IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME THROUGH COLLABORATION WITH CORPORATE SECTOR.

BY

NWOKIKE, FELICIA OGONNIA (Ph.D) & ASSOC. PROF. B.E OKOLI
Ogonnianwokike@yahoo.com.
Department of Technology and Vocational Education
Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT)

Abstract

This paper examined the various ways of improving the quality and relevance of business education programme in Nigerian universities through collaboration with corporate sectors. The study was carried out in Enugu State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. A sample size of 364 managers randomly selected was used for the study while all the 12 Business Educators from Enugu State University of Science and Technology and University of Nigeria Nsukka were used for the study. The instrument was validated by three experts, two experts from the Department of Technology and Vocational Education and one expert from the Department of Science and Computer, Measurement and Evaluation option, all from Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology. A structured questionnaire titled 'Improving the quality and relevance of business education programme through collaboration with corporate sector' developed by the researchers was used for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using mean with standard deviation while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that inclusion of competency based training and recruitment of experienced and qualified business educators are some of the various ways institutions could help in improving the quality and relevance of business education programme. The study also revealed that corporate sectors could improve the quality and relevance of business education programme in Universities by absorbing business education students during work visits and industrial training. It was concluded that universities should partner with corporate sectors to offer curriculum that will make business education students more valuable to companies while corporate sectors should share information and establish communication networks with the institution especially on technological changes in the industry that is relevant to business education programme. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended among others that competency based training need to be integrated into business education curriculum and corporate sectors should absorb business education students during industrial training and expose them to employable skills that are relevant to their programme.

Keywords: *Quality, relevance, corporate sector, collaboration and business education.*

Introduction

Education is the greatest instrument for National development. There is a great link between education and development. Nstan-gyabaah in Ansa and Bamfo-Agyei (2012) stated that there has never been any argument over the link between education and development because education helps to build natural capacity to apply science and technology to social and economic problems. Nigeria has in recent times given a renewed recognition of technical and vocational education as a catalyst for national development and reducing youth's unemployment. Days are gone when the programme was meant for dullards and less privileged or people who could not gain admission in other disciplines. Hence, the inclusion of technical and vocational education in the National policy of education.

Business education is an integral part of technical and vocational education. Business education is a skill oriented programme that equips the recipient with the skills and competencies for the world of work. In the view of Mamman and Nwabufo (2014) business education is a programme of instruction which offers specialized instruction for the office occupation and general business orientation which is capable of transforming the nation. Accordingly, Ezenwafor, Okoli and Obi (2014) opined that business education is a programme of study which provides knowledge, attitudes and skills for effective participation in such activities as producers and consumers of goods and services. The main objective of business education is to produce competent graduates that can teach in all levels of education, work in the office or be self-reliant. This is in line with Afolabi and Oru (2013) who stated that the primary objectives of business education is to prepare students to enter a business career or to help those who have entered to be more efficient and advance to higher levels of employment. Amor in Onwuachu (2013) summarized the objectives of business education as primarily to produce competent, skillful and dynamic youths who can function effectively in the world of work.

According to Osuala (2004), business education has played an important role in the manpower development of European nations. In addition, business education helps in manpower development for any nation. Azih and Nwosu (2012) noted that business education at all levels is aimed at providing training that will equip its recipients with business skills that will enable them function optimally in their working environment.

For the primary objectives of business education programme to be achieved, there is need for quality in the programme. Quality encompasses high standard of a product. Odunaike, Ijaduola and Epetimehin (2012) stated that for quality of education to be guaranteed, emphasis should be placed on the quality of teaching in order to ensure impressiveness, efficiency and productivity of education. Ile in Osahon (2013) opined that educational programme assumes quality when it provides graduates with enough skills that will enable them to be self-reliant and useful in the society. This is in agreement with Osahon (2013) that quality of TVE should ensure relevance and appropriateness of the programme in terms of its contents, structure, inputs, process and output to meet the individual and societal demands geared towards enhancing national development. Obeka, Peter and Kalu (2013) posited that the need for quality assurance in business education cannot be overemphasized because it ensures that high standard of business education is maintained at all levels of education and serve as an indispensable component of quality control strategy in business education.

