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# PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN POVERTY ALLEVIATION

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## Abstract
The main aim of this research was to ascertain the prospects and challenges of business education programme in poverty alleviation. The study was carried out in the North West States of Nigeria. A survey research design was used for the study. The population comprised 46 business educators teaching in colleges of education in Kano StatesNigeria. A self structured questionnaire was developed by the researchers and carefully validated by two experts, from Faculty of Vocational Technical education, Department of Business Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka.. The instrument consists of 25 questionnaire items. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t- test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study showed that Business Education programme will be an indispensable tool for alleviating poverty if the programme is not handled with levity and there is the provision of adequate fund and infrastructures needed to implement the programme. The study was concluded that meaningful poverty alleviation through Business Education cannot take place without adequate funding. It was recommended amongst others that: emphasizing the practical aspect of Business Education which will help to produce productive members of the nation's labour force that will be self-reliant or employable in an industry or company. Also, governments, school proprietors, donor agencies and all stakeholders should join hands in providing funds for Business Education so as to ensure scholarship award, conducive teaching and learning environment.

**Keywords**: Business Education, Prospects, Challenges, Poverty Alleviation, Business *Educator,*


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## Introduction

One of the major challenges facing developing and underdeveloped countries of the world is poverty. Poverty alleviation is listed as one of the key Sustainable Development Goals, and is one of the most important issues facing humanity today. Nigeria has been blessed tremendously and generously with remarkable economic resources such as oil, cocoa and rubber plantations. Despite all these natural resources and blessed assets, it is really lamentable to see an increasing number of Nigerians still living in absolute poverty in recent times and also tagged as "Poverty Capital of the World" (Adeowu, &Jekayinfa, 2016) Poverty in any society is a serious setback to the economic, political, social and general development of the society. More so, in a society like Nigeria, characterized by low educational level, unskilled labour, wasteful lifestyle, non-delivery of total quality policy package based on needs, policy leakages to non-target population and traditional values and norms have all affected the performance of poverty alleviation initiatives.According to Oguejiofor&Ezeabasili (2014), poverty goes beyond material deprivation to include insecurity, vulnerability and exposure to risks, shocks and stress. It includes specifically; a high rate of infant mortality; low life expectancy; poor environmental conditions; low level of energy consumption; low educational opportunities; inadequate health care; lack of productive assets; lack of economic infrastructure, and lack of active participation in the decision making process. Supporting the above assertion, Ndem (2010) buttress that poverty is the deprivation of the basic needs of life such as, food, shelter education and employment among others. Okanazu (2015) opined that poverty means lack of power, choice and material resources. Okanazuwent further, that the poor lack access to information that is vital to their lives and livelihood and about market prices for the goods they produce. 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.

The persistence of poverty, including extreme poverty, is a major concern for not just to Nigeria government but also to United Nations. To this end government and people in authority almost always strive to ensure that adequate structural programs are enshrined to see that poverty if not eradicated, is reduced to the barest minimum and to meet the special needs of the poor, at

least to reach them. These policies and programmes are identified by Idowu, Gberevbie, Moses, Duruji, and Bankole (2013) DFFRI, the National Directorate for Employment NDE, Poverty Alleviation Program PAP, the National Poverty Eradication Program, NAPEP , Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW), Bank of Industry (BOI); Family Support Programme (FSP); the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and Subsidy-Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (Sure-P), Seven Point agendaamongst others.As laudable as these programs appear, poverty still remains endemic and pervasive in Nigeria. What then are the challenges? According to Ekpe(2016), all the poverty alleviation initiatives in Nigeria since independence have yielded very little fruit. He claims that the programs were mostly not designed to alleviate poverty; they lacked clearly defined policy framework with proper guidelines for poverty alleviation; they suffer from political instability, interference, policy and macroeconomic dislocations; and are riddled with corruption, political deception, outright kleptomania and distasteful looting. It must also be stated that lack of continuity and shift in approach trailed poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. Each subsequent administration came with a different idea or no idea at all. Poverty reduction programs became more 'regime specific' because there was hardly any continuity with those initiated by previous governments. The challenges above have made government's policies to be largely unproductive.

Without doubt, we can see that attempts were made by each program to identify its target group. These attempts notwithstanding, there is overlap of target and intervention strategies, lack of continuity of programs and some programs were abandoned before reaching their maturity.According to Aliyu (2017) several poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria have failed due to overlapping functions among institutions which lead to unhealthy rivalry and conflicts between the public institutions charged with poverty alleviation programme.To Njoku (2015), there is unwieldy scope of most of the programmes without the spread of resources (fund) to effectively cover the programmes and projects. Njoku went further that the existenceof unnecessary political interference and rapid rate of turn-over of management structures, and lack of centralized decision making body specifically charged with responsibility

for success of the poverty alleviation initiative. Having identified the fact that poverty alleviation programme in the country is not achieving the much needed goal, it is therefore, necessary to come up with functional Business Educational programme to contribute to poverty alleviation.

