



## PERCEIVED STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE SCHOOL INDUSTRY COLLABORATION FOR IMPROVING SKILLS AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN DELTA STATE

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### **Abstract**

*The study focused on perceived strategies to promote school- industry collaboration for improving skills among Business Education students in Delta State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 41 Business Educators from Delta state University Abraka and Delta state Polytechnics Ogwashi-Uku and Ozoro. A structured questionnaire with a 4 point rating was used to obtain data. The instrument was subjected to validation by three experts and a pilot test was conducted to obtain reliability coefficient of 0.82 using Cronbach Alpha formular. With the help of two research assistants, 41 copies of the instrument were administered and retrieved for analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while analysis of variance was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that school-industry collaboration will be of immense benefits to schools (Universities and Polytechnics). It recommended among others that there is the need for a renewed policy by both the Federal and state Governments to make industries absorb students for SIWES with a view to training students to acquire better industrial skills.*

**Keywords:** *Business Education, Strategy, Collaborative Strategy, Skills.*

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### **Introduction**

Business Education is an aspect of Technical and Vocational Education and Training which is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving in addition to general education. The study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life. Technical and vocational education is further understood to be an integral part of general education, a means of preparing for occupational fields and for affective participation in the world of work; an aspect of lifelong learning and preparation for



promoting environmentally sound sustainable development and equally a method of alleviating poverty (FRN 2012). As an integral part of Vocational Education, Business Education programme prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business and prepares them to handle their own business affairs to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business community (Igboke & Okoro 2015.) Smith (2002) described Business Education in its broad sense as training that enable one to carry on successfully a socially useful occupation. This means Business Education is training for useful employment in trade and industry. It is a training in which the recipient acquires skills with which to earn a living and to be useful to his society. Skill according to Karl (1996) is the ability to carry out a task with determined results often with a given amount of time, energy, or both. He added that having knowledge of skills required in the workplace gives an individual a clear guide of what is expected of him in terms of performance. The workplace is changing daily because of technology which has brought with it broad range of skills, the Business Education student need various skills, such as hard, soft and conceptual skills to engage meaningful and to contribute to society.

Strategy is a plan for a particular purpose. According to Ghemawat and Pankjet in Okanazu (2018), strategy is viewed as the direction and scope of an organization over the long-term, which achieves advantage for the organization through its configuration of resources within a changing environment and fulfills stakeholders' expectations. It is a set of goals and objectives of an organization including major programmes of action chosen to reach those goals and objectives. Watters (2016) describes collaborative strategy as the synergy between the strategy of business and the strategy of partners to realize objectives. Through collaboration according to Watters, companies collaborate with partners, vendors and customers to build synergy at strategic level to grow their business. In the light of the above, the desire of business education to produce skilled graduates to meet the demands of a fast growing society can be achieved through deliberate collaboration with industries.

According to Olorunfemi, and Ashaolu in Uchena, Okeke- Okonkwo and Ifi (2018), a functional business education programme requires effective partnership with relevant industries which graduates will serve. Although in Nigeria, business education students are expected to be exposed to students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) and Teaching Practice (TP), the experience students acquire from these schemes are barely adequate to their training needs. The student industrial work experience scheme and teaching practice are design to create a formidable link



between Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics in order to bridge the gaps between theory and practice thereby exposing students to out-of-classroom experiences and enable students to understand the world of work experiences and to build their capacity for entrepreneurship or self-employment. As school to work programme that should ensure smooth transition of students to industry and business institutions, these programmes have not been able to impact successfully on the nation. As rightly observed by Uchenu, Okeke-Onkonkwo and Ifi (2018), their activities have been less impactful due to inadequate students placement, lack of supervision and rejection of student trainees, in some cases by public institutions, local and multi-national organizations. As a result, such linkages have become ineffective in achieving its objectives of industrial orientation that should lead to better career choice in entrepreneurship. The inability of the SIWES programme to achieve reasonable success not only make graduates of business education to lag behind in essential skills which may be required in industries but has also deter them from having adequate knowledge to venture into business.

