

RE-CONCEIVING BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR ENHANCED GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study looked at different approaches to redesigning business education curriculum in public universities in Cross River State, to increase their competitiveness in the global market. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were developed to direct the investigation in order to fulfil the study's objectives. For this study, a survey research design was used. The population of the study comprised 41 business education lecturers from public universities in Cross River State. The study's sample was chosen using the census approach. The Business Education Curriculum and Enhanced Global Competitiveness Questionnaire (BECEGCQ) served as the instrument for data collecting and analysis. One University of Calabar lecturer in business education and one measurement and evaluation specialist initially validated the instrument. The internal reliability was estimated using the Cronbach alpha reliability technique, yielding reliability coefficients between 0.82 and 0.85. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using one-way analysis of variance. It was concluded that the mean response of business education lecturers at University of Cross River State and University of Calabar to the question about the curriculum for improved global competitiveness differed significantly. It was suggested that all pertinent agencies be included in the business education curriculum development process by government policy makers.

Key word: Re-conceiving, Business Education Curriculum, enhance, global competitiveness

Introduction

Scholars generally agree that education is essential to the development of the individual and the community. It serves as a means of empowering students with the knowledge, abilities, and mindset necessary for both individual and societal growth. Education has been described by Olori and Olori (2018) as a catalyst for sustainability and development. This indicates that gaining knowledge changes a person into someone who is competent, familiar with the abilities required to be functional, and in a position to advance society. Thus, the core of business education is its ability to support personal development in addition to other goals. The development of skills for both individual and societal growth is the main focus of this education. Thus, the functionality of education for an individual's growth among other reasons is the essence of business education. This education is centred on the acquisition of skills for self and societal development. The development of skills for both individual and societal growth is the main focus of this education. A functional education programme like business education equips students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to succeed in the workplace. To be functional, a person must be able to use newly acquired skills to fulfil a variety of needs. Through promoting individuals' participation in their communities; this education also aids in the economic development of the country. These goals are as follows: supplying skilled labour in applied science, technology, and business, especially in craft and technical fields; supplying technical expertise and vocational skills required for agricultural, economic, and commercial development; and supplying individuals with the training they need to become self-sufficient and stable in their finances. The noble goals mentioned above are intended to produce citizens who are healthy, literate, and independent and who will generate wealth for the advancement of

humanity. Additionally, graduates of the programme should be able to successfully and appropriately integrate into the workforce.

Training in technical and vocational skills has a beneficial effect on reducing unemployment. It takes appropriate skill acquisition through education and training to enable young people to launch their own businesses (Uloko & Ejinkonye, 2010). The development of skills indicates the existence of multiple areas of need that the person needs to address in order to reduce unemployment. According to the study of Chinedu and Olabiyi's (2015), among the vocational skills needed to empower Nigerian youth were those related to horticulture, business, engineering, and constitution work. It's possible that the aforementioned studies had some bearing on how the curriculum was created. As a result, the main focus of business education curricula is on helping students acquire the skills necessary to find gainful employment. It is noteworthy to mention that because of its specialisation in marketing, accounting, management, and secretarial options, this education serves as a foundation for graduates' self-employment in Nigeria. Regretfully, this has changed recently, with the majority of business education graduates among other graduates being unemployed. In the context of this study, unemployment is the state in which individuals who are ready and able to work but are unable to locate gainful employment. According to a National Bureau of Statistics report from 2017, the percentage of youth without jobs as of the third quarter of 2017 varied from 14% to 18.88%. The National Planning Commission (2005) stated that empowering Nigerians to create wealth, create jobs, reduce poverty, and reorient their values is a crucial component of a strategic macroeconomic framework due to the dire state of the country's youth.

This claim by the National Planning Commission makes it necessary to redesign business education curricula in order to improve students' global competitiveness. It also proves that the calibre of the curriculum has a significant impact on how well graduates of business schools are able to meet the demands of the contemporary competitive environment. According to Yusuf (2012), a curriculum is a policy statement about a subject that outlines how the policy is to be implemented through a course of action. It is an action plan, a well-organized series of learning goals that are focused on outcomes and values. A curriculum is a written document that includes the subject matter, learning experiences, evaluation, goals, and objectives of a specific course of study. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the business education program's curriculum is based on the idea of giving students marketable skills.

