



PERCEPTION OF BUSINESS EDUCATORS ON THE RELEVANCE OF INTEGRATING GLOBALIZED EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN THE BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study sought to determine the relevance of integrating globalized employability skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 41 business educators in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Census survey sampling technique was used. A structured questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, two from Business Education Department and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Cronbach Alpha reliability procedure was used. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84. Forty one (41) copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents but 35 were retrieved representing 97% of the instrument. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for research questions while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The finding of the study showed that integration of technology and soft skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions was perceived very relevant and relevant respectively by business educators in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. It was also found from the hypotheses tested that the relevance of integrating technology and soft skills in business education curriculum by the respondents was not significantly influenced by gender. Based on the findings, it was concluded that graduates of business education programmes would easily familiarize themselves with diverse operations of the globalized employability skills upon graduation when relevant technology and soft skills are integrated and implemented in content of business education curriculum. It was also recommended among others that business education curriculum designers should incorporate the relevant technology and soft skills of the globalized workplace in the teaching and learning of business education curriculum.

Keywords: Employability Skills, Business Education Curriculum, Globalization, Perception Business Educators

Introduction

Influx of graduates yearly into the labour market with limited hope for gainful employment has become a worrisome experience in developing countries. Today, every new graduate requires employability skills to succeed. Education-to-work transition of new graduates and the extent to which they are readily employable has been of concern to government and researchers in Nigeria (Egba, Anyigor-Ogah, Imakwu, Eze, & Egba, 2018), in Malaysia (Zaharim, Ahmad, Zaman, & Ko, 2019).



Integration of globalized employability skills to business education curriculum could boost globalization.

Globalization is the inter-connectivity and acceptance of idea, information and culture between systems of the world without barriers. To this extent, the once portrayed worldwide has become a small village and the formation of a globalized employability is the new reality in the world of work. Bird and Kopp (2019) defined globalization as the spread of product, technology, information and jobs across national borders and cultures. They went further to state that globalization describes an interdependence of nations around the globe. This means that globalization is the process of expanding business activities in order to gain a worldwide perspective. Consequently, in the face of globalization, the activities of workplace cannot be operational, if it is not equipped with workers who possess the requisite employability skills to excel and understand the reality of the today's globalized world of work.

Employability skills are a set of skills and behaviour that are necessary for every job. According to Fajaryati, Budiyo, Aklyar and Wiranto (2020), employability skills are the transferable skills needed by an individual to make them employable. Osmani, Weerakkody, Hindi and Eldabi (2019) added that employability skills are sometimes called soft skills, foundational skills, work-readiness skills, or job-readiness skills. This entails that globalized employability skills consist of a range of ideas, attributes, thinking, knowledge, behaviour and technical competence which an employee uses to function efficiently and effectively without any form of constraints in the globalized workplace.

Generally, globalized employability skills consist of technology and soft skills. Technology skills are skills associated with working with equipment and software which workers must possess in order to function in specific occupation. According to Tom (2020) technology skills are practical abilities and specialized knowledge needed to perform tasks in technical roles in Information Technology (IT). He stated that technology skills include the ability to use socialized software or operate specific machinery, equipment and tools. He went further to emphasize that technology skills are hard skills that do not always transfer to all jobs. Tom (2020) and Turner in Nwokike and Eya (2015) categorized technology skills into word processing skills, spreadsheet, database, electronic presentation, web navigation, web site design, e-mail management skills, digital cameras, computer networking knowledge, file management and windows explorer and downloading software from the web, graphical, social media, and presenting among others.

On the other hand, soft skills are a combination of people skills, social skills, communication skills, character or personality traits, and emotional intelligence, quotients, among others, that enable people to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well and achieve their goals with complimentary hard skills. Alison (2019) described soft skills as desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge. He went further to opine that soft skills include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude. According to Rouse (2020) soft skills are personal attributes that support situational awareness and enhances an individual's abilities to get a job done. This emphasizes that soft skills are inter-personal, human, people or behavioral skills needed to apply technology skills in a workplace.

