

**A PERISCOPIC VIEW OF CHALLENGES OF COMMERCIAL EDUCATION; A STUDY OF
SOME SELECTED SCHOOLS IN OWERRI**

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Abstract

Commercial Education has been widely accepted as a formal method of training and advancement f commercial schools differs from the secondary technical schools yet the inherent problems of education in any developing country such as lack of fund to carry out programmes that could be of benefit to the public. The proprietors employ only a few qualified teachers who stay a short while and leave due to poor incentive and lack of good conditions of service. Students attitude towards commercial education are discouraging due to poor learning environment. Lack of funds by the government for the provision of necessary facilities contributed to factors hindering the development of commercial schools in the state. Based on the findings some recommendations were commercial school teachers should be recruited on their qualification as is the case with the secondary school counterparts. The government and proprietors of the institutions should work together to make the skill acquisition sector result-oriented.

Introduction

Commercial /education has not been given proper attention by the Nigerian government. Initially, it was found in organized form in private business schools which was managed and financed by indigenous Nigerian known as proprietors who in most cases were not professionally qualified. In rare cases did they care to employ qualified teacher or provide adequate facilities (materials, and equipments) for study. They scarcely border themselves much about what their students would graduate out to be.

During the colonial era, our colonial masters concentrated mostly on the development and well being of the general education on Grammar Schools only. They includes little in their curricular of book-keeping and Arithmetics. Besides, the earliest type of known Business Education was the apprenticeship system of t5raining Book-keepers. In this system, an experienced Book-keeper could one take up an assistant and train him on how to keep certain books. Those books and records being kept as at that time failed to give the detailed information accurately for further referencing. With the expansion of business centers in big and modern cities the need for more book-keepers arose and became very necessary. The result was that the apprenticeship system of training book-keepers became inadequate since they could no long meet the demand for book-keepers. As a matter of fact, private teachers began to teach book-keeping, shorthand and typing writing which led to the establishment of private commercial schools.

It should be noted that the private commercial schools by 1959 had never received any approval from the colonial educational authorities; especially here in the former eastern region of Nigeria, it was after Independent in 1960 that Nigeria Educational Authority began to look into commercial school as instruction for the post primary education. This consideration accorded to those institutions by the government attracted financial assistance from them.

Despite the fact that some recognition has been accorded to commercial institutions, many of them still lack materials and equipments for study as well as qualified teachers. The result was that many students graduated from commercial schools without knowing how to type, drill or write shorthand or balance simple

financial records, and such student found it derogatory to tell their fellow students that they were in commercial schools, instead the preferred to be students in grammar school.

Nevertheless, the growing needs for secretaries and stenographers since after independence promoted the public awareness regarding the studying of Business Education in Nigeria. Some proprietors in some commercial institutions broadened their curricular to include more commercial subjects (Typewriting, shorthand, book-keeping, office practice, etc). These schools absorbed many primary school leavers, where some were able to pass General Certificate in Education (GCE) and Royal Society of Art (RSA) examination which others found difficult to cope with.

From the late of ... and early... some comprehensive secondary schools were established by individuals and communities these new set of institutions which were embracing both Grammar, commercial and technical subjects began to attract government interest and later approved it was from these comprehensive schools and commercial schools which included commercial subjects in their curricular that Business Education course be began to enlarge at post secondary schools levels. Despite the fact that government has approved some commercial schools yet much attention has not been given to it as to improve in certain areas.

Statement of Problems

The researcher have observed that most commercial schools established in the state with special reference of Owerri Municipal Council some years back are not growing some have collapsed particularly in the rural area. This lack of expansion and subsequent collapse of commercial schools are of concern to the research. In an attempt to find out the factors responsible for these the researcher would like to look at or concentrate on the difficulties confronting commercial education in order to find solution to it. Education is a continuous programme with the following objectives.

1. To educate individual for and about business
2. To provide a continuous programme of planned learning experiences designed to equip individuals to fulfill effectively three roles.
 - a. To produce and distribute goods and services.
 - b. To use the result of production as consumers.
 - c. To make judicious socio-economic decision as citizens.
3. To provide career information that help students relate their interests, needs and ability to occupational opportunities in business.
4. To provide educational opportunities for students preparing for careers in fields other than business to acquire business knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in these careers.

