Innovation and Creativity in Business Education for Sustainable Educational Programs

Olasunmbo Bayonle LAWAL

omoobalawal@yahoo.co.uk

+234 8034625988

Department of Business Education

Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo

Innovation and creativity are crucial aspects of business education, especially when it comes to developing sustainable educational programs. Innovative sustainable business education refers to educational programs, courses, and approaches that focus on teaching sustainable business practices, ethical decision making, and environmental stewardship to future business leaders. By integrating innovation and creativity into business education for sustainable programs, students can develop the skills and mindset necessary to become agents of positive change in the business world, driving sustainability and innovation forward. Creativity is essential for business today, especially when the market is dependent on innovative braking technology. The slogan "think outside the box" had been over flogged, hence the new innovative trend is "throwing the box aside" and creating new and better idea to carry on business practices. However, creative ideas and innovative approaches can come from anywhere, such as the employees, target market, customers, and partners. Organizations today operate in a highly competitive, global environment, making creativity and innovation crucial. Creativity innovation is what fuels big ideas, challenges employees' way of thinking, and opens the doors to new business opportunities. It also looks at developing an effective innovation strategy and suggested among others the integration of creative innovation to facilitate the sustainability of educational programs in business education.

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Introduction

Creativity is the act of channeling imagination into something concrete. It is the beginning of new idea creation, where ideas start to actually take form, before a plan is developed. Innovation is the process of turning a new concept into commercial success or widespread use. Another word that can be used for creation of a new idea or concept is invention.

Creativity is an active process necessarily involved in innovation. It is a learning habit that requires skill as well as specific understanding of the contexts in which creativity is being applied. The creative process is at the heart of innovation and often the words are used interchangeably.

In education, creativity and innovation are characteristics that people seek to develop to help them look at the world in new ways and form ideas to improve or add to it. They are active characteristics, meaning they have to be used deliberately in order to create something beneficial or authentic.

In business however, creativity is rapidly centered on original thought and knowledge which unleashes potential and is an integral part of idea generation, innovation on the other hand, is used to turn the creative idea that you come up with into a viable solution.

Innovation in a business context means the ability to conceive, develop, deliver, and scale new products, services, processes and business models for customers. When a new idea is conceived formed and released, or a new method was introduced, or a new device is being produced and sent to the market; that is innovation. It is also a process by which a domain, a product, or a service is renewed and brought up to date by applying new processes. Introducing new techniques, or establishing successful ideas to create new value. In other words, the creation of value is a defining characteristic of innovation.

Business Education Programs in Nigeria

Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Eche (2015) quoting Popham (1975) said when a group of people were asked what business education is? The reply was as follows: A business executive replied, "Business Education is education to produce goods and services". A radical retorted: It is the avenue to make enormous profit. One teacher responded: Economic concepts necessary for living in a business economy. Another teacher answered: Learning skills to enter a business or distributive job. A person on the street said "Shorthand and typing, that's it". After looking at the different views of business educators, Popham came to a conclusion that: Business education is a course that prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business and it is equally important because it prepares students to handle their own business affairs and to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Citing Nolan, Hayden &Malsbary (1967); Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Eche (2015) defined business education as those business programs and courses taught ordinarily at the secondary school level. Osuala (2004), also defined business education as a program of instruction which consists of two parts (i) Office education - a vocational program of office careers through initial, refresher and upgrading education and (ii) General business education - a program to provide students with information and competences which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of the business. Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Eche (2015) again citing Njoku (1997) defined business education as that facet of educational training that helps the individual to acquire relevant skills needed for living. According to Amesi

and Nnadi (2015), Business Education represents a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all types of educational delivery systems - elementary, secondary and post-secondary. Business education can begin at any level, it can be interrupted for varying periods of time, and it can be continued throughout the life span of an individual.

With all the above mentioned definitions it could be deduced that; Business Education is a branch of education that involves teaching the skills and operations of the business industry. It is an education designed for use in business; a training in subjects such as accounting, shorthand, commerce, office practice, word processing, entrepreneurship; all useful in developing commercially useful skills. The major objectives of business education programs are to teach the ways of the decision making process, the viewpoint, theory, and psychology of management; practical functions; and business start-up and running processes. It is a field of education that occurs in multiple levels, including secondary and higher education. At secondary level, business education is introduced as business studies which was classified into four components as reflected in the 2012 Basic Education Curriculum; they are, Commerce, Office practice, Bookkeeping and keyboarding. Business education teaches the students how to handle company's accounting needs, comply with government regulations and find ways to make your organization as cost-effective as possible.

Business education in Nigeria aims to develop graduates who are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary to contribute to the growth and development of the Nigerian economy. Business education plays a vital role in preparing individuals for success in the business world, by providing a strong foundation in business principles and practical experience. Business education in Nigeria encompasses a wide range of educational programs and institutions that aim to equip individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in the business world.

