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Professionalizing Skills in Teaching and Learning of Business Studies to Persons with Special Needs

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at professionalizing skills in teaching and learning of Business Studies to persons with special needs. Business studies prepares and arms students with knowledge aimed at creating career awareness of saleable skills that will enable them to fit into the world of work. The career opportunities available to students who study Business Studies include; secretary, book-keeping, computer operator, cashier, clearing agent, marketer, etc. Skills that Persons with Special Needs can learn from studying Business Studies to help them become independent includes: tailoring, weaving, bricklaying, carpentry, painting, motor vehicle repairs, cobblers, typing etc. This can only be achieved with the help of a professional Business Studies Teacher. This paper x-rayed the concept of teaching, learning, and qualities of an effective teacher, strategies for professionalizing skills as well as challenges and prospects in teaching profession. The paper argues that the quality of teaching amongst some teachers seem not to have improved hence, they lack professional skills in teaching that qualifies them to be a competent teacher. Recommendations were proffered as a way forward. These include amongst others, the need for government to employ teacher's base on prerequisite qualifications and teachers should be allowed to attend workshops to enhance their teaching skills in line with modern trends in education.

Keywords: Business Studies, Professionalism, Teaching, Persons with Special needs

Introduction

Education is the process of helping individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits (Wikipedia, 2019). It is a fundamental right for all individuals, regardless of age, ethnicity, race, or social class. According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014), education equips individuals with the skills, knowledge, competencies, and values necessary to effectively function in society. Central to education is the role of the teacher, and it is widely believed that the quality of an education system is directly tied to the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2004). Regardless of how well-equipped an educational system may be, progress in human resource development is impossible without professional and well-trained teachers. The quality of teaching is thus a key determinant of an educational system's effectiveness. Teachers are expected to impart not only knowledge but also sound moral values. As Oriji (2010) notes, "Education unlocks the door to modernization, but the teacher holds the key."

A teacher is an individual who has received specialized training in skills, values, and knowledge in a formal institution to guide students effectively. Obidike (2016) describes a teacher as someone whose role is to instruct others, particularly children. The teacher is responsible for initiating the school's teaching and learning programs. Learning, which involves acquiring new information, skills, and behaviors that lead to personal change or adaptation, cannot occur without instruction. In this process, both the teacher and the student actively engage, with the teacher facilitating the learner's acquisition of knowledge and abilities. The teaching profession equips educators with the necessary skills, competencies, and attitudes to be effective in the classroom. However, this does not apply to individuals who lack stability or training in the profession. Teaching is a specialized career

choice, and those who pursue it do so in service to others. Teachers are the most valuable assets in the school system, and investing in their ongoing professional development is essential for ensuring quality education. Teachers with professional training are better equipped to make informed decisions, address challenges, connect theory with practice, and provide opportunities for students to meet high academic and professional standards, preparing them for future roles in society.

Education is based on the idea that students need to be in a mentally, physically, and emotionally healthy state to succeed. Schools must create a supportive learning environment that fosters inclusivity, catering to the needs of all students, regardless of their background or position. Business studies is a course designed to equip students with skills that will help them become self-reliant and entrepreneurial upon graduation. This subject offers career opportunities for students, including roles such as secretary, accountant, computer operator, cashier, stock broker, insurance broker, economist, marketer, and administrator (Ebge et al., 2013). Teaching business studies to students with special needs in regular classrooms requires specialized professional skills. These students benefit from practical and theoretical business knowledge, particularly as they face challenges in finding employment after graduation. Special education for these students is tailored to their individual needs and includes specialized materials, teaching methods, and monitoring to promote their independence. These students, referred to as exceptional children, may not be able to learn alongside their peers due to physical, emotional, or mental disabilities (Egaga, 2007). Fuandai (2010) further explains that special needs learners are those who cannot fully benefit from regular classroom experiences because of various conditions, which may not always be easily identifiable. Special needs students differ from others in terms of age, ability, learning styles, and more.

The quality of teaching in some classrooms has been compromised by teachers who lack the necessary professional skills and qualifications. In particular, teachers often lack the expertise to effectively teach students with special needs, hindering their ability to guide them toward meaningful learning outcomes in subjects like Business Studies. This lack of professional competence prevents students from acquiring the valuable skills that Business Studies offers. Students with special needs need to receive training that is aligned with their abilities and interests, providing them with skills relevant to the job market. This training can significantly improve their household's economic well-being and enable them to contribute meaningfully to the workplace. Empowering individuals with special needs not only enhances their economic value but also reduces the caregiving burden on their families, allowing them to engage in productive activities (Cobley, 2011). Therefore, professionalising the teaching of Business Studies is critical to achieving the subject's goals, as it requires the expertise of a qualified and skilled teacher.

