



EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTION ON STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION FOR QUALITY BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The study determined employers' perception on the strategies for improving school-industry collaboration for quality business education programme in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Two research questions and one null hypothesis were formulated for the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 390 managers of industries in Anambra State and the entire population was used as the sample size. 22-item five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used as the instrument for the study. The instrument was validated by two experts. Pilot-test was done and reliability co-efficient of 0.84 was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. Research questions and hypothesis were analyzed and tested using mean, standard deviation and t-test. The findings revealed that most of the available school-industry collaboration programmes in tertiary institutions are ineffective and that donation of equipment, regular organization of workshops and seminars among others are strategies identified for improving school-industry collaboration. The recommendations arising from the findings were among others that industrial experts and government should contribute meaningfully in school-industry collaboration programmes in areas of donation of equipment and provision of adequate funding to tertiary institutions offering business education programme in Anambra State.

Keywords: *Strategies, School-industry collaboration, quality, business education programme and tertiary institution.*

Introduction

Business education as an aspect of vocational education can be described as that which is concerned with the preparation of skilled manpower. It is a form of education, training or retraining which is directed towards developing the learner to become productive in a paid employment or self employment in business (Azuka and Nwosu, 2018). They further stated that the emphasis is not only on the provision of



skilled manpower for a static economy but also continuing to do so for a dynamic one, especially with changing societal needs for technological advancement.

Recent technological advancement offer tremendous challenges and significant opportunities for business education graduate. Globally, the nature of office work is undergoing tremendous challenges in recent times as a result of the influx of new technologies in organizations. There is a technological race between the business environment and educational institutions. This was why Atepor (2018) stated that recent changes in the external environment such as internationalization of education, technological innovation as well as labour market demands for new skills which inevitably leads to a shift in perception about the institution. Atepor advised that it is important for business education students who will form part of the stakeholders in the organization in future to be educated on standard institutional activities that are undertaken with due diligence and accountability to meet organizational objectives.

Igberaharha (2018) held the view that the tertiary education system has an important role in achieving long term and sustainable human capacity building. The goal of tertiary education is summarized as to contribute to national development through high relevant manpower training as well as to enable its recipients acquire both physical and intellect skills, competencies and knowledge which will enable individuals to be self reliant and useful members of the society at large, (Esene in Nwosu, crossdale and Ofulue, 2018).

To achieve these goals, there must be quality assurance in educational programmes in tertiary institutions (business educational programme inclusive). Igberaharha (2018) asserted that quality is at the top of most agenda and that improving quality is probably the most important task facing any educational institution. Quality as defined by Amor in Rotua (2017) is the standard of something as compared to other things. With respect to education, quality is seen by Oladipo, Adeosun and Oni in Ezenwanne (2019) as the ability or degree to which an education conforms to established and appropriateness. Therefore, quality in business education means the relevance and appropriateness of its programme to the needs of the community for which it is provided. Effective business and functional programme must as a rule, provide students with a variety of dynamic and viable learning experience so that they will be ready to perform in a professional manner upon entrance into the first career positions.



This explains the reason why Azuka and Nwosu (2018) suggested that in order to keep business education programme in tune with the demands of our ever changing business environment, there is need for collaboration between school and industry. They posited that business schools and the industry should always cooperate in order to ensure that what is being provided is what is required by the employees. Uwanze in Emeasoba and Mmuo (2018) defined school-industry collaboration as the partnership between formal education and industrial sector to create enabling environment for students to acquire hands-on experience, knowledge, skills and appropriate attitude to work. It is the cooperation between highly skilled personnel in many industries and educators which enable business education students to have practical training. It is a means through which industries meaningfully contribute to the training of students in appropriate skills relevant for employment. School-industry collaboration is beneficial to both the educational sector and the industries.

The viable working relationship between highly skilled personnel in many industries and educators has played a major role in providing quality education programme. In the opinion of Atepor (2018), partnership and network in universities and business communities goes a long way to benefit students and staff as they involve in innovative and entrepreneurial activities through internships, conferences, research projects, seminar and consequently apply their knowledge in the real world environment.

