations. These crises have affected our economy badly and chased our foreign investors away. How to reduce poverty to the barest

minimum is one of the challenges facing Nigeria as a nation. Nigerian government has initiated a lot of social and economic empowerment programmes including National poverty reduction programme (NAPEP), still many Nigerians are not living above poverty line. The researcher observed that poverty is the cause of Nigeria's problems such as kidnapping, oil bunkering, killing, destruction of properties, bank robbery, land clash, bokoharam, etc. Yakubu (2020) noted that absence of basic services, unemployment, bad governance and corruption provide an avenue for disgruntled members of the society to be radicalized. The situation is such that no day passes without news of one form of killing by insurgents or the other. Many properties have been destroyed and lives lost to these insurgents in almost all the parts of the country.

If the resources in Business Education are properly harnessed, they can curb crimes and poverty in Nigeria because the recipients will acquire the necessary skills that will make them to desist from crimes and become useful to the society. According to Enyi (2020), human resources can be harnessed through business education to provide solution to poverty and the security challenges that is ravaging Nigeria. Enyi advocated that business education is one of functional education that can equip the recipients' with skills for self-reliance.

Business education, therefore, could be considered as a gateway to poverty reduction in Nigeria. Possession of business skills is very important among students with entrepreneurial intentions in learning institutions. It contributes to the nation's human capital and is seen as essential for preparing one for employment. A skilled man is expected to manifest worthwhile in the society. Hence, it is a wakeup call for both the government and the trainers in the trades' schools to ensure that available resources are well harnessed to address the problem of unemployment as well as the underutilization of human resources which gave birth to poverty and insecurity in Nigeria (Insurgency and banditry).

According to Anyanwu cited in Isiaka and Kazeem (2021), youth unemployment is presently one of the most serious global development issues that countries are experiencing. In relation to the African continent, he stated that Africa, with more than 60% of its people under the age of 25, has the world's fastest expanding and most young population. In the case of Nigeria, youth unemployment is one of the key issues threatening the country's peace and security. Isiaka and Kazeem noted that youth unemployment in Nigeria is a major problem. It is unsurprising that the ever-increasing youth population and unemployment are contributing factors in the rising crime rate, which poses a threat to Nigeria's national security, especially when young men and women have few options for a decent living. Despite government efforts to solve the unemployment issue in Nigeria, Nigeria remains hampered by high levels of youth unemployment, which continues to disrupt socioeconomic activities and contribute to the country's rising crime rate because of the poverty level of her able-bodied youths.

Poverty in Nigeria has been an alarming and devastating issue. Up to 80 percent of Nigerians experience is a state of deprivation where one cannot afford the basic necessities of life. This sounds ironical because Nigeria is regarded as one of the wealthiest countries in the continent of Africa but they occupy the poorest people (Tope and Osariyekemwem, 2021). The extremeness of poverty renders life unworthy with characteristics starvation, diseases and death. Population growth for communities and nation increases, the socioeconomic development continues to deteriorate and this leads to drop in the standard of living of the masses which in turn lead to crime as citizens will engage in illegal acts in order to survive.

The high rate of unemployment has driven the youths to become ready tools in the hands of evil men. The foregoing ugly scenario needs to be reversed if we must survive as a nation. One of the strategies to fight the menace is to intensify effort towards developing Vocational and Technical Education which Business Education is an integral part of it. The skills acquired in Business Education will enable the youths to become employable, either as self employees or salary earners in government organization or in organized private sector (Machika and Kagbang 2017). In the view of Nedum-Ogbede (2019), she advocated that each subject to be taught should bring out hidden potentials in content in the area of employment, job and wealth creation. It is evidently clear that there is a strong link between Business Education and job employment, especially self employment.

### **Business Education**

Business education means many things to many people. To some, business education is the same as any education for entrance into the business world given at any educational level. The researcher is discussing business education as that aspect of the total educational programme that provides that knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as producer or consumer of goods and services that business offers. According to Maumako (2017), business education covers a wide range of spectrum of economic activities in any society, as well as the desirable business competencies appropriate for self-employment which is particularly pertinent in the present global economic situation, by equipping individuals with lifelong skills for self-reliance. Business education is in fact, education for and about business and is geared towards economic sustainability. It is education for sustainability in that it supports long term economic growth without negatively imparting social, environmental and cultural prospects of the community.

