RIDDLES OF HUNGER AMIDST ECONOMIC DEPRESSION: BUSINESS EDUCATION AS A WAY FORWARD AMONG GRADUATES IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

ADELEYE, Olatunji John, Ph.D

Department of Business Education,
School of Secondary Education (Vocational and Technical Programmes),
Oyo State College of Education
Email- adeleyeolatunjijohn@gmail.com
Phone number- 08038635014

Abstract

This study undertakes an exploratory investigation into the paradox of hunger amidst economic downturn, with a specific focus on the role of business education as a potential panacea for mitigating the effects of economic depression among graduates in Oyo State, Nigeria. The paper examined a comprehensive review for hunger and its causes among graduates in our society, particularly in Oyo state. To ascertain the reduction in hunger and to achieve that Business Education as a tool capable of tackling hunger in a depressed economy, the study reviewed past literature on concept of Business Education as a veritable tool in reducing riddles of hunger in Nigeria, concept of hunger and economic security among graduates in Nigeria, economic depression as a cause of hunger among Business Education graduates in Oyo state, concept of unemployment and riddles of hunger among Business Education graduates. Resource-based theory was used in the study. The study found that Business Education is a crucial tool for graduates' survival in the face of hunger and it is a sure way to stay ahead of competitors. The study concludes that Business Education is a capable tool to tackle riddles of hunger and surviving any depressed economy. Based on this, the study suggested among others that Business Education curricula should be periodically revised to replicate the contemporary expectation of society. Graduates of Business Education should be well-equipped with requisite competencies needed for occupational intelligence and entrepreneurial success.

Keywords: Business Education, Economic Depression, Riddles, Hunger, Graduates.

Introduction

Education remains one of the most potent tools to cause critical change in our society. Society needs to harness the power of education to shape a future of work that upholds the values we stand for and ensure a just and prosperous society for all (Ajaero, 2024). Most especially, the crucial roles of business education as a way forward to reduce the riddles of hunger amidst economic depression among graduates in higher institutions of learning in Oyo state, Nigeria.

Hunger is defined as condition synonymous with chronic undernourishment itself as a state or condition, lasting for at least one year, of the inability to acquire enough food to meet dietary energy requirements (Otata, 2013). The riddles of hunger in Nigeria have become serious issue where food security is indispensable prerequisite for the survival of mankind and its economic activities including food production. Food makes a great contribution to the healthier of the recipient as its inevitability for survival and existence. In Nigeria, the level of hunger is

skyrocketed for the past four decades, this could be as a result of neglect in food, oil has become mono-product and adoption of neo-liberal economic policies such as devaluation of our currency, trade liberalization and withdrawal of government from economic activities, ethnic and religious conflicts; disasters, such as flooding and drought have also contributed to riddles of hunger in Nigeria (Otata, 2013).

Food is for survival and it is an indispensable factor in a nation's quest for economic growth and development. But the issue of food production in Nigeria, the reverse is the case; because most of the food needed in Nigeria is produced by peasant farmers who seem to lack capital, skills, energy and other viable implements to produce food in large quantities that will meet the requirements of the growing population. Thus, the riddle of hunger in Nigeria is a serious factor that hinders people, most especially Business Education graduates. The paper, however, offers a workable solution to these problems through the Business Education programme.

Food plays a crucial role in providing health, social and economic benefits as well as preventing diseases in the life of individuals. Since 2007 to 2008, the issue of hunger has become a prominent on the global policy agenda (Jennifer, 2014). This could be as a result of neglect of the agricultural sector as a result of the complete dependency of the economy on the oil sector since when oil at Olobiri Village in 1963 and the rising population, sufficient food production becomes worrisome among individuals in Nigeria.

According to Nwokike, Ezeabii & Jim (2018), business education is that part of the instructional programme intended to furnish students with the required business and professional mentalities, information and abilities. The author further explained that business education is guided at building up students to become productive in teaching career, paid work and independent work or self-reliant. It is a kind of special education that opens students eyes to the reasonable utilization of essential business abilities for genuine work circumstances that can assume critical jobs in checking the expanding rate of hunger among graduates in higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria. Hence, functional business education is a basic mainstay of any fruitful economy.