School-industry collaboration help to strengthen school in academic skills, enrich the educational process through the talents, ideas, skills and competencies of the industry managers (Emeasoba and Mmuo, 2018). Such collaboration gives business education student the opportunity to receive the appropriate training from the real work environment which helps to bridge the gap between the needs of employer of labour and classroom experience. To ensure quality business education programme in tertiary institutions and qualitative business education graduates, adequate strategies must be put in place for the improvement of school-industry collaboration.

Strategies according to Okoye and Ashibogwu (2018) are the techniques or mechanism put in place to maintain degree of quality of excellence of a product or service. Strategies are the same as methods and procedures of attaining a goal. Supporting this view, Ugwuanyi in Emeasoba and Mmuo (2018) noted that strategy is a broad basic plan of action which individual(s) or organization(s) intend to reach



goals. In business education programme, Jim (2017) and Atepor (2018) identified available programme that needed school-industry collaboration to include Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) skill acquisition programme for students, special skills training/retraining for lecturers, curriculum planning and review, research collaboration and grants, scholarship to students etc. Uchenu, Okeke-Okonkwo and Ifi (2018) noted that a functional business education programme requires effective partnership with relevant industries which the graduates will serve but lamented that the experience acquired by business education students through SIWES are not adequate to their training needs. Consequently, this has resulted to their inability to secure employments in corporate industries in Nigeria. Most employers of labour in industries complain of non possession of adequate skills by graduates from tertiary institutions especially in this current technological advancement, having low practical know-how and lack of confidence. It becomes imperative to find out from the employers of labour strategies that will improve school-industry collaboration for quality business education programme. There is the need to prepare business education students in tertiary institutions to fit into world of work and to combat unemployment menace in Nigeria, hence the need for the study.

Statement of the Problem

School-industry collaboration has a greater role to play in facilitating the transition from school to world of work with a view to expose graduates for skill acquisition and industrial experience especially in handling equipment and machinery which they are likely to meet after their graduation. Greater collaboration between school and industry will also not only satisfy the immediate needs of graduates of tertiary institution but also ensure that employers themselves are satisfied by the quality of the graduates. Despite this role, it has been observed that the linkage between institution and industry is very weak in Africa (Nigeria inclusive) and do not produce the skill assets needed for industrial productivity leading to low absorption level by the available industries (Uchenu et al, 2018). They went further to lament that graduates from the nation's tertiary institutions most especially business education graduates have been unable to get jobs in corporate industries and companies in Nigeria.



Employers mostly complain of possession of inadequate skills, low practical know-how and lack of confidence by business education graduates. This was as a result of mismatch between the training received in school and the expectations of employers of labour. Employers demand graduates who can leverage technology and can advance the organization's strategy and operation (Atepor, 2018). Rufai, Bakar and Rashid (2015) lamented that there is dearth of meaningful relationship between institutions and the world of work and that this problem need to be properly addressed if at all, such a programme is to bridge the skills gap mismatch between courses studied in school and the employment market. For business education graduates to gain meaningful employment in industries, there is the need to make school-industry collaboration in tertiary institution to be effective. In effect the study is concerned with finding out employers' opinion on strategies for improving school-industry collaboration for quality business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra state

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How effective do employers consider the available school-industry collaboration programmes for quality business education programme in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
2. How important do employers consider strategies for improving school-industry collaboration for quality business education programme in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Hypothesis

This null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho: There is no significant difference in the mean response of male managers and female managers on their perception on the strategies for improving school-industry collaboration in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey design. This design was considered appropriate for the study since it sought the opinions of employers on the strategies



for improving school-industry collaboration for quality business education programme. The population of the study consisted of 390 managers of industries registered with Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Market and Wealth Creation in Anambra State. The entire population was used as the sample size because of its manageable size. The researchers developed a 22-item five-point rating scale instrument for the study titled 'Employers' Perception on Strategies for Improving School-Industry Collaboration For Quality Business Education Programme Questionnaire (EPSISICQBEPQ). The response categories were Very Effective/Very Important, Effective/Important, Slightly Effective/Slightly Important, Ineffective/Unimportant and Very Ineffective/Very Unimportant. Part A contained information on demographic data while part B contained information relating to research questions. The instrument was validated by two experts, one in business education and the other in measurement and evaluation. The questionnaire had an overall reliability index of 0.84 using Cronbach Alpha reliability method and this was established through a pilot test on 20 managers of industries in Enugu State.

