

Managing School Business for Self Sufficiency and Poverty Reduction in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Managing school business for self-sufficiency and poverty reduction in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria, was the title of the work. The thrust of the study was the management of school business to achieve two major goals (a) the generation of revenues for the schools to be significantly self-sufficient (b) equipping students with relevant practical skills for the world of work to ensure poverty reduction. The design of the study was the descriptive survey. The population was all the 267 public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. A sample of 40 schools was drawn through stratified random sampling technique, based on the location of the schools (urban and rural). 120 teachers responded to the instrument. The instruments for the study were questionnaire and structured interview. The reliability of the instrument was determined through the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation, with a reliability index of 0.82. four research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study showed. Among other things that most of the schools have business plans, lease out their facilities for revenue and are also engaged in agricultural, arts and crafts activities, though on a limited scale. The study therefore recommended among other things that there should be specific policies guiding school business, strategic and operational plans to guide school business and vocational education.

Keywords: school business, self-sufficiency, poverty reduction.

Introduction

The critical role of education in effecting national development through human capacity building is a universal truism, contextually domiciled in various nations and societies, developed and developing ones alike. Basically, education is planned in response to the manpower needs of the society as the active agents of economic development. The National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), expressly stated that education shall continue to be highly rated in national development. This is because education is the most important instrument for change, impacting on the intellectual and social outlook of any society. One of the goals of education is therefore for the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences to equip the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

With the current wind of globalization, nations are increasingly investing in education as an important strategy for capacity building in order to guarantee socio-economic and technological development. There is diversification and domestication of curriculum to equip the future generation with the skills and knowledge to cope with the challenges of globalization (Enaohwo, 2009). The first objective therefore aims at ensuring that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge (the “what”), the key dispositions and skills (the “how”) and the value (the “why”) that will motivate and empower them throughout their lives to become informed for a more sustainable future. As the demand for education increases, expenditure continues to rise because it is investment in mankind. Hence, a nation’s wealth is in its people. The returns on education, both individually and socially, could be compared to those in physical capital. However, the development of the physical infrastructures of society may largely be wasted unless there is the corresponding developed manpower to work on them (Vaizey & Debeauvais, 1969).

Secondary education is critical in the overall process of manpower development, both in the development of middle-level manpower and the generation of inputs for tertiary education that has the statutory mandate of developing high-level manpower. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) through her National Policy on Education therefore insisted that educational activities shall be centered on the learner for maximum self development and self fulfillment. Secondary education would provide technical knowledge and vocational skills required for agricultural, industrial and economic development.

This is in tandem with UNESCO (2016) position that secondary education of quality helps young people realize their full potentials and take their place in society as productive, responsible and democratic citizens. The accelerating globalization, developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and increasing social dislocation, particularly among the young, pose a great challenge to them. To cope effectively with these challenges (positive or negative), secondary education systems need to focus on enabling the young ones to develop into productive, responsible personalities, well equipped for life and work in today's technology and knowledge based society. There is the need to have a repertoire of life skills such as analytical and problem-solving skills, creativity, flexibility, mobility and entrepreneurship (UNESCO, 2005). As economies keep developing, the need for skilled workers, experts and generally educated people increases almost geometrically. Consequently, education is making new demands on the economy, while the economy is making growing demands on education. This interaction is taking place in a rapidly changing social environment, where there is growing demand for an educational structure that will give to all children the equal opportunities promised by the democratic process (Vaizey & Debeaves, 1969). In response to this ever dynamic environment, especially the social and technological changes that are rapidly sweeping across the globe, educational planning is key. Educational planning is a deliberate rational process of making educational decisions in terms of the goals and objectives to be realized in the future and the corresponding resources, both human and material, in order to realize those stated goals and objectives in the most efficient manner. It is a continuous process of obtaining and analyzing relevant data that provide factual information about the current societal realities for decision makers on how best to achieve educational goals and objectives most efficiently. Educational planning, to a very great extent, ensures that the education system is effective, rational, efficient, functional and relevant. The process is dynamic, in response to the dynamic environment. To that extent, Tahir (n.d.), remarked that in developing countries, literacy rates have been increasing, but they are not matched with the completion of education and the employability of those who complete is significantly low. This has made education only a monotonous theme to be enjoyed but not employment oriented as such. He further stated that an education system that does not allow a pupil to acquire a job today and renders him unemployed is as harmful as being illiterate. In a society that is changing, the pace of movement is such that some are left at the back while others who are galloping move upfront. However, it is proper planning that helps in bringing about cohesion between the slow and the fast.