Internationally, government and industry stakeholders have actively pursued collaborative arrangement with schools, such arrangement operate through policy and funding mechanisms. This is also done to address needs of a post-industrial age knowledge economy and to provide a range of benefits for enhance innovation and improve social educational outcomes for Learners and employees groups (James, Hitendra & Flynn 2016). Supporting this view, Waters (2016) stated that collaboration within schools and industries allows for efficient skill building in the students. It can help address supply of educational services to geographically dispersed locations which solves some of barriers and co-ordinations difficulties for rural and remote students and perhaps help the education sector to keep pace with knowledge innovation, new work practices and products, with innovative education solutions. Watters added that there are evidence in a business context that partnership collaboration allow convergence of partners perspectives which can result in innovative education ideas, directly relevant to their respective workforces, hence co-produced educational programmes which create genuine and direct value for both the school (students as ultimate beneficiaries) and for industry. It also provides access to resources that are beyond the financial capacity of schools. These resources include equipment that is industry standard, which is in contrast to simple options available in school laboratories and workshops as well as personnel who are experts in their respective fields. Finally, according to Watters, innovative contextualized industry based curriculum can produced knowledge transfer and workplace



readiness of potential employees as it is a platform for recruitment of future employees, so it is a win-win collaborations for both the institution and the industry. A secondary benefit to industry is the opportunity to influence school curriculum with the aim of better aligning future employees with the skill needs of industry.

In Nigeria there is lack of collaboration between industry and institutions and this is really a serious problem hampering the performance of Business Education students as the students do not have much opportunity to learn practical techniques which will enable them to acquire skills related to their future jobs. School- industry collaboration is achieved in several ways through mentorship, research and development, technology transfer and internship work placement (Jackson 2015) Collaboration is important not just because it is a better way to learn, learning to collaborate is part of equipping oneself for effectiveness, problem solving, innovation and life-long learning in an ever-changing networking economy (Nakagawa, Takata, Kato, Matsuyaki & Matsuhashi 2017). It is therefore important for institutions of higher learning to seek to enhance students' skills and ensure a smooth and effective transition through collaboration. Apart from students' industry work experience scheme, Business Education programmes could be improved through knowledge transfer and collaboration in research.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is dearth of skilled manpower due to the nature of courses offered in institutions of higher learning which are not always in tandem with the current need of the society. Technology today is moving faster than what the Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education are offering and many higher institutions are far removed from the machines and equipment used in industries today as a result graduates from higher institutions do not have the pre-requisite to be gainfully employed, neither are they ready for self employment. The SIWES programme as a strategy to acquire skills has experienced failure in so many areas of its operation. The supervision component for instance (industrial and institutional) are no longer taken seriously, the students as well are not mindful of the exercise. The desired need to face the reality in the current advances of the use of technology in all facets of human endeavours, especially in the field of Business Education has compelled scholars to focus on school-industry collaborative strategies in the expectation that such collaboration will close the gap between classroom experiences and employers expectation.



## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

What are the perceived school-industry collaboration strategies for improving skills among Business Education students in Delta State

What are the perceived challenges affecting adequate school-industry collaboration for improving skills among Business Education students in Delta State.

## **Hypotheses**

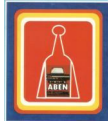
The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Business Educators in Universities and Polytechnics do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on perceived collaborative strategies for improving skills among Business Education student in Delta State.

Male and female Business Educators do not differ significantly on the perceived challenges affecting adequate school-industry collaboration for improving skills among Business Education students in Delta State.

## **Methods**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 41 Business Educators in Delta State University, Abraka and Delta state Polytechnics, Ogwashi-Uku and Ozoro. A Questionnaire with two sections of 28 items was designed and used for the study. The instrument for the study was validated by three experts from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. To establish the internal consistency of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted and Cronbach Alpha was used to test the data retrieved using the application of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The analysis yielded a co-efficient score of 0.82 and 0.85 respectively. The administration of the instrument was carried out with the help of two research assistants. Data collected regarding the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In order to determine strategies to promote school-industry collaboration for improving skills among Business Education students, the questionnaire was structure on a four point rating scale with response categories as “Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagreed (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. The mean rating of 2.50 was used for decision regarding research questions. Items with mean value of 2.50 and above were considered as agreed while items with mean values below 2.50 were considered disagreed.



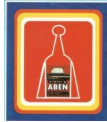
## Results

### Research Question 1

What are the perceived school-industry collaboration strategies for improving skills among Business Education students in Delta State?

**Table 1:** Mean and standard deviation of perceived industry collaboration strategies for improving skills among Business Education students in Delta State.

