

RE-ENGINEERING BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM CONTENT FOR INCLUSIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR UNDERGRADUATES' LABOUR MARKET PENETRATION IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study determined the impact of business education curriculum in promoting inclusive skills development for undergraduates' labour market penetration in public Universities in cross river state, Nigeria. The study answered two research questions and tested two hypotheses. The survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 1,411 business education undergraduates in public Universities in Cross River State. Simple random sampling was adopted in selecting the sample of 120 respondents. The instrument for data collection was Business Education Curriculum and Inclusive Skill Development Questionnaire (BECISDQ). The Instrument was validated by two lecturers in Business Education and one expert in measurement and evaluation, University of Calabar. Cronbach alpha reliability technique was used to estimate the internal reliability which showed a reliability coefficient of 0.82. Independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significant level. The findings from the study revealed that there is a significant difference in the mean response of University of Calabar and University of Cross River State business education undergraduates on business education curriculum contents delivery in promoting inclusive skills development for labour market in Cross River State, Nigeria. It was recommended that business education curriculum should be reviewed by relevant stakeholders to meet the exigencies of the time.

Keywords: Reengineering, Business Education Curriculum for Inclusive Labour Market.

Introduction

Traditional education has become inadequate for labour market preparation. In recent times, researchers have pathetically reacted differently to the current global skills mismatch between university graduates and needs of potential employers (Arum & Roksa, 2014). Many companies today find it increasingly difficult getting graduates with the right skills for the entry-level positions and thus contributing to the global unemployment phenomenon (Harris, 2013). City and Guilds (2013) survey reported that three quarters of employers in the Information Technology (IT) and Digital industries swiftly lamented the educational system inability to meet the needs of business. In corroborating these viewpoints, Belkin (2015), Mourshed and Suder (2014) attributed the prevalent condition to significant disconnect between the world of education and employment resulting in difficulty in finding qualified applicants. Employment sectors today are 'hollow-out' shells' for lack of skilled graduates and the leading reason for entry-level vacancies (Kaka, *et al.*, 2014). The aspirations of young people and their future prosperity have been negatively affected thereby creating global unemployment problem (Coughlan, 2014; Akpomi & Nnadi, 2017).

In many instances, the curriculum content operated in universities is incompatible with competences needed for employment. This situation suggests continue scientific interest to connect the existing curriculum in business education to labour market reality. Global Business School Network (GBSN, 2017), proposed strengthening the operational curriculum to be more intellectual relevant and connects it to students' career in the immediate and the medium term. Curriculum as an instrument of knowledge construction, the concept of employability has been over- theorized and subjected to conventional methods of teaching that produce job hunters than graduates having entrepreneurial instincts and intentions. Curriculum is the fundamental source of all intellectual disciplines. Generally, curriculum in higher education is a body of

interdependent knowledge sequentially and systematically planned to provide students qualitative learning and career education. There are several dimensions to curriculum planning and the process is subject to multifactor analysis. The cognitive theorists refer to learning as logical method for organizing and interpreting learning activities. Learning experiences are demonstrated through specific practices like reflective thinking, creative thinking, intuitive thinking and discovery learning.

Curriculum entails all the experiences, total programme of activities or learning of educational objectives planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals. The Tyler's model divided specifically into four ideological strands such as purpose, organization of experience, methods of teaching and evaluation; although still remain very relevant in education today but never envisaged possible changes in the labour market as a result of globalization and technological changes. Samuel and Alamina (2016) maintained that this bright future prospects facing business education graduates in Nigeria requires employability centered curriculum that can satisfactorily meet the unstable demands of employers. Employability-centered curriculum is a paradigm shift from the traditional known perspective of curriculum to knowledge-based and skill-based learning that prepare students for enterprise development, self-employment and social adjustment in society.

Business education like many other subjects in the school system has been defined in several ways by several scholars, to suit different situations and purposes. Some scholars define it from the way it is practiced in the field, while others define it from the angle it is taught in schools and colleges. Akpomi and Nnadi, (2017), defined business education as a specialized area of vocational education that provides educational training, skills development, attitudes adjustment towards business orientation and academic challenges. Bilyaminu (2011) views business education as an aspect of total education programme that provides the knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding needed to perform in the business world as a producer and/or consumer of goods and services. Professionally, business education can be defined as a programme designed to provide students with the basic processes of educational training; decision making; the philosophy, theory, and psychology of management; practical applications; business start-up and operational procedures (IET 2021).