In the view of the researchers, business education programme in Nigeria is faced with a lot of challenges such as low societal recognition, poor linkage, lack of motivation of business educators, obsolete instructional facilities, low enrolment, inadequate funding and poor staffing. These problems affect the quality and relevance of business education programme in the universities especially poor linkage with the industries. Proper maintenance of relevance is a critical factor in business education programme. The programme should take into cognizance, the needs of the society. This collaborates with Mickeniez and Dominic (2010) who asserted that relevance has become a critical factor in business education programme. The authors further stated that business education programme must deliver the skills and knowledge that enable participants to learn and thrive in context of change, growing business complexity and technological sophistication. The relevance and quality of business education programme in universities can be improved through collaboration with the corporate sector. Improving means the act of or making something better in terms of quality, value or usefulness, that is, relevance. (Amusa, 2009 in Nwokike, 2014).

According to the researchers, a corporate sector otherwise known as private sector is the part of the economy that is made up of companies. A corporate sector can be seen as a section of society consisting of companies or industries. They are the industrial development of our economy. On the other hand, collaboration according to Hornby (2006) is to work together with somebody, especially to create or produce something. Bryson (2009) defined collaboration as the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities and capabilities by organizations to achieve jointly outcome that would not be achieved by the organization separately. Collaboration with industry will ensure that the quality and relevance of business education programme is maintained. In support of this view, Onyia (2005) maintained that linkage programme will enhance better standard and quality of technical college graduates. Effective collaboration according to Onyia (2005) will offer greater opportunities in the updating of technology/practical skills. He further stated that new innovations in practical applications can be acquired through industrial linkage and good collaborations with industries. Both the institution and the corporate sector have a significant role to play in improving the relevance and quality of business education programme in Enugu State so that the product of the programme will be equipped with the necessary competencies that will make them to be self-employed and advance in office occupation

Nigeria as a developing nation needs a functional education to provide the citizenry with skills that can enable them gain employment in the relevant sectors of the economy or be self- employed. Business education as a programme can equip the products with the competencies that will make them viable and productive if the quality and relevance is enhanced. It has been observed that the products of business education programme still lack the competencies to function effectively in the world of work. One of the challenges of TVE in Nigeria according to Ayomike, Okwelle and Okeke (2014) is the lack of employable skills among graduates of technology and vocational education. This could be as a result of dearth of facilities for training in universities. Proper collaboration with industries can help in improving the quality and relevance of business education programme by exposing the students to technological skills that will guarantee skill acquisition. It is against this backdrop that the researchers sought to ascertain the various ways the institution and the corporate sector can improve the relevance and quality of the business education programme through effective collaboration between the institution and the corporate sector.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the ways the institutions and corporate sectors can enhance the relevance and quality of business education programme in Universities, Specifically the study sought to:

1. Determine the ways in which tertiary institutions can help in improving the relevance and quality of business education programme in universities in Enugu State.
2. Determine the ways the corporate sectors can help in improving the quality and relevance of business education programme in universities in Enugu State.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions

1. What are the various ways in which tertiary institutions can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme?
2. What are the various ways corporate sectors can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme?

Null hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

$Ho_{1:}$ There is no significant difference in the mean responses of business educators and corporate managers on the various ways the institution can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of business educators and corporate managers on the various ways the corporate sector can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme

Methods

The research design used for the study was a survey research design. The design was adopted for the study because a sample size which deemed to be the representatives of the population was used. The study was carried out in Enugu state. The population consisted of 12,035 managers in the corporate organizations in Enugu State including private and public sectors registered with Federal Inland Revenue Service. A sample size of 364 managers was randomly selected while 12 business educators in two Universities offering business education programme in Enugu State was used. A total sample size of 376 respondents was used for the study made up of 364 managers in small and medium enterprises and all the 12 business educators teaching in two universities that offer business education programme in Enugu State. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled 'Improving the quality and relevance of business education programme through collaboration with corporate sector'. The instrument is a 29 item questionnaire for data collection from the respondents. Each questionnaire had a four point scale of strongly Agree (4), Agree (37), disagree (2) and strongly dialogue (1). The instrument was validated by three experts, two experts from the Department of Technology and Vocational Education of Enugu State University of Science and Technology and one expert one expert from the Department of Science and Computer, Measurement and Evaluation option, all from Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while t-test was used for testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For decision to be reached regarding the mean, the upper and lower limits of the mean were used a basis for decision. Strongly agree (SA) 3.50-4.00, 2.50-3.49 (Agree) 1.50-2.49 (disagree) 1.00-1.49 (strongly disagree). The t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected if the t-calculated value was more than the t. critical t. but when the t-calculated was less than the critical t-, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Results

The results were presented in Tables 1-4 in line with the research questions and hypotheses.

Research question One: What are the various ways in which institutions can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme in universities?