390 copies of the questionnaire were administered through personal contact by the researchers with the help of three research assistants. 370 copies of the questionnaire were returned and found usable. The analysis was based on this number. Data collected were analyzed using mean standard deviation (SD) and t-test statistics. The analyses were done with statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Decision on the questionnaire items was based on the real limits of numbers. The decision was that items with mean ratings of 4.50-5.00 were regarded as very effective/important. Mean ratings from 3.50-4.49 were considered as effective/important and items with mean ratings from 2.50-3.49 was considered slightly effective/important. Furthermore, items with mean ratings of 1.50 -2.49 and 1.00 -1.49 were considered ineffective/unimportant and very ineffective/unimportant. Student t- test was however used to test the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected where the calculated t-value was equal to or greater than the table t-value for a given degree of freedom at $P = 0.05$ level of significance. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was upheld where the calculated t- value was less than the table t- value of 0.05 level of significance.



Results

Research Question 1

How effective do employers consider available school-industry collaboration programmes for quality business education programme in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 1: Managers' Mean Responses on Available School-Industry Collaboration Programmes for Quality Business Education Programme in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. N=370

S/N	Item	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Decision
1.	Collaboration through shared facilities	2.11	0.56	Ineffective
2.	Appointment of industrial experts in tertiary institutions governing council	2.68	0.47	S.effective
3.	Technical support programme	2.11	0.56	Ineffective
4.	Mentorship	2.11	0.56	Ineffective
5.	Planning of excursion to industries	2.81	0.83	S.effective
6.	Siwes programme	3.08	0.67	S.effective
7.	Giving scholarship to students	2.81	0.83	S.effective
8.	Skill acquisition programme for students	2.03	0.64	Ineffective
9.	Communication between stakeholders	2.03	0.64	Ineffective
Grand Mean		2.42		Ineffective

Table 1 reveals that the respondents rated four of the items as being slightly effective having the means ranging from 2.68 to 3.08. Six other items with means ranging from 2.03 to 2.11 were rated as being ineffective. The cluster mean of 2.42 indicated that the respondents were of the opinion that the available school-industry collaboration programmes for quality business education programme in tertiary institution in Anambra State were ineffective. The standard deviation of 0.47 to 0.83 shows that the respondents' opinions are homogeneous.

Research Question 2

How important do employers consider strategies for improving school-industry collaboration for quality business education programme in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?



Table 2: Managers' Mean responses on strategies for improving school-industry collaboration for quality business education programme. $N = 370$

S/N	Item	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Decision
1.	Donation of equipment tools and instrument by industries	4.51	0.55	V. Impt
2.	Organization of regular visits to factory sites	4.21	0.75	Impt
3.	Regular presentation of papers by industry experts in capacity building workshops and seminars	4.27	0.76	Impt
4.	Appointment of school industry liaison officer	4.24	0.67	Impt
5.	Provision of career advice by industries to tertiary institution	3.78	0.69	Impt
6.	Involvement of industries in developing courses based on industrial needs through curriculum upgrading	4.35	0.78	Impt
7.	Vacation employment for students who are interested in working in industry for short period	3.84	0.75	Impt
8.	Assistance to various projects schools by industries	3.95	0.77	Impt
9.	Effective implementation of SIWES expose students to industrial practice	4.51	0.55	V. Impt
10.	Giving students access to reference sources not available in institutions and special information concerning functions and structures	3.84	0.75	Impt
11.	Provision of enough funding for research and development in schools to a create strong hik with industries	4.22	0.74	Impt
12.	Training and retaining of business education lecturers on modern practice in industries	4.03	0.72	Impt
13.	Provision of adequate infrastructures by tertiary institutions and government	4.11	0.69	Impt
Grand Mean		4.14	0.24	Impt