Concept of Professionalism

Professionalism in teaching refers to the set of formal and informal standards that educators are expected to adhere to in their roles. It involves engaging with students, colleagues, administrators, parents, and the broader community in a respectful and productive manner, fostering an environment conducive to effective learning. Professionalism is reflected in the consistent approach that teachers take in their educational practices, including staying updated in their subject knowledge, teaching at appropriate developmental levels, and collaborating with other educators to design effective teaching strategies. It is a combination of traits unique to the profession, encompassing personal development, teamwork, teaching skills, and communication.

Yusuf et al. (2014) define a profession as a career that requires specialized skills and knowledge in a specific field, usually associated with high social status. It involves expertise gained through advanced education and training, focusing on intellectual capabilities rather than physical labor. Dada & Fadokun (2010) assert that a profession requires specialized intellectual study and training, aimed at providing skilled services to society for a fee or salary. Orubite (2010) further describes a profession as a paid occupation that necessitates extensive training and formal education. Mishra (2008) adds that a profession involves specialized intellectual study to provide skilled services or advice for a defined fee or salary. According to NTI (2007), a profession requires deep, specialized knowledge, skills, and attitudes to deliver a particular service to the community. Amaele & Amaele (2003) emphasize that a profession demands advanced training, along with acquiring specific knowledge, skills, and values, guided by technical language, traditions, and norms. A professional teacher is one who holds the necessary qualifications and licenses to teach in formal educational settings and supports their practice with a strong foundation in educational theory.

A professional teacher is expected to possess certain qualifications and attributes, including expertise in their subject area, effective communication skills, empathy, good classroom management, collaboration, patience, creativity, and more. However, the question remains whether teachers truly embody these professional qualities. Yusuf et al. (2014) point out that in Nigeria, teaching is often pursued by individuals who have not succeeded in

other careers or who view teaching as a temporary job to engage in more profitable ventures. In the past, teachers were highly respected and regarded in Nigerian society, but today, they are often seen as individuals who could not secure more prestigious roles. As a result, teaching is now perceived as a fallback option for those seeking temporary employment while pursuing other career goals.

A professional teacher acquires skills that enhance their teaching career. To be effective, teachers must possess a wide range of professional development skills, in addition to subject matter knowledge and teaching experience. Modern educators need to be proficient not only in basic skills but also in new competencies. These skills include:

- a. **Adaptability:** Teachers must be flexible and capable of adjusting to changing circumstances. With evolving administrative expectations, learning standards, student behaviors, and lesson planning, the ability to adapt is essential for every modern teacher.
- b. **Confidence:** Confidence is an important quality that teachers should have, not only in themselves but also in their students and colleagues. A confident teacher can inspire others to believe in themselves, and their self-assurance can help foster a positive learning environment.
- c. **Communication:** Strong communication skills distinguish a teacher by helping to alleviate fear and facilitating effective interactions with students, parents, and colleagues. Good communication is vital for building rapport and ensuring smooth classroom dynamics.
- d. **Continuous Learning:** As the world, curriculum, and educational technologies evolve, teachers must go beyond the basics to engage in continuous learning. Staying updated helps teachers remain effective and successful in their roles.
- e. **Leadership:** An effective teacher serves as a mentor, guiding students toward the right path. Teachers lead by example, acting as role models who motivate and encourage students to reach their potential.
- f. **Innovation:** Being innovative involves not just trying new methods, but also questioning students, making connections to real-world scenarios, and fostering a creative mindset. It encourages students to take risks and collaborate, cultivating an environment of creative growth.

Concept of Teaching

Teaching is considered a noble and esteemed profession, often referred to as the "mother of all professions." It involves the organized presentation of facts, ideas, skills, and techniques to students. According to Adesina (2005), teaching consists of actions aimed at fostering learning, with the deliberate effort of an experienced individual to impart knowledge, information, skills, attitudes, and beliefs to someone less experienced. However, Ayeni (2011) views teaching as a process that involves bringing about desirable changes in learners' so as to achieve specific outcomes. The National Teachers' Institute {NTI} (2007) defines teaching as a series of activities and processes designed to help individuals learn what is considered valuable and meaningful within the framework of literacy or Western education. The ultimate aim of teaching is to facilitate learning.

A society cannot progress or succeed without a robust and effective teaching profession. Teaching is generally recognized as a public service that requires teachers to possess expert knowledge and specialized skills, which are acquired and maintained through ongoing study. It also demands personal and collective responsibility for the education and well-being of the learners entrusted to them. Teachers are seen as potential agents of change, capable of freeing humanity from ignorance, fear, misunderstanding, conflict, and other societal challenges, making significant contributions to national development.