The basic purpose of commercial education is to give students an awareness understanding of the business world so that they can explore the various opportunities and be able to make meaningful career choice and decisions what these educationist were pointing at is that for an office to function effectively and for work that that is (office work) to appear in an organized form, business education could be given a dues consideration. Vocational skill , personnel, competencies and efficiencies to government, academic institutions, organization, industries and commerce and other public and private sectors, with her manpower4 needs, one can wisely say that commercial education is indispensable.

With regards to the objectives of commercial education derived from above statements, the question then arises as to know how these objectives are being achieved in our commercial schools.

- **Operation of Commercial Education**

Prof Emenyonu was commenting on the deplorable condition of our environments which tend to prevent some students from attending such schools, especially those commercial school students who received teaching and learning under related buildings where day to day. In addition to above mentioned condition of commercial education institutions, the number of the existing commercial schools are not enough to accommodate the population of people who desire commercial education.

Merenini in Nigeria statesman of February 22nd 1980 (wanted a model commercial school system) has this to say “The government is urged to recognized the importance of commercial education by establishing and approving more commercial schools. And to do this, a sort of overhauling of commercial

schools generally is inevitable". In a related view, Emeti (1980:3) says that "commercial inclinations are impeded".

Based on the problem of non-provision of finance for establishment and running of commercial institution by the government private individuals who feel that they worth such challenge have been left with the task. Some of them built one or two structures by name of schools buildings while others rent buildings besides, they employ any person at their reach who may or may not be qualified to teach any business or commercial subjects provided that he or she accepts what to pay him/her as salary. Some of these so called commercial school teachers are job seekers who resort to teaching and drop out immediately they find better job.

Those being the case the available ones lack teaching skills and methods that are supposed to be used in teaching and learning process in business and commercial subject since they have never been exposed to such methods. As a result their products, that is the students could not achieve what are expected of them. In compliance with one of the objectives of the National Policy on Education (1981:8) states that "The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society". Any education that does not get the child prepared for the task ahead and for adult life is not desirable and worth nothing. On the relevance of education given to students of the schools. "True education should train a child to live useful as a child to speak wisely as a child does so that when he becomes a man, he will live, speak, feel and think similarly as a man. "Banjo was trying to emphasize on the essence of functional education which makes one to be versatile and all round in efficiency.

In addition to what the contributors had said, students who attend commercial school feel so shy, inferior and cannot compete with their secondary school counterparts. In fact they have the greater percentage number in any organizational set up.

Sherry R. (1980:10) states "Rather than having students who came out of schools to clean the offices and files and put the room back into pre-offices arrangement. We can offer students more opportunities to further develop mechanical, organizational and human relation skills". In a related view,

All these problems associated to students of commercial schools or business education does not depict their in-abilities to cope with the academic works as it relates to commercial education but due to lack of well planned and structured programmes. Worst still, the number of facilities like typewriters, calculators, textbooks, etc that are deplorable in the commercial schools are nothing to write home about.

Having reviewed the related literature on commercial education in Imo State, one is tempted to ask what contribution is this research work is making to knowledge?

Analysis of Data

Test of Research Question I

R Q 1 Does poor funding of commercial schools lead to their employment of unqualified teachers?

Three questionnaire item were applied in the test of R Q 1, namely question 2,3 and 6

Q2 Almost all the commercial school teachers are unqualified due to poor funding

Table shows that 69.17% representing 83 number of the respondents agreed that teachers of commercial schools are unqualified, 13.33% representing 16 number of the respondents were not sure of the points while 17.5% (21) disagreed. This implies that research question one is accepted.

Q3 Some qualified teachers who get employed in the commercial schools stay for at short period as a result of poor salary

Table 1, reveals that 53.33% representing 64 numbers of the respondents agree that some qualified teachers of commercial schools only stay for a brief period as a result of poor salary, 36.37% (44) disagreed with the point while 10% (12) remained undecided. This implies that research question one is accepted.