Business education is a programme of study at tertiary level aimed at producing the right caliber of people with relevant skills, knowledge, competences, values and attitudes that can fit in any sectors of business economy.

#### **Objectives of Business Education**

‘1. To inculcate in students the right values and attitudes that will enable them relate effectively with people around them.

2. To teach individuals to be good consumers and producers of goods.
3. To train students to understand the technological challenges and changes in the business world.
4. To expose students to different careers in business that relate to their needs, interests and aspirations.
5. To empower individual with intellectual capabilities in the field of business and can function effectively in other fields of life.
6. To train individual for and about business.
7. To meet the individual needs that will help to some extent in solving societal problems.
8. To train individuals to function effectively in the world around them' (Okoye, 2021).

### **Poverty**

Poverty is the state of being extremely poor to the extent that the person cannot afford the three basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter. Supporting this, Jeroh and Obi in Mbah and Udegbumam (2022) see poverty in its cause and manifestation as a multi-dimensional concept usually experienced by the poor and observed by the rich. According to them, this is why discourse and definitions of poverty are multifarious and highly extensive. For them, the concept of poverty is relative to the life situations of people and a state of mind and a perception of self in the complex web of social relation. In the same vein, Alao in Mbah and Udegbumam (2022) defined poverty as simply the condition or quality of being poor, unproductiveness, deficiency or inadequate supply of something. He argues that despite the multi-dimensional approach to the concept of poverty, one common theme is the lack of command of resources to meet essential needs. The poor lack access to knowledge, education, and skill development opportunities needed to improve on them. From the above definitions, it is clear that poverty is far more than financial solvency and can manifest in the form of unemployment, homelessness and lack of education.

### **Poverty alleviation**

Poverty is one of the forces militating against the social and economic development of Nigeria. The level of poverty in Nigeria is astronomically high and politically embarrassing considering the enormous human and material resources the country is endowed with and despite the huge resources successive governments have committed to alleviate and or eradicate poverty, it seems no success has been achieved. Alleviation generally means to make pain or difficulty less severe. From the socialist point of view, poverty can only be alleviated through complete overthrow of the capitalist system. But for the capitalist system and the mixed economy ideology frameworks poverty cannot be completely wiped out but can be alleviated through a number of measures (Mbah and Udegbumam, 2022).

Ejiofor, (2018) defines poverty alleviation as a set of measures both economic and humanitarian that are intended to permanently lift people out of poverty. Okeke in

Mbah and Udegbonam contends that individuals, groups or governmental organizations adopt from time to time a number of measures in an attempt to avoid falling into the poverty trap set by challenging socio-economic conditions. According to him, this can be through institutional framework of poverty alleviation like social security benefits through non-formal financial institutions among others.

Finally, the target approach favours the directing of poverty alleviation programs at the youths through adequate control and utilization of business education resources in Nigeria.

### **Concept of crime**

Crime is behaviour, either by act or omission, defined by statutory or common law as deserving of punishment or penalty. Crime is often perceived to be threatening the fabric of society or as a symptom of a breakdown of the social order. Crime is dysfunctional as it threatens the stability of society and it is therefore, a social problem that requires a concerted effort towards finding a lasting solution to it. It undermines the social fabric by eroding the sense of safety and security (Adesina in Isiaka and Kazeem, 2021).

Crime is also defined as an act that causes offenses and is punished by law. For instance, rape, abduction, murder, burglary, fraud, terrorism, robbery, cybercrime, bribery and corruption, money laundering, and other crimes are common in Nigeria (Isiaka and Kazeem 2021). Crime is a threat to a country's economic, political, and social security, as well as a major factor linked to underdevelopment, because it discourages both domestic and foreign investment, lowers quality of life, destroys human and social capital, and erodes citizens' relationships with governments, undermining democracy, rule of law, and the country's ability to promote development. This is to say that crime does no country any good and those found wanting, should be severely dealt with according to the law of the land so that it can serve as a deterrent to others.

