

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY THROUGH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILL ACQUISITION BY BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES**

**Magnus P. Udo & Faruk A. Suleiman**

Business Education Section

Department of Vocational and Technology Education

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU)

Bauchi, Bauchi State, Nigeria

**Email:** [jemautong@gmail.com](mailto:jemautong@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*This article discussed achieving sustainable development of the Nigerian economy among business education (BE) graduates through social entrepreneurship skill acquisition. To start with, the paper defined terminologies such as business education, sustainable development, skill acquisition and social entrepreneurship. It highlighted the importance of social entrepreneurship skill acquisition as a device for sustainable development among BE graduates as well as explore the difference between social and commercial entrepreneurship. The paper further examined the three components of sustainable development and discussed the types of social entrepreneurship skill activities that BE graduates can embark on around those components in order to engender social change. Lastly, the paper discussed the impediments to practical skills acquisition of social entrepreneurship among BE students that tend to prevent setting up their own entrepreneurial businesses and made recommendations on the way forward. It was recommended that the business education students should be seriously committed and dedicated to the practical contents of their programme and that they have to develop good attitude towards the entire programme contents.*

**Keywords:** Business education, Sustainable development, skill acquisition, and Social entrepreneurship

### **Introduction**

The process of developing sufficient practical skill is an important attribute of Business Education (BE) programme in the Nigerian education system. To support this, one of the National Educational Objectives stated that the attainment of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical are important for all Nigerians to live and contribute to the development of their society (Federal Republic of Nigeria - 2013). Consequently, the National Educational Policy document (2013) states that the Nation's educational activity should be centred on the students in order for them to acquire the highest practical skills for self-sufficiency, self-development and personal fulfilment as white-collar job employees or entrepreneurs. Regrettably, the poor attitude and poor mindset of the students toward maximum skill acquisition and social entrepreneurship have resulted in low skill level acquired by them. This has also resulted in low sustainable development that could not engender social change among these graduates, and consequently nothing to brag about their skill acquisition and social entrepreneurship. This explains why most BE graduates in Nigeria are unemployed and are unable to establish their own entrepreneurial business ventures. It is against this backdrop that this paper is written to explore how to improve skill acquisition and social entrepreneurship and to increase sustainable development of entrepreneurship activities among BE graduates and to make recommendations on the way forward.

### **Definition of Business education, Sustainable development, skill acquisition, and Social entrepreneurship**

Business Education (BE) is defined as that aspect of vocational education which provides skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes necessary for effective employment in any specific business occupations. According to Udo (2015) BE is a comprehensive activity-based occupational education programme that is concerned with the acquisition of practical skill, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in any chosen business occupation. It equips the recipients with practical skills in the areas of accounting, marketing, distributive trade, management and office technology, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), economics, and

entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, World Commission on Environment and Development Report – Our Common Future (1987) defined sustainable development as that development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. The field of sustainable development can be conceptually broken into three constituents parts: social sustainability, economic sustainability and environmental sustainability (World Commission on Environment and Development Report – Our Common Future, 1987). Furthermore, people who are concerned about sustainable development suggest that meeting the needs of the future generation depends to a large extent on how well the present-day decision makers can balance social, economic and environmental objectives when making decisions today (The World bank Group, 2001).

Skill acquisition is the capability to be trained on a particular business occupation and become a specialist in. Lastly, social entrepreneurship can be described as the recognition, evaluation and the willingness to exploit business opportunities to solve social problems. Bornstein and Davis (2010) defined social entrepreneurship as the process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems that include poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuses and corruption in order to make life better for humanity, experiencing adequate high level social and practical skills, the graduates of BE programmes can engage in social entrepreneurship and sustainable entrepreneurial activities that will open the doors to their greatness and will cause them to be up and doing in job creation and social change. However, acquiring practical skills and social entrepreneurship needs to win over the mindset and ways of thinking of the BE graduates so that they create public value, pursue new opportunities, innovate and adapt, act boldly, control resources they are not in charge of and exhibit a strong sense of accountability (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). It is pertinent to note that maximum skill acquisition and social entrepreneurship would lead to sustainable development of entrepreneurial businesses and thus invoke the BE graduates conceiving business visions and turning them into business realities. Certainly, maximum skill acquisition and social entrepreneurship in business and social occupations is what could be considered as a tool leading to sustainable development of entrepreneurial businesses that BE graduates can be engaged in. Maximum skill acquisition can be defined as the highest level of skill an individual attained in a skill to perform any given job expertly, and effortlessly and with joy.

