

Innovative Implementation of Business Education Curriculum in Tertiary Institutions in South-East Nigeria for Relevance in Modern Day economy

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Abstract

This study aimed at exploring innovative implementation measures that can be taken in order to make business education curriculum relevant for the modern day economy. Specifically, the study aimed at examining the modern day needs of the business education graduate, ascertaining the skill gaps that exist amongst business education graduates and interventions that can be carried out in order to bridge these skill gaps. A total of 380 respondents, made up of business education postgraduate students drawn from different tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria were used for this study. Structured questionnaires, validated by three business education experts from the University of Nigeria of Nigeria. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was used for data analysis, with Cronbach Alpha used for testing reliability. The findings from the study showed that the use of teacher-centred form of learning, lack of use of presents-day business case studies, teaching of obsolete topics and concentration on lower cognitive levels in teaching and evaluation pose significant challenges militating against business education in Nigeria from being relevant for the modern day knowledge economy. The study thus recommended that learner-centred mode of teaching be applied in teaching business education in tertiary institutions and also evaluation of higher cognitive levels to be implemented in order to improve student interest, improve instruction delivery and make the subject more relevant to modern day realities.

Keywords: *Business education, curriculum, innovation, knowledge economy, assessment.*

Introduction

Business Education is a dynamic subject that involves teaching students the fundamentals, theories and processes of business. The aim of business education is to equip students with the skills, knowledge, attitude and aptitude that will enable them to contribute positively and effectively to the business world (Agomuo, 2005). Business education is a dynamic subject, relevant in creating employment, economic development both nationally and globally (Ajisafe; Bolarinwa and Edeh, 2015). It is a subject that is taught at the secondary school and tertiary

levels, with the aim of producing graduates who are skilled with the attitudes, knowledge and skills that are needed to engage in entrepreneurship and business management (Njoku and Nwosu, 2002). The components of business education include; elements of accounting/ finance, marketing and office management. Business education, students are exposed to general business principles, taking initial courses on accounting/finance, human resources, statistics, marketing, economics and information systems (Amoor, 2010). At the tertiary level, the term Business Education is sometimes considered synonymous with education in the broad areas of business

administration in which the objective is primarily preparatory for professional careers in the administration and management of business enterprises (Oliver, 2008). Business education is also used to designate the preparation of teachers of business and economics both at the secondary and tertiary levels of education.

For Business Education to be effectively taught and learnt, it needs a curriculum that is well tailored to the needs of learners. A curriculum can be described as a document that comprises of the goals and objectives of a particular course of study (Shao-Wen, 2012). It includes the subject matter or content, the learning experiences and evaluation. It also spells out the materials/resources that are required to enhance the teaching and learning of the subject (Amadioha, 2016). According to Olaitan (2003), curriculum is defined as the totality of student experiences that occur in the educational process. It is a planned sequence of instructions that are aimed at equipping students with experiences aimed towards achieving specific goals.

Curriculum implementation is an important aspect of education at all levels. It is an activity that involves ensuring that the needed knowledge and competencies are optimally transferred to the end user, which is the learner (Adesugba and Temitope, 2019). Curriculum development cannot be complete without proper implementation of the curriculum. Curriculum implementation can be described as the execution of a curriculum with the aim of achieving the objectives for which the curriculum was formulated (Olaitan, 2003). It is a specified set of activities that are designed to put in practice an activity or program of known dimensions. According to Adeshina and Aliyu (2012), the implementation process is purposeful and is described in detail well enough for independent observers to be able to detect the strength and presence of specific set of activities related to the implementation. Implementation can be likened to execution. Without proper implementation, the best laid out plans will not achieve results. In order for a curriculum to continually meet changing demands and environmental dynamics, it ought to inculcate elements of innovation for overall effectiveness. Innovation