Additionally, how the aforementioned materials are delivered has a big impact on how functional and relevant the curriculum is. This is accurate given that business education is a curriculum that emphasises both general business education and office education (Osuala, 2009). When viewed in this light, the curriculum delivery should incorporate the two business education components' diversification to accommodate the various needs of the students. In the current era of globalisation and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), where work processes and organisations are becoming more flexible, multitasking, and performance-based, integration becomes especially important. To accomplish this, Utoware and Kren-Ikidi (2013) proposed integrating new technologies into the delivery of business education curricula. To guarantee that the quality of education offered is in line with societal demands, the authors came to the conclusion that a continuous review of the curriculum was necessary. The development of an online learning environment, the integration of all technical, vocational, and business practices and workshops, and the integration of liberal learning with business practices are just a few of the delivery strategies that should be employed in an effort to meet societal demands. The need for this review stems from the typical Nigerian university's strong traditional orientation and reluctance to reassess its curriculum in light of the challenges facing both domestic and international economic development. The observation is supported by Bellman's (2004) assertion that insufficient coordination between educational institutions and the community, private, and public sectors (stakeholders) is to blame for the institutions' failure to foster entrepreneurship. The public universities located in Nigeria's Cross River State are among these

establishments. These academic institutions are those that offer business education programmes in relation to the study. Therefore, in order to instill a practical culture that fosters business thinking and lifelong learning about business, it is necessary to review the current business education curriculum in these institutions.

Furthermore, in order for the curriculum to achieve its objectives in the labour market, it should include e-commerce, e-marketing, electronic accounting, teleconferencing, and other topics in addition to the theoretical instruction, counselling, monitoring, and evaluation that are present in the current curriculum. This suggests that a more thorough, practical, and integrated strategy is needed to discourage the passive system of making a living through paid employment (jobs that require a suit and tie). Additionally, the curriculum aligns with the way the labour market is currently trending in relation to the maintenance of the global economy. According to Ezeugwu (2003), business education should prepare students to be financially independent by providing them with the necessary training and skills. This perspective demonstrates the significance of business education for the maintenance of the global economy.

It is therefore depressing that the rate of unemployment among business education graduates keeps rising, which undoubtedly necessitates incorporating different approaches to revitalise the current business education curriculum. In a study, Olori and Olori (2018) found that some strategies for empowering youth through TVET included using appropriate instructional methods, developing skills packages for captivity apprenticeship, and raising awareness of vocational skills programmes. In addition to these results, it was evident that curriculum highlights, analytical abilities, tying theory and practice together, availability of modern instructional technologies, and efficient inclusion of stakeholders in curriculum development, content, and delivery were some of the areas that needed to be addressed in order to revitalise the process of business education curricula in universities. Ajagu (2015) suggested a curriculum that incorporates all elements of technical, vocational, and business studies courses along with project teams, peer exchange, individual counselling, and workshops to provide a holistic education in light of these viewpoints. Despite these suggestions, research is still needed to determine the best ways to review the current business education curriculum, particularly with regard to encouraging graduates of federal universities for enhanced global competitiveness. The lack of these studies have created a gap that this study aims to fill. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to re-evaluate the business education curricula at public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, in order to improve their competitiveness in the global market.

Purpose of the study

The study's primary goal was to redesign the business education curriculum at public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, in order to improve students' competitiveness on the global stage.

The study specifically aims to ascertain the:

1. Techniques for redesigning the content of business education curriculum in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, to increase their competitiveness in the global market.
2. Methods for redesigning the content delivery of business education curriculum in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, to increase global competitiveness.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are the contents of the business education curriculum in public universities in Cross River State being rethought to make them more globally competitive?
2. How are the business education curriculum in public universities in Cross River State being redesigned to improve their global competitiveness?