### **Importance of Practical Skill Acquisition and Social Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

Skill acquisition and social entrepreneurship are means of livelihood and therefore very vital in the life of every Nigerian citizen. The reason why many Nigerian technicians and social entrepreneurs earn more money than some university graduates is because the technicians and social entrepreneurs have acquired more skills than the theories the graduates were taught when they were in universities. The skills can take the technicians and social entrepreneurs to places they did not expect they would ever find themselves. Skill acquisition is the capacity to be trained on a particular business occupation and become a proficient professional in it. On the other hand, social entrepreneurship is a process which helps to improve the productive capacity of the society and provide the social change that propels economic change (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). It is a disappointment that there is terrible unemployment problem in many parts of Nigeria today.

This unemployment problem is giving many Nigerian youths sleepless night, It is one of the causes of rapid growth in criminal activities in many parts of the country. This is because skill acquisition and social entrepreneurship help to reduce the crime rate in many nations. In the absence of such skills, the youths start to think on many filthy activities to embark upon in order to make money since they do not have anything that they can call their own jobs or entrepreneurial businesses. However, if the youths have acquired maximum skills and social entrepreneurship in any given occupation, they will work and make money from their acquired skill. This will make them to live a comfortable life and do not disturb their life in any way. But, do we feel there is any relationship between somebody who has acquired skill on how to perform a particular job expertly and make money from it and unemployment? The respond is no because the skill he/she has already acquired can always speak for him or her.

According to Udo (2016) the acquisition of adequate practical skills and social entrepreneurship is a means of increasing the productive power of any individuals or nations and hence, a means to boosting sustainable development of entrepreneurship businesses in Nigeria. Consequently, Udo pointed out that the Nigerian society should recognize the fact that every citizen should be equipped to contribute

effectively to the welfare of the country. The acquisition of such practical and social skills is important because when efficient and skilful hands are employed in any fields of human endeavours, high productivity is usually achieved. Economically, maximum practical skills acquisition and social entrepreneurship by BE students and others will help to enrich the Nigerian society and in this way, make possible sustainable development of entrepreneurship. Okorie and Ezeji (1988) opined that a rich nation is one that is capable of meeting the economic, social, moral and political needs of the citizenry. Nigeria as a nation will enjoy sustainable development if BE students in particular and all other students in general acquire maximum skills acquisition and competencies in their specialties.

Furthermore, politically, practical skill acquisition makes possible the promotion of personal and national greatness. Okorie and Ezeji (1988) pointed out that the behaviour of an individual in a society or the behaviour of a nation in a community of nations may be influenced by the skills and competencies possessed by that individual or nation. Socially, the acquisition of maximum skills helps a person to provide amusement, happiness, love, affection and enjoyment to other individuals as well as the entire nation at large. It also helps to reduce criminal activities such as armed robbery, kidnapping, insurgency and other social vices among the youths. To the BE students, maximum skill acquisition helps them to be engaged in productive work either for themselves or for their employers of labour. This enables BE students to qualify for and hold productive employment as well as increases their productivity and earns more remuneration (Osuala, 1998). This is so because a BE graduate who acquired maximum skills is classified as someone who is up and doing. Such a graduate who has sufficient skills stand the opportunity of getting jobs from many establishments or even establishing his/her business venture. Indeed BE graduates who have obtained adequate business skills are being searched by many organisations. This happens as Business Organisations X, Y, and Z often stand in a queue struggling over one skilled and talented worker. Such BE graduates are being searched for because they can perform many functions expertly due to the highest level of skills that they possessed.