is defined as the process of employing new and better procedures for approaching issues and challenges, that meets new requirements and existing market needs (Amadioha, 2016). It is also defined as the production, assimilation and exploration of a value-added novelty in economic and social spheres, renewal and enlargement of products, services and markets; development of new methods of production and establishment of new management systems (Zieba and Zieba, 2014). Innovation comes mainly in two forms or dimensions. The first dimension is the novelty form, where innovation is totally new to the industry, subject area or a business enterprise. The second form of innovation is known as process innovation. This involves changes and evolution to method of delivery or rendering of service (Woli and Dokubo, 2012). It also entails an improvement in what is erstwhile existent by making adjustments and making the product or service new. These adjustments are made by adjusting mode of delivery, creating greater flexibility in mode of service delivery in order to increase efficiency in utilization. It is on the backdrop of these changes and the need to keep up with the ever changing needs of Business Education as a course and education as a whole that this study is carried out, and it is aimed at examining the modern day needs of the business education graduate, ascertaining the skill gaps that exist among business education graduates and suggesting intervention measures that can be adopted in order to bridge these skill gaps.

In order for Business Education to provide its students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are needed to take up readily available jobs in the global job market, it is imperative that the curriculum should encompass the most current topics that are relevant to the needs and solutions of today's business world. Despite the large number of graduates of Business Education produced by tertiary institutions, there is still a high level of unemployment. A good number of those who are employed are unable to carry out their duties without further training. This brings about a question of the functionality, relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum and curriculum materials used in the education process. It also questions the level of preparedness of graduates to be able to use what

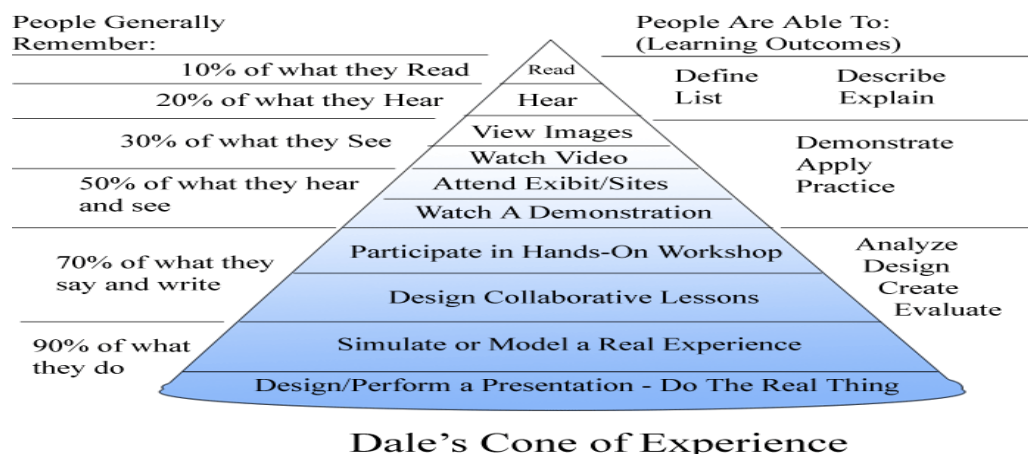
they have been taught in order to either be an entrepreneur or thrive in a business environment.

Innovation in business education curriculum is therefore vital because of; (i) the dynamic nature of the subject; (ii) research findings; (iii) changes in teaching and learning materials. This is because knowledge is not static, but dynamic. According to Egbule (2009), new methods of teaching business education have evolved due to the changing nature of the learner needs. Production of graduates who lack requisite 21st century skills tends to increase the unemployment menace that is adversely affecting the Nigerian society. According to Aquah (2014), informed that developing economies like India, Brazil, China, South Africa and Indonesia were able to achieve their developmental feat due to their sound productive base and an educational system that is aimed at producing innovators and job creators. The study also mentioned that institutions of higher learning are innovation hubs that are used to champion production and innovation and they have strategic relationships with industries for producing innovative products and services. This is a major reason these countries have achieved rapid economic growth and developments, as they are production hubs, provides skilled personnel for local and international organizations, and coupled with their export oriented economic policies, is achieving high level of economic growth.

