PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND INDUSTRIES FOR DEVELOPING QUALITY ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN DELTA STATE

BY

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Abstract

The study was designed to determine the nature of partnership between educational institutions and industries for developing quality entrepreneurial skills in business education students in Delta State. Two research questions were raised to guide the study while one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The entire population of 103 business educators in tertiary institutions in Delta State was used for the study. Data were collected for the study through the administration of validated questionnaire on the respondents. Test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The mean statistic was used to answer the research questions while z-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis. The result of this study revealed that the partnership between the educational institutions and industrial organizations in Delta State is weak. It was therefore recommended among others that industrial organizations should help educational institutions in producing highly skilled human power by making available funds, technical support and supply of instructional material such as computers to schools and that communication between industry and educational institution should be improved so that the industries would be more involved and committed in training of highly skilled workforce.

Keywords: *Skills, Entrepreneurship, Partnership, Business education, Industries*

Introduction

Business education is a vocational education programme for economic growth of Nigeria. Business education is required by any nation that must keep pace with the technological demand of the world; hence, business education which is an aspect of vocational and technical education must be made more sustainable, functional and capable of producing knowledge-based individuals. The paradigm shift therefore, is towards equipping vocational and technical graduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions with appropriate skills required in the labour market and for self-reliance. The training of skilled business education graduates to generate and sustain the country's economic growth depends to a great extent on the training relationship or partnership between schools and industries. Business organizations and industries should play very paramount role in training of students particularly in vocational and technical education in which business education is an integral part. This is because business and industries remains the largest beneficiary of the services rendered by these graduates. It is an acceptable fact that it is not possible to have a curriculum that can satisfy all the requirements of the industries at all times (Okoh, 2010 and Azikiwe, 2008).

In this vein, Nwafor (2007) also noted that usually there exist mismatch between the knowledge acquired by graduates and the need of the industry. However, when there is cooperation and good partnership between

educational institutions and industries, curriculum that provides the essential basic training that will guarantee quality business education graduates emerge. Good partnership between school and industry provides occasion for representatives of labour, business and industry to develop a common language and bring technicians-in-training and front line workers into communication process. This relationship will make the graduating students able to make connection between school and work. It will equally enable graduates of such system to be able to set up business that can serve all the sectors. In line with this, the National Policy on Education stated that cooperation between industries and training institutions shall be encouraged (FRN, 2004).

The idea of partnership between educational institutions and industries is not a new one. In some developed countries of the world like the United States of America and Britain, many industrial concerns provide schools with valuable teaching aids, literature, films, visiting speakers to give career talks to students and restricted teacher-industry fellowship as well as allowing students and teachers to visit the industries to see various industrial processes (Okoli, 2010). The author added that in Britain, for example, a clear function of school-industry link has been firmly established and this has given birth to organizations such as School Council Industry project, Confederation of British Industries, and Understanding British School-Industry Project.

In Nigeria, school industry partnership strategy dates back to the establishment of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) in 1971. The ITF was charged with the responsibility of promoting and encouraging the acquisition of industry/practical skills so as to produce a pool of indigenous trained personnel sufficient to meet the needs of Nigeria growing economy (Amasa in Okoli, 2010). To achieve this, the ITF initiated the supervised Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in 1973 with the aim of providing an avenue for students in tertiary institutions to have industrial exposure in their own discipline during the course of their study.

SIWES is a skill development programme designed to prepare students of universities, polytechnics/monotechnics and colleges of education for transition from the college environment to work. It provides avenue for evaluating participating students both as students and as prospective employees and where defects are found in a student's job performance or attitude to work, they could be guided to correct such defects through proper supervision prior to taking permanent employment. Ekpeyong (2008) recognized this fact that the major problems experienced by ITF in its efforts to implement SIWES are connected with prospecting and securing acceptance from employers for the acceptance of students. The available firms are too few to accommodate the ever growing number of students going out for industrial attachment. In most cases, some from the available few are usually unwilling to accept students for industrial training. They seem to show sufficient interest in collaborating with schools to produce highly skill human manpower required in the workforce. There is need therefore, to promote increased collaboration of industries with educational institutions particularly in business education programme since many of its graduates are prospective employees of the industries.

It is obvious that many graduates particularly business education graduates in Nigeria are unemployed or unemployable due to lack of relevant skills required in the workplace and this is traceable to poor or lack of partnership between educational institutions and

industries. This problem is further compounded by the fact that these graduates do not possess entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to set up and manage successfully a small business enterprise of their own and by so doing become self-employed and self-reliant.

It is expected that entrepreneurship education would equip graduates from Nigerian tertiary institutions with entrepreneurial skills that would enable them to set up a small business enterprise of their own should they fail to secure a paid employment on graduation. Entrepreneurship according to Anugwom (2007) means the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunities. Through entrepreneurship education, students can be exposed to a wide range of business skills and management competencies which would enable them to set up and manage successfully small business enterprise of their own, thus becoming self-employed and self-reliant.