The importance of any education such as business education to a nation cannot be overemphasized. It is very evident that a knowledge-based economy is the backbone of development and growth. Everyone is aware that great economies are built in the gateway to the world of possibilities and the opener to the path of achieving greatness and prosperity in the past, companies used to rush to the Universities graduates every year and later to the NYSC camps to recruit skilled workers. At that time a certificate guaranteed a job, and a better social advancement. Education is the best legacy, once it is lost, nothing can avail us in this country. Therefore, the effect of the economic depression has extended into the education system in Nigeria, particularly, business education programme. Inadequate government funding paralyzed the operations of business education programme leading to dilapidated structures, poor research capacity, poorly motivated staff that lack expertise to conduct world class researches, epileptic power supply, industrial strikes, sub standard and in some cases, absence of teaching facilities. This makes stakeholders believe that the country had not yet recognized business education as a way out to reduce hunger, development, job opportunities, and economic empowerment among graduates in higher institutions in Oyo State, Nigeria.

The economic depression had brought about an undeniable feeling of disappointment in the economy, affecting the value of naira and generating series of issues, such as hunger among graduates in higher institutions in Oyo State and Nigeria in general. Even the higher institutions

such as in Oyo State that seem to be of more importance to the government are still struggling with outdated syllabuses that only groom ill-prepared and unseasoned graduates- graduates that are unprepared to be self-reliant and not trained to face challenges of fast changing world. Thus, without any doubt, business education is a necessary factor aimed at promoting socio-economic development of individuals and capable of reducing riddles of hunger among graduates in Nigeria. Business education, as a secondary subject, or as a course of study in the higher institutions has four acceptable and defensible aims and objectives as follows:

- To equip the business students with the capacity to solve practical problems
- To provide the business students with a detailed knowledge of the intricate performance of a complex economic system.
- To give the business students the capacity to communicate effectively both verbal and in writing and
- To afford business students thorough understanding of the functional areas of business.

The subject matter also focuses on career opportunities available for the business education students, such as to make them teacher to teach in the secondary schools, to hold administrative positions in the private and public sectors of economy. Moreover, it is also designed to make the students self- employer or employer of labours having been exposed to business knowledge and assisting them to undergo higher studies in business education either at the undergraduate or post- graduate levels and in turn escaped from riddles of hunger ravaging our society and Nigeria at large (Olu-Alonge & Alonge, 2023).

Concept of Business Education as a veritable tool in reducing riddles of hunger in Nigeria.

The role of Business Education is one of the subject's worth for acquisition of entrepreneurship skills that create employment and make the recipients self-reliant most especially in the face of riddles of hunger amidst economic depression that is battling hard especially amongst graduates and on the average of Nigeria in general (Olu-Alonge & Alonge, 2023).Business education is a type of total educational system that involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and management abilities necessary for job creation. The study was necessitated by the need to curd the increasing level of hunger among Business Education graduates, specifically and the society at large in general and the many associated ills in Nigeria and generally and the Oyo state is caused by lack of employability skills facilitates poverty and eventually turns to hunger among the graduates (Felicia & Justina, 2021). Vital component of Vocational Technical Education that prepares students for careers is Business Education. To be a useful member of society, one must attain both business knowledge and the personal responsibility to manage one's affairs.

In an ideal society, where there are no job Possibilities, Business Education Provides students with marketable skills (Hadiza, 2022). At the top institutions, business education has aspiration objectives like producing marketers, entrepreneurs, Accountants, secretary and the lecturers who will teach Business and related courses in higher institutions as well as producing managers who are efficient and effective in management, secretarial, marketing, and accounting as this will help people learn how to work for themselves when there are no paid job opportunities; expose students to the vast world of business through available courses; and help them get ready for jobs as qualified administrators, managers in business organizations; create necessary abilities and knowledge for managing both public and private businesses, and equip the students with the analytical capabilities required to handle the escalating of hunger by

providing the students with needed skills of entrepreneurship especially in the difficulties of the current and future environments in Nigeria and beyond (Edokpolor & Owenvbiugie, 2016).