S/N	Items on perceived strategies to improve skills	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Formation of joint ventures between schools/Business Education department and industries.	3.51	0.66	Agreed
2	Inviting experts from industry to schools as resources persons to demonstrate skills and production techniques to business education department	3.67	0.61	Agreed
3	Deliberate policy for students to be absorbed by industries for SIWES.	3.76	0.56	Agreed
4.	Entering of agreement of jointly sharing of instructional training facilities between industries and schools	3.77	0.55	Agreed
5.	Extending SIWES beyond the stipulated six months to one year for students in the Universities	3.09	0.82	Agreed
6.	Monitoring /supervising ND students who are in one year attachment as if they are continuing students.	3.89	0.45	Agreed
7.	Increase institutional /organizational awareness and recognition of the value of collaborative research activities.	3.45	0.79	Agreed
8.	Organizing conference for both students and Business Educators.	3.51	0.66	Agreed
9	Organizing workshops for students	3.21	0.76	Agreed
10.	Involving industry experts to address students during orientation.	3.11	0.96	Agreed
11	NUC and NBTE should allow Universities Polytechnics to enrich their local content in order to meet the present trend	3.01	1.c01	Agreed
12.	There should be more effective use of talents and synergy among collaborative bodies in the area of entrepreneurship programmers.	3.42	0.80	Agreed
13	Proper orientation of business education students before commencement of industrial training	3.21	0.76	Agreed
14	Free dissemination of output of research.	3.17	0.85	Agreed
15	Encouraging and allowing students to visit industries on excursion	3.79	0.52	Agreed
16	Schools and industries should partner in innovative activities to develop new products services	3.61	0.62	Agreed
17	Organization of learning experiences for Business education programme based on industry needs.	3.61	0.65	Agreed
<b>Grand mean and standard deviation</b>		<b>3.45</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>Agreed</b>



Data in Table 1 reveals that respondent were unanimous in their responses to all the items listed with a grand mean of 3.45 which is above the mean scores fixed decision value of 2.50 and also with the standard deviation range from 0.45-1.01 which indicates low variability in the responses, this indicates that respondents perceived all the items for the study as important in promoting school industry collaboration for improving skills among business Education Students in Delta State.

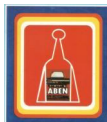
### Research Question 2

What are the perceived challenges affecting school- industry collaboration for improving skill among Business Education Students in Delta State?

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard deviation of perceived challenges affecting school industry collaboration for improving skills among Business Education Student in Delta State

S/N	Items on perceived challenges	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Differences between the values, objectives, and missions of schools and industries	3.74	0.57	Agreed
2	Low commercialization of higher institution research	3.88	0.45	Agreed
3	Lack of trust among collaborations	3.71	0.57	Agreed
4	Near absence of effective collaboration	3.67	0.61	Agreed
5	Lack of fund by industries to imitate collaboration work with schools	3.29	0.70	Agreed
6	Lack of motivation and entrepreneurship spirit among academics	3.40	0.64	Agreed
7	Absence of reliability contractual negotiation among schools and industries	3.09	0.82	Agreed
8	Lack of interest and motivation in school which also affects student's interest	2.97	1.21	Agreed
9	Absence of clear expectation for the collaboration among stakeholders.	3.10	0.94	Agreed
10	Difference in management culture of schools and industries especially in financial management	3.21	0.41	Agreed
11	Institution of learning structures not adopted to the needs of industries collaboration	2.50	0.91	Agreed
<b>Grand mean and standard deviation</b>		<b>2.99</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Data in table 2 reveals that respondents rated all items for the study as agreed. With a grand mean of 2.99 which is above the fixed decision value of 2.50, and also with a standard deviation which ranges from 0.41-1.21, which indicates low variability in



the responses showed that respondents agreed that items' listed are perceived as challenges affecting school-industry collaboration for improving skills among Business Education students in Delta state.

### Hypotheses

HO<sub>1</sub>, Business Educators in universities and those in polytechnics do not differ significantly on their mean rating on perceived collaborative strategies for improving skills among business education students in Delta State.

The data collected on perceived collaborative strategies for improving skills among business education students was subjected to analysis of variance so as to test hypothesis 1.