The integration of technology and soft skills in business education will efficiently give business education students the competitive edge to stay in touch with the changing conditions of the globalized workplace without any pressure. Business education according to Azuka in Azuka and Nwosu (2018) is a programme of studies, which comprises four parts-creating awareness in occupations; preparing youths for work in business occupation; preparing people to become better citizens and consumers of goods and services; and preparing business teachers. Business education is that aspect of general education that prepares students for employment and advancement on a broad range of office occupations accounting professions marketing occupation, teaching precession and entrepreneurship



venture (Onokpaunu, 2016). However, the reliable medium, through which the mission and vision of business education programmes can be achieved, stems from effective implementation of its curriculum. Udeme in Egba (2017) noted that curriculum is the official blue print through which the laid down educational philosophies of a national are translated into concrete reality. He added that, it encompasses the goals and objectives of a study, organization of the content area and evaluation of student's academic achievement in that particular course of study. Thus, business education curriculum is a set of learning experiences designed to enable students attain the objectives of business education programme.

In the era of globalization, a worthwhile and functional curriculum always charges to meet the present needs of individual, work place and the society at large. According to Isyaku (2006), business education curriculum should be dynamic and relevant with societal and ICT, oriented courses that will boost students' knowledge, manipulation competence, attitudes and values with which to compete for jobs in real work setting. The impact of globalization demands that global literacy and awareness of the workplace should be inculcated into the content of business education curriculum to enable students acquire cross-cultural and employability skills to perform the required activities of the globalized workplace. The goal of business education programme, therefore, is to ensure that there is a transfer of relevant employability skills to and fro the world of work and business education that goes beyond the theoretical contents of business education curriculum in bid to prepare students for the globalized workplace, business education curriculum must be subjected to international and multi-cultural standards to enable domestic and foreign business education students acquire the same global employability skills in their different learning communities (Ikpesu, 2017; Abraham & Karns, 2009).

Business educators are professional trained teachers of business subjects who are competent in teaching the content of business education curriculum in the faculty of education in Universities and Colleges of education. According to Osuala (2004), a business educator is any person who plays a critical role in making business education viable and visible in the community, plays the critical role of agent of change in business education, delivers high quality instruction in business education and is able to identify problems facing teaching and learning in the field as well as speculate solutions to such problems.

Business educators in the process of integrating globalized employability skills to business education curriculum must stay abreast of impacts of globalization in the workplace in order to promote the employability prospects of business education graduates. According to the association of American Colleges and Universities in Diane and Ellen (2011), to create a relevant business education curriculum, business educators need to become aware of the skills and competencies needed in the globalized workplace and the entry-level job criteria for graduates of business education programs.

There are different studies that have analyzed perception regarding employability skills. For instance, Chadha and Sacdeva (2019) studied on perception of employability: A gender perspective with a sample of 325 students in Punjab. The result showed a higher perception of integrating employability skills. In turn in another study of Chan, Ahmed, Zama and Ko (2018) on employers' perception on important employability skills in the manufacturing industry with 182 employers in Malaysian. The result highlighted considerably positive perception regarding the important of employability skills. Aluko (2014) working with 360 respondents on gender influence on potentials graduates perception of importance of employability skills: An exploratory study in South West Nigeria. The result showed positive perception on the importance of employability skills. Again, Chithra (2013) on employability skills: A study on the perception of the Engineering students and their prospective employers with 120 respondents in India. The result showed positive perception regarding employability skills. With this, I want to highlight that perception includes the vision and opinion of the participants about the potentials of employability skills. With respect to the analysis of perception,



different variables have been studied that can influence these perception such as gender of the participants. Lee in Igboke and Anyigor-Ogah (2021) noted that gender is an attributed quality that differentiates female and male. In this regard, I found studies in which no significant differences were found (Pardo-Garcia & Barac, 2020, Chadha & Sacndeva, 2019; Chan, Ahmed, Zamam & Ko, 2018; Ann-Maria, 2015; Aluko, 2014; and McIntosh, 2013), and other in which significant difference were found (Chithra, 2013).

The geometric influence of globalization makes it a challenge for curriculum planners and business educators to integrate global employability skills into the curriculum. It is against this backdrop, this study was designed to determine the perception of business educators on the relevance of integrating globalized employability skills in the business education curriculum in tertiary institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Global workplace is dynamic and business education graduates need more than academic knowledge to be successful as employees and entrepreneurs. The goal of education is the development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individuals to live in and contributes positively to the society. In an effort to change the difficulties of readiness, uncertainty, joblessness, low innovative, advance and moderate national improvement caused by non globalized or non uniformity of business education curriculum, integrating globalized employability skills in the business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in Nigeria becomes a welcome idea. However, a curriculum without the requisite attention to the teaching of employability skills like technology and soft skills will only succeed to make business education graduates more globally deficient and unfit. Thus business education curriculum needed to be integrated in the area of employability skills to respond smartly to the needs of alleviating business education graduates from global deficiency and unfit. Thus, this study sought to examine the perception of business educators on the relevance of integrating globalized employability skills in the business education curriculum in tertiary institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study.

