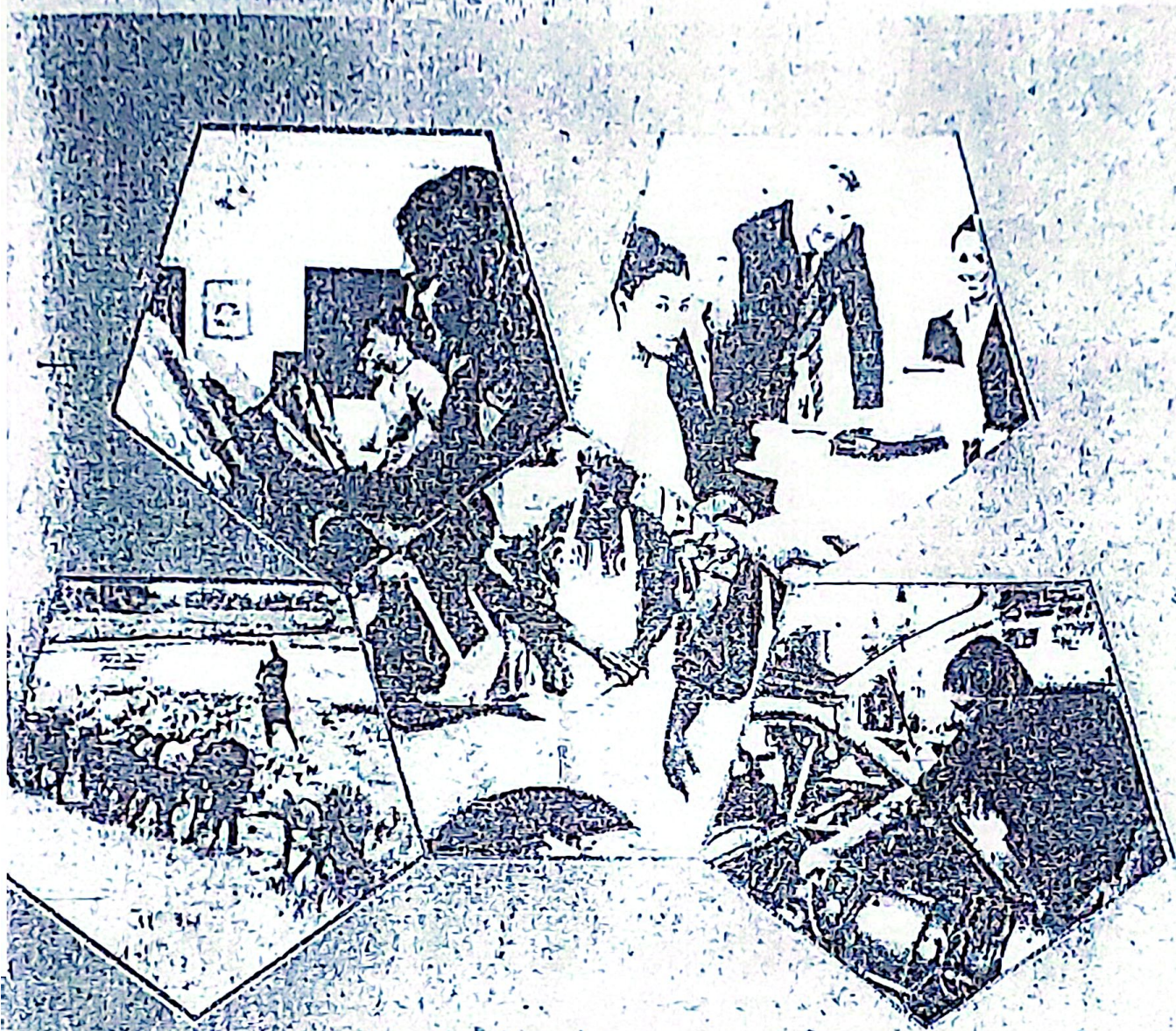




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AN ANATOMY OF THE FALLING STANDARDS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

This paper concerned itself with the falling standards in Business Education in Nigerian post-secondary institutions. The paper made efforts to find out how the problem can be addressed and gave some useful suggestions to those concerned on the roles they have to play towards this end. Primary and secondary sources of data collection were explored. Interviews were also conducted and personal observations were made. Some lecturers and students of Business Education in some Colleges of Education and Universities as well as some business subjects teachers in some secondary schools and their principals constituted the population among whom samples for this study were drawn. The paper discovered that the standards of Business Education is falling steadily and alarmingly. The researchers therefore concluded that there is urgent need for decisive steps to be taken by all concerned to arrest the fallen standards. Finally, the paper gave some recommendations on how this can be achieved.