. Business Education is an integral part of Vocational Education which is the education for Self relianceand employability.Appreciating the role business education play in economic and social development of the ration, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) identified that one of the objectives of Business Education is to help the recipient to appreciate the world around him and contribute maximally to the social and economic development of the nation. In order to fully achieve the alleviation of extreme poverty including hunger, integrating some of the poverty alleviation issues into the curriculum should be one of the top priorities of educational planners. Also, Government shall take necessary measures to ensure that quality of instruction at all levels of education shall be oriented towards acquisition of functional skills and competencies necessary for self-employment which will eventually lead to poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Business Education has been defined in several ways, most of which highlights its vocational nature. It is a form of vocational education that is directed towards developing the learner to become productive in teaching, paid employment and self employment (Anyeaeneh&Nkegwu, 2015) Business Education prepares beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. It is generally seen as education for and about business. It is an education that provides knowledge and understanding of the economic, financial, marketing, accounting, management system and other branches of business endeavours. Hence, education about business prepares students to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. To Chiadika, Iwendi, Fassasi and Onianwa (2014),Business Education programme equips its recipients with necessary business skills as it encompasses the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed by all persons in order to effectively manage their personal business, economic system and be gainfully employed. The acquisition of skills, competencies and knowledge as imbedded in Business Education helps to address unemployment and its attendant vices, increase productivity and accelerate the development of the nation.

Udo (2014) notes that by engaging in paid job or running of private businesses, graduates of business education programme are able to reduce poverty and social crimes among youths. With courses in Accountancy, Office Management, Computer, Marketing and Distributive Education, the individual will acquire saleable skills be self-employed and above all create jobs by being employers of labour. By so doing, they alleviate poverty in the society. In the opinion of the researchers, the relevance of Business Education in alleviating poverty cannot be over-emphasized because of its potential in equipping the recipients with the relevant skills for self-employment. This is in conformity with the statement made by ABEN(2017) that Business Education can be a major instrument for national development because it promotes industrialization through its entrepreneurship offerings. It is against this backdrop that the researchers seek to determine the prospects and challenges BusinessEducation programmmeas an indispensable tool for alleviating poverty

## Statement of the Problem

Most countries of the world especially developing countries like Nigeria are faced with poverty. At a critical time like this, what the nation needs is a theoretical and skill oriented programme that can equip the products with skills and attitudes relevant for poverty alleviation. This will help to end extreme poverty, hunger, create jobs and promote economic growth and finally reduce poverty if not eradicating it completely. Without a functional education program like Business Education, achieving and alleviating extreme poverty including hunger and promoting economic growth and decent jobs within the planetary boundaries will be difficult.

## Research Question

1. What are the prospects of Business Education programme towards poverty alleviation?
2. What are the challenges of Business Education programme towards poverty alleviation

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of business educators at colleges of education on the prospects of Business Education programme towards poverty alleviation?
2. There is no significant difference in the mean response of business

educators at colleges of education on the challenges of Business Education programme towards poverty alleviation

## Method

A descriptive survey research design was used to carry out this study. The population of the study is made up of 46 business educators made up of 18 male and 28 female business educators teaching in colleges of education in kano State, Nigeria offering Business Education programme. The instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers. The items had a 4-point rating scales of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree with a corresponding values of 4, 3, 2 and 1. The instrument was validated by two experts,from Faculty of Vocational Technical education, Department of Business Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka.. The instrument consists of 25 questionnaire items. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Any item with a mean of 2.50 or above was regarded as agree while any item with a mean score below 2.50 was regarded as disagree. The hypothesis of no significance difference was upheld if t- calculated value was greater than the t-table value of 1.96 value at 0.05 level of significance and at 44 degree of freedom. However, the hypothesis was not upheld if the t. calculated value was less than the t. table value of 1.96 but not upheld if the t. calculated value was less than the t.table 1.96 and at 0.5 level of significance.

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## RESULTS

### Research Question 1

What are the prospects of Business Education programme towards poverty alleviation?