### **Role of Business Education in curbing Poverty and crime**

Business education according to Olu-Alonge and Alonge (n.d) plays a significant role in curbing the challenges or menace of poverty and crimes in the society. The unemployment problems facing our country today can best be addressed through functional education which equips the young people with knowledge and skills in subjects like book-keeping, office management, data processing, and entrepreneurship which can lead to self-employment. Business education if well harnessed, will play vital roles in poverty and crime reduction which will give rise to national development.

Resources in Business Education can be harnessed in the following ways to curb poverty and crimes:

1. Business education helps individuals to set up small scale business enterprises. Those who acquired the required knowledge and skills in Business education tends to set up micro industries and other small scale enterprises to liberate themselves from poverty rather than seeking for white collar jobs like their counterpart from other disciplines (Gana, 2016).

When this is done, it will bring about a turnaround in the economic future of individual and the country, thereby reducing the poverty level in the society.

2. It also plays the role of providing good citizenship by preparing students to become intelligent productive wage earners. The knowledge of business education enhanced the employability of graduates of the discipline since the subject/course focuses on the training of people to acquire skills and knowledge that adequately prepare them for employment in business related occupations as it therefore disallows them from engaging in unlawful acts that could negate the ideals of good citizenship (Oyerinde, 2017).

3. It helps in preparing individuals for career that are based on manual and practical activities rather than certification. There is need to shift our focus of education from certificate base to skill oriented. This would assist individuals to make use of their hands and brain to better their lots and checkmate the incidence of poverty in their lives and the society at large (Sani in Nedum-Ogbede, 2019). The saying ‘devil finds work in an idle hand’ does not arise for those who have acquired skills and knowledge in Business education who are also ready to practicalise it.

4. Business education will help in alleviating poverty by making its graduates possess saleable skills and also be self-reliant by being employed in establishment and employers of labour. This would help the government to assist people of like-minds to come together into different productive ventures even as they engage in production venture, preservation and distribution of goods and services that can better the lots of the citizens and also add value to their own lives in return.

5. Business education assists in promoting peace in the society as people with gainful employment will have little or no time to engage in crime and other unlawful activities. (Oyerinde, 2017) posits that if militants and insurgents that have surrendered are trained with vocational skills of which Business education is an aspect, there will be peace in the land and they will contribute maximally to the growth of Nigeria economy.

6. Business education provides training ground for people to understand the nation's economy and to know their responsibilities as citizens. The economic responsibility of any citizen is to improve the per capita income of the people by contributing maximally to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the nation, which will also improve the standard of living of the citizens.

7. Skill acquisition reduces crime rate in many nations of the world. People only begin to think of dirty activities when they are jobless in most cases (an idle hand is a devil workshop). The rising level of poverty has been blamed on security challenges confronting Nigeria. Crimes like insurgency, banditry, kidnapping are all products of poverty.

### **Challenges facing Business Education as a Tool to Eradicate Poverty and crime**

The neglect of functional education in Nigeria is robbing the country of the benefits that would have been derived from it. Though there are many other problems that have culminated into the poverty level of the citizens, but neglect of Business education as an aspect of education could be said to be responsible for the increasing rate of unemployment as a casual factor of poverty.

The following are some of the challenges facing Business education as a tool to eradicate poverty as posited by Oyerinde, (2017) and Uwanze, (2016),