Yusuf et al. (2014) noted that in Nigeria, teaching has often been seen as a profession for individuals who could not succeed in other careers or those who view it as a part-time job while pursuing more lucrative opportunities. In the past, teachers were highly respected in Nigerian society. However, today, they are often regarded as people who could not find other meaningful occupations and are sometimes viewed as occupying teaching as a temporary job until they find a more desirable career. This has led to the perception of the teaching profession in Nigeria as a fallback option for those searching for alternative employment.

Concept of learning

Zailani (2015) defines learning as a lasting change in behavior that occurs as a result of practice and experience. Likewise, Ajoku (2004) describes learning as a permanent alteration in behavior brought about by experience. Learning involves a reaction from the learner to an external stimulus or an action performed by the learner, and it is not merely the result of maturation, growth, or the passage of time. Therefore, teaching and learning cannot occur effectively if the teacher lacks the necessary professional skills. Learning thrives in a well-managed classroom environment. In contrast, a poorly managed class leads to chaos, with students engaging in disruptive behaviors such as absenteeism, noise, truancy, fighting, inattentiveness, and aggression. An effective teacher mitigates these issues through proper classroom management techniques. This underscores the importance of

professionalizing the teaching and learning of business studies.

Concept of Business Studies

Business studies is a subject designed to equip students with knowledge that promotes career awareness and the development of valuable skills, enabling them to transition into the workforce with minimal difficulty (Ohaka, 2017). It is one of the vocational subjects taught at the junior secondary school (JSS) level and is a practical course that should be taught in a way that mirrors real-life scenarios. Business studies encompasses various areas, including office practice, bookkeeping, commerce, keyboarding, and computer studies. The general objectives of business studies are as follows:

1. To provide students with foundational knowledge in Business Studies.
2. To develop basic skills required for office occupations.
3. To prepare students for advanced training in Business Studies.
4. To offer foundational skills and orientation for students who may not pursue further education but aim to enter the workforce.
5. To equip students with essential personal skills for future application.
6. To link knowledge and skills to the broader national economy.

To achieve these goals, it is crucial to address the misconception that Business Studies is a subject that requires minimal preparation and can be taught by anyone. This is far from the truth. As a prevocational subject for junior secondary schools, it is essential to allocate adequate human and material resources to achieve the desired outcomes. Business Studies is a hands-on course that should be taught practically, using real-life situations, and offers various career opportunities for students upon graduation. These career opportunities include roles such as secretary, accountant, transporter, computer operator, cashier, clearing agent, stock broker, insurance broker, economist, marketer, and administrator (Ebge et al., 2013). These career prospects can be realized with the guidance of a trained and qualified professional teacher, which is why teaching is considered a profession.

Persons with Special Needs

Persons with special needs are those with significant sensory deficits or unusual high intellectual capacities that are not properly addressed in the regular program, (Unegbu, 2006). Children with special needs are people who have physical, learning, visual, mental or hearing impairment. The impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on the children's ability to perform normal day to day activities that boarder on their survival within the society." These children cannot benefit maximally from regular classroom teaching /learning experiences on account of the physical, mental, emotional, and other sundry disabilities which may not be easily identified, therefore they need special attention in the classroom. Persons with Special needs can be made useful and productive by sensitizing them on the need for skill acquisition. Educating them in skill acquisition will make them productive in nation development. Neglecting persons with special needs who constitute an integral part of Nigeria population is tantamount to wastage of human resources. The unusual demands of these special children compel teachers and relevant professionals to device means of accommodation and modification in terms of lesson content, instructional methods, materials, learning environment, lesson presentation etc. because they cannot learn with maximum benefit without the use of special approaches, accommodations and modifications in school and work environment. Skills that Persons with Special Needs can learn from studying Business Studies to help them become independent includes: tailoring, weaving, bricklaying, carpentry, painting, motor vehicle repairs, cobblers, typing etc.

The Role of the Teacher in Teaching Persons with Special Needs

The teacher's role in the teaching and learning process is crucial and cannot be overstated, as they are regarded as facilitators whose primary goal is to utilize the necessary resources to achieve predetermined objectives. The teacher is responsible for guiding, motivating, and assisting students in their learning journey. They also have the duty to manage the classroom environment, regardless of whether it is ideal or not. Many students rely significantly on what they learn, and teachers are often seen as surrogate parents, providing care and guidance while the students are in school.

Teaching learners with special needs require a unique set of skills and qualities. Here are some of the professional skills:

1. **Patience and Empathy:** Understanding and relating to students' challenges and emotions.
2. **Knowledge of Disabilities:** Familiarity with various special needs, such as Autism, ADHD, and physical disabilities.
3. **Individualized Instruction:** Adapting teaching methods to meet each student's unique needs and learning style.
4. **Behavior Management:** Developing strategies to support students with behavioral challenges.

5. **Communication Skills:** “Communication is fundamental to your success as a teacher because it is the cornerstone to how students absorb instruction, curriculum and guidance.

