

BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND PROMOTION OF INCLUSIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR LABOUR MARKET

Maiwaazi, Sharon Miriam
sharonmphil@gmail.com

Akwo, Simeon Cletus
simeonakwo@gamil.com

Department of Business Education
Faculty of Vocational and Enterprenuership Education
University of Calabar

Abstract

This study determined the influence of business education curriculum in promoting inclusive skills development for labour market. Specifically, the study determined the influence of availability of business education teaching and learning resources, collaboration with industries, relevance of course materials to real-world labour market demands as the independent variables and promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students as the dependent variable. The study answered three research questions, and tested three null hypotheses. The design adopted for the study was correlational research design. The population of the study was 2,150 Business Education students from College of Education (COE) Akamkpa in Cross River state, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was adopted for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-made questionnaire constructed on a four-point scale titled “Business Education Curriculum for Inclusive Skills Development Questionnaire” (BECISDQ). Independent t-test statistical technique was employed to test the hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) at .05 level of significant. Results of the analysis revealed that, there is a significant influence of business education curriculum on promoting inclusive skills development for labour market. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that the government at all levels should increase the budgetary allocation for education especially Business Education in order to provide adequate teaching and learning resources for Business Education programme at all levels.

Keyword: Business Education, Curriculum, Skills, Development and Collaboration

Introduction

Skills development for labour market through education and training are paramount for an educational system or programme to be adjudged relevant or successful. Hence, business education effectiveness depends on how relevant the programmes offered are to the needs of the labour market. Mbaji and Ibezim (2019) stated that in an increasingly dynamic and competitive global economy, the role of education in shaping a skilled and adaptable workforce has become more critical than ever. This is because, education is evidently the basic mechanism for economic growth, transformation and technological advancement of any society (Breton, 2012) It has been defined as the bedrock of any and every society which is aimed at nation building and through which the needs and aspiration of the nations are achieved. Business Education occurs at several levels, including secondary education and higher education or university education. It is provided to develop business acumen, capability, and skills in a person which may help him to work efficiently and effectively in the workplace (Mbaji & Ibezim, 2019).

According to ILO (2010), equipping the workforce with the skills required for the jobs of today and those of tomorrow is a strategic concern in the national growth and development

outlooks of all G20 countries. Together, G20 leaders have pledged to support robust training strategies to meet the challenges of fostering strong, sustainable and balanced growth in each country and globally. The globalization of markets is accelerating the diffusion of technology and the pace of innovation. New occupations are emerging and replacing others. Within each occupation, required skills and competencies are evolving, as the knowledge content of production processes and services is rising.

A major challenge in all G20 countries is simultaneously to enhance the responsiveness of education and training systems to these changes in skill requirements and to improve access to training and skills development (ILO, 2010). Ultimately, each country's prosperity depends on how many of its people are in work and how productive they are, which in turn rests on the skills they have and how effectively those skills are used. Skills are a foundation of decent work. Opara (2018) maintained that equipping individuals with quality education needed for self-employment in nation building cannot be overemphasized. Business education as a subject, holds the potential to prepare individuals for the challenges of the modern labour market by providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in various professional domains. Business education is concerned with teaching students the rudiments, fundamental, concepts, theories and processes of business and its environment. It is an important part of the general education which emphasizes on skills and competencies acquisition for use in offices and business related occupation (Okenwa, 2018). Business Education programme is an important part of the general education which emphasizes on skills and competency acquisition. It is a programme of study which encompasses education for office occupations, business, teaching, administration and economic understanding (Okenwa, 2018). It is important to note that one remarkable characteristic of an efficient business education programme is the capacity to produce individuals who can function effectively as self-employed persons and employers of labour hence, the tenet of business education includes basic education for teaching career, entrepreneurship, business understanding and vocational practices. According to Ajua (2020), business education plays a significant role in the economic development of a country by providing knowledge and skills to the learners which enables them to impact knowledge to others, handle sophisticated office technologies and information system aimed at producing competent, dynamic and skillful business teachers, office administrators, businessmen and women that can comfortably compete in the workplace. Therefore, the business education curriculum is a planned sequence of formal courses and other activities and learning experiences which a student follows in an attempt to achieve particular educational objectives (Nwankwo & Obuah, 2021). The Business Education programme in Nigeria requires a practical and effective assessment that can bridge the gap between theory and practice, thereby ensuring that there is a correlation between skills and competency exhibited by graduates of business education. This can only be achieved through a well-structured and update of business education curriculum. It is therefore expected that graduates of business education should able to put to practice the skills professed.