KEYWORDS: *Anatomy, falling standards, Business Education, Post-secondary institutions.*

INTRODUCTION

For any organization to succeed, apart from stating its purposes and objectives in understandable terms, it must set some standards which must be strictly adhered to by all its stakeholders. The education sector is not an exception.

According to Grounhund (1975), educational standards refer to the minimum level of acceptable performance determined or set after a careful consideration of the norms of standard achievement tests based on the syllabus of the school subject in question. Stanley (1984), explains educational standards as the goals and objectives to be reached i.e. the set of curricular objectives framed in behavioural objectives.

The National Policy on Education (1981) itemizes the educational aims (set standards) of Nigeria as the;

1. Incultation of national consciousness and national unity;
2. Incultation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society
3. Training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and the
4. Acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

With the backdrop of the above, the researchers attempted to consider whether or not the standards of the present-day graduates of Business Education meet the Nigerian education aims and objectives especially in this era of ICT.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Business Education is a course of study meant for the preparation of individuals for the world of work as teachers, office employees as well as for self-employment. Hence, Oyesode (1998) explains Business Education as an important tool that prepares the youth for today and for the future. Adegbenjo (2004), posits that the essence of Business Education is to impart to the students knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to perform in the business world as producers and/or consumers of goods and services that business offers. Subsequently, Adegbenro (2007), affirms that the philosophy behind Business Education is to prepare its graduates for work which will earn them their living and for the development of the society. As lofty as the objectives

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(set standards) of Business Education are, it is sad to note that for the past more than one decade, there has been a steady decline in the level of their attainment. This does not augur well for a nation like Nigeria which ties its development to the education of her youths. Hence, there is the need for the problem of falling standards of Business Education to be addressed.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed at determining the reasons for the falling standards in Business Education and the effects of the falling standards in this field of study on those concerned on one hand, and the entire country on the other hand. The research work also intended to help proffer solutions to the problem so that the aims and objectives of Business Education in Nigeria will be achieved.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In carrying out this research on the falling standards of Business Education in Nigerian post-secondary institutions, the following questions will be answered:—

1. Is there a prevalence of falling standard in Business education
2. How does the falling standards in Nigerian Business Education manifest in its graduates?
3. What are the causes of the falling standards in Business Education at the Post-secondary institutions-levels in Nigeria?
4. What are the impact of the falling standards in Business Education at the Post-secondary institutions levels in Nigeria?
5. How can the problem of falling standards in Business Education at the Post-secondary institutions levels in Nigeria be ameliorated?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will be of great benefit to different categories of stakeholders. For instance, it will enable the authorities of tertiary institutions offering Business Education and their regulatory bodies (NUC and NCCE) to see the need to intervene with a view to arresting or curbing drastically the steady falling standards in the field of study. To the teachers and students, this research work will open their eyes to what they need to do to complement the efforts of their schools authorities and the regulatory bodies in improving the present level of standards. To the

society at large, the advantage to derive from this study is that by the time the standards of Business Education improve, its graduates will be able to render quality services in the labour market and so contribute more meaningfully to national development.

METHODOLOGY

Primary and secondary sources of data were explored. In effect, relevant literature were reviewed while copies of structured questionnaire were administered to the target population. In order to ensure ease of analysis and discussion, close-ended format was used in framing the response options in the questionnaire. Also, the percentage method was adopted for treating the respondents' answers to the questionnaire items for each research question. Interviews were equally conducted while personal observations were made. The answer to each research question was finally based on the average percentage of responses to each set of questionnaire items for the research question concerned. Thus, an average of more than 50% "yes" or "no" responses of the samples to each research question was taken as its answer by the researchers.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population for the study consists of Business Education lecturers and students of some Colleges of Education and Universities as well as some Business Studies teachers and their principals in two South-Western states of Nigeria. 160 copies of a structured questionnaire were administered to the respondents out of which 100 were selected as samples through stratified random sampling method. The stratified random sampling method was adopted so as to ensure that each category of the target population was well represented.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1:

	Business Education in Tertiary Institutions entail producing graduates	No of "Yes" Responses	% of "Yes" Responses	No of "No" Responses	% of "No" Responses	Total
1.	To teach	100	100	-	-	100

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	business subjects in secondary and post secondary schools.					
2.	Who will be competent to render business services in offices	74	74	26	26	100
3.	Who will be competent to go for further studies	81	81	19	19	100
4.	Who will be proficient enough to be self-employed	69	69	31	31	100
		324	324	76	76	400
	Average	81	81	19	19	100

Source: Survey, 2013

Table 1 above shows that an average of 81 samples (representing an average of 81%) were of the opinion that Business Education in our post-secondary institutions entails producing graduates who will be competent enough to teach business subjects in secondary and post-secondary schools. This is in tandem with the objectives of Business Education at the NCE level as outlined in the National Commission for Colleges of Education Minimum Standards for National Certificate in Education. The Commission states the objectives (expected standards) of NCE in Business Education as; To

1. Produce well-qualified and competent NCE graduates in business subjects who will be able to teach business subjects in our secondary schools and other related educational institutions;
2. Produce NCE business teachers who will be able to inculcate the vocational aspects of Business Education into the society;
3. Produce business teachers who will be involved in the much desired revolution in vocational development right from the primary and secondary schools;

4. Equip students with the necessary competencies so as to qualify for Post-NCE programmes in Business Education; and
5. Equip graduates with the right skills that will enable them to Engage in a life of work in the office as well as for self-employment.

