



## INDUSTRY – INSTITUTION RESEARCH COLLABORATION AND BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*Industry – institution research collaboration in Business Education is capable of providing mutual benefits to industry and educators aimed at enhancing learning effectiveness. However, such situation makes students adjust to societal life and create linkages for service provision. The relationship between industry-institution research collaboration is capable of engendering Business Education teaching and learning effectiveness in public universities in Rivers State. The correlational study guided by three research questions and corresponding hypotheses was driven by a population of 820 final year Business Education students from three public universities in Rivers State. A Sample of 269 final year students were drawn using stratified random sampling. The two instruments designed were validated and tested for reliability to obtain an index of 0.82 using Cronbach alpha. Data collected and analysed through SPSS 21 using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to analyze the bivariate data which revealed a weak positive but significant influence of industry – institution research collaboration on students' mastery of content knowledge. Again, the result further revealed a strong positive and significant association between industry – institution research collaboration and students' skills development. It was recommended among others that Business Education students should strengthen their research collaboration with industries so to enhance learning experiences in Business Education courses.*

**Keywords:** *University, Teaching, Learning Experience, Pedagogical Practices, Research, industry – institution collaboration*

### Introduction

Universities globally are established for the purpose of developing human capital required for continuous promotion of quality socio economic activities within the society. It is in recognition of this, that the National Policy on Education mandated universities in Nigeria to develop high-level manpower, inculcate and develop individual's intellectual capacity to understand and appreciate their local and external environments, promote and encourage researches and community service (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2014). There are no doubts, the attainment of these mandate statements through any educational programme rests upon effective implementation of curriculum designed for this level of education. Core to the effective implementation of curriculum is teaching and learning effectiveness.

Teaching effectiveness according to DePaul University Centre for Teaching and Learning (2023) is pedagogical practices that impact on students by adding value to their knowledge and skills, as well as helping them to develop tolerance for diverse point of views that exist within their career path. The Centre further noted that teaching effectiveness can be assessed by determining the extent to which teaching leads to mastery of content knowledge, development of skills, meeting diverse students' learning needs, integrate technology and facilitate self -actualization. Rahimi (2015) defined teaching effectiveness as producing gains on students' knowledge and skills taking into cognizance their prior attainment and other characteristics capable of influencing these gains. Skill development continue to attract global attention due to huge graduate unemployment in countries. Such attention today has been geared towards practical, technical and vocational skills rather than mere academic knowledge. Employers now strongly prefer



transferrable soft skills such as creativity and people management. Empirical evidence has constantly associated soft skills with worker productivity, sustainable poverty reduction, human capital development and economic development (Maclean & Wilson, 2009, Akpomi & Ikpesu, 2023). Universities now constantly seek and implement strategies to improve graduate employability and prospects in the labour market. Oliveira (2010) observed that skills are important issue especially when it comes to graduate employment where it is the person's own characteristics that determines the chances. Thus, in recent literature, researchers have defined skills to mean proficient performance gain through series of practice and training (Wolugbom & Ben-George, 2019), It is the ability to do something more efficiently and satisfactorily usually acquired through training and experience (Oyerinde & Falana, 2016). The World Bank (2010) relating the importance of skills to individual and economies describe skills as the core of improving individuals' employment outcomes and increasing countries productivity and growth. The global organization further found that an estimated eight percent occupations center on the application of technical and vocational skills to the world of work. Increasing changes in industries and corporation equally seek for high-skill human resources with global drives and orientations. High skill put the holders in advantage, enjoys substantial wages and demonstrate high capacity for innovation. In the words of Mouzakitis (2010) improving the skills and knowledge of workers is crucial for achieving economic competitiveness, especially in globalization era. He further points out that modern global organizations can only be managed by people who can think, lead and act from global perspective. Akpomi et.al. (2023) highlighted the benefits of skill ecosystems to include technological innovation, national economic growth, social inclusion and economic integration of region and countries. Teaching effectiveness thus can be summarized as adding value to what the students know before being taught, a product of the teacher's pedagogical practices. Consequently, Business educators' teaching effectiveness proxies in this study would be limited to students' mastery of content knowledge and skills development.

