



CHALLENGES OF IMPROVING INSTITUTION-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION AND CURRICULUM INNOVATION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study focused on the challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study consisted of 117 business educators in government owned tertiary institutions that offer business education programme in Anambra State. No sample was taken, as the population size was manageable. A 22-items structured questionnaire titled “challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation” was validated by two experts for the study. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha which showed that the clusters achieved co-efficient values of 0.92 and 0.88 respectively for the clusters B1 and B2, with an overall reliability co-efficient value of 0.90. Data related to 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. The findings of the study revealed that there are many challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions. There is also no involvement of industries in the running of programme in business education in Anambra State, Nigeria. Some challenges tend to slow down the effective collaboration between business education, school and industries, and some suitable measures for improving the business education through effective institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation were identified. The study revealed that business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State differ significantly on the challenges and ways of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. It was concluded that there exists little connection between the business education programmes and the workplace. It was recommended, among others, that business education with institutions should provide liaisons offices for industries to and helps in bridging the collaboration gap institutions and industries.

Keywords: *Challenges, Improving, business education programmes institution-industry collaboration.*

Introduction

Business education is one of the aspects of vocational education that focuses on skills and knowledge acquisition for the recipients towards national development. Efanimjor and Okolocha (2020) defined business education as a dynamic course of study that equips its students with the knowledge and skills for and about business. Internationally, Roobeek and Ritter (2016) divided business education into several subtypes, namely regular undergraduate (Bachelor) and graduate (Master) education, Master in Business Administration (education) in different varieties (modular, executive, international, part-time, fulltime), and customized executive education for companies, in-house or taking place at business school premises. Business education emphasizes practical skills and equips students with knowledge and abilities to find work anywhere in the world or to create new business upon graduation (Ogben and Amahi, 2018). The goal of business education, according to Nwazor and Udegbonam (2016), is the production of manpower that possesses the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes for harnessing other resources and bring them into co-operative relationships yielding goods and services demanded by society for satisfaction of other wants and needs for national development. It is taught at tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Tertiary institution also refers to third level, third stage or post-secondary schools. It is the educational level following the completion of secondary education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2014). It includes universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and mono-technics. Therefore, in this study, tertiary institution here refers to universities and colleges of education where business education programmes are taught with major realignment curriculum.



Curriculum is the vehicle via which a country's established educational ideology is transformed into tangible reality. It specifies the courses of study that students must complete in order to achieve a specific degree of education. According to Efanimjor and Okolocha (2020), curriculum includes the aims and objectives of a specific course of study, the structuring of the topic area, and the assessment of students' academic progress in that specific course of study. Curriculum is the educational programme of experience given to the learner under the direction of a school in order to effect specific changes in the learner's behavior (Akpan, Nwokocha & Naboth, 2018). It is believed that the curriculum of business education will expose students to educational and business related experiences. As a result, the business education curriculum should provide students with learning opportunities that will enable them to develop into managers who can be recognized as global citizens since they are capable of efficiently managing businesses in multicultural settings (Okeke, 2022). The curriculum of business education programme seems to be limited in its provision of educational experiences that prepares students for the changing business world. Avolio, Benzaquen and Pretell (2019) noted that lack of school-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation are some of the challenges of preparing business education. Hence, there is urgent need for effective, well-articulated and coordinated institution-industry collaboration in the provision of business education programme. It is in this regard, that Bamiro (2012) opined that one of the important prerequisites for enhancing business education programme is through effective institution-industry collaboration.

Institution-industry collaboration (IIC) is a term used in Nigeria to describe the relationship, association, partnership or connection between education institution and related industries. The aim of this partnership is to bridge the gap between academic research and industrial practice. It covers various programmes and activities, such as collaborative research, students' industrial training and developmental projects support. IIC aims to improve the skills of the workers, to increase the product, technology, process and to update the workforce. Natarajan (2014) defined IIC in terms of collaboration, co-sponsorship, inter-agency or inter-organisational partnership between educational institutions and industries where the two agencies are engaged in the shared design and supervision of programmes or initiatives with the aid of contributing capital that will provide reciprocal benefits to both organisations. The forms of partnerships differ according to the extent of interconnections between the institutions and the industries involved. Eniola-Arigbe, Arigbe and Awodiji (2022) described a gap between the standard of the training that students undergo and the expectations of employers in Nigeria's business and industry.