As regards the objectives (standards expected) of Business Education at the higher levels, Olawole (2007) stresses that the objectives of Business Education at the degree levels are somehow related to those of NCE level except that at the degrees levels, Business Education strengthens and consolidates on the gains and achievements of the NCE programme. The submissions of many authorities in Business Education on what the field of study is all about are in agreement with the objectives outlined above as well as those of the sampled respondents. For example, Olawole (2002) defines Business Education as a component of Vocational Education involving the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies which makes the recipient or beneficiary proficient.

Clark (2002) posits that Business Education is an all-encompassing programme of study which equips its recipient with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable him succeed in whatever business endeavour he may engage in. On the parts of Agudohemba and Ngurukwem (2007) and Shu'aibu (2003), while the former see Business Education as that aspect of vocational education which seeks to impart into its learners the rudiments of business practice, the latter's opinion is that it is an educational process or context which has the primary aim of preparing people for roles in enterprises as employees, entrepreneurs, employers or as self-employed. In view of the responses of 81% of the respondents which are in consonance with the submissions of the different authorities above, the researchers concur with them on what Business Education entails in answer to Research Question 1.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: "HOW DO THE FALLING STANDARDS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION MANIFEST IN ITS GRADUATES?"

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Table 2 showing how the falling standards in Business Education manifest in its graduates.

	Falling standards manifest in Nigerian Business Education graduates in the forms of poor	No of "Yes" Responses	% of "Yes" Responses	No of "No" Responses	% of "No" Responses	Total
5.	Mastery of course contents	84	84	16	16	100
6.	Mastery of pedagogic skills	77	77	23	23	100
7.	Mastery of communication skills	86	86	14	14	100
8.	Acquisition of ICT skills	89	89	11	11	100
9.	Entrepreneurial competency	70	70	30	30	100
10	Inter-personal relations skills	52	52	48	48	100
		458	458	142	142	600
	Average	76.3	76.3	23.7	23.7	100

Source: Survey, 2013

The respondents' opinions as shown in Table 2 above are that the falling standards in Business Education manifest in its graduates in forms of poor mastery of course content as well as low pedagogic, communication, entrepreneurial and inter-personal skills. Worst still, many of the graduates of Business Education often reflect very low level of ICT skill. In view of the opinions of an average 76.3% of the sampled respondents above which was buttressed by all the people interviewed, the researchers agree with them that their opinions have rightly answered Research Question 2.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: "WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF THE FALLING STANDARDS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION AT NIGERIAN POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS LEVELS?"

Table 3 showing responses to Research Question 3 on the causes of the falling standards in Business Education at the Nigerian Post-Secondary Institutions levels.

	Some of the causes of falling standards in Business education at the tertiary education levels are	No of "Yes" Responses	% of "Yes" Responses	No of "No" Responses	% of "No" Responses	Total
11	Poor quality of intakes for training	53	53	47	47	100
12	Inadequate/obsolete curriculum specifications	76	76	24	24	100
13	Inadequate/obsolete instructional facilities	92	92	08	08	100
14	Too large number of students	78	78	22	22	100
15	Shortage of teaching personnel	69	69	31	31	100
16	Discouragement on the part of students	73	73	27	27	100
17	Inadequate motivation on the part of teaching personnel	57	57	43	43	100
		498	498	202	202	700
	Average	71.1	71.1	28.9	28.9	100

Source: Survey, 2013

As can be seen in Table 3 above, an average of 71.1% of the sampled respondents opined that inadequacies in teaching curricular, human and infrastructural resources (teachers and instructional

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materials), poor entry behavior on the part of intakes for the course, large number of students with very few instructional materials and teachers, dearth of Business Studies textbooks and inadequate funding on the part of government and school authorities are some of the causes of the falling standards in Business Education in Nigerian post-secondary institutions. Supporting some of the respondents claims above, Ayeni (2004) highlights some of the problems bewildering the sustainability of Business Education as high cost of equipment and facilities, poor image of Business Education, inadequacy of qualified teachers and funds. Reiterating the problem of funding, Atugbonu (2007) regrets that funding has become a thorny issue in our education sector generally. Still on the causes of falling standards in education, Adesina (1977) summarizes some of them as the declining quality of teachers, the imbalance existing between the expansion of the educational institutions and the facilities provided, over-crowded classrooms and lack of systematic planning.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: "WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THE FALLING STANDARDS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION AT THE POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS LEVELS IN NIGERIA?"