Q6 Unqualified teachers are interested to seek for employment in commercial schools.
 Table 1 also respondents agreed that commercial schools employed unqualified teachers, 6.66% (8) were not disagreed. From the data above, it is agreed that poor funding leads to the employment of unqualified teachers in the commercial schools, thereby accepting research question one.

Table 1
 Responses to questionnaire items bearing on research question one
 Questionnaire item

	Agreed	%	Undecided	%	Disagreed	%	Total	%
2	83	69.17	16	13.33	21	17.5	120	100
2	64	53.33	12	10.00	44	36.67	120	100
6	89	74.17	8	6.66	21	19.17	120	100

Test of Research Question 2

RQ2: The low regard of commercial schools in the state can it be as a result of inadequate provision of facilities and equipments?

Three questionnaire items were used to test this research question they are questions 5,6,11.

Question 4: Inadequate facilities and equipment are posing a lot of problems for teaching and learning of commercial subjects, the data in table 2: shows that 60% (72) of the respondents were of the view that inadequate provision of equipment contributed to low standard of commercial education, while 21.67% (26) were not so sure and 18.33% (22) of the respondents did not agree with the statement. This concludes that majority of the respondents agree that inadequate provision of facilities and equipment is a hindrance to the commercial school development thereby accepting research question two.

Question 5: The government provides enough equipment and facilities to the commercial schools.

In table 2, 9.17% representing 11 number of respondents agreed that the government provides enough equipment and facilities to commercial schools while 6.66% representing 8 number of the respondents strongly disagreed with the fact, thereby rejecting the fact that government provides enough facilities and equipments to commercial schools. This implies that research question two is accepted.

Question 11 The commercial school lack adequate materials for effective teaching and learning process.

Table 2, also indicates that 63.33% representing 76 numbers of the respondents strongly agreed that commercial schools lack adequate materials for effective teaching and learning process. While 7.5% (9) were not so sure and 29.17% (35) disagreed the fact. By majority of the respondents agreement with the fact indicates that research question two is accepted.

Table 2
 Responses to questionnaire items bearing on research question two
 Questionnaire item

	Agreed	%	Undecided	%	Disagreed	%	Total	%
42	72	60.00	26	21.67	22	18.33	120	100
5	11	9.17	8	6.66	101	84.17	120	100
11	76	63.33	9	7.50	35	29.17	120	100

Test of Research question three

Research question three commercial school graduates are not able to perform in the field, and this leads to decision of commercial school. In the test of research question three, two questionnaires items were used, they include question 9 and 12.

RQ3: Do graduates of commercial schools perform well in the field?

Question 9: Commercial schools are inadequate enough as to cater for the variety off interests and capabilities of the learners.

Table 3 reveals that the responses gathered from this question shows that 51.67% representing 62 numbers of the respondents agreed that commercial schools are not adequate enough to produce capable learners, 10.83% (13) remained undecided, while 37.50% (45) disagreed the fact. This indicates that majority of the respondents agreed that graduates of commercial schools are not able to defend their field of learning which leads to divisions of commercial schools. This implies that research question three is accepted.

Question 12: Some of the graduates of commercial schools are looked down in the society due to their academic performance.

Table 3: analyzed that 75.83% (91) of the respondents were in agreement that some of the graduates of commercial schools were not regarded in the society 10% (12) of the respondents disagree with the statement. While 14.17% (77) remained undecided Majority of the respondent agreed to the question, thereby accepting research question three.

Table 3

Responses to questionnaire items bearing on research question three

Questionnaire item

	Agreed	%	Undecided	%	Disagreed	%	Total	%
92	62	51.67	13	10.83	45	37.50	120	100
12	91	75.83	17	14.17	12	10.00	120	100

Test of research 4

Research question four proprietors and management staff of commercial school are the qualified both academic and professional

Three questionnaire items were used to test this research question 4. They are questions 8,10,15.

Question 8:

Commercial school teachers and their proprietors do not regularly attend seminars, workshops and in-service course organized by the government. The data analyzed in able 4 shows that 90% (108) of the respondents agreed that proprietors and their staff do not regularly attend seminars and workshops organized by the government 6.67% (8) of the respondents were not so sue while 3.33% (4) disagreed with the fact. This implies that research question 4 is accepted.