**Table 1: Mean response of male and female business educators on the prospects of Business Education programme towards poverty alleviation**?

| S/N | Items Statement | X | SD | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Equips its graduates with necessary skills and potentials, that will make them perform very well in business and also take to teaching as a profession. | 3.11 | 1.04 | Agree |
| 2. | Educates individuals for and about business | 3.48 | 0.75 | Agree |
| 3. | Provides the recipients' with necessary skill for transition into labour market | 3.20 | 0.69 | Agree |
| 4. | Helping in the reduction of high incidence of school dropout by providing alternatives for students who lack interest in grammar school offerings | 3.46 | 0.72 | Agree |
| 5. | Provides effective learning for the recipient for lifelong livelihood | 3.54 | 0.50 | Agree |
| 6. | Help the recipients to be producers and distributors of goods and services | 3.30 | 0.70 | Agree |
| 7. | The environment in which the learner is Trainedshould be replica of the environment in which he must subsequently work | 3.74 | 0.44 | Agree |
| 8. | Acquisition of skills and ideas for creating employment for oneself and others | 3.72 | 0.46 | Agree |
| 9. | prepares and exposes recipients to real life learning experiences to think, take risks, manage circumstances | 3.59 | 0.50 | Agree |
| 10. | equip the students with skills for constant improvement and innovation in their undertake | 3.11 | 0.92 | Agree |
| 11. | Training students on using new ideas/ways of | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| doing things | 3.13 | 0.81 | Agree |
| 12. Helping in the reduction of high incidence of school dropout by providing alternatives for students who lack interest in grammar school offerings | 3.35 | 0.74 | Agree |
| 13. Produce graduates that are job creators not job seekers | 3.48 | 0.75 | Agree |
| **GRAND MEAN** | **3.40** | **0.67** | **Agree** |

Data in Table 1 shows that all the items have mean scores between 3.11 and 3.72 which indicates that the respondents agreed that the items are the prospects of business education programme towards poverty alleviation. The standard deviation scores indicated that the respondents were homogenous in their responses.

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**Research Question 2:**
**What are the challenges of Business Education programme towards poverty alleviation ?**

**Table 2: Mean response of lecturers of Business Education on the challenges of BSusinessEducation programme towards poverty alleviation**

| S/N | Item Statement | X | SD | REMARK |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Shortage of competent and experienced business educators to inculcate the right skills and attitude needed in the world of work | 3.54 | 0.50 | Agree |
| 2. | The curriculum lack 21st century contents because Business Educators are not incorporated into the reviewed curriculum | 3.59 | 0.50 | Agree |
| 3. | Business Education lack the capacity of equipping students with the requisite attributes for lifelong learning | 3.67 | 0.47 | Agree |
| 4. | Inadequate provision of resources has devalued the image of Business Education in labour market | 3.00 | 0.84 | Agree |
| 5. | There is general perception that Business Education is meant for individuals who are academically less endowed | 3.46 | 0.50 | Agree |
| 6. | Successive government and other major stakeholdersIn education have been handling business education with levity | 2.67 | 1.01 | Agree |
| 7. | The programme lacks the capacity to strike a balance between what is taught and what is | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| requiredin the world of work | 3.52 | 0.51 | Agree |
| 8. Poor monitoring and evaluation mechanism of resources available in teaching Business Educationcourses. | 3.67 | 0.47 | Agree |
| 9. Courses on poverty reduction is not integrated into the curriculum | 3.07 | 1.00 | Agree |
| 10. Inconsistent development of staff skills and resources. | 2.63 | 1.00 | Agree |
| 11. Improper utilization of budgetary allocated for the programme | 3.63 | 0.49 | Agree |
| 12. Inaccessibility of Digital and Internet Technology: | 2.33 | 0.97 | Disagree |
| **GRAND MEAN** | **3.23** | **0.68** | **Agree** |

The results of the data presented in Table 2 show the mean responses of business educators at colleges of education on the challenges of business education programme towards poverty alleviation. The results revealed that out of 12 items, business educators disagree on item number 12 with a corresponding mean of 2.33, 11 items had the mean scores that range from 2.63 to 3.67. The mean scores are indications that there are lots of challenges hindering Business Education in poverty alleviation.

**Data Analysis for Testing the Hypotheses**

The data analysis for testing the hypotheses was carried out using the t-test statistic. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

**Hypothesis 1**:

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of business educators at colleges of education on the prospects of Business Education programme towards poverty alleviation

**Table 3: t-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of Business Educators at colleges of education on the prospects of business education programme towards poverty alleviation**

| Variable | N | X | SD | DF | t-cal | t-crit | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Male** | **18** | **3.40** | **0.68** | | | | |
| | | | | **44** | **0.00** | **1.96** | |
| **Female** | **28** | **3.40** | **0.69** | | | | |

The results presented in table 3 shows that the aggregate mean ratings of business educators at colleges of education on the prospects of business education programme towards poverty alleviationis 3.40 and 3.40 while the corresponding standard is 0.68 and 0.69.The table indicated that the t-value is .0.00 at df of 44, while the p-value is 1.96. Therefore the null hypothesis (Ho1) is not rejected. This shows that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female business educators at colleges of education on the prospects of business education programme towards poverty alleviation