1. Misconception of Business education as the education for people with low intelligence. Many believe that people that go for Business education are people or no or little intelligence and this affect the morale and attitudes of the students, towards the subject.
2. Business education students are not regarded unlike their counterparts in Engineering, Medicine, Law, etc. who are being motivated by awarding of scholarships, cash incentives, etc.
3. Another challenge facing Business education as a tool to curb poverty is the shortage of equipment and infrastructural facilities for the training of Business educations students. Non- availability or shortage of equipment hinders the impartation of the right knowledge to the students to become more knowledgeable in their chosen fields that could assist them to stand on their own.
4. The biggest problem of education generally and business education in particular is inadequate funding. For instance, enough fund is needed to purchase equipment, to constantly service the machines, to replace out-dated accessories and to purchase necessary materials that can aid the teaching and learning process. This financial involvement scares a lot of institutions from establishing business education programmes in their institutions. The government budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria is paltry.
5. Teachers are considered to be moulders of students who wish to become somebody in the future. They are the builders of tomorrow's leaders, the transmitter of social virtues, models and innovators and directors of learning and instruction.
6. Some business education teachers do not possess relevant professional skills to handle business education courses. If these courses are handled by experts in the field, greater success would be recorded in the achievement of educational objectives as well as the development goals.

Resources in Business Education can be harnessed in order to reposition it as skills acquisition oriented through the following ways/approaches according to Enyi (2020):

1. Public-private Partnership: Training in the private sector by private employers and in private training institutions can be the most effective and efficient way to develop the skills of the workforce. This arrangement not only provides directs links between institutions and the industries but also enable the learners acquire requisite skills as well as having the confidence that employers reposed in them.
2. Independence of Vocational Institutions: According to Eke (2014) adequate attention would be paid to technology and vocational schools if they exist independently and run vocationally. Thus, vocational education institutions should be isolated from general education, so that its curriculum is tailored to meet the employed ability skill demands of relevant specialties and industries.

3. Innovation: It is important that the objectives embedded in business education as a skill acquisition course should evolve in consonance with the dynamism of socio-economic trends and global market paradigm shift in order to be relevant.

4. Availability of state of Art Tools/Equipment: It is a well known fact that most studios, laboratories, computers studio among others do not only suffer inadequacy of facilities but fraught with obsolete and dysfunctional equipment. Sometimes due to corruption, even when fund is released for the purchase of these facilities, substandard and even moribund equipment are purchased with the aim of enriching their pockets at the expense of the future of the entire country. Therefore, provision and training of students with modern equipment would enrich the quality of business education programmes.

5. Training and Re-training of Business Educators: Training and retraining of business education teachers is quite imperative in re-building this field of study (business education), in order to realize its goals and objectives.

6. Organize business plan competitions

7. Introduce networking events through workshops, Seminars, symposia, lectures and stakeholders where cross fertilization of ideas could occur

8. Industrial visits and excursion for onsite field trip.

### **Conclusion**

The poverty situation in this country has become so serious. It is regarded as one of the major developmental challenges of the country. Efforts have been made to reduce this ugly monster but all to no avail. Business Education has been identified as a strong tool that can be used to fight the menace. Youths without skills are idle and become ready tools in the hands of evil doers to be used to execute their evil deeds. It behooves on the Nigeria government and other stake holders to painstakingly develop Business Education programme to enable it play its role of developing skills in youth. Business education as a programme caters for interests in and outside the classrooms, with its graduates making a remarkable contribution to societal improvement. This development and improvement on the individual is geared towards poverty/crime reduction.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the critical issues discussed in this paper, recommendations were made as follows:

1. Youth should be encouraged to have a change of attitude and perception towards the subject matter of Business education. They should see it as a subject that can bring them out of poverty and make them to be self-reliant.

2. Government should also ensure that only business education teachers are to be recruited to teach the subject so that problem of unqualified business education teachers will be solved.

3. Business education needs to be properly funded to achieve its goals. Funds are required to harness and maintain both human and material resources that are highly imperative for the development of sustainable business education.

4. More functional and modern equipment/facilities should be provided in every institution offering business education. This will enhance proper training of the students which is geared towards acquisition of the right skills.
5. Grants and soft loan should be made available to graduates of Business Education to enable them establish their own businesses, thereby staying away from crime.
6. Clear emphasis should be made in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme on the nature of skill acquisition, how and where it will be received. When the pupils are exposed early enough on the benefits of Business Education programme, they will not want to deviate from the programme when seeking for admission in higher institutions.

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