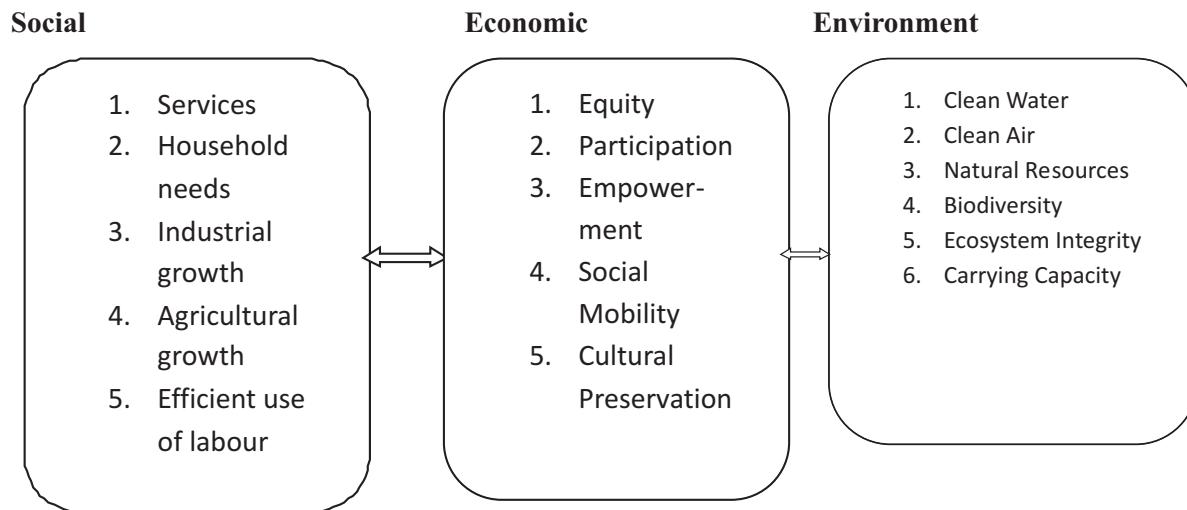
Self employment leads to sustainable development of entrepreneurial activities in the Nigerian economy. This is so because a BE graduate who has acquired a high level of skill in a particular business occupation could be a self-employed graduate. There are so many self-employed writers today who do not border themselves of carrying files from one place of work to another in search of job, their duties are freelance writing and they make a lot of money from their writing. In the same way, many successful businessmen and women whose names are heard in many parts of the Nigeria are entrepreneurs. A self employed individual can never go starving because the skill he/she acquired provides food for him/her on daily basis (Osuala, 1987). However one who lacks skill acquisition will find it difficult to be self employed because he/she has nothing to offer.

The ability of Nigerian BE graduates to generate employment for themselves and others through maximum skill acquisition is the key to the growth and sustainability of entrepreneurial activities. Today, the Nigerian governments are still finding it hard to offer jobs for their citizens because the citizens themselves lack necessary skills they needed to have acquired. A lot of job opportunities would have been generated for Nigerian graduates and other citizens if they were well equipped with skills. This is why it is necessary for government to organize practical skill acquisition academy for the teaming Nigerian youths as this will go a long way in providing skills for job creation. Other importance of acquiring maximum skills and competencies includes: it reduces the drop-out rates among the Nigerian youths; it helps to make the youths intelligent users of the products of technology as well as the most reliable vehicle for economic prosperity and diplomatic supremacy of the Nigerian nation.

### **The Difference Between Social and Commercial Entrepreneurship**

The main difference between social and commercial entrepreneurship has to do with the purpose or what the enterprise is trying to maximize (Bornstein and Davis (2010).. They added that for social entrepreneurs, the bottom line is to maximize some form of social impact, usually by addressing an urgent need that is being mishandled, overlooked or ignored by some institutions. For business entrepreneurs, the bottom line may be to maximize profits or to build an ongoing respected entity that provides value to

customers and meaningful work to employees. When both social and business entrepreneurship are combined by business education graduates, sustainable development will be the resultant effect. These benefits of maximum skill acquisition and social entrepreneurship are still there if BE students while in their colleges and universities will reason and change their negative attitudes towards the two concepts and turn to develop themselves sufficiently in these skills which are inherent in BE programmes of their institutions. Indeed, when students of BE fail to acquire both practical skills and social entrepreneurship from their programmes; this in turn affects sustainable development negatively. Below are the major components of sustainable development that BE graduates can start various entrepreneurial activities.



#### **Adopted from the World Bank Group 2001**

The three components of sustainable development are explained below:

According to Oxford University Press (1987), the social aspect of sustainable development looks at issues that impact people's lives directly and that either helps or hinders the process of improving the quality of lives. From the diagram above, the social aspect of sustainable development includes elements such as services, household needs, industrial growth, agricultural growth and efficient use of labour. According to Njoku and Nwosu (2011), some entrepreneurial activities available for BE graduates in Nigeria include trading in fast food, snacks, native delicacies, assorted soup and foo-foo, roasted yams and plantain, etc. Other entrepreneurial activities are clothing merchandise, fashion accessories and garment production as well as dye and bleaching.