There is therefore the need to impart in a holistic way, the knowledge, skills and attitude that will enable young people to be effective in life, including being able to deal with paradox and conflict generated by change, being agents not just recipients of knowledge, skills and attitudes and being life-long learners and members of flexible workforce (UNESCO, 2005). One critical strategy in realizing this dream is school business.

Effective school business is strategic in ensuring self-sufficiency by the school and also, developing in the students some critical skills, knowledge and entrepreneurship capacity that will help prepare them for the world of work. The over dependence on government to provide the necessary resources for the schools to pursue their core mandate is no longer feasible and realistic. Government resources have continued to dwindle drastically, with its ripple effects on budgetary allocations. To that extent, Proctor as cited in Farber (2012) cautioned that we do not know what the future holds but what we do know is that in every decade, over the past century and a half, we have experienced a recession. In order therefore to stay steady through the economic ups and downs, we need to look at entrepreneurial development of profitable activities based on the expertise and business infrastructure of a school's core activities – and use those profits to sustain our key missions.

Self-reliance is the key, and vibrant school business is the strategic option. Teach a Man to Fish (2008) is emphatic on this position. It is stated that all children, irrespective of where they live and their socio-economic background, deserve high quality education. Unfortunately, in many developing countries, governments just can't or won't cover the cost of providing this. Alternatively, however, a school that can generate its own income can provide education to even the poorest students without relying on government support or charging student's fees. Establishing such a school is a great opportunity to light a candle. In the same vein, Independent Schools Bursars Association (ISBA) (n.d.) remarked that there has been continued growth in recent years in commercial activities targeted at schools. Hence, well thought out commercial activities are of benefit to schools and business. They not only add value to school life and the taught curriculum, they also provide additional resources. Basically, school business aims at achieving two objectives:

- (a) generating income to support the financial self-sufficiency of the school
- (b) Educating the students in an entrepreneurial environment in which technical knowledge is combined with the business practices and business management that will make them successful upon graduating from the school.

Consequently, one of the statutory tasks of any education system is to facilitate youth transition from school to work. Hence, governments must believe that technical and vocational education, beyond keeping out-of-school and out-of-work youth out of the streets, can improve their employability and lay the foundation for learning throughout life.

Promoting technical and vocational education could be part of the answer to unemployment. Policy makers and indeed planners are of the firm belief that vocational education and training is a major vehicle for equipping young people with the skills they need to earn a living (Atchoarena, 2000).

The aim of any school should therefore be to achieve the best possible education to its students. Whatever the subject being taught, one of the most effective ways to build understanding of a new concept is to use real life examples. When it comes to acquiring practical skills, this is even more important – you can read as many books as you like, but you can't really learn how to milk a cow without having milked a cow (Teach A Man To Fish, 2008). Vocational education and training is basically utilitarianism and a concept that recognizes the importance of labour. This is practically what Nigeria needs at this very critical moment to reshape and revive her crumbling, monolithic economy and address the social crisis that has engulfed her. This is because, such education is directed towards the preparation for occupational type since its recipients are equipped to face the challenges of the world of work (Enahoro in Oguejiofor & Ezeabasili, 2014).

The Problem

The philosophy of the Nigerian education system and the core goals, as espoused by the National Policy on Education, are crystal clear on the mandate of the system in ensuring national development through human capacity building. Just like in other nations, education is majorly planned for the development of relevant manpower to effect economic development, social engineering and global competitiveness. Irrespective of the sufficient motivational approach in the planning of education, it is basically investment oriented. Ipso facto, the different levels of education are planned to be involved in this process of economic development, and secondary education is vital. Hence different strategies and programmes are expected to be developed among the lines of the vision and mission of the system.