In addition, institution-industry collaboration is the partnership between formal education and industrial sector to create an enabling environment for students to acquire hands-on experience, knowledge, skills and appropriate attitude to world of work. Within communities are industries that have a highly skilled workforce of production, functional facilities and raw materials that could be very useful in the practical training of business education students. These industries through collaboration with institutions could be made to meaningfully contribute to the training of students in appropriate skills that relate to their areas of interests (Oviawe, Uwameiye & Uddin, 2017). Institution-industry collaborations are increasingly significant to make contributions to economy and society. The mutual relationship can generate knowledge used in production to achieve efficiency in economy and innovation and in this way firms gain a significant competitive advantage in world markets. The collaboration will be more functional through education sector.

Similarly, Oviawe et-al. (2017) revealed that a lot of challenges tend to slow down the collaboration between institution and industries. These include students' apathy to SIWES, disruption of academic calendar by recurrent strike, poor supportive attitude of the industries, poor attitude of students during SIWES, industries' apathy to SIWES, poor economic state of the industries, lack of school-industry liaison offices, mismanagement of industries' donations and so on. Emeasoba (2017) noted some of the challenges to include cultural differences between tertiary institutions and the private sector, lack of trust and confidence in universities, over-dependence on foreign innovation and technologies, lack of expertise, corrupt practices, lack of government policies on tertiary institutions-industry linkages, funding, lack of sustainability and ineffective communication/flexibility. While Oviawe et-al. (2017) noted that institution-industry collaboration could be improved through the identified strategies like SIWES, continuous curriculum planning and review to meet the needs of the industry, research collaboration and grants, IT, scholarship to business education students, planning of work-visits/excursions/field-trips, organization of seminars/workshops by the industries for business education students, invitation industrial workers for special lectures among others.

Thus, institution-industry collaboration is a key to positioning business education for global dominance. For business education to remain relevant they cannot exist in isolation or disconnected from students, businesses, the government, faculty and the local community. This new viewpoint on business



education represents a fundamental challenge for all stakeholders in the educational process, including firms, government, employees, students, local communities, accrediting bodies, and partner educational institutions, among others (Avolio, et-al., 2019). To Onyemaobi, Amobi and Nwosu (2021), institution-industry collaboration can be effective through efficient curriculum development, conferences exchange programmes, classroom visitations, work experience programmes, internships, tutors, skills training, career development activities, mentoring programmes, job-shadowing, apprenticeship programmes and on the job training programmes among others.

Education blooms in bio-network in which multiple stakeholders play vital roles, but academic institutions are fundamental to provide education and are in a position to stimulate and fortify collaboration with the industries to enhance the exposure of students to practical and real life situations of the workplace. This collaboration needs an extensive formal and flexible commitment on both the academic institutions and industries. The collaboration will make both sectors to share the felt needs, challenges, issues, strengths and weaknesses of training business education programme. The industrial sector can provide expertise and collaborate with educators and educational institutions to develop the desired atmosphere and locally relevant pool of resources for students training. This when appropriately controlled, would work well to produce the most needed business education products with enhanced nation building.

Thus, it has become necessary that industries should be keenly involved in the skills training of business education students to complement classroom experience to accustom them with skills acquired for employment in the industries upon graduation. Business education programmes should tap the energies and synergies as well as the resources of the industries to the full. An effective relationship between the institutions and the industries will compel the industries to make their expertise, equipment and expendable materials available for learning in the programme. To this end, Oviawe et-al. (2017) opined that as the industries contribute in the training of the students, certain deficiencies that beforehand existed in the training of students will be reduced if not entirely eliminated.

The influencing factor on business education programme effectiveness through institution-industry collaboration for nation building in tertiary institutions could be ownership of institutions. The institutions ownership is federal and state governments. They are tertiary institutions owned by federal and state governments that run business education. Ukata (2022) revealed that federal owned tertiary institutions sufficiently collaborate with industry better than their counterpart in the state owned. Ukata noted further that federal owned tertiary institutions collaborate through curriculum development, conferences exchange programmes, classroom visitations, work experience programmes, internships, tutors, skills training, career development activities, mentoring programmes, job-shadowing, apprenticeship programmes and on the job training programmes than the state owned tertiary institutions

Consequently, when effective institution-industry collaboration is established, business education students will have the opportunity to receive the appropriate training from the real work environment and bridge the gap between classroom experience and the yearnings of employers of labour to the barest minimum. Hence, this study will find out the challenges and ways of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education programme in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The business education programme is an educational programme that is geared towards educating its recipients for business and about business as well as equipping trainees with self-reliant and entrepreneurial skills. Therefore, a functional business education programme needs effective collaboration with the relevant industries that the graduates will serve upon graduation. The achievement of the objectives of the business education programme seems to be defeated because of the failure of graduates of the business education programme to fit into the world of work. This seems to have resulted because of lack of synergy between the institution-industry collaboration towards curriculum innovation in business education programme which have resulted in the high rate of unemployment rate among business education graduates. This point to a lack of collaboration between the business education programme and industry. Thus, institutions need to collaborate with the industries for research assistance and collaboration, curriculum planning, infrastructural provision, in-service training, scholarships, seminars and work visits. However, the problem of this study is that it seems that there are little or no effective collaboration between the institution and industry despite the inherent mutual benefits derivable from such collaborations. Therefore, this study focused on challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State with ways to remedy the situation.



Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
2. What are the ways of improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

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

1. Business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in tertiary institutions.
2. Business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the ways of improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in tertiary institutions.

Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study consisted of 117 business educators in government owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State comprised of FCE(T)-Umunze; NAU, Awka; NOCE, Nsugba, COOU, Igbriam and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Record was gotten from the academic planning unit of the institutions as at 2023. The entire population of 117 business educators in study area was studied because it is manageable for the researchers to handle. A 32-item structured questionnaire validated by three experts, two experts in business education and one in measurement and evaluation from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was used in gathering data for the study. To establish the instrument's reliability, split half test was utilized. The internal consistency of the instrument was established using Cranbach Alpha to which yielded reliability co-efficient values of 0.92 and 0.88 respectively for the three clusters with an overall co-efficient value of 0.90. Data collected in the study regarding the two research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Mean value was used to answer the two research questions while the standard deviation was used to determine the closeness of the mean ratings. Decision on the questionnaire items were interpreted on means, any mean score of 3.00 and above were considered agreed while the mean scores below 3.00 were considered disagreed. In data collection, out of the 117 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, 114 copies were actually retrieved from the respondents which represented about 97 percent. One copies were not properly filled and discarded representing 1 percent, while the remaining two copies were not retrieved representing 2 percent. The t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Where the calculated p-value was less than the 0.05, it means that there was significant difference and the hypothesis was rejected. Conversely, where the calculated p-value was equal to or greater than the table value at level of significance (0.05), it means that there was no significant difference and the hypothesis was not rejected.

Results

Research Question 1:

What are the challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on the challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. N=114

S/N Challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation		X	SD	Remarks
1.	Lack of trust and confidence in institutions	3.60	0.43	Agree
2.	Lack of institution-industry liaison offices	3.20	0.61	Agree
3.	Mismanagement of industries' donations	3.70	0.42	Agree
4.	Poor maintenance culture of industries' supplies	3.69	0.50	Agree
5.	Lack of sustainability	3.54	0.53	Agree
6.	Gap in communication between the institutions and Industries	3.24	0.59	Agree
7.	Cultural differences between tertiary education institutions and industries	3.20	0.61	Agree
8.	Lack of trust and confidence in institutions by industry	3.50	0.54	Agree



9. Over-dependence on foreign innovation and technologies	3.36	0.58	Agree
10. Lack of government policies on institution-industry linkages	3.35	0.57	Agree
Cluster Mean	3.44		Agree

Data in Table 1 show that the respondents agree that all the items as challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions with mean scores ranging from 3.20 to 3.70. This is because its mean score was above 3.00 which is the cut of point. The standard deviations show that there is homogeneity amongst responses indicating a greater consensus of opinions.

Research Question 2:

What are the ways of improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean ratings of respondents on the ways of improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. N=114

S/N	Ways of improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation	X	SD	Remarks
11.	Research collaboration and grants from industries	3.50	0.47	Agree
12.	Invitation of industrial workers for special lectures	3.10	0.64	Agree
13.	Sharing training facilities between institution-industry	3.60	0.42	Agree
14.	Donation of equipment/devices from industries to institutions	3.57	0.44	Agree
15.	Funding educators on-the-job-training programmes	3.43	0.51	Agree
16.	Collaboration through mentorship	3.13	0.62	Agree
17.	Collaboration through joint institutional workshops, seminars and conferences	3.06	0.67	Agree
18.	Books co-authorship and sales	3.40	0.54	Agree
19.	Collaboration through academic staff and institutional research	3.31	0.56	Agree
20.	Collaboration by participating in institutional outreach programmes	3.20	0.57	Agree
21.	Collaboration through staff sabbatical leave	3.16	0.59	Agree
22.	Collaboration through effective communication between the institutions and Industries	3.31	0.55	Agree
	Cluster Mean	3.44		Agree

Data in Table 2 show that the respondents agree that all the items as suitable measures for improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions with mean scores ranging from 3.06 to 3.67. This is because its mean score was below 3.00 which is the cut of point. The standard deviations show that there is homogeneity amongst responses indicating a greater consensus of opinions.