Statement of hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no discernible difference in the mean rating of business education lecturers regarding the approaches for rethinking business education curriculum contents for an enhanced global economy in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. There is no discernible difference in the mean rating of business education lecturers regarding the approaches for rethinking business education curriculum contents delivery for enhanced global economy in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design used in the study was a descriptive survey. A total of 41 business education lecturers, comprising 28 from the University of Calabar and 13 from the University of Cross River State, Calabar, who offer business education programmes, made up the study's population. Due to its manageability, the entire population was chosen using the census sampling technique. The Business Education Curriculum and Enhanced Global Competitiveness Questionnaire (BECEGCQ), a structured questionnaire created by the researchers, served as the instrument for gathering data. A five-point rating scale with the following options: Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Disagree (3 points), Strongly Disagree (2 points), and Undecided (1 point) comprised the instrument's 20 items, arranged in a cluster of two. Two experts, one from the Department of Business Education and the other from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit of Education Foundation Studies at the Universities of Calabar and Cross River State, respectively, face validated the instrument. Using the Cronbach Alpha Statistic Tool, the reliability coefficient values for clusters A and B were 0.82 and 0.85, respectively, and the overall reliability index was 0.81. The real limit of number was used as a decision rule for the questionnaire items, and the mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data gathered from the respondents in order to address the research questions. This was categorised as follows: (4.50–5.00) - Extremely In agreement, (3.49–4.00) - Disagree, (1.50–2.49) - Strongly Disagree, (2.50–3.49) - Agree, and (1.00–1.49) - Undecided. At the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypotheses were tested using the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). When $p > 0.05$ level of significance, which implies the existence of no significant difference, the null hypothesis is not rejected; however, when $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance, which implies the existence of a significant difference, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Results and discussion

Results

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the respondents regarding their strategies for redesigning the curriculum contents of business education in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, to increase their global competitiveness.

S/N	Items	x	SD	Remark
1.	Including a method for locating profitable business prospects	4.28	.62	Agree
2.	Integrating business practices and liberal education	4.40	.86	Agree
3.	Integration of all facets of technical skills	4.14	.74	Agree
4.	Including the different elements of vocation skills Consent	3.87	.79	Agree
5.	Including every facet of business operations	3.11	.72	Agree
6.	Including business plan mechanisms	4.52	.89	Agree
7.	Including internally focused courses in line With demand in the labour market	3.30	.87	Agree
8.	Incorporating e-commerce	4.10	.89	Agree
9.	ICT integration into business procedures	3.83	.77	Agree
	Group average	4.16	.85	Agree

Table 1 displays the mean agree scores of the respondents for items 1 through 10, which were 4.28, 4.40, 4.14, 3.87, 3.11, 4.55, 3.30, 4.10, 3.54, and 3.83. The standard deviations for the same items were 0.62, 0.86, 0.74, 0.79, 0.72, 0.89, 0.87, 0.89, 0.83, and 0.77. The table also included a cluster mean of 4.16 that was categorised as agreeable and a standard deviation of 0.85. This suggests that among the strategies for rethinking the business education curriculum contents for increased global competitiveness in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, were the inclusion of a mechanism for identifying viable business opportunities, the integration of liberal learning with business practices, the inclusion of a business plan, e-commerce, and cost-profit determination.

Table 2: mean and standard deviation of the respondents regarding strategies for redesigning the delivery of business education curricula in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, to improve their global competitiveness.

S/N	Item	X	SD	Remark
1.	Using SWOT analysis to improve business procedures	4.56	.84	Agree
2.	Application of field trip culture	4.18	.78	Agree
3.	Aligning theory and practice	4.22	.81	Agree
4.	Modification of the student-centered Delivery strategy	3.51	.62	Agree
5.	Teleconferencing application	3.16	.80	Agree
6.	Use of integrated strategy	3.14	.65	Agree
7.	Using group interaction strategy	4.19	.80	Agree
8.	Using students' self-drilling exercises	3.11	.72	Agree
9.	Using a practical approach	4.20	.70	Agree
10.	Group average	4.21	.75	Agree

For items 1 through 10, the mean agree scores for the respondents were 4.56, 4.18, 4.22, 3.51, 3.16, 3.14, 4.19, 3.11, 4.62, and 4.21, according to data in Table 2. The corresponding standard deviations were 0.84, 0.78, 0.81, 0.62, 0.80, 0.65, 0.80, 0.72, 0.70, and 0.71. The application of SWOT analysis to business practices, field trip culture, group interaction, and student self-drilling exercises were some of the strategies for rethinking business education curriculum delivery for enhanced global competitiveness in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, according to the cluster mean of agree (4.21) and standard deviation of 0.74.