Business Education as a discipline is relief upon opening its beneficiaries to broaden educational plans, subsequently, it is the training that inculcates in its beneficiaries' perspetives, information, abilities and self-worth needed in the world of work. Business Education, according to (Bukki, Olugbenga & Magareli, 2020), is an integrated concept designed to provide solid, proficient entrepreneurial skills to her recipients and add value to the sustainability of a country's development and reducing the menace of hunger amongst graduates in Oyo state, Nigeria. It is a type of education that enhances creative knowledge, financial competencies and entrepreneurial dexterity that can boost the innovative tendencies of business graduates for self-reliance, employability and capable of reducing hunger among graduates in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Bukki, Magaret and Olugbenga (2020) described business education as a programme designed to provide solid, proficient and independent to the students who are offering the course on their graduation. That is to say that course in a great extents add value to the sustainability of a country's development at large. Business education enhances creative knowledge, financial competencies and entrepreneurial dexterity that can boost the innovative tendencies of business graduates for self-reliance and employability skills. Functional business education is one of the basic mainstay of any economy and aims to increase the students' abilities, information and value of performing explicit capacities to be self-reliant, value their global surroundings and add greatly to the social and financial advancement of the country. It also assist the students with training into a reasonable speaker and create legitimate qualities for the accomplishment of healthy living and understand the political structure of a country in order to contribute to the growth and development of a nation's economy, hence reduce riddles hunger in the society. In this study, the researcher intends to established if Business Education subject will capable of combating riddles of hunger amidst economic depression as a way forward among graduates in Oyo State.

Concept of Hunger and Economic Security among graduates in Nigeria.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2023, not only proclaimed the right to be free from hunger, but also, acknowledged the need for hunger to be eliminated through an international cooperation (Blessing, 2021). Jennifer (2024) confirmed that from 2007 to 2008 food crisis has leads to riddles of hunger and become a prominent issue on the global policy agenda. The price of food has sky-rocketed since the initial price spikes has given rise to a concern that a new crisis could emerge at any time. On this note, a number of governance initiatives for riddles of hunger in the society, most especially among students in higher institutions, have been announced in recent years.

Victor & Enemeri, (2022) viewed economic as long- term or final situation. It is a dynamic economic situation that has the potential to improve or worsen. Inflation, unemployment, the exchange rate, the misery index, and the rate of corporate mortality are all high during an economic depression and hunger, indicating a state of corporate mortality, all of which result in adverse socio-political behavior. The authors stressed further that it is reasonable to conclude that the Nigerian economy has displayed unmistakable signs of depression or a condition of near depression.

Bukky, Margaret & Olugbenga (2020) postulated the following strategies among others to further enhance economic security through business education: Issue of Business Education Curriculum: the authors believes that for Business Education capable of reducing riddles of

hunger and economic depression with the expected outcomes there will be a need to revisit the Business Education curricular. This can be done by changing some courses contents and incorporate appropriate materials and content into existing educational programmes. The issue of revalidation of Business Education curriculum cannot be over-emphasized if its objectives of producing graduates that can actively contributes in global economy with skills, abilities and entrepreneurial idea and the principles with relevant scholastic information that can reduce riddles of hunger must be embraced

In the view of the author in this paper, the study infers that the wide gap between intents and actual practices of vis-à-vis Nigeria's food policy and Business Education Programmes may require a new approach and philosophy if the fate of riddles of hunger that be fell Nigeria's neighbor will not be fall the country more so, that the country lacks clear cut food.

Economic Depression as a Cause of Hunger Among Business Education Graduates in Oyo State. Economic depression is not a long-term or final state of affairs. It is a dynamic situation that has the potential to improve if necessary, adjustment actions could be implemented or worsens. It can decrease productivity, lower educational attainment and increase health care costs and even resulted into riddles of hunger. Additionally, hunger can perpetuate poverty and in quality, creating a cycle of deprivation. Economic depression is characterized by high rates of inflation and unemployment, as well as a high exchange rate, a high misery index, and a high rate of corporate mortality, all of which result in adverse socio-political behaviour (Victor & Enemeri, 2022). Hunger happens when people do not have enough food to eat. The main cause of hunger is not a collective shortage of food but rather access to food especially nutritious food when certain factors are not effectively in corporate into educational curriculum such as Business Education programmes.

Undoubtedly, one of the major objectives of the Nigerian government in this nascent democratic era, where hunger has ravage the society is food security should be to prioritize food security. A country that fails to formulate, adhere to, and effectively implement standard educational policies can hardly meaningful contributions from its towards building a sustainable democratic society. More so, the survival of any society is inextricably linked to its economy's ability to meet the material needs of both its citizens and government (Ojo & Adebayo, 2022).

Ojo and Adebayo noted that Nigeria is one of the food-deficit countries in sub-Saharan Africa, despite being relatively better in terms of production compared to its peers. Moreover, Nigeria has not experienced any major catastrophes that could lead to widespread farming, hunger, and food crisis. Nevertheless, policy makers must remain vigilant to avoid the debilitating impact of food shortages in neighboring countries. Consequently, food security has become a top priority for the current Nigerian government, prompting a re-examination of educational policies and the business education rriculum to address the persistent problem of hunger among graduates in Oyo State.