Despite this noble mission of secondary education, two major problems still hunt it (i) the continued rise in unemployment rate and low productivity among the products of the system (ii) the over reliance on the very poor budgetary allocations to the sector. The later has grossly impeded the delivery of its mandate in ensuring the self-sufficiency of secondary schools and human capacity building especially in the face of economic recession.

Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the level to which school business and practical skills development are carried out in secondary schools in Rivers State. The specific objectives are

- ❖ To find out the school business plans of the secondary schools in RiversState.
- ❖ To determine the facilities that are leased out for fund generation by the secondary schools in RiversState.
- ❖ To determine the agricultural activities embarked upon for the development of practical skills and the generation of funds in secondary schools in Rivers State.
- ❖ To find out the arts and crafts activities that are engaged in for the development of practical skills and the generation of funds in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. What are the school business plans of the secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. What are the facilities that are leased out for funds generation by the secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. What are the agricultural activities that are embarked upon for the development of practical skills and the generation of funds in secondary schools in Rivers State?
4. What are the arts and crafts activities that are engaged in, for the development of practical skills and the generation of funds in secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between urban and rural secondary schools with respect to the agricultural activities that are embarked upon for the development of practical skills and the generation of the funds.
2. There is no significant difference between urban and rural secondary schools with respect to the arts and crafts activities engaged in for the development of practical skills and the generation of funds.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population was all the 267 public secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 40 schools was drawn through stratified random sampling technique. The stratification was on the basis of the location of the schools (urban and rural).

120 teachers responded to the instrument (3 respondents from each school). The instruments for the generation of data are questionnaire and structured interview. The questionnaire was titled "School Business for Self-Reliance and Skills Development" (SBSRSD). It was segmented into two sections: A and B section. A was on the demographic information on the schools, while section B was on the data to answer the research questions. The reliability of the instrument was determined through the use of test-re-test approach, using Person Product Moment Correlation with a reliability index of 0.82. Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation and 2-test were used for data analysis.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Research Question 1

Table 1: The mean responses on the core business plans of secondary schools.

S/N	ITEMS	URBAN		RURAL	
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
	The products to be produced	2.78	2.96	3.96	42.76
	The market and marketing strategies	3.50	3.21	3.70	32.53
	Competition and competitive advantage	3.48	3.11	3.87	37.39
	The requirements for the investment	2.50	11.90	3.80	36.01
	The Staff responsibilities	3.62	3.00	2.90	12.27
	Project income strategies	2.46	3.61	2.55	10.65
	Legal requirements	2.22	1.43	2.27	9.72

Table 1 show that except for item vii which is the legal requirements with mean values of 2.22 and 2.27 for both urban and rural schools respectively which is below the criteria mean (2.50), all the other items were accepted to be part of the business plans.

Research Question 2

Table II: The mean scores of the responses on the facilities that are leased out for the generation of funds.

S/N	ITEMS	URBAN		RURAL	
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
	These facilities are leased out for the generation of funds.				
i	School hall	2.26	1.44	3.40	21.12
ii	Other school buildings	2.00	11.90	2.00	11.90
iii	Sports facilities	3.25	3.15	2.54	11.00
iv	School equipment	2.43	1.39	2.30	5.24
v	School farm	2.98	2.95	2.48	9.90

Table II above reveals that all the identified facilities are leased out for the generation of the funds because they all have mean values above the criterion mean of 2.50. The same is true with the rural schools except the other school buildings which have a mean value of 2.00, which is below the criterion mean.

Research Question 3

Table III: The mean value of the responses on the agricultural activities that are embarked upon for the development of practical skills and funds generation.

S/N	ITEMS	URBAN		RURAL	
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
	The following agricultural activities are embarked upon for the development of practical skills and funds generation.				
i	Cultivation of cash crops.	3.41	21.94	2.94	12.45
ii	Poultry keeping.	1.91	14.30	2.50	10.11
iii	Piggery and fishery	2.10	11.85	1.88	14.34

Table III shows that for the urban schools, only cash crops cultivation with a mean value of 3.10 is carried out while the rest of the activities have mean values below the 2.50 criterion mean. Among rural schools, the cultivation of cash crops and poultry keeping with mean values of 3.10 and 3.25 respectively were accepted to be engaged in, while the others have mean values that are below the criterion mean.