Business education curriculum is part of continuous process of planning and development, that involves selection of learning experiences calculated to help in the attainment of goals and objectives of the programme. According to Coles (2013), Business Education curriculum was designed to educate students in the skills, processes, understandings and responsibilities necessary for success in the world of business. Dike (2019) viewed business education curriculum as an educational process of action about opportunities for engagement of students to be educated in business and educational related discipline. Business education curriculum in this context is responsible for equipping students with skills, attributes, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours required for teaching, entrepreneurship, administrative and clerical work.

Requisite job skills are those essential skills that are needed to get most jobs, help employee to stay in a job and facilitate their promotion. The skills are flexibly adapted, applied and transferred under different context necessary for gainful employment. According to Ahmed (2019), requisite job skills include a breadth and depth of specialized knowledge that are needed in the labour market profile. Framework of requisite job skills of Lapan (2020) indicated that, a good curriculum should provide students with skills on:- effective communication; supervision; coordinating; planning and think strategically; clear vision; Information and Communication Technology; creativity/self-confidence; good self-management and time-management which are consider as requisite skills for job opportunity.

Bearing in mind that Business education being one of the vocational programmes in Nigeria was targeted at empowering students with skills for the world of life and creates for them employment opportunities. As attested by Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) that

maintained that, business education is to among others impart skills, knowledge and abilities necessary for gainful employment or self-reliant economically. The curriculum focused on fostering student's acquisition of skills in managerial, communication, ethics and human relations, scientific and 21st century technological needs for teaching, administrative/clerical fieldwork and self-reliance. Strengthen this view, Chukwurah (2010) and Stephen (2010) maintained that business education curriculum was prepared to provide students with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required for graduates gainful employment or self-reliance. Having gone through the variables that constitute the background of this study, it can be understood that curriculum is the roadmap to acquire essential working skills, career competency for employment opportunities in Nigeria. Considering this relationship between the variable, the researcher assessed the impact of business education curriculum in promoting inclusive skills development for labour market in Cross River State, Nigeria.

In Nigeria, university education plays a crucial role in contributing to economic and human development. The nation's professional and highly skilled personnel such as engineers, managers, technicians and teachers among others are products of universities. curricula of universities in this context define the in-depth knowledge, skills, competency and attitudes to be achieved. As a result, the curricula are prepared towards integrating relevant skills with diversity in considerations to enable graduates gain job and enhance their performance in the fieldwork. As a result, curriculum of business education is geared towards equipping students with broader requisite knowledge and skills attributes, such as team-working, communication, leadership, critical thinking and problem solving for graduates employability has emphasized by philosophy of business education programme in Nigeria (Charles and David (2016)).

Despite the laudable philosophy of business education programme in Nigeria, recent studies have shown that business education graduates do suffer labour market discriminations in the country. Most employers of labour continue to reject business education graduates arguing that their skill is only needed in the classroom. The situation is also found in teaching professions more especially in Polytechnics where graduates of the programme are not considered to be specialist in accounting, marketing, purchases and supply departments. Beside the discriminations, graduates of business education programme have not adequate skills for life and services to society in various spheres of human endeavor. Indeed, most graduates of the programme lack adequate skill and knowledge for entrepreneurship in the country. In addition, this era of modern technology, business education graduates in Nigeria are ill-prepared for the full range of application of ICT skills required for job opportunity in the 21st century. This proves that business education curriculum is inadequate and it has very little capacity to develop students' skills for job opportunities and entrepreneurship consciousness in the country (Dike (2019).

By implication, the possibility of securing job is becoming more difficult while number of unemployed graduates is always increasing. However the outcry of labour market and other bodies have led to commendable changes in the procurement of more facilities and modern equipment, employment of more manpower, construction and renovation of structures and even partial review of curriculum. Considering that, these developments are anticipated to make robust changes in Nigeria tertiary institutions, this study is designed to investigate the impact of business education curriculum in promoting inclusive skills development for undergraduates' labour market penetration in public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

1. Impact of business education curriculum content on inclusive skills development for undergraduates' labour market penetration in public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. The inclusive skills development required by business education undergraduates for undergraduates' labour market penetration in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions are posed to guide the study.

1. To what extent does business education curriculum content promotes inclusive skills development for undergraduates' labour market penetration in public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. What are the inclusive skills development required by business education undergraduates for labour market penetration in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?