Over the past few decades, the nature of work and the skills required to excel in the labour market have undergone profound transformations. Traditional careers in manufacturing and agriculture have given way to knowledge-based and service-oriented professions, with technology playing an ever-increasing role (Siegrist, & Jian, 2024)). As a result, the labour market has become more competitive and demanding, necessitating a workforce with versatile, adaptable, and inclusive skills. Business education encompassing programs such as undergraduate degrees in business administration, MBA programs, vocational training, and various specialized courses, is often viewed as a pathway to acquiring essential skills for the contemporary job market. This education equips students and professionals with a range of competencies, from financial and marketing knowledge to leadership and communication skills.

However, concerns have arisen regarding the inclusivity of business education in addressing the diverse needs of the workforce. Disparities in access to quality education, whether due to socio-economic factors, gender, or geographical location, may have led to

unequal opportunities for skills development. In an increasingly diverse and globalized world, addressing these disparities is not only a matter of social justice but also crucial for the continued growth of economies. To have an insight into the effectiveness of business education curriculum in achieving inclusive skills development for all, irrespective of their background. There is the need to examine the curricular content, teaching methodologies, partnership and the outcomes of business education programs, so as to shed light on how well these programs prepare individuals to meet the diverse and evolving demands of the labour market.

In regards to training quality and relevance, a great deal of effort is required to make sure that skills development systems deliver both the quantity and the quality of training needed. According to (ILO, 2010), this entails in the first instance an adequate supply of qualified teachers, trainers, directors of training institutions, and master craftsman to take on apprentices; the provision of opportunities for them to periodically upgrade their own skills; and conditions of work comparable with those in industry so as to attract the most talented staff. ILO, (2023) further states that a well-staffed and adequately funded training institutions are essential to skills development strategies and policies. Periodic reviews may be necessary to assess their effectiveness in meeting their goals and their efficiency in using scarce resources. Existing training infrastructure needs constant innovation to keep up with new technologies and learning methods.

Accordingly, Voogt and Roblin (2012) define 21st Century Skills as ‘new competencies’ which society is increasingly demanding of the existing workforce and, in educational terms, of the youth who need to be trained today for future jobs and careers. They state that the term ‘21st Century Skills’ or ‘21st century competences’ is ‘an overarching concept for the knowledge, skills and dispositions that citizens need to be able to contribute to the knowledge society’. Scott, (2015) defines 21st Century Skills as ‘the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to be competitive in the twenty-first century workforce, participate appropriately in an increasingly diverse society, use new technologies and cope with rapidly changing workplaces’. Scott provides a summary of essential competencies and skills for 21st century learning by analyzing several 21st century skills frameworks, a number of which work to synthesize the broad range of skills and attributes such as those indicated by Lippmann et al., (2014). Skills are instilled in the learning through adequate curriculum content.

Curriculum development in business education as opined by Tukur (2016), is a process that integrates a content area with educational theory and methodology and evaluates its impact when curriculum development follows a systematic approach. One of the basics of curriculum development is the continual improvement of the outcomes, the analyses of the processes and the decision to change. A curriculum however, encompasses all knowledge, skills and attitudes which a nation, imparts to her citizens through education. It concerns the facts, theories, principles and rules needed to be acquired to be certified as skilled and knowledgeable. Mkpa in Nnachi (2009) in his opinion, describes curriculum as a vehicle through which the school could strive towards the achievement of educational ends. Such ends could be those of the nation, State, local governments and communities. For the business education programme to become relevant and functional it must not only seek to achieve the goals and objectives of the general business and basic business education, but also seek to give learning in the 21st century skills basic for employability in the global labour market (Aquah, 2014). Hence, the business education programme in Nigeria calls for a positive and effective evaluation that can bridge the gap between theory and practice. Thus, ensuring the correlation between skills and competency exhibited by graduates of business education and the certificate they obtain to parade looking for professional jobs in the world of competition. Business education refers to a programme of instruction that offers various skills in accounting, marketing, office technology and management (OTM) and entrepreneurial education. Edokpolor and Egbri, (2017) stipulated that the actual goals of business education include to prepare students for specific career in office occupations, equip students with the requisite skills for job creation and entrepreneurship and

also expose students with knowledge about business, including a good blend of computer technology, which incorporates information and communication technology (ICT).