Question 10: The proprietors and teachers of the commercial schools are not recognized in the society like other teachers.

Table 4 reveals that 60% (72) of the respondents were of the opinion that commercial schools staff were not recognized in the society, while 21.6% (26) were not sure of the fact and 18.35% respondents agreed that commercial school proprietor and staff were not recognized in the society like other teachers research question four is accepted.

Question 15: The proprietors of commercial schools have little or no knowledge of school administer

Table 4 shows 52.50% (634) of the respondents agreed that the proprietors of commercial schools have little or no knowledge of school administration while 10.83% (13) remained undecided and 36.67% (13) disagreed with the point from this indication, majority of the respondent agreed with the question thereby accepting research question four

Table 4:

Responses to Questionnaire item bearing on research Question four

Questionnaire item

	Agreed	%	Undecided	%	Disagreed	%	Total	%
8	108	90.00	8	6.67	4	3.33	120	100
10	22	60.00	26	21.67	22	18.33	120	100
15	63	52.50	13	10.83	44	36.67	120	100

Test of Research Question 5

R.Q.5: Does the government contribute to financing of commercial schools?

In the test of research questions, three questionnaire items were used. They are questions 7,13 and 14

Question 7: Certain programmes of study are not run by commercial schools due to lack of materials.

Table 5 indicates that 75.83% presenting 91 numbers of respondent agreed that commercial schools do not run certain programmes of study due to lack of materials while 14.17% (17) remained undecided and 10% (12) of the respondents disagreed the fact. This shows that necessary assistance not provided by the government affects the programme of the school thereby accepting research question 5.

Question 13: State Education Service Board is very cordial to commercial schools in terms of incentives and co-operation.

In table 5, the data analyzed shows that 21.67% (26) of the respondent agreed that state education service board co-operated cordially with commercial schools, 66.67% (80) of the respondents strongly disagreed while, 11.66% (14) remained undecided. The large majority of the respondents strongly disagreed that state education service board co-operated with commercial schools cordially thereby accepting research question 5.

Question 14: The State Education Board always attends with urgency every requests of commercial school. Table 5 reveals that 10.83% representing 13 number of respondents agreed that State Education Board always attend to the request of commercial schools urgently 20% (24) were not sure of the statement, while 67.17% representing 83 number of respondents strongly disagreed the fact. This indicates that majority of the respondents confirmed that government does not assist the commercial school, which led to sub-standard of commercial schools. Research question 5 is accepted.

Table 5

Responses to questionnaire items bearing on Research Question 5.

Questionnaire item

	Agreed	%	Undecided	%	Disagreed	%	Total	%
7	91	75.83	17	14.17	12	10.00	120	100
13	26	21.67	14	11.66	80	66.67	120	100
15	13	10.83	24	20.00	83	69.17	120	100

Conclusions

In the course of study the researcher observed that commercial education has been widely accepted as a formal method of training and advancement of commercial and technical know-how in this case Imo State is not left out especially Owerri Municipal Council. Although the academic curriculum of commercial school differ from secondary technical school yet the inherent try problems of education in any developing country are inadequate facilities and equipments, lack of qualified teachers poor working environment and other incentives, contributed to factors hindering the development of commercial school in th state this is noted to have affected academic pursuance and acquisition of skilled labour force the study has further show the apparent nonchalant attitude of the government towards the development of commercial education it is however noted that people especially students are enthusiastic to learn the skill in commercial school but the zeal seem to be frustrated by lack of maintenance, poor remuneration and inadequate facilities.

In conclusion of the study it is seen that commercial education is accepted to be relevant to our society and that the government and the proprietors of the institution should work together to make this skill acquisition sector result oriented.

Recommendations

In view of all the findings the following recommendation were made.

1. Commercial school teachers should be recruited on their qualification, as is the case with their secondary school counterparts and adequate attention should be paid to their condition of service and other incentives.
2. Government in collaboration with the proprietors of approved commercial schools should set up a standing committee with responsibilities of monitoring the strict implementation of the approved guidelines for the operation of commercial school.
3. A standardized curriculum should be put in place for all commercial schools to adopt.

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