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Evaluating Managerial Skills for Business Education in a Technological Age

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Abstract

Having witnessed the extraordinary development of information technology in recent time, one needs to critically examine some systematic changes it triggered in Business Education. This will go a long way in determining whether Business Education is still relevant in accomplishing its goals such as provision of managerial skills for economic sustainability. Based on the above, the researchers thought it reasonable to evaluate the managerial skills acquired through Business Education in present day technology. The researchers' findings revealed that Business Education still has the unique and significant potentials in providing managerial skills needed in handling personal affairs, as well as management of business and skills for gainful employment, but calls for improved provision of needed personnel and equipment such as computer for training the would be managers.

Introduction

Skills needed for initiating and successfully running business enterprises or simply the capacity to manage things are the essential factors that can induce

economic development. A managerial skill is one of such basic skills required to facilitate appropriate and maximum utilization of people in productive activities that would produce variety of goods and services. Managerial skills are necessary to plan, launch and successfully manage business enterprises. Managerial skills according to International Labour Organization (2002) are skills essential for conceiving, starting and managing a business enterprise.

Any form of education which focuses on equipping the individual with managerial skills to enable him hold a job or survive in an occupation is termed Business Education. Business Education according to Akpan (2003) as cited in Isaac (2007) is the training for the acquisition in business skills occupation.

The choice of managerial skills in evaluating Business Education in its ability to enhance economic sustainability in this technological age is not unconnected with Akpan's (1997) assertion that the pace of small scale industrialization is slow owing to lack of managerial skills. According to Ambah (2008), many developing countries, only have a small proportion of micro and small firms grow beyond a certain threshold due to lack of specific managerial skills. This weakness is a major structural flaw which prevents many small scale enterprises from scaling up in size and graduating into more formal medium-size business activities.

The availability of manpower that has passed through a viable and sound Business Education is the fundamental prerequisite for the desired technological development for self-sustainable and national development. This assertion calls for evaluation of Business Education as to whether it has what it takes to provide appropriate managerial skills for economic sustainability in the current technological age.

Concept of managerial skills

According to Robert (2001), the managerial skills are the quality of the manager which are found in the managers. In order to ensure a safety business environment and make it successful in the market, different skills in the managers are required. This implies that there are different types of skill which the managers need in order to exercise the skill in the person in the different people. So managers have to deal with a lot of problems which require special skills of the managers in order to solve them. It therefore

means that when managers encounter a problem then they require some special skills in order to deal with the specific problem.

Types of managerial skills

Igbo (2007) as cited in Lucky and Emechi (2008) identified the managerial skills needed for success in entrepreneurship to include:

- i) Ability to communicate effectively using oral and written skills.
- ii) Knowledge and method of conducting effective meetings.
- iii) Ability to do long and short term planning.
- iv) Knowledge of factors involved in overhead control.
- v) Knowledge of inventory control and turnover.
- vi) Acquisition of management and supervisory skills.
- vii) Ability to manage time and meet job schedule.
- viii) Knowledge of need for employee growth development.
- ix) Knowledge of important job demand on home and family life.,
- x) Ability to determine personal salary.
- xi) Knowledge of good human relationship.

For Robert (2001), the managerial skills of today managers are intuitiveness, work under pressure, manage the people, conflict management, crisis management and motivate the people under their supervision. These are the skills which are needed in order to carry the different operations of the business.

Piskanin (2006) maintained that the criteria for dividing the skills can vary but the basic managerial skills needed for an effective managerial work include the following:

- i. **Technical Skills:** Ability of manager to use specific method and technique in doing the managerial work. These technical skills for managers represent the usage of methods like break-even analysis in planning or ability to prepare for and conduct a structured interview.
- ii. **Interpersonal Skills:** Interpersonal skills are essential on every level of management. People are most valuable resource of any enterprise and manager needs to know how to lead people. Ability include motivation of workers, solving work conflicts, communication and working with people.

- iii. **Conceptual Skills:** These skills are most demanding for middle or top manager as it required the ability to analyze and diagnose a situation and distinguish between cause and effect. Planning and organization require high level of conceptual skill. Business Education is very important in helping managers develop conceptual skills.
- iv. **Communication Skills:** Managers need information for decision making. Ability to disseminate and receive information is thus important tools for managers.
- v. **Information Seeking Skills:** That is ability to gather and analyze vital data and information required for operations.
- vi. **Persistence Skill:** That is having ability to repeat the process in order to achieve success or overcome obstacles or lack of success.
- vii. **Risk-Taking Skill:** That is ability to take moderate and calculated risks after decision making.
- viii. **Efficiency and Quality Skill:** That is ability to do things better, faster, cheaper and more efficiently.
- ix. **Goal Setting Skill:** That is ability to set clear and attainable short and long term goals.

Needs for managerial skills

As the enterprise grows, there are different specific needs for managerial skills and knowledge. Newton (2001), created a certain pyramids with different levels of management skills, based on his previous researches. These levels represent the type of skills needed in different phases of development.