The education sector has a lot of services to offer the Nigerian masses and these include establishment of day care centres, nursery and primary schools as well as the establishment of secondary schools and vocational training schools. Still others include making of non-alcoholic wine using locally made raw materials, making of washing detergents, fashion designing, establishing gymnastics and fitness centres, dietary centres, food processing and making of toys, table and floor mats from raffia. Social sustainability is often considered to be an area of priority because adequate skill acquisition has to be built upon it so that that could assist to contribute to sustainable development of entrepreneurship activities in the economy. In Nigeria, the curriculum contents of BE equip the recipients with skills and competencies in direct and personal services, and other commercial services and business activities that help men and women to carry out productive processes that contribute to sustainable development. Apart from that, BE skills and competencies of accounting, marketing, ICT and entrepreneurship tend to support industrial and agricultural growth and household needs by creating employment opportunities for households, thus enhancing sustainable development in one way or the other.

Economic aspect of sustainable development highlights another priority area towards starting entrepreneurial businesses in Nigeria. This aspect determines how limited resources needed to improve people's lives are distributed and used. It involves equity, participation, economic empowerment, social mobility and cultural preservation. Equity talks of fair play, impartiality, justice and even-handedness while participation requires BE graduates involvement in the sustainability of entrepreneurial businesses which in turn give way for their economic empowerment. The later can be said to take place if the relevant

government agencies give grants and credit facilities to help the BE graduates to start their entrepreneurial businesses for themselves. This will also enhance social mobility and cultural preservation. The BE curriculum contents of economic education impart BE skills and competencies in social mobility, cultural preservation, empowerment, participation and equity. Undeniably, the recipients of BE programmes are equipped with Economics curriculum objectives which emphasize economic literacy, prudent management of limited resources, respect for the dignity of labour and acquisition of economic knowledge for solving the economic problems of the society.

Consequently, the BE students are equipped with all the above economic knowledge and economic understandings. However some of them lack interest in the skill content of the curriculum, hence the level of skills and competencies acquired are poor. The implication of this is that roughly all of them chose to study economics during their tertiary education level, yet the level of skills acquired would not be sufficient to help them to contribute to sustainable entrepreneurial business ventures. Lastly, the environmental aspect of sustainable development looks at how the natural resources both renewable and non-renewable that make up our surrounding can help to sustain and better the lives of the people. This appears to be a non-priority area even the BE graduates can be engaged in entrepreneurial activities such as palm tree planting, clearing of duty public places and refuse disposal activities which can fetch them a lot of money to earn a living. Indeed, the acquisition of maximum BE skills by students of the BE programmes could help them to be engaged in the tapping and conversion of natural resources to the form that satisfy the needs of the Nigerian people nationwide.

### **Impediments to Practical Skill Acquisition of Social Entrepreneurship among BE Students**

Efforts to improve the standard and quality of acquisition of practical skill of social entrepreneurship inherent in BE courses to maximum level seems to be slowed down by a number of factors such as BE students' poor attitude, mindsets and poor values towards the skills inherent in BE programmes, curriculum structure, inadequate personnel, inadequate equipment and facilities for the teaching and learning of the skills, inadequate material resources for training and others.

Many of the BE students have very poor attitudes and mindset towards acquiring the skills inherent in BE programme courses. These have made them to develop low interest towards the skills inherent in the BE courses. Because of such negative attitudes and poor mindsets, the personal interest and willingness to concentrate and acquire maximum level of skills expected of them are not there. One of such negative attitudes is failure to sit down and make wise use of their time and energy in acquiring maximum skills for self-development and fulfilment. This is because time is a critical matter in everybody's lives. Consequently, the BE students fail to find time to engage themselves in practical exercises in courses such as in accounting, typewriting, word-processing, and shorthand to mention just but a few. When assignments and home work are given in any of the subjects listed above, it is often discovered that about ninety percent of the BE students in the class did not find time and/or take time to do it. Such students fail to take their studies seriously as they often come late to the lesson and even when they know that they are terribly late, yet they would be listening to pop music/other music or talking to people with their phones. A careful examination shows that they put more efforts in playing with their mobile phones and in making calls than they do with their studies. In fact, many of the BE students often left practical subject lessons to stand outside to answer calls as well as make calls. A great majority of them does not consider the length of time spent outside the classroom for such calls neither do they consider that an important part of the lessons .lost or missed.