**Hypothesis 2:**
**There is no significant difference in the mean response of business educators at colleges of education on the challenges of Business Education programme towards poverty alleviation**

**Table 4: t-test analysis of the difference between the mean ratings of business educators at colleges of education on the challenges of Business Education programme towards poverty alleviation**

| Variable | N | X | SD | DF | t-cal | t-crit | Dec |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Male** | **18** | **3.24** | **0.73** | | | | |
| | | | | **42** | **0.27** | **1.96** | |
| **Female** | **28** | **3.11** | **0.75** | | | | |

Table 4 above shows that the t.cal is 0.27 while t. table is 1.96. Since the t-cal is less than the t-table, the null hypothesis is upheld. Therefore significant difference does not exist in the mean responses of male and female business educators business educators at colleges of education on the challenges of business education programme towards poverty alleviation.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The aim of this research at the first instance was the prospects and challenges of Business Education programme in poverty alleviation. The result of the findings in table 1 revealed that B usinessEducation is very relevant in alleviating poverty because, its an educational programme that educates individuals for and about business and also provides the needed manpower in industry. The above statement is in tune with the statement of Ugwuogo (2013)who opined that Business Education holds the prospect of contributing, through its job creation and self-employment packages.. Thus, he stated that a gainfully employed individual contributes to GDP per capital, thereby reducing poverty and unemployment which are some of the indices of development. The skills acquired in business education can help the recipients to establish small scale business and run it successfully. By doing this, it may likely alleviate poverty and hunger.Furthermore, Anyaeneh and Nzegwu (2015) note that Business Education plays a significant role in the economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the learners thereby, enabling them to adequately impart knowledge to others and handle sophisticated office technologies and information system. An entrepreneur does not only provide job for himself or herself alone, but provides for others too. Thus, in turn helps the individual to increase per capital income as well as the standard of living. Supporting this, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) affirmed that one of the objectives of TVET is to produce manpower required in industry, commerce and agriculture. From the findings of the study, it is therefore worthy to note that Business Education programme can contribute immensely to poverty alleviation.

From the findings of research question 2, it was revealed thatthere are lots of constraints hindering Business Education programme in alleviating poverty. Some authors argued that Nigeria is handling this sector with levity (Ekpenyong & Edokpolor, 2015a; Obunadike, 2015; Oladunjoye, 2016).

From another perspective, available research finding revealed that since Business Education has been viewed with levity or disdain by the general public, it naturally follows that majority of Nigerian youths would lack the requisite abilities for unemployment eradication and poverty alleviation (Edokpolor&Egbri, 2017). The findings is in accordance with Oladunjoye(2016, )where he argued that the inadequate provision of funds, qualified manpower, modern facilities, and quality curriculum, coupled with low public interest, are some of the possible challenges facing the delivery of business education in Nigeria. Ekpenyong and Edokpolor (2015) also argued that this situation would consequently affect the production of competent graduates that are useful for poverty alleviation and unemployment eradication.

## Conclusion

No meaningful poverty alleviation can be achieved by any nation without effective and efficient and functional education programmes, since the level or nature of development in a country is often considered to be an offshoot of the nature of her educational programme and system. Meaningful poverty alleviation through Business Education cannot take place without adequate funding.

## Recommendations

It is therefore suggested that the following measures if well-articulated in business education programme will alleviate or reduce poverty among Nigerian graduates.

1. Only qualified business educators should be recruited to teach Business Education course at all educational levels. The already recruited ones should as a matter of urgency go for retraining especially in the use of ICTs.
2. Emphasizing the practical aspect of Business Education which will help to produce productive members of the nation's labour force that will be self-reliant or employable in an industry or company.
3. Governments, school proprietors, donor agencies and all stakeholders should join hands in providing funds for Business Education so as to ensure scholarship award, conducive teaching and learning environment: facilities such as internet, computers, textbooks,

and related reading materials are provided and maintained.

4. To combat the poor public perception and misconceptions about vocational education which Business Education is part of, vocational educators and other stakeholders should embark on aggressive public enlightenment and career guidance programmes right from the secondary school level. The education must be geared towards improving the image of vocational education for the public to appreciate.
5. Experts in Business Education should be incorporated into the reviewed curriculum when the time arises to ensure that the contents to be recommended and taught are in line with what it is obtainable in the modern day organizations practices to deliver national development and transformation assurances.
6. Government should ensure that the objective of our educational system is geared towards producing a total person with the requisite skills, knowledge and values relevant to the 21st century and beyond.
7. Finally,graduates of the programmes should be encouraged to be self-employed by assisting them with soft loans and/or micro credit.

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