It is important to note that pedagogical practices of educators (Business educators inclusive) shape the teaching actions and assessments more effectively when they are outcomes of thorough academic research. This is based on the fact that as observed by Okeke (2022) through research, Business educators keep abreast with the need to enhance learning experiences capable of assisting their products become relevant to the need of the labour market. Using the appropriate learning experiences in line with labour market expectations will not only make the products of Business Education programme relevant to the need of the labour market but transform them for self-actualization as future entrepreneurs (Akpomi, Stewart & Ogbulujah, 2019). Consequently, to ascertain new practices in the industry and design students' learning experiences in line with such practices, there is need for industry – institution research collaboration in Business Education. Many researchers have viewed learning from the perspectives of experiential learning. As Clark and White (2010) rightly pointed out quality university education programme must include experiential learning components such as internships especially stimulated, on-campus and distance, service learning or classes that collaborate with industries. Learning experiences in this context refer to any effective interaction, course, programs, or any other situations where learning take place. Experiential Learning activities may occur and take the form of case discussions, group cases, stimulation games, analytic field projects, internships and live cases. Furthermore, these learning styles also may be observation activity, hands -on activity, assessment activity which assist the students in knowledge construction. In addition, learning experience also reflects larger pedagogical and technological shifts in learning. Introduction and adaptation of new technologies have deeply multiplied and diversified the ways students learn and interact with educators. Students today independently learn through email, chat, or video interaction and sharing ideas with their teachers. In other words, online course -management systems organized to exchange learning materials especially offer class assignments and students turn in the work using the same process. These learning activities possibly facilitates social constructivism. Social constructivism is centered on the notion that all cognitive activities such as learning are based on meaningful interaction with others. According to Schunk (2012) the qualities of a collaboration within an educational community is situation specific and context bound. Learning goes beyond assimilation of knowledge by the learners but being integrated into knowledge community. More meaningful and achievable learning can also be facilitated through effective industry -institution collaboration

The need for industry – institution research collaboration in Business Education is supported by the fact that the programme is designed to feed industries with the right caliber of human capital for their operations (Umoru, 2020). Okeke (2022) noted that the need for industry - school research collaboration in repositioning business education for teaching effectiveness and global relevance is informed by the fact that the outcomes of researches in this educational programme need to be aligned to the demand of industries. This assertion by Okeke (2022) can be translated into two dimensions (i) the outcome of



researches in business education need to be tailored to improve pedagogical practices capable for producing graduates who can meet the demand of the available industries or (ii) the outcomes of researches in the programme are most probably solved industrial problems. The focus of this present study is in line with the first assertion, that is the outcome of researches in Business Education programme should improve Business educators' teaching effectiveness in public universities. Inferring from the foregoing, the need for industry – institution research collaboration cannot be overemphasised. According to Akpomi, Stewart and Ogbulujah (2019) decried the low school – industry collaboration in the area of industrial attachment leading to students work related skills development. Okeke (2022) also reported low industry – institution research collaboration. It will be realised that industry – institution collaboration based on earlier researches should be cherished by educational programme because if well designed and implemented, it will lead to teaching excellence, skills development and justifies investment in the educational programme. Considering the weaknesses and benefits accrued from industry – institution research collaboration there is need to ascertain the extent to which the existence of such actions in Business Education is promoting teaching and learning effectiveness in public universities in Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Business Education as a programme designed to produce the manpower needs of industries is expected to meet the ever-changing needs of stakeholders. However, a situation where most of the products of the programme are finding it difficult to secure place in the world of work for which they were educated and trained, one wonder what is going wrong. The helpless situation of the graduating students of Business Education programme in Rivers State can be seen in the number of them roaming the corridors of industries still in search of jobs. More frustrating with regards to the inability of the graduating students of the programme is the refusal to be absorbed by industry that have vacancies due to a claim of skill mismatch between societal expectation and what is taught in Business Education institutions (Okeke, 2022). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the issue of skill mismatch is not supposed to arise if there is industry – institution research collaboration aimed at improving Business educators teaching and learning experiences in public universities in Rivers State. Consequently, the researchers were inspired to examine the extent to which industry – institution research collaboration can be catalyst to students learning experiences in public universities in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between industry - institution research collaboration and students' mastery of knowledge in Business Education in public universities in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between industry - institution research collaboration and students' skills development in Business Education in public universities in Rivers State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. The relationship between industry – institution research collaboration and students' mastery of knowledge in Business Education in public universities in Rivers State is not significant.
2. The relationship between industry – institution research collaboration and students' skills development in Business Education in public universities in Rivers State is not significant.

### **Methodology**

Correlational research design was adopted for the study. This research design is deemed appropriate because the researchers intend to test the relationship between the independent variable 'Industry – Institution Research Collaboration' and the dependent variable 'Business students experiences. According to Kpolovie (2011), correlational study is the best research design that can be used to ascertain the magnitude or direction of relationship among variables in a study. The study was conducted in using three public universities that offers Business Education programme in Rivers State namely, Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, and University of Port-Harcourt. The presence of these three institutions makes the area of the study appropriate for the study.