All children process information in their own way but students with learning challenges may have impairment that limit speech, hearing, vision or social awareness. As such developing effective communication methods enables you to convey instructions, provide feedback and address concerns that ensure everyone is on the same page in supporting students’ growth.”

Strategies for Professionalizing Skills in Teaching and Learning of Business Studies.

Professionalizing skills in Teaching Business Studies is crucial for educators to stay updated and effective in their teaching practices. The following strategies will assist teachers in teaching and learning of business studies in schools.

1. **Stay current with industry development:** Engage with business publications, attend conferences and network with professionals to stay informed about the latest trends and best practices.
2. **Develop your subject matter expertise:** Pursue further education or certifications in business-related fields like finance, marketing or entrepreneurship to enhance your knowledge and credibility.
3. **Improve your teaching methods:** Explore innovative and interactive approaches like case studies, simulations, and project-based learning to engage students and promote experiential learning.
4. **Leverage Technology:** Utilize digital tools, such as educational software, on-line resources and multi-media materials to enhance teaching and learning.
5. **Foster industry:** Invite guest speakers, organize field trips, and encourage internship to provide students with practical insights and real-world.
6. **Develop soft skills:** Focus on building essentials skills like communication, teamwork and problem-solving to prepare students for the modern business environment.
7. **Pursue professional certifications:** Consider obtaining certifications like the Certified Business Educator (CBE) or the Certified Association in Management (CAM) to demonstrate your expertise and commitment to professional development.
8. **Join professional organizations:** Participate in associations like the National Business Education Association (NBEA) or the Association for Teaching Entrepreneurship (ATE) to connect fellow educators and stay updated on the best practices.
9. **Engage in peer mentoring:** Collaborate with colleagues to share effective teaching strategies, resources and experiences.
10. **Pursue ongoing professional development:** Regularly attend workshops, webinars, and conferences to stay updated on new teaching methods, technologies and industry trends.

Challenges and Prospects in Teaching Business Studies in Nigeria

The primary goal of business studies is to equip students with the knowledge needed to foster career awareness and develop marketable skills, enabling them to seamlessly transition into the workforce (Ohaka, 2017). Researchers such as John (2006) and Akinduyo (2014) highlighted several challenges faced by the teaching profession, which include:

1. Low wages, insufficient motivation, and inadequate teachers' welfare
2. Lack of in-service training opportunities
3. Low professional status within society
4. Insufficient budget allocation for the teaching profession
5. Poor working conditions (e.g., inadequate infrastructure and amenities)
6. A high number of unqualified staff
7. Inadequate entry qualifications.

There is the possibility that teaching profession will achieve its aims and objectives as stipulated in the National Policy, if Policy makers and stakeholders religiously carry out the planned purposes. Unfortunately, the goal of teacher education has not been fully achieved. It is believed that when these conditions are met, the teaching profession will be geared towards preparing sound and skillful teachers because the amount of time and quality of learning that takes place in school depends on the competence of the teachers in the school (Obanya, 2002). Teaching should be a type of training opportunities that will enable students acquire knowledge, competence and skills to explore, investigate, experiment, create, practice and innovate socio-economic development and education excellence. Adequate attention should be given to teachers in terms of improving their working conditions and provision of necessary materials needed for teaching and learning. By so doing, teaching profession will no longer be regarded as the last resort for those who cannot get employment.

Conclusion

Teaching is a complex activity which also requires multi-variant and dynamic approaches. It’s aim, principally is

to achieve learning. Because of its complex nature, many people have some shallow understanding of the concept, thereby reducing it to anything that goes between one person and another or a group. Professionalizing skills in teaching business studies to persons with special needs is essential because these individuals will be armed with knowledge aimed at creating career awareness of saleable skills such as weaving, carpentry, welding, bricklaying, tailoring etc. This will enable them to fit into the world of work with little or no difficulty. These skills will help them become self-reliant, self-development and contribute to the growth of the society. Hence they are independent and not a burden to their families. The role of the teacher in teaching-learning process in the class is one of the success benchmark of the effectiveness of learning for the students. However, challenges in teaching such as low wages, poor motivation and teachers' welfare, lack of in-service trainings, Poor budgetary allocation to teaching profession, Poor work environment (e.g. infrastructures amenities) etc must be addressed. Professional development of teachers to teach children with special needs is evitable because these persons must be cared for in the society for the society to be a better place.

Suggestions

1. Teachers should be sponsored to workshops to enhance their skills in line with modern trends in education.
2. Teachers of persons with special needs should shift from teaching methods that only equips them with skills to become job seekers to a productive goals-oriented teaching methods.
3. Government should provide enough infrastructural facilities such as well-ventilated classrooms, electricity supply, and well equipped business studies laboratory with ICT gadgets as well as assistive devices for persons' with special needs to enhance effective teaching of Business Studies.

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