Among the key aspects of business education in our contemporary world particularly in Nigeria are:

1. **Higher Education Institutions:** Though students at the lower and upper secondary are taught the introductory parts of business education; such as business studies, business method, economics etc., but the major aspects of the business education are offered at the tertiary level of education. In Nigeria there are several higher institutions like the Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, and Colleges (both public and private) that offer business related programs at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. These institutions provide degrees in disciplines such as business administration, business education, economics, accounting, finance, marketing, and entrepreneurship. Until recently business education in colleges of education combines the disciplines having only two distinct programs, Accounting and Office Technology and Management; but now the courses have

been separated and even broken down into four options in which students can now graduate specializing on a discipline, the courses offered now in colleges are Accounting, Office Technology and Management (OTM), Entrepreneurship and Marketing respectively.

2. **Professional Certification:** In addition to academic programs, there are various professional certifications that individuals can pursue to enhance their business knowledge and credentials. Examples include certifications from the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), Institute of Chartered Accountants (ICAN), Chartered Institute of Business Administration (CIBA), and Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPM). There are also professional associations that enhance the acquired business knowledge and skills of business in Nigeria such as Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN).

3. **Curriculum:** Business Education in Nigeria typically cover core business subjects such as management. Marketing, finance, accounting, economics, business law, auditing and taxation, and entrepreneurship. The curricula are designed to provide students with a solid background and firm foundation in business theory and practice.

4. **Practical Training:** In most of the business education programs in Nigeria, the institution usually incorporate practical training components to bridge the gap between theory and real world application. Such training could be the students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES), where students are expected to experience on the spot practical knowledge of what they have been taught in theory in the school, it is known as industrial training often sponsored by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF). Here students in the colleges spend sixteen weeks working in the industry while the students in the polytechnic are allowed a one year training program after their national diploma program. Other training could be internship, especially for students in the medical or paramedical programs.

5. **Entrepreneurship Education:** Entrepreneurship is gaining significant attention now in the curricula of higher institutions in Nigeria, owing to its importance in the Nigeria's economic landscape. Some universities and institutions are now offering dedicated entrepreneurship programs with degree awarding. The programs provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to start and manage their own businesses.

6. **Industry Collaboration**: The industries in Nigeria have opened their doors to institutions that are interested in partnering with them to provide students with practical insights and exposure to real world business challenges. Nigeria Business schools are now collaborating with the higher institutions in a bid to assist each other in bringing business knowledge to the classroom, while on the other hand the schools provide the industry with capable hands among the students who could help handle business activity in the industry.

7. **Professional Development:** Having realized that continuous professional development is essential in the business field, many professional business education programs are now being offered in our various higher institutions for working professionals to upgrade their skills and stay updated with industry trends. Such programs are professional executive education and short term courses e.g. Executive Master in Business Administration specializing on various fields as finance, marketing, accounting etc.

8. **Digital Education:** In Nigeria today, there is an increase in the availability of online learning platforms, ranging from certificate program, degree and postgraduate programs. Some institutions have adopted online programs for their business courses. Online courses and programs provide flexibility for individuals who may not be able to attend traditional brick and mortar institutions. In some cases, institutions allow their lecturers to arrange online lectures for their students in order to ease the difficulty their students are facing coming to class for physical lectures. Digital education has become the in thing now, and one major advantage of this is that students are forced to become internet compliant and there expose them to the digital world.

9. **Government Initiatives:** The Nigerian government has implemented various initiatives to promote business education and entrepreneurship. Among other initiatives is the establishment of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) which aims to provide support and training for small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs. Further to this are the small scale business finance institutions established to cater for loans and other financial assistance to business owners.

Creativity in Business Education

Creativity in business education refers to the incorporation of creative and innovative thinking skills into the curriculum and teaching methodologies of business schools and educational programs. Traditionally, business education has focused on teaching analytical and technical skills necessary for success in the corporate world. However, with the rapid pace of change and increasing complexity of business environments, there is a growing recognition of the importance of creativity in driving innovation and competitive advantage.