Statement of hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean response of University of Calabar and University of Cross River State business education undergraduates on business education curriculum content required for labour market penetration in public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean response of University of Calabar and University of Cross River State business education undergraduates on inclusive skills development required for labour market penetration in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Methods

This study adopted a survey research design, this is because it involved collection of data from respondents from various institutions. The population of this study consists of one thousand, four hundred and eighteen (1,411) business education undergraduates in two (2) public universities in Cross Rivers State. Simple random sampling technique was used to arrive at a sample size of four hundred and ten (120) students which are made of up one hundred and eighty (66) University of Cross River State and two hundred and thirty (54) University of Calabar business education students. Data were collected through self-structured questionnaire titled Business Education Curriculum and Inclusive Skill Questionnaire (BECISQ) which was designed on a four (4) point modified scale of: Very Very Great, Very Great, Great and Not Great with a nominal value of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The questionnaire was face and content validated by specialist in the field of research study. Data were analyzed with the use of mean and standard deviation and a decision rule based on mean ratings between 3.50 – 4.49 was regarded as very high extent (VHE), item with mean of 2.50 – 3.49 was High Extent (HE) item with mean of 1.50 – 2.49 was Low Extent (LE) and item with mean of 0.50 – 1.49 was regarded as No Extent (NE). T-test statistical tool was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance and any value of the calculated t-test that is greater than or equal to the critical table value at a given degree of freedom would be regarded as significant and the associated null hypothesis rejected, but if otherwise, the associated null hypothesis would be accepted.

Results and Discussion

Results

Hypothesis one

There is no significant difference in the mean response of University of Calabar and University of Cross River State business education undergraduates on business education curriculum content in promoting inclusive skills development for labour market in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 1: T-test of University of Calabar and University of Cross River State business education undergraduates on business education curriculum contents for Labour market penetration in Public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Institution	N	x	SD	DF	T-Cal	T-Critical table
Unicross	66	3.43	0.76	2	3.29	1.96
Unical	54	3.20	0.67			

Result in Table 1 shows that the calculated t-value of 3.29 is greater than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean response of University of Calabar and University of Cross River State business education undergraduates on business education curriculum contents for labour market penetration in public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant difference in the mean response of University of Calabar and University of Cross River State business education undergraduates on inclusive skills development for labour market penetration in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 2: T-test of University of Calabar and University of Cross River State business education undergraduates on inclusive skills required for labour market penetration in public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Institution	N	x	SD	DF	T-Cal	T-Critical
Unicross	66	3.18	0.80	2	0.38	1.96
Unical	54	3.15	0.678			

Result in Table 2 reveals that the calculated t-value of 0.38 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significance difference in the mean response of university of Cross River State and University of Calabar business education undergraduates on the inclusive skills required for Labour market penetration in public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

Discussion

The findings in Table 1 revealed that the contents of business education curriculum in terms of enabling the students acquire new skills, equipping students with the right skills in order to engage themselves in the world of works, endowing them with the acquisition of planning skill, communication skills and inculcating in the students the spirit of problem-solving skill has a very great influence on the students. This is in line with the opinion of Agwu (2018) who argue that the extent to which business education curriculum assists business education students to competently enter and succeed in the world of work by acquiring the necessary skills spells out success. Supporting this findings, Nwankwo and Obuah (2021) opined that business education curriculum is that which endows the students with the appropriate skills and attitudes which enables them to improve the quality of life and environment they find themselves upon graduation. In addition, the associated null hypothesis showed that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of University of Cross River State and University of Calabar business education students regarding how great business education curriculum influences their skill acquisition in public Universities in Cross Rivers State. Furthermore, result in Table 2 showed that inclusive skills required by business education students enhances labour

productivity. This finding is sync with that of Onuoha (2017) who affirmed that a quality business educator (teacher) help students develop to their maximum capacity to work or fit in the business world. Also Amadike and Obara (2020) contended that poor teachers of business education hinders students from developing their intellectual skills that would equip them to contribute significantly to the society. Finally, the associated null hypothesis indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of University of Cross River State and University of Calabar business education undergraduates regarding how inclusive skills influence their enhance labour market productivity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Business education curriculum should be reviewed for inclusion of requisite skills required by business education students to be self-reliant after graduation.
2. Business education students should be endowed with relevant skills for labour market

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