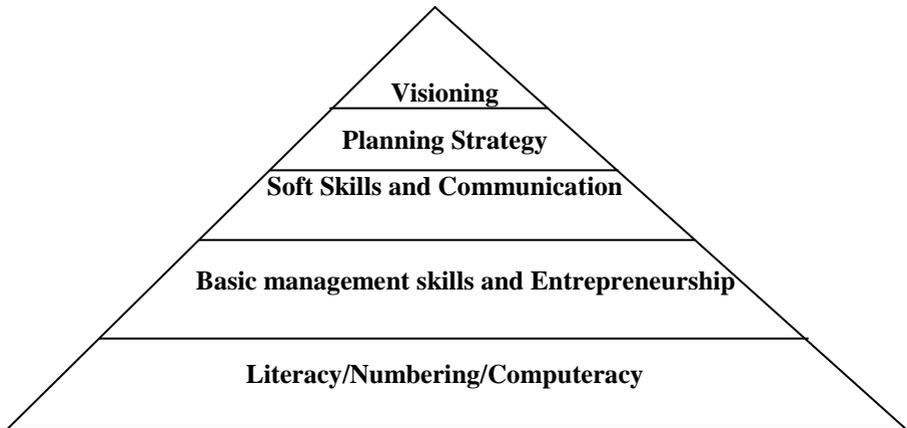


Fig.1: Pyramid of Managerial Skills

At the base of the pyramid is a group of basic skills competencies. Basic understanding is needed in reading numbers (i.e financial statement and working with computer). It is hard to survive without them in this computer age.

Second in the pyramid is the usage of managerial skills which includes the application of basic entrepreneurial skills to prepare business plan.

In the third level comes the attention of communication skills which serve the following purposes:

- i) To secure financing from investors and banks
- ii) Convincing potential customers of advantages of the particular product or services
- iii) To acquire key personnel for the enterprise
- iv) To acquire the best advice and consultancy
- v) To form and cultivate partnerships and alliances.

The fourth level requires formal planning and strategy which is an important component of managerial skills.

The fifth and final level is the visioning. How does the enterprise see itself in future? What mission should it undergo? What enterprise culture does it want to create?

The above pyramid represents set of certain managerial skills which are needed to manage business enterprises.

Business education and managerial skills in the technological age

The managerial skill discussed in this paper can be conveniently provided through Business Education. The educational system is a vital transformational tool and a formable instrument for socio-economic empowerment.

The growth of any nation depends on the level of education acquired by its citizen. Therefore, the educational system is an ultimate precursor for national development, culture transmission and also the acquisition of needed competencies and skills for the lives of individuals in a society. Business Education charts the course, and generates the energy and speed with which the appropriate skills such as managerial skills could be acquired.

Business Education is an aspect of education program which prepares students for career in business. The claim for Business Education to provide managerial skills is supported by Ikechi (2008), as education for business, or training in Business skills, which are required for use in Business offices, clerical occupations and Business policy analysis. It should be noted here that business executives cannot effectively and efficiently carry out their functions without acquiring appropriate managerial skills which business education provides.

Osuala (1981), as cited in Ikechi (2008), maintained that Business Education is a program of instruction which consists of two major parts. One of the parts consists of program and computerizes which are needed by all in managing personal business world. It could be deduced from the above definition that Business Education provides managers of Business with business management skills which include, planning, and goal setting, decision making, human relations, marketing, finance, accounting, management, contract, negotiation, venture launch and growth management.

Business Education is education needed to teach people business, education needed to handle personal affairs and education needed about business in order to be good citizen in a society.

Business Education is designed with the primary aim of providing one's skills as well as providing citizens with the required skills to secure gainful employment as to earn a living. By implication, Business Education has the potentials in providing managerial skills needed in handling personal affairs, management of business and skills for gainful employment.

Generally, business education provides managerial skills which are required in Business offices, clerical occupations, personal business affairs and services of the business world.

For Business Education to provide the needed managerial skills for economic sustainability it should keep abreast with the technological age. Technological age is a length of time characterized by the use of information technology such as the computer as a means of communication.

Information technology is relevant in the teaching and learning process. With computer the concepts of managerial skills can be taught to the students at every corner of the globe. This makes learning easy, accessible and affordable. The introduction of various sophisticated learning packages has made teaching/learning interactive, easy and learner centred. With the numerous capabilities of the computer, it becomes increasing evident that Business Education must explore and utilize the capabilities of information technology to facilitate and enhance the provision of managerial skills for economic sustainability and development. To accomplish the above benefits, computer technology must be available, effective and utilized.

Conclusion

This study evaluates the relevance of Business Education in managerial skills acquisition in this technological age. However, the need to improve managerial skills in our modern enterprises is determined by the amount of human capital skills available. Business Education is significant for several reasons. It is expected to provide the managers with the means by which new ideas could be acquired, and the skills to manage business enterprises. In recognition of the dominant role played by business education in an acquisition of managerial skills as reviewed in this study, the stakeholders in education should create an enabling environment by providing necessary

equipment and personnel for the training of managers especially in areas of technology.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Computer education should be made compulsory by the school authority to students of Business Education. Emphasis should be placed on both practical and theory.
2. Industrial attachment for students of business education should be provided to help them gain on the job training.
3. Tertiary institution should made computer to be available and accessible to students of Business Education.
4. Software on management should be used in instructional delivery by the lecturers.

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