In view of the utilitarian nature of maximum skills acquisitions, BE students should cultivate the habit of working hard, commitment and dedication to studies in order to achieve maximum skills acquisition needed by the employers of labour. Indeed, many business students who enrol for BE programmes do not show commitment and dedication to their studies because they are often attracted by very many unimportant issues during their studies. Such unimportant issues range from peer group pressure to friendship issues and joining the group of students popularly known as NFA – No future Ambition. The later group can be said to be students who do not worry or who are not concerned about their poor performances in their varsities. Business students should regard hard work, Commitment and dedicated to studies as the sole reason being in school. When they are driven by such forces, they will discover that they are breaking new grounds in their area of specialties and that they are acquiring maximum level of skills expected of them by labour market.

Furthermore, all business students should be determined to overcome the poor reading culture prevalent in the Nigerian society. In fact without a strong determination to overcome it, they will not be able to read their study materials and textbooks intensively and extensively. Globally, very many Nigerians are often associated with poor reading culture. This poor reading culture has affected the fabrics of our society so much so that many Nigerian students are held captive to it. Intensive and extensive reading is very pertinent because it equips the readers with all the information and knowledge required for success in the acquisition of BE skills and competencies. However, many Nigerian students hate being given voluminous materials to read and in this way miss out the knowledge, skills and competencies that go with such materials. Some of them will even nickname the lecturers trying to involve them in intensive and extensive reading exercises as a way of discouraging them. Such students forget that a well read student is bound to do far better than a poorly read one in all facets of life.

Another issue that affects maximum skills acquisition among BE students in particular is their refusal to use their money to buy study materials for their own training. Indeed, most of them prefer to use their money to buy expensive handsets and recharge cards to phone their parents, friends and relatives at the expense of their studies. They forget that there is no substitute for having the correct textbooks and other necessary study materials when it comes to learning a skill to the maximum level of it. The BE students should remember that having a personal laptop nowadays can help them to obtain knowledge, skills and competencies in information and communication technology which in turns will help them to secure a lucrative job in the global labour market. In disregard of this, BE students prefer to use their money to go for anything that does not help them to learn business subjects at all (Udo, 2016). The other issue about the negative attitude of Business Education students is their unwillingness to change their thinking and behaviour positively. It is common place that one hundred (100%) percent of Business Education Students' success in life or in their studies is dependent on positive attitude to whatever they are taught. Indeed, the willingness to change positively their attitudes, mindsets and behaviours will help them to acquire maximum skills expected of them for the labour market.

Unfortunately, many of the business students are often unwilling to change their negative attitudes. In fact, a majority of the business students in our colleges and the universities are often unwilling to concentrate and study the skill contents of business education to maximum level. For example, in the teaching and learning of computer keyboarding skills, many students only want to operate the computer keyboards with two or three fingers instead of their nine fingers. When teaching the students that they should use their nine fingers to type in order to achieve maximum skills level, those who are used to operating the keyboard with two or three fingers would remain obstinate and would be unwilling to change. Consequently, such students would not be able to achieve maximum skills level for the global labour market.

The next issue is impediments to maximum level of skills and competencies needed to enhance sustainable development of entrepreneurial activities in Nigeria is BE students poor attitude to work. They do not want to be hard-working enough in their chosen careers. It is quite unfortunate that many business students choose to study a particular business education course and yet refuse to work hard enough to acquire enough skills expected of them. They prefer to memorise the theory aspects of BE courses but have a disdain for skill acquisition. In fact often times, when serious-minded business education lecturers want their students to become serious and be very hard-working in their studies; such teachers are often called nicknames by those lazy students. A majority of the business students would not appreciate the efforts of their lecturers who want them to be hard working for their wellbeing in the future; instead they looked at such lecturers as being wicked, cruel and not cooperating with them.

Another impediment to acquiring maximum BE skills is the failure of governmental agencies, private organisations and local communities towards investment in the purchase of relevant equipment and facilities needed in the training of their BE students. The governments, parents and other stakeholders lack the will power to invest in the education of the BE students. They are not ready to buy and install modern facilities and equipment needed for practical assignments in their classes. For example, there are inadequate number of computers in almost all our colleges and universities. Also, there are inadequate word-processors and modern office technology facilities and equipment for the teaching-learning of information and communication technology (ICT). However, this is not the case in colleges and universities in Britain, China, Japan, America and other countries abroad. In fact, in those countries,

primary school pupils play with as well as learn with computers and other educational resources right from kindergarten. Here in our nation, kindergarten children study under shades of trees, sitting down on the fields, or blocks without seeing anything like a computer or even a word-processor. Indeed very many BE students often go from one level of their programme to another without properly acquiring the skills expected of them. In the end, such students cannot do well in skill acquisition throughout their stay in their institutions

The other factors impeding maximum skills acquisition in our colleges and universities include: inadequate trained personnel to teach the skills plus too many students admitted into one class, poor maintenance culture, lack of electricity and dishonest students and leaders. In the case of having too many children to be taught at a go, it is not surprising to see over five hundred students in one BE subject class. Many of them have no seat and no writing table. Even when there are tables and seats, too many students are squeezed into one seat. Consequently, they lack the comfort and comfortable atmosphere needed for maximum skills acquisition. Again, the curriculum structure seems not to allow enough hours for practical work, thus the BE students learn more of theory than practical skill acquisition.