Integrating creativity into business education helps students develop a broader set of skills and competencies beyond the traditional business knowledge. It encourages them to think critically, solve problems creatively, and generate new ideas. Certain factors need to be considered in integrating creativity in the curriculum of business education such as:

i. **Encouraging Divergent Thinking:** Business education should foster an environment that encourages students to explore multiple perspectives, challenge assumptions, and generate a wide range of ideas. This can be done through brainstorming sessions, design thinking workshops, or case studies that require creative problem solving.

ii. **Experiential Learning:** Though part of this had been included in the curricula for business programs, however, emphasis should be on providing hands-on experiences and real world projects for students to apply their creative thinking skills in practical business situations. This can be achieved through internships, consulting projects, or simulations that simulate business challenges and encourage students to find innovative solutions.

iii. **Collaborative and Interdisciplinary Approach:** Students from different backgrounds should be encouraged to collaborate among themselves to share knowledge and experiences, such as engineering, business, design, and the arts, can foster cross pollination of ideas and stimulate creative thinking. Interdisciplinary approaches will help students understand the interconnectedness of different disciplines and apply creative problem solving techniques.

iv. **Design Thinking:** A human-centered approach known as design thinking to problem-solving can be integrated into business education to promote creativity. It involves empathizing with users, defining problems, ideating potential solutions, prototyping, and testing. Incorporating design thinking methodologies help students develop empathy, creativity and innovation skills.

v. **Entrepreneurship and innovation courses:** Courses or programs that focus on entrepreneurship and innovation should be offered in business education in all tertiary institutions. These courses can teach students how to identify market opportunities, develop creative business models, and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset.

vi. **Creative Assessment Methods**: Traditional examinations and assignments may not adequately measure creative thinking abilities, including alternative assessment methods, such as presentations, portfolios, creative projects, or group wok, can provide students with opportunities to showcase their creative problem-solving skills.

vii. **Faculty Development:** Educators playa crucial role in promoting creativity in business education. Providing professional development opportunities for faculty members to learn about creative teaching methods, incorporating real-world examples, and staying updated with industry trends can enhance their ability to inspire and nurture creativity in students.

Traditional methods of teaching and learning in business education are being challenged by advancements in technology Innovation in business education, changes in industry practices, and the need for more practical and applicable skills. To keep up with these changes, business education institutions are exploring innovative approaches to deliver relevant and effective business education.

Here are some key areas of innovation in business education.

1. **Technology Integration:** Technology is playing a significant role in transforming business education. Online learning platforms, interactive simulations, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence are being used to enhance the learning experience. The tools provide students

with opportunities to engage in real world business scenarios, analyze data, and make decisions in a simulated environment.

2. **Experiential Learning:** Case studies, internships, consulting projects and entrepreneurial ventures are among others that business education institutions are now emphasizing. The approaches allow students to apply theoretical knowledge to real world situations, develop problem solving skills, and gain practical experience.

3. **Blended Learning**: This is a combination of online and face-to-face instruction, offering a flexible and personalized learning experience. It allows students to access course materials and resources online while also participating in discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities. This approach blended both online and traditional classroom learning.

4. **Collaboration and interdisciplinary learning:** Present business education encourages collaboration and interdisciplinary learning in which students are exposed to different perspectives and learn to work in diverse teams. This involves collaborative projects, crossdisciplinary courses, and joint programs with other departments or institutions to foster a holistic understanding of business challenges and solutions.

5. **Lifelong learning and continuous education:** Business education institutions have started lifelong learning programs, providing executive education courses and online microcredentials to cater for the needs of working professionals. Students of these programs acquire new knowledge, stay relevant, and adapt to changing industry requirements.

6. **Developing soft skills learning:** Courses, such as, communication, leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking have been integrated into the curriculum of business education at some levels, while greater emphasis is being placed on developing soft skills.

7. **Entrepreneurship and innovation programs:** Students of business education are now being exposed to entrepreneurial programs that enable them to have skills, and mindset required to identity opportunities, create new ventures, and drive innovation within existing organizations.

Integrating Creativity and Innovation into Business Education

Integrating creativity and innovation in business education will further enhance the effectiveness and high productivity of the program in our tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Here are some ways in which innovation and creativity can be integrated into business education for sustainable programs:

1. **Design thinking approach:** Incorporate design thinking methodologies into the curriculum.

   Design thinking encourages students to adopt a human-centered approach to problem-

solving, fostering creativity, empathy, and innovative solutions. It involves iterative processes of empathizing, defining the problem, ideating, prototyping, and testing solutions in real-world contexts.

2. **Project-based learning:** Implement project-based learning approaches where students work on real-world sustainability challenges. This approach allows students to apply their knowledge and skills to develop innovative and sustainable solutions while collaborating with peers and engaging with stakeholders.

3. **Entrepreneurialmindset:** Foster an entrepreneurial mindset among students, encouraging them to identify and seize sustainable business opportunities. This involves cultivating traits like creativity, risk-taking, resilience, and adaptability. Offer courses or extracurricular activities that focus on sustainable entrepreneurship, social innovation and intrapreneurship within established organizations.

4. **Collaboration with industry partners:** Forge partnerships with businesses, startups, and sustainability-focused organizations to provide students with opportunities to work on reallife projects. This collaboration enables students to gain practical experience, learn from industry experts, and explore innovative approaches to sustainability within different sectors.