The population of this study consisted of 820 Business Education final year students in the three public universities offering Business Education in Rivers State during the 2022/2023 academic session. This population was deemed appropriate because these sets of students have spent reasonable academic



sessions in the department, hence in the best position to give their view about the research collaboration and learning experiences. The breakdown of the population is as shown in the Table below:

**Table 1: Population Distribution of Business Educators**

S	/	NAME OF INSTITUTION	BUSINESS EDUCATORS
1	.	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	6
2	.	Rivers State University	1
3	.	University of Port-Harcourt	4
<b>T O T A L</b>			<b>8</b>
			<b>2</b>
			<b>0</b>

Source: Human Resource units (2023)

The sample size is made up of 269 Business Education students from the three public universities. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane formula. The sample size was selected from the population using stratified random sampling technique. Two structured designed questionnaires titled "Industry – Institution Research Collaboration Questionnaire' (IIRCQ) and 'Business Educators' Teaching Effectiveness Questionnaire (BETEQ)" were used for the study. The first instrument contains 12 items and second instrument consists 8-items with response scale based on 4 points rating of Strongly Agree (SA – 4points), Agree (A – 3points), Disagree (D - 2), and Strongly Disagree (SD – 1point). The face validity of the instrument was ascertained by two Business Educators and a Measurement and Evaluation expert in Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State. Their contributions were used to correct the instrument before the final copy produced. Reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient. To compute the reliability, data obtained from 15 Business Education students from Niger-Delta University, Bayelsa State. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0 was used to compute all statistics. The computation gave reliability index of 0.82. The instrument was personally administered by the researchers to the students within an interval of two weeks. The filled questionnaire copies retrieved were collated and data obtained was presented for analysis. Data collected for this study were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses posed at 0.05 level of significance. For the relationship scale interpretation, the scale by Bryman and Bell in Ahaiauzu and Asawo (2016) was used:

- r = 00 – 0.19 'very weak relationship'
- r = 0.20 – 0.30 'weak',
- r = 0.40 – 0.59 'moderate relationship',
- r = 0.60 – 0.79 'strong',
- r = 0.80 – 1.00 'very strong'

**Results**

**Test of Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1:** The relationship between industry – institution research collaboration and students' mastery of knowledge in Business Education in public universities in Rivers State is not significant.

**Table 4: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Significance of Relationship between Industrial – Institution Research Collaboration and Students' Mastery of Knowledge in Business Education**

	Industry – Institution Research Collaboration	Students' Mastery of Knowledge
Industry – Institution Research Collaboration	Pearson Correlation 1 . 3 1	Sig . ( 2 - t a i l e d ) . 0 4 1
	N 2 6 9 2	6 9
Students' Mastery of Knowledge	Pearson Correlation . 3 1	Sig . ( 2 - t a i l e d ) . 0 4 1
	N 2 6 9 2	6 9

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation r of 0.31, p value > 0.05 at 0.41. Since the p value obtained at 0.041 is greater than the p value provided at 0.05, it means the null hypothesis is accepted.



This means that the relationship between industry – institution research collaboration and students’ mastery of knowledge in business education in public universities in Rivers State is not significant.

**Hypothesis 2:** The relationship between industry – institution research collaboration and students’ skills development in Business Education in public universities in Rivers State is not significant.

**Table 5: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Significant of Relationship between Industrial – Institution Research Collaboration and Students’ Skills Development in Business Education**

		Industry – Institution Research Collaboration		Students’ Skills Development	
Industry – Institution Research Collaboration	Pearson Correlation			1	.69*
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.001
	N	26	92	69	91
Students’ Skills Development	Pearson Correlation	.69*			1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001			
	N	26	92	69	91

\* \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 shows a Pearson Product Moment Correlation  $r$  of 0.69,  $p$  value  $> 0.05$  at 0.001. Since the  $p$  value obtained at 0.001 is less than the  $p$  value provided at 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the significant level of the relationship between industry – institution research collaboration and students’ skills development in business education in public universities in Rivers State was found weak.

**Discussion**

The contribution of the study was found weak positive relationship between industry – institution research collaboration to students’ mastery of content knowledge in public universities in Rivers State. The relationship between industry – institution research collaboration and students’ mastery of knowledge in business education in public universities in Rivers State has lower significant level. This finding emanated from the respondents was however supported by the Akpomi, Stewart and Ogbulujah (2019) when they noted the low school – industry collaboration leading to students work related skills development. Okeke (2023 also reported low industry – institution research collaboration. Empirical evidence obtained from the study showed strong positive relationship between industry – institution research collaboration and students’ skills development in public universities in Rivers State. This results of the test of hypothesis also revealed that the relationship between industry – institution research collaboration and students’ skills development in business education in public universities in Rivers State was found significant. This finding emanated contribute significantly to skills development among business education students. The finding of this study confirms the position held by Levin, Santos and Weber (2023) when they noted that industry – institution collaboration if well designed and implemented can lead to teaching excellence, skills development and justifies investment in the programme.

**Conclusions**

Drawing from the findings of the study, it can be concluded that industry – institution research collaboration contributes minimally and could not leverage on such collaboration to ensure students adequate mastery of knowledge. However, industry – institution research collaboration directly enhanced students’ skills development through internship methods or other practical approaches that consequently is a catalyst to proactive measures need to be taken.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations were put forward for implementation:

1. Business Education students should strengthen their collaboration with relevant industries leaders to leverage their research and improve mastery of content knowledge.
2. Collaboration with industries should be encouraged by the institutions to provide opportunity to hone students’ skill development through internships and expertise career guidance in Business Education programmes.



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