Innovation in course content is vital for positioning business education as a course that provides solution to modern day economic problems. This is due to the fact that there is a need to make students familiar with modern day technologies in order to use them effectively in creating solutions to modern day problems (Amoor and Udoh, 2008). Teaching methods ought to inculcate methods that graduates will use in real life business situations to deliver

solutions to modern day business needs. The evolution of new technologies has increased electronic commerce (popularly known as e-commerce) tremendously, and benefitting from the growth of e-commerce to build an enterprise requires technical skills. Furthermore, the modes of communication that are used in the business world have continually evolved over time, inculcating more creative means of communicating with investors, customers and advertising. Methods for raising funds for business ventures have also evolved from the use of savings, equity and credit funding to the use of crowd-funding. In addition, websites such as "GoFundMe" (a crowd funding platform used to solicit for public funding of projects) and other electronic commerce sites create the need for continuous innovation in curriculum so that both teachers and learners are prepared to effectively utilize the availability of these innovations and also make use of them in creative problem solving (Utoware and Kren-Ikidi, 2013). Zieba and Zieba (2014) in their study opined that teaching methods in business courses ought to be designed in such ways that students will learn in practical ways how to build business models, teach them to be able to do critical case analysis of real business situations.

Teaching methods have undergone an evolution to include presentations of business proposals, presentation of case study analysis of real life business situations, games and also group assignments where brainstorming is used to encourage team work and creative problem solving. According to the cone of learning that was promulgated by Edgar Dale, in 1970, students remember better when they learn via hands on experience or by doing, than just reading. The cone of learning is a product of over two decades of educational research carried out in schools and colleges in the United States of America. An illustration of the cone of learning is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Edgar Dale's Cone of Learning

(Dale, 1970)

Figure 1 shows that performing and designing a presentation, which is a hands-on approach to doing the things taught are the best form of learning as students on the average remember 90% of what they do. It also shows that reading and hearing alone rank very low in the cone of learning. The cone shows that assimilation and retention rate increases as the learner actively participates in the learning exercise. This illustration buttresses the view that an increased level of student participation in the teaching and learning process increases retention capacity as well as performance achievement of the subject area on the part of learners. According to Dale, students should be encouraged to participate more in the learning process by teaching others. In a related study, Otteiwel and Macfarlane (2003) mentioned that an effective way of teaching as it activates the imagination of students and helps them relate lessons to real-life scenarios is through simulation.

Simulation games for learning business and management are active didactic techniques, and unlike non-didactic techniques, the students involved are get knowledge of the influence of the changes made by parameters that influence the complete state of the market. At the same time, students are able to learn communication skills as they work as members of teams with each other. They are also able to learn to get support from team members for implementation of their decisions. Simulation games enable learners to simulate economic phenomena and conditions which managers take into account

when in control of a virtual firm. Through simulation games, experiments with economic models are conducted, which represent a selected part of the real economic system. Simulation experiments also enable learners to confront and subsequently combine the results and come up with new solutions to economic problems. Computer simulation models create interactive learner environments, through which various experiments can be implemented. Simulation approach has been used in tertiary institutions in teaching courses such as entrepreneurship, business education and financial management. Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon and Byers (2002), mentioned that the use of simulation teaching methods such as board games in teaching finance and investing in related subjects helps in student retention, increases the level of student participation in the teaching and learning process and further helps students in better applying the knowledge that they have gained in real life entrepreneurial situations (Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon and Byers, 2002). It is on the backdrop of these that this study aims at exploring innovative implementation measures that can be taken in order to make business education curriculum relevant for the modern day economy.

Statement of the Problem

Despite laudable strides made in developing business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, it has not achieved desirable results, especially pertaining to keeping abreast with changing trends in the

world of business. Furthermore, it has failed to adequately prepare business education backdrop of this that this study is carried out in order to explore innovative measures that can be used in teaching business

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to explore innovative implementation measures that can be taken in order to make business education curriculum relevant for the modern day economy. Specifically, the study aims to determine:

- (i) modern day needs of the business education graduate.
- (ii) skill gaps that exist amongst business education graduates.
- (iii) interventions that can be carried out in order to bridge these skill gaps.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

Table 1: Tertiary Institutions Used for the Study

Name of Institution	Ownership Structure	Number of Business Education Postgraduate Students
University of Nigeria	Public/Federal	137
F.C.E. Umunze	Public /Federal	77
Ebonyi State University	Public / State	92
F.C.E., Asaba	Public/Federal	61
Benue State University	Public/State	34
Total		401

Source: Field Data 2019

These institutions were selected based on the fact that they have existing business education programme that is accredited by the National Universities Commission and also the Association of Business Educators of Nigeria, and also the curriculum adopted by these schools have been in use over time. Business education is a stand-alone department in the University of Nigeria while it is domiciled under the department of Vocational Technical Education in the four other institutions.