5. **Incorporation of emerging technologies:** Integrating emerging technologies such as block chain, artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics into the curriculum. This allows students to understand how these technologies can be leveraged to create innovative solutions for sustainable business practices, energy management, supply chain optimization, and more.

6. **Experiential learning:** Offer experiential learning opportunities, such as field trips, site visits, and internships, to expose students to sustainable businesses, eco-friendly practices, and socially responsible initiatives. This hands-on experience helps students connect theory with practice and sparks their creativity by observing innovative sustainable practices in action.

7. **Interdisciplinary collaboration:** Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration by organizing joint projects or courses that bring together students from different disciplines, such as business, engineering, environmental science, and social sciences. This collaboration facilitates the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and expertise, leading to innovative solutions to complex sustainability challenges.

8. **Social and environmental impact measurement:** Teach students how to measure and evaluate the social and environmental impact of business activities. Provide them with tools and frameworks for assessing sustainability performance, such as life cycle assessment, social return on investment, or sustainability reporting, enabling them to make informed decisions and drive positive change.

9. **Continuous learning and adaptation:** Promote a culture of continuous learning and adaptation within the educational program. Encourage students to stay updated on the latest trends, research, and best practices in sustainable business. Foster an environment where experimentation, creativity, and innovation are valued, allowing the curriculum to evolve with changing sustainability challenges and opportunities.

Sustainability of Business Education Program

The sustainability of a business education program refers to the ability to maintain its effectiveness, relevance, and impact over the long term. A sustainable business education program must address several key aspects to ensure its ongoing success and ability to meet the needs of students, businesses, and society as a whole. Let us consider some factors that contribute to the sustainability of a business education program.

1. **Relevance and Continuous Improvement:** The program should continually adapt to changing business landscape, technological advancements, and emerging trends to remain relevant. Regularly reviewing and updating the curriculum and teaching methods are essential to keep up with the dynamic nature of the business world.

2. **Industry Collaboration:** Strong ties with the business community help ensure that the program remains aligned with the real-world needs of employers. Regular engagement with industry leaders, guest speakers, internships, and industry projects can enrich the learning experience and foster valuable connections for students.

3. **Quality of Faculty and Staff:** Recruiting and retraining experienced, knowledgeable, and passionate faculty and staff members is crucial, Expert educators who are well versed in both theory and practical applications can provide students with a high quality education.

4. **Student-Centric Approach:** Focusing on the needs of students and their learning outcomes is vital for sustainability. Programs that actively seek feedback from students, offer mentorship opportunities, and provide career development support tend to be more successful.

5. **Ethics and Social Responsibility:** Integrating ethics and sustainability principles into the curriculum helps students understand the importance of responsible business practices. Emphasizing corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental stewardship can create socially conscious business leaders.

6. **Technological Integration:** Embracing technology in the learning process can enhance engagement and provide students with relevant skills for the digital age. This includes leveraging online resources, simulations, and virtual collaboration tools.

7. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Creating an inclusive learning environment that values diversity can enrich the educational experience and better prepare students to work in global and diverse workplaces.

8. **Accreditation and Recognition:** Seeking and maintaining accreditation from reputable bodies can enhance the programs credibility and attract more students and employers.

9. **Financial Viability:** A sustainable program must also be financially viable. Adequate funding and budget management are necessary to support faculty, facilities, technology, and other resources needed to maintain program quality.

10. **Measuring and Monitoring Outcome:** Essentially the program output needs proper monitoring and evaluation. Regularly assessing the program's performance and student learning outcomes allows for adjustments and improvements based on data driven insights.

By incorporating these elements, a business education program can ensure its sustainability and continue to produce graduates who are well prepared to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the business world while promoting responsible and ethical practices.

With globalization, businesses are operating in an interconnected world. Business education is adapting to this reality by emphasizing a global perspective. In the global world now, programs of business education have included international study tours, exchange programs, and partnerships with foreign universities. These initiatives expose students to diverse cultures, markets, and business practices, enhancing their understanding of global business dynamics.

Suggestions

Owing to the above, this paper hereby suggest as follows:

1. That students of business education should be exposed to various innovative and creative entrepreneurial programs that can enhance their sustainability.

2. All tertiary institutions offering business education should as a matter of urgency integrate creative innovation to facilitate the sustainability of educational programs in business education.

3. Business Education program should be made to continually adapt to changing business landscape, technological advancements, and emerging trends in order to remain relevant.

Conclusion

For business education to be fully sustained, integrating creative and innovative strategies in the curriculum will go a long way. Innovative strategies are geared towards preparing students for the dynamic and complex business environment. Business education institutions need to equip students with the tools and mindset to thrive in the modern business landscape. By incorporating creativity into business education, students are better prepared to navigate complex and dynamic business environments. They develop the skills and mindset needed to adapt, innovate, and lead in an ever changing world.

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