1. What are the perceptions of business educators on the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions?
2. What are the perceptions of business educators on the relevance of integrating soft skills business education curriculum in tertiary institutions?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents on the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions based on gender.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents on the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions based on gender.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The area of the study was Ebonyi State comprising three tertiary institutions offering business education namely: Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Ebonyi State College of Education, Elex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo. The population of the study comprised of 41 business educators which was made up of 24 male and 17 female in the three institutions: Ebonyi State University 14, Ebonyi State College of Education 14,



and Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo 13. The data for the study was collected using a structured questionnaires titled. Relevance of Globalized Employability Skills in Business Education Curriculum Questionnaire (RGESBECQ)". The questionnaire consisted of 40 items according to research questions on a 4-point rating scale of Very Relevant, Relevant, Irrelevant and Very Irrelevant. The instrument was validated by three experts; two from business education and one from Measurement and Evaluation, all from Ebonyi State University, (EBSU) Abakaliki. The instrument was also subjected to a reliability test, and yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.84.

41 copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents but 35 were retrieved representing 97% of the instrument. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using t- test. Decisions on the research questions were based on the grand mean in relations to the real limits of numbers. Therefore, items with mean ratings of 0.50-1.49 were rated Very Irrelevant, those with 1.50 – 2.49 were rated Irrelevant, items with mean ratings of 2.50 – 3.49 were rated Relevant and those with 3.50-4.00 were rated Very Relevant. For hypotheses, if the calculated t-value is equal or greater than the critical t-value, it will be rejected. If otherwise, it will be accepted.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of business educators on the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

Data collected to answer the above research question are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents Mean Ratings on the Relevance of Integrating Technology Skills in Business Education Curriculum

S/N	Relevance of Integrating Technology Skills in Business Education Curriculum	X	SD	REMARK
1	MS-office skills	3.29	0.46	Relevant
2	Email – skills	3.57	0.50	Very Relevant
3	Google drive skills	3.40	0.49	Relevant
4	Phone skills	3.91	0.28	Very Relevant
5	Social media skills	3.37	0.49	Relevant
6	Computer spreadsheets skills	3.86	0.36	Very Relevant
7	Computer graphical skills	3.82	0.38	Very Relevant
8	Web page design skills	3.31	0.47	Relevant
9	Enterprise system skills	3.51	0.50	Very Relevant
10	Computer networking skills	3.60	0.49	Very Relevant
11	Power point skills	3.77	0.42	Very Relevant
12	Data base management system skills	3.62	0.49	Very Relevant
13	Quick book skills	3.62	0.49	Very Relevant
14	Internet skills	3.94	0.23	Very Relevant
15	Intranet skills	3.97	0.17	Very Relevant
16	Computer programming skills	3.62	0.49	Very Relevant
17	Video creation skills	3.82	0.38	Very Relevant
18	Computer security skills	3.80	0.40	Very Relevant
19	Computer software installation skills	3.74	0.44	Very Relevant
20	Computer maintenance skills	3.48	0.50	Relevant
	Grand	3.67	0.42	Very Relevant

Sources: Field Work 2021



The data in Table 1 reveal that items 1, 3, 5, 8 and 19 had mean rating from 3.29 to 3.48 and items 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 20 had mean rating from 3.51 to 3.97 with a grand mean of 3.67. This indicates that integration of technology skills in business education curriculum was perceived very relevant by the respondents.

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of business educators on the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, Nigeria?

Data collected to answer the above research question are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents Mean Ratings on the Relevance of Integrating Soft Skills in Business Education Curriculum

S/N	Relevance of Integrating Soft Skills in Business Education Curriculum	X	SD	REMARK
21	Communication skills	3.94	0.63	Very Relevant
22	Work ethic skills	3.02	0.74	Relevant
23	Team work skills	2.88	0.67	Relevant
24	Interpersonal skills	3.11	0.67	Relevant
25	Time management skills	3.05	0.63	Relevant
26	Problem-solving skills	3.14	0.69	Relevant
27	Social skills	3.06	0.72	Relevant
28	Critical thinking skills	3.17	0.74	Relevant
29	Adaptability skills	3.06	0.68	Relevant
30	Organization skills	3.26	0.65	Relevant
31	Integrity skills	3.11	0.71	Relevant
32	Flexibility skills	3.20	0.63	Relevant
33	Emotional intelligence skills	3.14	0.71	Relevant
34	Coaching skills	3.02	0.77	Relevant
35	Analytical skills	3.17	0.82	Relevant
36	Global awareness skills	3.25	0.70	Relevant
37	Self confidence skills	3.26	0.65	Relevant
38	Conflict management skills	3.20	0.67	Relevant
39	Foreign language skills	2.97	0.89	Relevant
40	Leadership skills	3.17	0.56	Relevant
Grand		3.16	0.66	Relevant