Table 1: Mean responses of managers and business educators on the various ways institutions can improve the quality and relevance of business education programmes in the universities

S/N	Questionnaire items	X	SD	RMK
1	Competency based education and training should be included in business education curriculum	3.80	0.40	S/Agree
2	The institution should recruit qualified busines educators			
3	The relevance of the programme can be improved through effective leadership	3.09	0.58	Agree
4	Institutions should ensured that business educators are properly motivated	3.46	0.56	Agree

5	Creating awareness on the imperative of business education in national development	3.19	0.67	Agree
6	Institutions need to lay more emphasis on the manpower need of the industry	3.19	0.94	Agree
7	Mode of assessment and evaluation in the programme should be50% practical and 50% theory	3.09	0.76	Agree
8	The curriculum of the programme need to be market focused that is, it should include the needs of the society	3.56	0.49	S/Agree
9	Quality mechanism should be put in place so that students are not taught on outdated equipment	3.46	0.49	Agree
10	Policy measure need to be put in place to improve the reliance and quality of training facilities	3.34	0.53	Agree
11	Institutions should strive to establish strong linkage with successful entrepreneurs	3.50	0.55	S/Agree
12	Students should be posted to suitable firms industries during indusial training	3.53	0.49	S/Agree
13	The student teacher ratio need not be more than 30 so that the students will have more attention	2.81	0.80	Agree
14	Institution superiors should ensure that students are properly supervised during IT	3.43	0.49	Agree
15	High utilization of industrial resources	3.15	0.66	Agree
	GRAND MEAN	**3.55**	**0.61**	S/Agree

The data presented in Table1revealed that all the 15 items were accepted by the respondents as the ways institutions can improve the quality and relevance of business education programmes in universities. The mean ranges from 2.81 to 3.80. The standard deviation of the two groups which ranges from 0.40 – 0.94 indicated that the respondents are very close in their responses.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and business educators on various ways the institution can help in improving the relevance and quality of business education programme in Universities.

Table2: Summary of t-test of the mean responses of managers and business educators on various ways institutions can help to improve the relevance and quality of business education programme in Universities.

Variable	**N**	**X**	**SD**	**DF**	**t – cal.**	**T.crit.**	**Rmk**
Managers	364	3.36	0.60	374	0.29	1.96	Accept Ho_1
Business educators	12	3.31	0.61				

Table 2 shows that items on various ways institutions can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme in universities have t - value of 0.29 at 374 degree of freedom which is less than the table value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and business educators on various ways institutions can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme in universities. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted.

Research question Two

What are the various ways corporate sectors can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme in universities?

Table 3: Mean rating of managers and business educators on various ways corporate sectors can help in enhancing the relevance and quality of business education programme in universities.

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	X	SD	RMK
1	Provision of innovative financing strategies for funding the programme.	3.28	0.67	Agree
2	Sponsoring project through co-operate social responsibilities	3.22	0.59	Agree
3	Corporate sectors should involve in mentoring of business education students	3.06	0.78	Agree
4	Corporate sector should take the responsibility of preparing the students for viable roles in their work place during IT.	3.18	0.85	Agree
5	Corporate sector can donate cash for staff development	3.18	0.0.58	Agree
6	Corporate sectors can support in innovative models that can enhance the quality and	3.15	0.71	Agree
7	Cooperate sectors can help in improving the relevance and quality of the programme through donation of basic equipment needed in the programme e.g computers.	3.43	0.55	Agree
8	Provision of funds for infrastructural	3.50	0.56	S/Agree
9	Corporate sector can help in the maintenance/ servicing of equipment used in teaching and learning	3.06	0.61	
10	Cooperate sector should share information and establish communication networks with the institution especially on technological changed in the industry that is relevant to business education programme	3.31	0.52	Agree
11	Donation of cash for research and staff development of business educators	3.24	0.56	Agree
12	Absorb business education students during industrial training	3.56	0.55	S/Agree
13	The industrial supervisors should co-ordinate the IT programme effectively and expose business education students to areas that can enhance their competencies	3.25	0.66	
14	Industries need to absorb business education students for a work visit from time to time as need arises.	3.59	0.49	S/Agree
	GRAND MEAN	**3.07**	**0.58**	Agree

Table 3 revealed that all the 14 items were accepted by the respondents as the ways corporate sectors can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme in Universities. The mean ranges from 3.06-3.59 with a grand mean of 3.07. The standard deviation of the two groups which ranges from 0.52 to 0.85 with a grand standard deviation of 0.58 indicated that the respondents are very close in their responses.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in the mean response of managers and business educators on the various ways corporate sectors can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme.

Table4: Summary of t-test of the mean responses of managers and business educators on various ways corporate sectors can help to improve the relevance and quality of business education programme in Universities.