According to Nwankwo and Obuah (2021), Business education curriculum is a planned sequence of formal courses and other activities and learning experiences which a student follows in an attempt to achieve a particular educational objectives. The extent to which business education curriculum assists business students to competently enter and succeed in the world of work by acquiring skills spells out success. Agwu (2018) maintained that business education curriculum enables students to acquire the skills necessary for entrepreneurship and also equip them with the right skills that would enable them to engage in a life of work in offices as well as for self-employment upon graduation. The author opined that business education curriculum is a curriculum that endows its learner with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes which enables them to harness the natural and human potentials in order to improve the quality of life environment they find themselves.

This implies that the availability of business education teaching and learning resources, while collaborating with industries and matching course materials to real-world labor market demands is eminent for the promotion of inclusive skill development. The study will explore various aspects of business education, including the relevance of the curriculum, the pedagogical approaches employed, and the extent to which business education fosters inclusivity in skills development. The findings of this study will be invaluable for educators, policymakers, and employers seeking to enhance the impact of business education in equipping individuals with the skills necessary to thrive in the labour market, while simultaneously promoting diversity and inclusivity. Tety, (2016) examined the extent to which the selected community secondary schools in Rombo District utilize quality and adequate instructional materials in classrooms and how this has promoted academic performance of students. The following were findings of the study: first, instructional materials are the key to teachers' and students' performance. Secondly, most community secondary schools in Rombo District suffer shortage of essential teaching and learning materials. Thirdly, the study revealed that teachers used different strategies to minimize the challenges of attaining and using quality instructional materials like borrowing books and improvisation. The study recommends that the government should budget sufficient funds for improving the availability of instructional materials in all secondary schools.

Also, Iweyah (2023) carried out a study centered on the impact of business education programme on skill acquisition by business education students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The study found that contents of business education curriculum and the quality of teachers has a very great influence on the students' skill acquisitions. Therefore, the study among others recommended that business education curriculum should be reviewed and expanded for inclusion of various skills required for students to be self-reliant upon graduation.

In another study by Nungse, Ugwoke, Ogbuanya and Shetima (2020) on enhancing school-industry collaboration for effective skill development of technical education students in Enugu State. It was found that preparing skill training programmes that will suit the school academic calendar, industry personnel participating in special lectures, narrowing the gap through periodic meeting on technological innovations were among the strategies for improving school-industry collaboration in skill development of technical education students for effective skill development in South east Nigeria. Mohammed and Hassan (2022) found that business education curriculum content in Niger colleges of education does not provide students with essential skills required for their employability after graduation. In respect of the relevance of course materials to real world of work, Imeokparia and Ediagbonya (2012) posited that the business education curriculum has the potential to reinforce students with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values for gainful employment and be efficient in the teaching profession. They had also indicated further that the current level of skills possessed by Business Education graduates is good enough for them to secure placement in the classroom.

Statement of problem

The observed ineffectiveness of business education curriculum in promoting inclusive skills development for the labour market is a pressing concern. In an era marked by rapid economic and technological changes, the question arises: Does business education adequately prepare individuals from diverse backgrounds for success in the contemporary job market? This is because there are worrying disparities and inconsistencies in access to quality business education, which impact skills development and employment opportunities coupled with the relevance of curricular content, and the inclusivity of pedagogical approaches, all of which impact skills development and employment opportunities. The inclusivity of the pedagogical approaches used in business education is a matter of concern, as they may not accommodate the learning needs and skills of individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds, genders, and geographical locations to succeed in a diverse and competitive workforce. The study will explore the outcomes of business education programs by considering factors such as employability, career advancement, and income potential among others. By addressing these objectives, the study will offer insights into the complex relationship between business education, skills development, and inclusive labour market participation, providing valuable guidance for educators, policymakers, and employers.

Objectives of the study

The study specifically seeks to determine the:

1. Availability of business education teaching and learning resources for promoting inclusive skill development of business education students for labour market.
2. Collaboration with industries in promoting inclusive skill development of business education students for labour market.
3. Relevance of course materials to real-world labor market demands in promoting inclusive skill development of business education students.

Research questions

1. To what extent does the availability of business education teaching and learning resources influence the promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market?
2. To what extent does collaboration with industries influence the promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market?
3. To what extent does the relevance of course materials to real-world labor market demands influence the promotion inclusive skill development among business education students?