Statement of the Problem

Industries are expected to support educational institutions to equip business education students with relevant entrepreneurial as well as technological skills bearing in mind that many of these students are prospective employees of industries. Thus, through their partnership, business organizations are expected to give financial aid, provide teaching equipment and technological tools and machines to educational institutions, and in addition be willing to accept these students by sending their technical staff to support schools to teach students some industrial processes.

The institutions on their part are expected to produce highly skilled graduates for potential hire by the industries. If the above assertion is ideal, the big question which constitutes the worries of this study is: Does such partnership or relationship actually exist between the industries and tertiary institutions in Delta State? It is with this backdrop that this study was conducted to find out from business educators on the existing partnership between educational institutions and industries on entrepreneurial development of business education students in Delta State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions

1. What is the nature of partnership between tertiary institutions and industries in Delta State towards developing entrepreneurial skills in business education students?
2. What are the hindrances to tertiary institutions – industries partnership in provision of material and human resources for developing entrepreneurial skills in business education students in Delta State?

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference between the mean rating of male and female business educators (lecturers) on the partnership between educational institutions and industries towards entrepreneurial development of business education students in Delta State.

Method

The research design used for this study was survey design to assess the partnership between educational institutions and industries in developing entrepreneurial skills in business education students in Delta State. The population of the study consisted of all the 103 business education lecturers made up of 41 male and 62 female in tertiary institutions in Delta State as follows: Delta State University Abraka (8); College of Education, Agbor (15); College of Education, Warri (18);

Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba (31); College of Physical Education, Mosogar (12); Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro (12); Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku (11) and Delta State Polytechnic, Oghara (10).This information was generated from the various institutions. The entire population was used for the study since the number is small and relatively manageable, hence there was no sampling.

A 20 item questionnaire was used as instrument for the study. The research instrument has two parts – Part A and Part B. Part A contained information on the respondents' biographic data. Part B was divided into two sections in line with research questions raised for the study. The instrument was structured to elicit information from the assessment of respondents on a 4 point rating scale as follows: Strongly Agreed (SA) 4point; Agreed (A) 3point; Disagreed (D) 2point; Strongly Disagreed (SD) 1point.

To establish the face validity of the instrument, it was given to three experts in business education. Their observations were effected on the questionnaire before final copy was written. The test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered to ten business educators from University of Benin and College of Education, Ekiaolor. After an interval of two weeks, the same instrument was administered to the same set of respondents. The result was computed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Formula which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.86 which was high enough to consider the instrument reliable.

The questionnaire constructed was administered by the researcher to the respondents with the aid of three research helpers. The researcher was able to collect some copies of the questionnaire on the spot while others were collected after few days. Out of a total of 103 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 85 copies were returned based on which analysis for this study was done. In analyzing the data collected from the instrument administered, simple mean was used to analyze the responses for the research questions while z-test was used to test the null hypothesis formulated for the study. The Decision Rule: Any item with a mean rating that is equal to or greater than 2.5 was considered 'Agreed' while any item with a mean rating that is less than 2.5 was considered 'Disagreed'. The null hypothesis was tested using z-test statistic at $p<0.05$.

Results

The results of the study were presented in Tables according to research question 1 and 2 while the test of hypothesis was presented in Table 3

Research Question 1

What is the nature of partnership between educational institutions and industries in developing entrepreneurial skills in business education students in Delta State?

Table 1: Respondents' Rating on Nature of School – Industry Partnership

S/N	Items: *Industries relate with school by:*	Mean	Remark
1	Allowing students to visit the industry on excursion	2.60	Agreed
2	Accepting students on industrial attachment	3.53	Agreed
3	Donating instructional materials like books, office tools and machines etc.	2.34	Disagreed

4	Awarding prizes to students	2.61	Agreed
5	Awarding scholarship to students	3.05	Agreed
6	Sponsoring students to conferences, seminar etc.	1.60	Disagreed
7	Providing infrastructures like computer laboratory, studios, classrooms etc.	1.55	Disagreed
8	Giving career talks to students	3.00	Agreed
9	Funding students projects	2.20	Disagreed
10	Providing support staff to give entrepreneurship education to business education students	1.00	Disagreed
	Grand Mean	**2.35**	**Disagreed**

The data in Table 1 revealed the nature of partnership between educational institutions and industries in developing entrepreneurial skills in business education students in Delta State. Apart from allowing students for industrial attachment, excursions, giving of award and scholarships to students and giving of career talks to students, the respondents were of the opinion that industries do not relate with educational institutions in Delta State in terms of sponsoring students to seminars and conferences, donating instructional material, provision of infrastructural facilities, provision of fund and provision of support staff to give entrepreneurship training to business education students. A grand mean of 2.35 shows that the respondents were of the view that industries were not adequately involved in the business of training business education students.

Research Question 2

What are the hindrances to tertiary institutions – industries partnership in provision of material and human resources for developing entrepreneurial skill in business education student in Delta State?