**Table 3:** *t-test Result on Perceived Collaborative Strategies for Improving Skills among Business Education students.*

Variables	No	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal.	T-crit.	Decision
Bus. Educators in university	13	3.10	0.63	39	1.06	1.96	NS
Bus. Educators in Polytechnics	28	2.91	0.68				

Table 3 reveals that the overall t-calculated is 1.06, which is less than t-critical of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and at 39 degree of freedom (df). Therefore there was enough evidence not to reject the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the respondent of Business Educators in the University and Business Educators in Polytechnics on perceived collaborative strategies for improving skills among Business Education Student in Delta State. This indicates that the null hypothesis was accepted.

HO<sub>2</sub>: Male and female Business Educators do not differ significantly on the perceived challenges affecting schools-industry collaboration for improving skills among Business Education Students in Delta State.

The data collected on perceived challenges affecting school-industry collaboration for improving Business Education Students in Delta State were subjected to analysis of variance so as to test hypothesis 2.

**Table 4:** *t-test result on perceived challenges affecting school-industry collaboration for improving skills among Business Education Students in Delta State.*

Variables	No	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal.	t-crit.	Decision
Males	22	3.01	0.61	39	1.35	1.96	NS
Females	19	2.94	0.64				



Table 4 reveals that the overall  $t_{\text{calculated}}$  was 1.35 which was less than  $t_{\text{critical}}$  value of 1.96 at 0.05 levels of significance and 39 degree of freedom (df). Therefore, there was enough evidence not to reject the null hypothesis. This implies that the null hypothesis which started that there is no significance difference between male and females Business Educators on perceived challenges affecting school-industry collaboration for improving skills among Business Education students in Delta State was accepted.

### **Discussion**

Table 1 reveals that Business Educators in University and polytechnics agreed to all the items presented for the study as perceived strategies for promoting schools-industry collaboration for improving skills among Business Education Student in Delta State. The grand mean of 3.27 was above the mean score mixed value of 2.50. Test of Hypothesis 1, reveals that the  $t_{\text{calculated}}$  values of 1.06 with a degree of freedom of 39 was less than the  $t_{\text{critical}}$  of 1.96, this implies that the null hypothesis was accepted. The finding supports the result of Emeasoba and Ezeani (2018) which states that there are benefits of collaboration between the universities and business sectors.

Table 2 reveals that respondent agreed to all the items as challenges affecting school-industry collaboration for improving skills among business education students in Delta State. The grand mean of 2.99 which is above the boundary limit of 2.50, implies that respondents perceived items listed as challenges affectingschool-industry collaboration for improving skills among business education students in Delta State.

Test of hypothesis 2 shows that overall  $t_{\text{calculated}}$  of 1.35 was less than  $t_{\text{critical}}$  value of 1.96 as 0.05 level of significant, this also implies that the null hypothesis was accepted. The findings support the results of Tsignab (2013) which stated that internal and external constrain impedes school-industry linkage.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, school-industries collaborative research will be of immerses benefits to the higher institutions especially Business Education department. From the Business educators perspective, there is the need for the formation of joint ventures between schools and industries and that a deliberate policy for students to be absorbed by industry for SIWES program with the zeal in both academic and industrial supervision is necessary in order to build skills, knowledge and confidence in students.



Challenges to school-industry collaboration were viewed as differences between values, objectives and missions for schools and industries, lack of trust and lack of interest and motivation in schools which also affect students' interest. Other challenges include differences in management culture of higher institutions and industries in financial management and institutions of higher learning structures and non-adaptation to the needs of industrial collaboration.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

There is the need for a renewed deliberate policy by the federal, state and local government to make industries absorb students for SIWES program in order to train them for better industrial skills acquisition.

There is the need for school to re-design the work scheduled for SIWES unit to include a broad team that will initiate plans, arranged for students' placement according to areas of study and arrange for evaluation. The unit should be empowered to negotiate with industries on favourable terms that will arouse school, students and industries' interest in continuous collaboration.

In entering into negotiation with industries, schools and industries should look beyond students' industrial work scheme but also seek better ways the industries can assist in providing some needed resources such as equipment and experts from the industries to assist the school. Also, the industries can use such opportunities to influence schools to tailor their curriculum to align to industries' needs. This will help to produce students with required industrial skills.

Institutional research carried out that will be of benefit to both industries and government should be advertised and made known to the public. This may motivate both individuals and industries to put interest in contributing to schools and it will help in school-industry collaboration.

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