Research Question 4

Table IV: The mean value of the responses on the arts and crafts activities that are engaged in for the development of practical skills and fund generation.

S/N	ITEMS	URBAN		RURAL	
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
	These arts and crafts activities are engaged in for the development of practical skills and fund generation.				
i	The production of art works.	2.10	11.85	3.74	12.90
ii	Crafts making.	2.93	10.32	3.86	12.33
iii	Music entertainment.	3.80	10.65	2.25	6.78
iv	Drama presentations.	3.86	8.22	2.93	9.35
v	Retail outlet where the products of the school are sold.	2.44	10.87	2.14	10.56

Table IV reveals that items II, III and IV with mean values of 2.93, 3.80 and 3.86 respectively are engaged in by the urban schools. On the other hand, for the rural schools, the analysis shows that items I, II, and IV with mean values of 3.74, 3.86 and 2.93 respectively which are above the 4 criterion mean are accepted as being practiced.

Hypothesis I

Table V: Z-test of difference between urban and rural schools with respect to the agricultural activities that are embarked upon for the development of practical skills and funds generation.

	N	Mean	SD	df	z-cal	z-crit	Sign Level	Remark
Urban	60	2.45	2.56	118	0.079	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Rural	60	2.47	2.42					

Table V shows that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of the respondents from both the Urban and Rural schools with respect to the agricultural activities that are embarked upon for the development of practical skills and funds generation. This is because, the calculated value of 0.079 is below the critical value of 1.96. Hence, the hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis II

Table VI: Z- test of difference between urban and rural schools with respect to the arts and crafts activities that are engaged in for the development of practical skills and funds generation.

	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Sign Level	Remark
Urban	60	2.25	1.97	118	0.101	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Rural	60	2.27	1.97					

Table VI reveals that the calculated value of 0.10 is below the z – critical of 1.96, the hypothesis was accepted. It means that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of the respondents from both the Urban and Rural schools with respect to the arts and crafts activities that are engaged in for the development of practical skills and funds generation.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the schools both in urban and rural areas have formalized plans that cover their business activities. This is in line with the position of Teach A Man To Fish (2008) which stated that business plan is critical to any business activity because it is the “navigation chart.” It sets out the overall purpose of the business, its model, the organization chart, the source of initial investments and must be continuously updated. In the same vein, ISBA (n. d.) maintained that each school should have a single policy on developing commercial activities to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school. It should be for all teachers, students, governors and parents.

Again, the study revealed that most of the school facilities are leased out to generate funds. Such a business activity agreed with the position of Adsit and Murdock (2010). According to them, leasing school facilities helps in generating funds for schools. Also, the study revealed that agricultural activities are limited in the schools. The emphasis is more on the cultivation of cash crops and in some situations, fish farming. This is not healthy for the proper education of the students.

Hence, Teach A Man To Fish (2008) maintained that the best education a young person can receive is based on learning by doing. The aim is not just to teach young people about a specific crop or types of livestock, but how to create a business based on a given agricultural activity.

Finally, the study showed that some arts and crafts activities are engaged by the schools for the development of practical skills and funds generation. This corroborates the position of Teach a Man to Fish (2008) which observed that within the self-sufficient school model, school businesses serve two clear functions (i) educating the students in an entrepreneurial environment in which technical knowledge is combined with the business and business management that will make them successful upon graduation (ii) generating income to support the financial sufficiency of the school.

Conclusion

On the strength of the findings, the study concluded that the schools have formalized plans for business activities, and some of the school facilities are leased out for the generation of funds. Also, the study concluded that the schools are involved in agricultural, arts and crafts activities for the acquisition of practical skills and income generation, though, on a limited scale.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- ❖ There should be clear cut policies that would make it mandatory for schools to be actively engaged in school business.
- ❖ The policies should spell out in clear terms the agricultural activities and framework for school business based on the different environmental peculiarities.
- ❖ Strategic plans for both school business and vocational education and training for secondary schools across the country should be developed and operationalized at the institutional levels based on the varied environmental circumstances.
- ❖ School authorities should develop collaborative framework with the industry to help the students develop sufficient practical skills.
- ❖ There is need for the re-orientation of the mindsets of both the teachers and students to appreciate and be fully committed to school business.

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