Research hypotheses

1. Availability of business education teaching and learning resources does not significantly influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market.
2. There is no significant influence of collaboration with industries on promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market.
3. The relevance of course materials to real-world labor market demands does not significantly influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was correlative research design. Correlative research design is used to determine whether there exists relationship between two or more variables which may be positive, negative, or neutral relationship. Correlative research indicates whether or not two variables are directly proportional, inversely proportional or are not related

to each other. According to A correlation is the measure of a relationship between two or more variables. A correlation is simply a co-relation which defines how well two separate variables "go together. This definition is provided by the American Board organization. If an increase in one variable depends on the increase of the other variable then, it is positive correlation. Correlation helps to identify the complexity between the modules. The correlative research design is suitable for the study as this study aimed at finding out the relationship that exists between the business education curriculum and inclusive skills development for the labour market. The population of the study is made up of 2,150 Business Education students from College of Education (COE) Akamkpa in Cross River state, Nigeria. These categories of persons were chosen for the study because it was considered suitable and that the information needed for this study is embedded therein. Sampling technique used in the study was simple random sampling technique. The sample for this study was made up of two hundred and fifteen (215) representing 10% of the total population. The choice of 10% is in agreement with the opinion of Ali in Omenka and Kurumeh (2013) who states that in a definite population, the choice between 10-30% of the population making up the sample is reasonably adequate.

Results and discussion

The data presentation and analysis were based on the research questions and hypotheses formulated for the study. The presentation were data analysis, interpretations, followed by the discussion of the findings.

Hypothesis one

Availability of business education teaching and learning resources does not significantly influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market.

To provide answers to this hypothesis, independent t test was used with availability of business education teaching and learning resources as the independent variable, while promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market was the dependent. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of independent t test on availability of business education teaching and learning resources and influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market.

Students for labour market							
Gender	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal.	P-value	Decision
Male	103	23.55	1.57	213	4.181	0.0001	Rejected
Female	112	22.63	1.69				
P> 0.05							

Table 1 shows the result of the hypothesis on availability of business education teaching and learning resources and promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market. The table above showed the calculated t value of 4.181 with a P-value of 0.0001 which was found to be less than 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis which states Availability of business education teaching and learning resources does not significantly influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market is rejected. This means that availability of business education teaching and learning resources significantly influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant influence of collaboration with industries on promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market.

To provide answers to this hypothesis, independent t test was used with collaboration with industries as the independent variable, while promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market was the dependent. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of independent t test on the influence of collaboration with organizations on promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market.

Gender	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal.	P-value	Decision
Male	103	25.17	2.33	213	3.824	.000086	Rejected
Female	112	23.58	3.60				

p> 0.05

Table 2 shows the result of the hypothesis on the influence of collaboration with organizations on promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market. The table above showed the calculated t value of 3.824 with a P-value of .000086 which was found to be less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of collaboration with industries on promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market was rejected. This implies that there is significant influence of collaboration with industries on promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market.

Hypothesis three

The relevance of course materials to real-world labor market demands does not significantly influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students.

To provide answers to this hypothesis, independent t test was used with relevance of course materials to real-world labor market demands as the independent variable, while promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market was the dependent. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of independent t test on influence of relevance of course materials to real-world labor market demands on promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students.

Gender	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal.	P-value	Decision
Male	103	22.815	1.4802	213	4.848	.00001	Rejected
Female	112	24.063	2.190				

p> 0.05

Table 3 shows the result of the hypothesis on influence of relevance of course materials to real-world labor market demands on promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students. The table above showed the calculated t value of 4.848 with a P-value of .00001 which was found to be less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis which

states that the relevance of course materials to real-world labor market demands does not significantly influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students was rejected. This means that the relevance of course materials to real-world labor market demands significantly influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students.

Discussion

The finding of hypothesis one revealed that availability of business education teaching and learning resources significantly influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market. This findings concurred Tety, (2016) who examined the extent to which the selected community secondary schools in Rombo District utilize quality and adequate instructional materials in classrooms and how this has promoted academic performance of students. And found that instructional materials are the key to teachers' and students' performance. Tety, further found that most community secondary schools in Rombo District suffer shortage of essential teaching and learning materials.

The finding of hypothesis two shown that there is significant influence of collaboration with industries on promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students for labour market. This finding is in agreement with Nungse, et al. (2020) who carried out a study on enhancing school-industry collaboration for effective skill development of technical education students in Enugu State, and found that preparing skill training programmes that will suit the school academic calendar, industry personnel participating in special lectures, narrowing the gap through periodic meeting on technological innovations were among the strategies for improving school-industry collaboration in skill development of technical education students for effective skill development in South east Nigeria.