Sources: Field Work 2021

Data in Table 2 reveal that item 1 had mean rating of 3.94 and items 2 – 20 had mean rating from 2.88 to 3.26 with grand mean of 3.16. This indicates that integrating of soft skills in business education curriculum was perceived relevant by the respondents.

Test of Hypotheses

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents on the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions based on gender.

Data collected to test hypothesis 1 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of t-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of the Respondents on the Relevance of Integrating Technology Skills in Business Education Curriculum

Variables (Gender)	NO	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision	Sig
Male	22	3.64	0.40	33	0.97	2.04	Uphold H ₀	NSd
Female	13	3.50	0.41					

Sources: Field Work 2021

Key: Sig: Significant; SNd: No Significant Difference

Table 3 above reveals t-calculated value of 0.97 and t-critical of 2.04 at 33 degree of freedom. From the table, since the t-calculated is less than the critical t-value, we uphold the null hypothesis and conclude that the respondents do not differ significantly in their opinion regarding the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents on the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions based on gender.

Data collected to test hypothesis 1 are presented in Table 4

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of the Respondents on the Relevance of Integrating Soft Skills in Business Education Curriculum

Variables (Gender)	NO	Mean	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision	Sig
Male	22	3.10	0.69	33	0.90	2.04	Uphold H ₀	NSd
Female	13	3.11	0.70					

Sources: Field Work 2021

Key: Sig: Significant; SNd: No Significant Difference

Table 4 above reveals t-calculated value of 0.90 and t-critical of 2.04 at 33 degree of freedom. From the table, since the t-calculated is less than the critical t-value, we uphold the null hypothesis and conclude that the respondents do not differ significantly their opinion regarding the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions.



Discussion of Findings

The result in Table 1 shows that integration of technology skills in business education curriculum was very perceived relevant by the respondents in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. This finding is in line with Chadha and Sacndeva (2019) who found that integration of employability skills in curriculum showed a higher perception. In the same vein, Chan et al (2018) found that employability skills high-lightered considerably positive perception regarding the importance of employability skills. The test of hypothesis (HO_1) in table 3 proved that there no significant differences the mean responses of the respondents on the perception of the relevance of integrating technology skills in tertiary business education curriculum based on gender. The findings are in agreement with multiple works Pardo-Garcia and Barac, 2020; Chadha and Sacndeva, 2019; Chan et al 2018 and Ann-Maria, 2015) who perceived that there is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female respondents on the integration of employability skills (technology skills).

The result in Table 2 shows that the integration of soft skills in business education curriculum was perceived relevant by the respondents in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The findings are was in agreement with Aluko (2014) who found positive perception on the importance of soft skills. In the same vein, McIntosis (2013) stressed that the integration of soft skills in the curriculum makes graduates report for work with the right attitude. Also, the test of hypothesis (HO_2) in Table 4 proved that there is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female respondents on the relevance of integration soft skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions. The findings are in agreement with multiple works, (Aluko, 2014; and McIntosh, 2013) who found that integration of soft skills do not differ significantly based on gender. Similarly, the finding contradicts with the work of Chithra (2013) who found that there is significant difference in the perception of the respondents based on gender.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the integration of technology and soft skills in business education curriculum was perceived very relevant and relevant respectively by the respondents in Ebonyi State Nigeria. This implies that graduates of business education programmes would easily familiarize themselves with the diverse operations of the globalized employability upon graduation when relevant technology and soft skills are integrated and implemented in the content of business education curriculum. It was concluded also, that gender does not significantly affect respondents' mean ratings on the relevance of integrating technology and soft skills in business education curriculum.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Business education curriculum designers should incorporate the relevant technology and soft skills of the globalized workplace in the teaching and learning of business education courses.
2. ICT manufacturing companies, internet services providers, employers of labour and international communities should support business education programmes in Nigeria by providing affordable computers and telecommunication gadgets, reliable internet services as well as sponsor in-service teaching courses for the acquisition of technology and soft skills for business educators in the country.

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