Table 4 showing responses to Research Question 4 on the effects of the falling standards in Business Education at the post-secondary institutions levels in Nigeria.

	The effects of the manifestation of falling standards in Business Education include:	No of "Yes" Responses	% of "Yes" Responses	No of "No" Responses	% of "No" Responses	Total
18	To teach business subjects effectively	69	69	31	31	100
19	Work competently in modern business offices	78	78	22	22	100

20	Communicate and interact well with others	79	79	21	21	100
21	Succeed in entrepreneurial endeavours	62	62	38	38	100
		288	288	112	112	400
	Average	72	72	28	28	100

Source: Survey, 2013

Table 4 above, shows that an average response of 69% of the sampled respondents answer to Research Question 4. The summary of their responses is that the effects of the falling standards in Business Education at the post-secondary institutions in Nigeria include inability of graduates in Business Education to teach business subjects effectively, work competently in modern offices, communicate and interact well with others as well as inability to succeed in entrepreneurial endeavours. Afemikhe (1985) confirms the concern of the populace on the falling standards in education in Nigeria. Also expressing the terrible effect of falling standards in education generally, Olatunji (1986) regrets that the falling standards have drastically changed things from what they were before. He asserts that our educational system has since been producing functional illiterates who are not adequately armed for the world of work.

RESEARCH QUESTION 5: "HOW CAN THE PROBLEM OF FALLING STANDARDS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION AT OUR POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS LEVELS BE AMELIORATED?"

Table 5 showing responses to Research Question 5 on how the problem of falling standards in Business Education at our post-secondary institutions levels can be ameliorated

The problem of falling standards in Business education at the tertiary institutions level will be anchored if	No of "Yes" Responses	% of "Yes" Responses	No of "No" Responses	% of "No" Responses	Total

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22.	Modern day instructional materials are adequately provided and maintained	67	67	33	33	100
23.	There is a marked improvement in the quality of intakes for business education	74	74	26	26	100
24.	Only manageable numbers of applicants are admitted by each institution for the course	78	78	22	22	100
25.	Teaching personnel at the tertiary institutions levels are adequate in quality and quantity	79	79	21	21	100
26.	Teaching personnel are well-motivated to put in their best	76	76	24	24	100
27.	Learners are encouraged to study hard	67	67	33	33	100
		441	441	159	159	600
	Average	73.5	73.5	26.5	26.5	100

Source: Survey, 2013

Table 5 above shows that an overall average of 73.5% of the sampled respondents felt that Questionnaire Items 22 to 27 are some of the steps that should be taken by the different stakeholders in order to seriously step down the decreasing standards in Business Education in Nigerian Post-Secondary Institutions. Since the average percentage of respondents in favour of taking these steps as remedies to the falling standards in Business Education is more than 50% which is the benchmark, the researchers hereby agree that the steps listed as items 22 to 27 on the questionnaire are some of the measures that could help ameliorate or check the falling standards. Some of the views of the respondents have also been supported by some experts in Business Education. For instance, Adache (2005) suggests the need for more budgetary provision for Business Education by government while Ettik (2005) harps on provision of adequate equipment, facilities and instructional materials. On his part, Oluwalola (2007) opines that Business Education curricular should be reviewed from time to time.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the course of this study and from the submissions of the experts cited it was discovered that the standards of Business Education in Nigeria, particularly at the post-secondary institutions levels which is the focus of the research, have truly been falling. This fall has led to some other problems the aggregate of which is that most of our post-secondary-institution graduates are grossly unskilled, deficient and are not fit at all to teach business studies subjects let alone working efficiently in business offices. The researchers therefore concluded that concerted efforts should be made urgently to address this ugly situation with a view to strengthening Business Education in order to fulfill its objectives. Towards this end, the following recommendations are made by the researchers:

- Every stakeholder, government inclusive, should have a change of attitude towards Business Education as a field of study;
- The different levels of government (especially states and federal) should allocate adequate funds to boost Business Education in Nigeria;
- The authorities of all post-secondary institutions where Business Education is offered should provide the Department of Business Education in their institutions with ICT and other modern

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equipment to keep their students abreast of emerging office technologies;

Departments of Business Education in our post-secondary institutions should be allowed to conduct Post-JAMB aptitude tests to help determine the suitability of applicants for the course of study;

The Association of Business Educators of Nigeria should be empowered to have a say in determining those that are competent to be employed to teach business studies subjects in our schools' and

Business educators at all levels should be regularly sponsored by their employers to attend seminars, workshops and conferences in order to help update their knowledge and keep pace with the ever-changing information and communication technologies.

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