Table 2: Respondents' Rating on Hindrances to School and Industry Partnership

S/N	*Hindrances to School – Industry Partnership*	Mean	Remark
11	Insufficient fund in the industries cause them to shy away from their responsibilities	3.22	Agreed
12	Unwillingness of industries to invest their resources in school	2.60	Agreed
13	Fear of damage to their tools and machines makes them to reject students on industrial attachment	3.00	Agreed
14	Poor relationship between school administrators and directors/managers of industries	2.82	Agreed
15	Poor preparation of students for industrial training make industries to reject students for IT	3.20	Agreed
16	Ignorance of the industries about their social responsibility to the school	3.61	Agreed
17	Secrecy and protection of patent right make industries unwilling to discuss certain details about their business with students	2.54	Agreed

18	Over crowded school curriculum does not give enough practical activities by experts from industries	3.20	Agreed
19	Lack of adequate facilities prevents experts in industries from participating in entrepreneurial development of business education students	2.89	Agreed
20	Failure to involve the industries in development of curriculum for training students in school	3.12	Agreed
	Grand Mean	**2.92**	**Agreed**

Table 2 revealed the hindrances to industries' participation in the training of business education students. All the items in this section received mean rating greater than 2.50. The grand mean of 3.84 is a further indication of respondent agreement to the items as the hindrances to industries' involvement in the training of business education students in Delta State.

Table 3: The z-test Analysis of Male and Female Business Educators' Responses on School-Industries Partnership

Gender	N	X	S	z-cal	α	Df	z-crit	Remark
Male	32	3.52	0.28					
Female	53	3.42	0.34	1.41	0.05	248	1.96	Retained

Table 3, shows z-test analysis of responses of male and female business educators on the partnership between educational institutions and industries in developing entrepreneurship skills in business education students in Delta State with mean scores of 3.52 and 3.42 respectively. The z-calculated value of 1.41 is less than the z-tabulated value of 1.96 at 85 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained which implies that, there is no statistically significant difference between the mean rating of male and female business educators on the partnership between educational institutions and industries in entrepreneurial development of business education students in Delta State.

Discussion of Results

The findings of this study showed that industries partner with the educational institutions in Delta State through allowing students to visit for excursion, accepting students for industrial attachment and giving of awards and scholarship to students and giving of career talks to students. However, the finding revealed that industries do not partner with educational institution in Delta State in terms of sponsoring students to seminars and conferences, donating instructional material, provision of infrastructural facilities, provision of fund and provision of support staff to give entrepreneurship training to business education students. This implies that industries in Delta State do not sponsor student to conferences seminars and workshops where they can update their knowledge and skills in the relevant areas. This finding is in agreement with Akpan (2008) who stated that the link between the tertiary institutions and industries in Nigeria is generally weak and that there are several research reports on the lack of necessary resources to carry out practical exercise.

Chukwumezie (2003) stressed on the need for increased collaboration between tertiary institutions and industries in Nigeria. The author further noted further that, in the face of the present economic recession, reduced funding of education and high cost of

technological equipment, tertiary institutions cannot be left alone to provide the technological needs of the school in training students. The status of partnership between educational institutions and business organizations need to be seriously strengthened to encourage the industries to provide technological tools needed by the tertiary institution for competent entrepreneurial development of business education students.

For effective implementation of business education programme, substantial investments need to be made for resources both human and material resources. Therefore, functional and productive partnership between industries and educational institutions needs to be established.

Thus, involving all stakeholders in education sector especially business organizations are essential to ensure the business education graduates are fit and competent for the world of work and entrepreneurship. The findings of the study also revealed that the constraints or hindrances to industries' participation in developing entrepreneurship skill in business education students is traceable to the fact that most industrial organizations are not aware of their social obligations to the educational institutions, in addition to insufficient fund in the industries, poor preparation of business education students for industrial attachment, fear of damaging their tools and equipment by IT students. Lack of facilities, secrecy and prevention of patent right as well as non involvement of industries in the development of business education curriculum were among the hindrances to industries participation in training business education students.

Conclusion

The result of this study has shown that the partnership between the education and industrial organizations in Delta State is what it should be. Based on the findings and its implications, there is need therefore for business education lecturers in tertiary institutions and industrialists in Delta State to synergize in developing entrepreneurial skills in business education students through high quality technologically based and industrial focused education. When the necessary resources are made available by the industries for the educational institutions, it will enable them to effective accomplish the task of highly skilled office workers/technologists and entrepreneurs to generate and sustain the country's industrial growth. Hence, strong partnership between educational institutions and industries is what is needed to enhance the social economic growth and development of the state and nation at large.

Recommendations

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

1. Industrial organizations should help educational institutions in producing highly skilled human power by making available funds, technical support and supply of instructional material such as computers to schools.
2. Business education curriculum should be reviewed to reflect the current realities in modern business office by involving industrial organization in review process.
3. Communication between industry and educational institutions should be improved so that the industries would be more involved and committed to training of highly skilled workforce.
4. Meaningful relationships between job preparation in school and on the job activities should be established to ensure smooth school to work transition.
5. Educational institutions should be properly funded by the government so that adequate infrastructural facilities should be provided for effective teaching and learning.

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