The respondents used for this study were postgraduate students of Business Education drawn from these tertiary institutions. The students are both male and female, and were selected based on the fact that they have questionnaires were face validated by three lecturers of Business Education in the

graduates for the modern day, fast-changing world of business. It is on the education in order to make the curriculum more relevant to the modern day economy.

- (i) What are the modern day needs of a business education graduate in Nigeria?
- (ii) What are the skill gaps that exist amongst business education graduates?
- (iii) What intervention measures can be implemented to fill these skill gaps?

Methodology

The participants for this study were drawn from five (5) tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria. These institutions are public institutions, owned by the federal government or state government. Table one shows the tertiary institutions used, the sample size of business education students used and the ownership structure of the institutions.

been studying business education for up to or more than two years. Furthermore, these students gave their consent before being used as respondents for this study. The population for this study was a total of 401 respondents. However, due to the size of the population, no sampling was done as it was not deemed necessary. Data for this research was collected using structured questionnaire. These questionnaires were administered by the researcher with the aid of one research assistant. A total of 401 questionnaires were administered for this study with a total of 380 filled and returned, indicating a 94.76% rate of return. The first section consisted of profile of the respondent, gleaned information such as age, gender and institution of study. The second section consists of answers to the research questions that guided the study. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Data was analyzed using the statistical package for social

sciences (SPSS) version 20. Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A 5-point likert scale was

used to measure the mean responses of the respondents, with a score of 3.50 and above indicating significantly positive response.

Results

Table 2: Mean Responses on the Modern Day Needs of Business Education Graduates

S/N	Requirement	X	SD	Decision
1.	Creative problem solving abilities	3.72	0.81	Agreed
2.	Relating what is taught with real life business case studies	3.91	0.72	Agreed
3.	Information and communications technology (ICT) skills	3.77	0.55	Agreed
4.	Ability to suggest solutions to modern day business issues	3.73	0.91	Agreed
5.	Ability to identify business opportunities in all circumstances	4.01	0.76	Agreed

Key: N = Number of students, X = Mean, SD = Standard deviation

From the findings in Table 2, it is imperative to point out that creative problem skill and also the ability to relate what is taught in the class with real life business case studies are skills needed for the modern day business education graduate.

Table 3: Mean responses on skill gaps among business education graduates

S/N	Skill gap	X	SD	Decision
1.	Lack of creative-problem solving skills	3.62	0.82	Agreed
2.	Inadequate knowledge of modern-day business trends	3.77	0.64	Agreed
3.	Inability to keep up with changing trends in the subject	4.01	0.66	Agreed
4.	Inability to practice higher order cognitive skills	3.96	0.61	Agreed

Key: N = Number of students, X = Mean, SD = Standard deviation

Table 4: Mean Responses on Intervention Measures for Bridging Skill Gaps among Business Education Graduates

S/N	Intervention	X	SD	Decision
1.	Use of learner- centered mode of teaching	3.91	0.72	Agreed
2.	Evaluation should be based on higher-order cognitive skills	3.93	0.55	Agreed
3.	Increased use of ICT in teaching and learning	3.98	0.59	Agreed
4.	Periodic review of curriculum to keep up with new trends	3.58	0.77	Agreed
5.	Periodic teacher training on innovative teaching methods	3.53	0.62	Agreed
6.	Monitoring and evaluation of curriculum implementation	3.64	0.59	Agreed

Key: N = Number of students, X = Mean, SD = Standard deviation

From the results shown in Table 4, respondents of the study were of the view that the use of learner-centered mode of teaching would ameliorate the skill gaps that exist amongst business education graduates.