In addition, there is poor maintenance culture in our colleges and universities. Consequently, the buildings in colleges and universities are dilapidated, and windows and doors are often broken down. Most of the Provosts, Rectors and Vice Chancellors are often not disturbed about the poor state of facilities and equipment in their institutions of higher learning. The government in power does not release money for yearly maintenance culture. In fact, most of our colleges and universities are worst than piggery farms in abroad. There is also lack of electricity in our colleges and universities for practical work and we have many dishonest students and leaders who are all out to steal and destroy whatever the government has made available to us in our colleges and universities. Lastly, the BE students who would like to establish their own entrepreneurship activities cannot see anywhere to go and obtain grants and micro-credit facilities to do. The governments, banks and other money lenders are not in position to give grants and credits to the BE students to establish and run their business ventures. This tends to limit sustainable development of entrepreneurial activities in the country.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the above impediments to maximum skills acquisition in BE, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The BE students should be willing to cultivate keen interest in the skills inherent in the BE programmes. Right from the start of the programme, they should be serious and value the skill aspect of the BE course contents. They have to develop good attitude towards the entire BE programme contents.
- ii. The BE students should also determine to be more industrious and to show appreciation to teachers who could make them to work harder.
- iii. They should learn to do away with poor reading culture and be prepared to read and practise intensively and extensively. The students should be seriously committed and dedicated to their practical contents of their programme.
- iv. Both BE students and their student leaders should learn to do away with all forms of dishonesty. Furthermore, provision of basic facilities, equipment and material resources for the teaching-learning of BE subjects should be made available.
- v. Proper investment should be made towards boosting the teaching and learning materials in BE in our schools and colleges.
- vi. Lastly, the governments should give grants and other micro-credit loans to help BE graduates to establish their own business ventures.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion of this write-up was that maximum skill acquisition among BE students could help to bring them into a productive life-style that will assist them to solve both the social and commercial problems facing their communities. The sustainable development of the Nigerian economy will surely

take place as the BE graduates and other graduates acquire adequate skills for the development of their own communities. As BE equips the recipients with firm-specific, industry-specific and general skills and competencies, this paper therefore appeals to all BE students to make sure they acquire maximum and sufficient skills and competencies that will help them to live and contribute to sustainable development of entrepreneurial business ventures in Nigeria.

## References

BBC English and Harper Collins Publishers (1992). *BBC English Dictionary, A Dictionary for the World*. London: Harper Collins Publishers.

Ekpenyong, L. E. (1988). *Vocational Content in the National Curriculum for Nigerian Secondary Schools: How Industry Can HelpΩ The Vocational Aspect of Education*, Vol XL(106) 57–62.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) *National Policy on Education*: Lagos: NERDC Press.

Okorie, J. U. & Ezeji, S. C. O. A. (1988). *Elements of guidance, vocational and career education*. Onitsha: Summer Educational Publishers Nigeria Limited

Osuala, E. C. (1998). *Foundations of vocational education* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Onitsha: Cape

Osuala, E. C. (1987). *A handbook of vocational-technical education for Nigeria*. Anambra State, Nigeria: Pacific Publishers

Oxford University Press (1987). From the *world commission on environment and development's* (the Brundtland Commission) report on Our Common Future, Oxford University Press.

Oxford Popular School Dictionary (2002). *Oxford popular school thesaurus, Tested in Schools, The student support centre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Telsang, M. T. (2007). *Industrial and business management*. New Delhi: S. Chand and Company Limited.

The Worldbank Group (2001) Website: <http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/sd.html>

Udo, M. P. (2016). *Principles and methods in Nigerian vocational business education*. Jos: Calvary Press

Udo, M. P. (2012). *Gender Dimensions in the teaching and learning of VBE in Nigerian senior secondary schools*. Unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Leeds, Leeds, England.