To fit into the economic security and to reduce hunger through desirable leaning outcomes, there will be a need to revisit the business education curricula. Now, there might be a need to change some course contents as such incorporate appropriate materials and content into existing educational programmes. Specialists such as curriculum planners, students, politicians and educational stakeholders. A curriculum designed based on the needs of the nation can give a better learning environment to all student regardless of their background, social status and gender identities. These will make the graduates to adapt an unfamiliar culture and customs; and be able to work effectively within the national and international community (Ugwuogo, 2013). The author agreed that curriculum redesign is imperative if the Business Education objectives of

producing graduates that can participate in global economy, contribute to local and global business environment, development information technology skills, and incorporate business principles, entrepreneurial idea and abilities with relevant scholastic information must be attained to reduce unemployment that eventually results into riddles of hunger.

Concept of Unemployment and Riddles of Hunger among Business Education Graduates Prior to the 1980s, Nigeria did not experience significant unemployment and hunger. However, after 1980, the needs for specialized education, such as Business Education, become increasingly important due to political instability and inconsistent socio-economic policies implemented by successive governments. In the mid 1980s, according to Onyechinyere and Eke (2016), the Nigerian economy collapsed, and youth and graduate unemployment soared. Many workers were laid off, and early retirement became prevalent due to the Structural Adjustment programme and adverse economic trends. This led to widespread hunger among individuals.

It was noted that the concept of self-reliance, which emphasizes creating productive environment that promotes pride in work and self discipline, was lacking in tertiary institutions in Oyo State and Nigeria as a whole. The author argued that it is essential for the government and educational stakeholders to incorporate types of education that can alleviate hunger, such as Business Education, to address unemployment and hunger among graduates in Oyo State.

Unemployment occurs when an individual is willing and able to work but lacks a paid job or self-reliance. The unemployment rate is the percentage of people in the percentage of people in the labour force who are unemployed and are forced to wander the streets due to a lack of job opportunity.. Figuring out who is employed or unemployed involved making particular judgments, such as how much paid work someone needs to undertake for them to be considered as having a job, as well as actually counting how many people have jobs or not.

The concept of unemployment has become a major problem bedeviling the lives of Nigerian youth, causing increased militancy, violent crimes, kidnappings, restiveness and socially delinquent behaviour. Graduate unemployment is devastating to both the individual and the society as a whole both psychologically and economically. For individuals, the loss of employment or failure to secure employment often leads to financial instability and hunger and can have severe psychologically effects, including stress, anxiety, and a diminished sense of self-worth. The lack of a regular income makes it difficult to meet basic daily needs and can even contribute to a riddles of hunger and a decline in overall quality of life. As a result of the concept of unemployment that has already overthrow our society, one of the most promising ways to tackle unemployment among our graduates in Oyo state is by promoting and revisiting Business Education curricula. Revitalized the course and empowering individuals to start their own business that can enhance job opportunities not only for themselves but also to become employers of labour (Olawumi & Adedayo, 2017). Therefore, the researcher wants to establish in this study if Business Education will capable of reducing riddles of hunger among graduates in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to investigate the riddles of hunger and business education as a way forward among graduates in Oyo state. The study revealed that Business Education is an essential tool for suppressing riddles of hunger and graduates survival in the tight and turbulent environment of business and is the sure way to stay ahead of competitors. In conclusion, business education is imperative as a way forward for graduates to become entrepreneur, self-reliance and survival in any depressed economy. But however, no matter the ability and

capabilities of Business Education as a tool, its effectiveness greatly pending on educational stakeholders and concern, its success is ultimately in the hands of aforementioned people. Hence, government, educational policy makers, students and the society at large should embrace Business Education and periodically revisit the curriculum in order to achieve and capable as a way forward to enable graduates be achieve entrepreneurial skills, become self-employed, and conquer unnecessary hunger after they might have finished their courses.

Suggestions:

Based on the findings of this paper, it is therefore suggested that:

1. Business Education curricula should be periodically reviewed to replicate the contemporary expectations of society.
2. Students should be well equipped with the requisite competencies needed for occupational intelligence and entrepreneurial success while on training.
3. The regulatory agencies saddled with the mandate of accrediting training programmes should endeavour to be more objective by ensuring that standards are impact to the students up amid accreditation exercises.

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