Hypothesis one

There is no discernible difference in the mean rating of business education lecturers regarding the approaches for rethinking business education curriculum contents for an enhanced global economy in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA of the mean ratings given by business education lecturers in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, regarding the strategies for rethinking the curriculum's contents to increase the schools' global competitiveness.

Variables	Sum of squares	Mean square	F-value	t-value	Df	Sig. Level
Between groups	.44	.15	2.95	.005	3	.05
Within groups	1.85	.05			38	

Table 2 indicates that a significant value of 0.05 was associated with the F ratio of 2.94. The null hypothesis is thus rejected because the associated significant value of 0.05 is equivalent to the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean rating of university of Calabar and University of Cross River State business education lecturers on the approaches for rethinking business education curriculum to improve global competitiveness.

Hypothesis two

There is no discernible difference in the mean rating of business education lecturers regarding the approaches for rethinking business education curriculum contents delivery for enhanced global economy in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 4: One-way ANOVA conducted on the mean rating of business education lecturers regarding the strategies for rethinking the delivery of business education curriculum contents in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria, to improve global competitiveness.

Variables	Sum of squares	Mean square	F-value	t-value	Df	Sig. Level
Between groups	.24	.08	1.49	.04	3	.05
Within groups	1.99	.05			38	

According to Table 2, the F ratio was 1.49, and at the 0.05 level of significance, the corresponding significant value was 0.04. The null hypothesis is rejected because the associated significant value of 0.03 is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significant difference in the mean rating of university of Calabar and University of Cross River

State business education lecturers on the approaches for rethinking business education curriculum content delivery to improve global competitiveness.

Discussion of results

The first hypothesis's findings demonstrate some of the necessary strategies, including the inclusion of business plan mechanisms, the integration of liberal learning with business practices, the inclusion of mechanisms for identifying viable business opportunities, and the integration of all technical, vocational, and business skills in the curriculum. These opinions from the respondents might not come as a surprise because it's thought that graduates of business school will be exposed to these skills and gain the necessary relevant skills to be self-sufficient. This would undoubtedly contribute to the decline in unemployment. The results of Okon, Eminue, and Leema (2016), who showed that vocational and technical skill trainings have a positive impact on alleviating unemployment, further support this finding. Ajagu (2015) also discussed the integration of the various components and suggested a curriculum that incorporates project teams, peer exchange, individual counselling, workshops, and all aspects of technical, vocational, and business studies subjects for a holistic education. Apart from these integrations, the respondents also mentioned that the curriculum should incorporate e-commerce and e-marketing in conjunction with ICT for business practices. This may or may not be related to the fact that, given how quickly technology is changing society, exposing students to these lessons helps them acquire the best practices required to compete on a worldwide scale.

The results of hypothesis two demonstrate that, among other things, rethinking the way business education curriculum are delivered in order to improve students' ability to compete globally will require strategies like applying SWOT analysis to business practices, fostering a culture of field trips, connecting theory to practice, and utilising online learning for practical exhibitions. This finding might not be unrelated to the necessity for effective learning to shift from merely theoretical to practically applicable in a technologically changing society. Olori and Olori's (2018) research highlights the importance of aligning theory and practice, as well as implementing enhanced instructional technology in business education courses, as effective strategies for empowering young people through vocational technical education. It's possible that the fact that business-related courses are still taught using out-of-date, unstable teaching materials has nothing to do with the efficient use of these technologies. It is also not unexpected that there was no discernible difference between the two public universities' business education lecturers' mean ratings when it came to rethinking how to deliver the curriculum for increased global competitiveness. This suggests that respondents have similar opinions about the topics brought up in the survey.

Conclusion

The study came to the conclusion that developing a business plan, integrating liberal learning with business practices, and including a mechanism for identifying potential business opportunities were some of the strategies for rethinking the contents of the business education curriculum. It was also discovered that some strategies for redesigning business education curricula to improve global competitiveness include using a pragmatic approach, applying SWOT analysis to business practices, and applying online learning for practical exhibitions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

1. Business education curriculum content should be reconceived in a manner that would enhance global competitiveness among business graduates.
2. Business education curriculum content should be delivered in line with the modern realities in order to enhance global competitiveness among business graduates.

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