Testing of Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis 1

Business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis on the mean ratings of business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State on the challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in tertiary institutions.

Ownership of Institution	N	X	SD	α	df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Federal	32	3.20	.19	0.05	112	-3.110	.002	Significant
State	82	3.17	.15					



Table 3 indicate that the aggregate mean ratings of business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State differ significantly on the challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation with mean scores of 3.20 and 3.17, while the corresponding standard deviation is .19 and .15. The Table indicated t-value of -3.110, at degree of freedom of 112 and the p-value of .002. Testing at alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is significant, since the p-value is less than the alpha value (0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Null Hypothesis 2

Business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the ways of improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis on the mean ratings of business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State on the ways of improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in tertiary institutions.

Ownership of Institution	N	\bar{X}	SD	α	df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Federal	32	3.09	.12	0.05	112	1.442	.003	Significant
State	82	3.02	.10					

Table 4 indicate that the aggregate mean ratings of business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State differ significantly on the ways of improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation with mean scores of 3.09 and 3.02, while the corresponding standard deviation is .12 and .10. The Table indicated t-value of 1.442, at degree of freedom of 112 and the p-value of .003. Testing at alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is significant, since the p-value is less than the alpha value (0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of first research question agreed that there are challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions with mean scores ranging from 3.20 to 3.70. This implies that the respondents agreed that these statements are the challenges for improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The findings of this study agreed with the views of Oviawe, Uwameiye and Uddin (2017) who revealed that students' apathy to SIWES, disruption of academic calendar by recurrent strike, poor supportive attitude of the industries, poor attitude of students during SIWES, industries' apathy to SIWES, poor economic state of the industries, lack of school-industry liaison offices, mismanagement of industries' donations as challenges that tend to slow down of collaboration between institution and industries. Emeasoba (2017) added that cultural differences between tertiary institutions and the private sector, lack of trust and confidence in tertiary institutions, over-dependence on foreign innovation and technologies, lack of expertise, corrupt practices, lack of government policies on university-industry linkages, funding, lack of sustainability and ineffective communication/flexibility were seen as challenges facing collaboration between institution and industries.

The result of the first null hypotheses revealed that business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State differ significantly on the challenges of improving institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation. The findings disagreed with Ukata (2022) who revealed that federal owned tertiary institutions sufficiently collaborate with industry better than their counterpart in the state owned. This implies that there are serious linkages between the business education institutions and the workplaces. Therefore, on the benefits of institutions-industry collaboration, neither the institutions nor industries have not indicated interest in collaboration or any strong move for collaboration.

Findings of second research question agreed that there are suitable measures for improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in business education in tertiary institutions with mean scores ranging from 3.06 to 3.67. This implies that the respondents agreed that all the items are suitable measures or programmes that can be jointly engaged by institutions and industries to improve on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation in



business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The finding of this study supported by view of Onyemaobi, Amobi and Nwosu (2021) who noted that institution-industry collaboration can be effective through efficient curriculum development, conferences exchange programmes, classroom visitations, work experience programmes, internships, tutors, skills training, career development activities, mentoring programmes, job-shadowing, apprenticeship programmes and on the job training programmes among others. In support, Oviawe et-al. (2017) noted that institution-industry collaboration could be improved through the identified strategies like SIWES, continuous curriculum planning and review to meet the needs of the industry, research collaboration and grants, IT, scholarship to business education students, planning of work-visits/excursions/field-trips, organization of seminars/workshops by the industries for business education students, invitation industrial workers for special lectures among others.

The result of the second null hypotheses revealed that business educators from federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Anambra State differ significantly on the ways of improving on the challenges of institution-industry collaboration and curriculum innovation. This implies that if both parties can apply the suitable measures mentioned above the institutions-industry collaboration will be enhanced.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there exists little connection between the business education programmes and the workplace. Business education programmes are constantly faced with the challenges to produce virile graduates that the current workplace would find fit and proper to assume functions in the industries. However, if there is an effective collaboration between the institutions and industry, these challenges would be reduced or addressed. Effective collaboration between the institutions-industry will salvage the deplorable learning environment of our business education programmes and improve curriculum innovation.

Recommendations

The researchers make the following recommendations based on findings of the study:

1. Business education with institutions should provide liaisons offices for industries to and helps in bridging the collaboration gap institutions and industries.
2. Institutions should make sure that the suitable measures provided in this study be adequately implemented for effective collaboration between and industries to enhance nation building.

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