The finding of hypothesis three revealed that the relevance of course materials to real-world labor market demands significantly influence promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students. This finding is in consonant with the assertions of Edigbonya (2012) who posited that the business education curriculum has the potential to reinforce students with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values for gainful employment and be efficient in the teaching profession. They also indicated further that the current level of skills possessed by Business Education graduates is good enough for them to secure placement in the classroom.

Conclusion

Business Education curriculum that will enhance the development of skills type that will match with the real world of work is sacrosanct to the promotion of inclusive skill development among business education students. This is because if Business Education graduates are equipped with that kind of skills that industries desire to solve business problem and create value for their customers, then will be solving the problem of unemployment that is ravaging our country for decades. And this type of skills will also empower the individual to start up a business and remain in the business, thereby contributing to economic development of the country and the world at large.

Recommendations

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

1. The government at all levels should increase the budgetary allocation for education especially Business Education in order to provide adequate teaching and learning resources for Business Education programme at all levels.
2. Institutions running Business Education programme should as matter of policies ensure that Business Education programme is runnel in collaboration with industries in order to expose learners to real-world labor market.

3. Business Education curriculum designers to revisit Business Education curriculum course materials to match real-world labor market demands.

References

- Agwu, E. (2018). Business education students' entrepreneurship skills acquisition on the employability potential of undergraduates in Ignatius Ajuru university of education in Rivers State. *International Journal of Innovative Social & Science Education Research*, 6(1), 1-12.
- Ajua B. C. (2020). Business education: Relevance and functionality in Nigeria philosophy of education. *Business Education Journal*, 3(2), 116-121.
- Asmaa, E. E., Merola R., Richard R., & Martin S., (2021). *Inclusivity in the labor market*. IMF working Paper. WP/21/141, International Monetary Fund.
- Breton, Theodore. (2012). The role of education in Economic growth: *Theory, History, and Current Returns*. *Educational Research*. 55(10) 2139/ssrn.2184492.
- Edokpolor, James & Egbri, Jane. (2017). Business education in Nigeria for value re-orientation: A strategic approach for poverty alleviation and national development. *Journal of Educational Research and Review*. 5. 41-48.
- ILO (International Labour Office, 2012). The youth employment crisis: A call for action, resolution and conclusions of the 101 session of the International Labour Conference. Available at: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_633677.pdf
- Imeokpana, P.O & Edigbonya, K (2012). Employability of business education graduates *Educational Research* 3 (8), 645-651
- Iweyah, A. (2023). Impact of business education programme on skill acquisition by Business education students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. *International Journal of Innovative Education Research* 11(2), 203-209.
- Siegrist, Johannes, & Jian Li, (2024). The changing nature of work and employment in modern societies', *Psychosocial Occupational Health: An Interdisciplinary Textbook* (Oxford, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 22 Feb. 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192887924.003.0002>.
- Khaykin, M. M., Lapinskas, A. A. & Kochergina, O. A. (2020). The development of the theory of human capital in the historical dimension. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, 139, Atlantis press.
- Mbaji, A. J. & Ibezim, N. (2019). Business education need for requisite infrastructure for the business education programme in tertiary institutions. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 17(40), 1-4.
- Nungse, N. I., Ugwoke, C. K., Ogbuanya, T. C., & Shetima, A. (2020). Enhancing school-industry collaboration for effective skill development of Technical education students in South-East Nigeria. *Vocational and Technical Education Journal*, 2(1), 22 – 29.
- Nwankwo, B. & Obuah, F. (2021). Assuring quality graduate output through entrepreneurial oriented education in Nigerian universities. *Nigerian Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 12(3), 48-57.
- Okenwa, O. (2018). Policy framework and strategies for entrepreneurship development for Nigerian universities. A paper presented at the national sensitization workshop of entrepreneurship development in Nigeria universities organized by National Commission, Abuja 21st June.
- Otamiri, S. (2014). Business and technical education delivery in the 21st Century: The challenge of quality and functional skills. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 5(11), 187- 196.
- Scott, Cynthia Luna (2015). The Future of Learning 2 What kind of learning is needed in the 21st century. *Education, research and foresight: working papers*; 14, 14 p. 2015/WS/23.

- Tety, J. L. (2016). Role of instructional materials in academic performance in community secondary schools in Rombo district. A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of master of education in Administration, planning and policy studies of the Open university of Tanzania
- Tukur, A. (2016). Assessment of implementation of Business education curriculum in colleges of Education in North-West Geo-political zone, Nigeria, ABU Zaria.
- Voogt, J., & Roblin, N. P. (2012). A Comparative Analysis of International Frameworks for 21st Century Competences: Implications for National Curriculum Policies.