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	t- cal	t. crit.	Rmk
Managers	364	3.33	0.63	374	1.60	1.96	Accept Ho_2
Business educators	12	3.27	0.66				

Table 4 reveals that items on various ways corporate sectors can improve the quality and relevance of business education programme in universities have t-value of 1.60 at 374 degree of freedom which is less that the table value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and business educators on ways corporate sectors can help to enhance the relevance and quality of business education programme in universities. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted.

Discussion

The result of the data obtained in Table 1 revealed that one of the ways institutions can improve the relevance and quality of business education programme is inclusion of competency based training in business education curriculum. Ayomike, Okwelle and Okeke (2014) called for the integration of competency based education technical and vocational education programme in Nigeria. They considered competency based education and training very suitable in TVE because TVE is oriented towards the world of work and also the curriculum emphasized the acquisition of employable and lifelong skills. In the view of Deb (2014) competency based learning empowers learners to focus on mastery of valuable skills and knowledge. Deb further noted that competency based education helps to improve the learners' ability to recognize, manage and continuously build their own competencies. Competency based training will help business education students to acquire the skills that are necessary for the industry.

The inclusion of competency based training in business education curriculum will help to reduce the gap between business educators and the labour market. The gap between education and industry can only be reduced through proper collaboration of the institution and corporate sectors. The study further revealed that the recruitment of qualified business educators by the institutions could help to improve the quality and relevance of business education programme. This collaborates with the statement made by Amor (2010) that improving teacher quality in business education in Nigerian universities is an effective way of boosting the economy of the nation and also helping individuals to effectively combat unemployment and poverty. A qualified business educator exhibits mastery of the subject and teach them to the students but unqualified teacher may not be able to teach effectively. Amor (2010) noted that poor teacher quality causes serious damages on the graduates of business education in Nigerian universities because it denies the graduates the ability to satisfy the requirements of the labour market. In order to improve the quality and relevance of business education, university management should ensure that only qualified and experienced business educators that show mastery of the business courses both theoretically and practically are recruited.

The result of null hypothesis one showed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and business educators on various ways institutions could improve the relevance and quality of business education programme in Nigerian Universities. Institutions can help to improve the quality and relevance of business education programme by recruiting qualified business educators. Odunaike, Ijaduola and Epetimehin (2012) found that there is a significant relationship between qualified teachers and quality of business education programme in higher institutions.

Result shown on Table 2 shows that corporate sectors can contribute their own quota in improving the quality and relevance of business education programme by absorbing business education students during work visit/excursion to industries from time to time. The finding of the study conforms to Nwokike (2014) who found that exposing business education students to field trips can boost their entrepreneurial competencies. The trip can enforce what a teacher has been instructing in class about a subject and help students understand the topic better. Anila, Wagar-un-Nisa and Sana (2011) posits that one of the positive benefit of field trip is that it helps to improve the quality of education. Furthermore, the study revealed that corporate sectors could enhance the quality and relevance of the programme by absorbing business education students during industrial training. One of the benefits accruing to students who participated conscientiously in industrial training is the skills and competencies they acquired (Aminu, 2012) Oriazowanlan and Umunna (2012) asserted that if institutions partner with industries in their various localities, there will be effective practical training.

In order words, industrial training exposes business education students to acquisition for skills and competencies relevant to their programme which cannot be acquired in the classroom. If the relevance and quality of business education is improved, it will help to reduce unemployment, eradicate poverty among business education graduates and consequently lead to national development. This can only be achieved if the cooperates sectors absorb business education students during their industrial training and expose them to skills that are relevant to their study and prepare them for the world of work. The result of null hypothesis two revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of business educators and managers on various ways corporate sectors could enhance the relevance and quality of business education programme in universities. This indicates that managers and business educators agreed that corporate sectors could help in improving the relevance and quality of business education programme in universities for national development.

Conclusion

In order to maintain high quality standards in business education programme, the institutions and corporate sectors have significant role to play. Universities should partner with companies to in order to offer the curriculum that will make business education students more valuable to companies while the corporate sectors should absorb business education students during work visits or excursion and industrial training and expose the students to the acquisition of skills that are relevant to their programme.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made

1. Co-operate sectors should absorb business education students during industrial training and exposed them to skills that are relevant to their programme
2. Corporate sectors should inform institutions that offer business education programme of the technological changes in industries that need to be integrated into business education curriculum.
3. Institutions of higher learning should partner with corporate sectors on skill training programme on a regular basis so as to ensure transfer of skills and knowledge.

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