Discussion of Findings

discipline in order to ensure that students are able to turn theory into proactive. The findings of the study also showed that the ability to identify business opportunities in all circumstances is a valuable skill for business

From research question one, the findings of the study showed that creative problem solving skills, ICT skills and the ability to relate what is taught to real life business case studies constitute modern day needs of business education graduates. These are in consonance with the findings of Ali and Tej (2012) who opined that creative problem solving skills is vital for students of every educational

education graduates. This is in agreement with the findings of Osuala (2002) who mentioned that the ability to identify business opportunities in different circumstances and proffering solution to real-life business challenges are

important skills for the business education graduate. The ability to engage in creative problem solving and the use of ICT is vital in order to properly fit into the modern day office environment.

From research question two, the findings of the study showed that the lack of creative problem solving skills as well as inadequate knowledge of modern-day business trends constitutes significant skill gaps for business education graduates. Furthermore, the inability to keep up with changing trends in the subject as well as the inability to exhibit higher-order pedagogical skills constitutes major skill gaps that hamper the development of business education. This is in agreement with the findings of Zieba and Zieba (2014) who mentioned that the inability to exhibit higher-order cognitive skills and inability to keep up with modern trends in business and business education are significant skills gaps and thus constitute major challenges for modern day business education. Furthermore, Oliver (2008) also opined that higher-order cognitive skills are vital for business education to grow to higher levels and it will also help students in keeping up with modern day trends in the business world. Also, Ezeji (2001) also opined that not keeping abreast with changes in the business world significantly prevent business education graduates from effectively fitting into the modern-day business world.

From research question three, student evaluation should be based on higher-order pedagogical skills to ensure that students have proper grasp of the competences needed for a business education graduate. These interventions are in line with the postulations of Aquah (2014) who mentioned that learner-centered mode of teaching increases student level of participation and interest in the subject. Furthermore, Okoth (2016) also opined that the use of ICT in teaching makes for more efficient and effective teaching and learning of business education. In another study, Oliver (2008) asserted that periodic teacher training in different methods of teaching will help in improving rate of student assimilation and retention of content. The study further mentioned that this teacher training should be aimed at improving the knowledge base of

teachers both in terms of the subject area and also new and innovative methods of teaching. The findings of this study are also in agreement with the postulations of Wodi and Dokubo (2012) who mentioned that the process of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should be applied to the curriculum implementation process in order to ensure that the aims and objectives of the curriculum are met.

Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring innovative measures that can make the business education curriculum relevant for the modern day economy with the specific aims of ascertaining the modern day needs of the business education graduate, the skill gaps that exist among business education graduates and interventions that can be put in place in order to bridge these existing skill gaps. Using postgraduate students of business education in selected tertiary institutions as respondents, the findings from the study showed that creative problem solving skills, adequate information and communication technology (ICT) skills as well as the ability to link what is taught to modern day business challenges constitute modern day needs of the business education graduate. The study further discovered that the lack of creative problem solving skills, low level knowledge of modern day business trends as well as inability to exhibit high-order cognitive skills constitute skill gaps that exist among business education graduates. The study also discovered that the increased use of learner-centered mode of teaching, increased use of ICT in teaching as well as implementation of evaluation that is based on higher order cognitive skills will help in reducing these skill gaps that exist among business education graduates.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be regular and periodic training of teachers and students in new technological trends in order to bring about improvement and growth in innovation. This should be done by the

tertiary institutions in collaboration with the private sector.

2. Teaching and assessment of student works should be done with the use of ICT in order to make teachers and students get used to using modern day technology in the teaching, learning and assessment process. This should be done by lecturers in conjunction with the ICT sections of tertiary institutions.
3. Implementation of learning techniques such as student presentations of present day case study in class so as to make them in tune with modern day trends. This should be done by class lecturers and encouraged by departments of Business Education.
4. Periodically reviewing the curriculum content bi-annually should be done in order to ensure that topics relevant to modern day needs are included in it. This should be done by Ministry of Education in conjunction with the National Universities Commission (NUC) and experts in Business Education and curriculum development.

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