Table 2 shows that the respondents rated two items (1 and 9) to be very important strategies for improving school-industry collaboration in tertiary institutions in Anambra State with the means of 4.51 and 4.51. The remaining eleven items were rated to be important strategies for improving school-industry collaboration with the means ranging from 3.78 to 4.35. The Cluster mean of 4.14 shows that the respondents rated all the strategies to be important for improving school-industry collaboration in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The standard deviation of 0.55 to 0.78 shows the respondents' opinions are homogenous.



Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male managers and female managers on their perception on the strategies for improving school-industry collaboration in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Table 3: *t-test Analysis of Male and Female managers' on the strategies for improving school-industry collaboration in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.*

Respondents	N	\bar{x}	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	356	4.14	0.24	368	0.10	1.96	Not significant
Female	14	4.14	0.23				

From Table 3, the t-calculated value of 0.10 is less than the t-critical table value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 368. The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study in research question 1 revealed that four items with mean scores ranging from 2.68 to 3.08 were rated as slightly effective while six items with mean scores ranging from 2.03 to 2.11 were rated as ineffective available school-industry collaboration programmes. This implies that most of the available school-industry collaboration programmes in tertiary institutions are ineffective and this was also buttressed by the cluster mean of 2.42. This is in line with the findings of Jim (2017) and Rufai et al (2015) who acknowledged the existence of such collaborative ventures and notably among them was SIWES. They expressed fear that quite a number of such collaborative programmes make little or no impact on graduate employability skill. Although SIWES is considered as being part of the core course in business education programme, the main problem was its inability to yield any meaningful successful positive result since its inception. Rufai et al (2015) further stated that representations of industrial experts to serve in institutions governing council still exists but argued that it does not serve its purpose because it does not provide such experts the opportunity to engage the academic department directly with a view to fully participate in developing programme of study.

The findings of the study on research question 2 revealed that all the respondents rated all the items as strategies for improving school-industry collaboration for



quality business education programmes with the mean scores ranging from 3.78 to 4.51. This implies that employers agreed that they should be actively involved in school-industry collaboration for it to enhance quality business education programme. The finding is supported by the findings of Udegbnam, Igomu, Enenchukwu and Igbinothodua (2018), Rufai et al (2015) and Atepor (2018) who found out that cooperation of industries in supervision of SIWES programme, donation of equipment, tools and instrument, appointment of school-industry liaison officers, regular organization of workshops and seminars with industry experts as speakers, assistance to projects, planning of work-visits/excursions, training and retraining of business education lecturers on modern practices, etc are strategies identified for improving school-industry collaboration for quality business education programme.

Results in table 3 revealed that male managers do not significantly differ from their female counterparts on the strategies for improving school-industry collaboration for quality business education programme. For school-industry collaboration to be improved, both the tertiary institutions and industries must participate actively in business education programme.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that greater collaboration between education and business sector will not only satisfy the immediate needs of graduates of tertiary institutions but will also ensure that employers themselves are satisfied with the quality of the graduates. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the available school-industry collaboration programmes are not effective and as such there is dearth of meaningful relationship between institutions and the world of work. However, if the improvement strategies for the collaborative programmes are implemented, it will make them effective and as such bridge the skill gap mismatch between business education programme and the employment market.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Collaborative research between tertiary institutions offering business education programme and the business sector should be encouraged to enable the business sector contribute meaningfully to business education programme.



2. Strong connections between tertiary institutions and industries should be maintained in order to make collaboration programmes in business education effective.
3. Government should provide adequate funds to tertiary institutions offering business education programme for the procurement of equipment to prepare the students for the world of work.

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