



## **SCHOOL-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH AS CURRICULUM CHALLENGES IN PREPARING BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS FOR THE CHANGING BUSINESS WORLD**

**OKEKE BETHEL, A.**

School of Business Education, OTM Department,  
Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze,

Email: [okekebethel2020@gmail.com](mailto:okekebethel2020@gmail.com)

Phone: 07061824677

### **Abstract**

*The study investigated school-industry collaboration and academic research as curriculum challenges of preparing business education students for the changing business world. Two research questions guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The population of the study comprised 109 business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire which was validated by three experts in the faculty of education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The test of reliability on the instrument yielded coefficient values of 0.82 and 0.84 for Sections A and B respectively with an average reliability coefficient of 0.83. The mean value was used to answer the research questions while the standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' ratings. Findings of the study revealed that school-industry collaboration is a curriculum challenge of preparing business education students for the changing business world to a high extent. Furthermore, findings of the study revealed that academic research is a curriculum challenge of preparing business education students for the changing business world to a high extent. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended that administrators of the business education programme should regularly interface and collaborate with local, national and international business and corporate leaders in terms of curriculum reviews, funding, training, and professional support. It was also recommended that administrators of business education programmes should institute a research management teams that will assess the quality and relevance of research in the business education programme*

**Keywords:** School-Industry Collaboration, Academic Research, Curriculum, Challenges, Business World

### **Introduction**

The business environment is experiencing rapid changes in its processes and procedures. These changes have led to the competitiveness of the global business environment. This is because advancement in technology has aided the removal of barriers witnessed in the traditional business environment. As a result of the above, the global business environment has become highly competitive. According to Avolio, Benzaquen and Pretell (2019), the business education programme has been internationalized because of the changes occurring in the global business environment.

Business education is an academic programme that equips its recipients with business, vocational and technical skills for paid and self employment. Obiete, Nwazor and Vin-Mbah (2015) saw business education as a unique academic programme that equip its recipients with skills to



function independently as self-employed and employers of labour. Ezeani and Ogundola (2017) 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. The customized executive courses for companies have the purpose to make immediate change in the company (through its leaders or employees), whereas undergraduate business education is about preparing the future workforce for the job to be done. Summarily, Iñiguez (2011) defined business education as an academic programme that put students through the transformation process that turn them into managers who can be recognized as “citizens of the world”. In order for business education to meet up with the demands of the ever changing business world it requires a review that is all encompassing with the needs of the global business community. This requires a major realignment of the curriculum of business education programme to meet with these changes in the global business environment (Avolio, et al., 2019).

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). 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. Okoro (2013) opined that business education curriculum entails educational training which an individual receives in order to acquire adequate attitudes, concepts, knowledge, understanding and skills in business activities for vocational usage in careers as an administrator, manager, teacher or wherever he may find himself in the business world. 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 (Iñiguez, 2011). The curriculum of business education programme seem to be limited in its provision of educational experiences that prepares students for the changing business world. Avolio, et al (2019) noted that lack of school-industry collaboration and academic research are some of the challenges of preparing business education for the changing business environment.

School industry collaboration is 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). Similarly, investment in academic research is another curriculum challenge facing business education in the changing business world.

Although current arguments imply that there is a gap between management research and management teaching, academic research must be linked with the demands of stakeholders. Academic research frequently fails to address the practical significance, real-world application, and consequences. In recent years, business education has been chastised for putting too much emphasis on teaching-focused research and for undertaking limited, irrelevant, and impracticable research projects (Obiete, Nwazor & Vin-Mbah, 2015). These views however are theoretical and have not been empirically ascertained. This study therefore empirically determined if school industry collaboration and academic research are curriculum challenges in preparing business education students for the changing business world.



### **Statement of the Problem**

The changes happening in the global business environment has exposed the need for resetting the business education programme to accommodate new skills and knowledge. This is necessary because the astronomical rise in the rate of unemployment among graduate of business education programme indicate the gap in the skills learnt in school and the expectation of the global business environment. There appear to be a skill mismatch between societal expectation and what is taught in business education institutions. This is indicative of a poor attitude towards school industry collaboration and investment in research that is targeted at improving skills and knowledge. It is saddening to note that business education programmes in Nigeria are still debating on the removal of typewriting from the business education curriculum when the global business world is discussing technologies like artificial intelligence and crypto currency among others. If this situation is left to continue, the business education programme in Nigeria would find itself displaced in the scheme of things in the global business world.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent is school-industry collaboration a curriculum challenge in preparing business education students for the changing business world?
2. To what extent is investment in academic research a curriculum challenge in preparing business education for the changing business world?

### **Method**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 109 business educators in tertiary institutions (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (16), Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbaria Campus (5), Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze (71), Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe (10) and Madonna University, Okija (7) in the State. The instrument data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher which is titled "Questionnaire on School-Industry Collaboration and Academic Research as Curriculum Challenges of Preparing Business Education for the Changing Business World (QSIARPBEBCBW)". The instrument was structured on a 4- point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The instrument was validated by three experts in the Department of Technology and Vocational Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Further the instrument was subject to a pilot test on 10 business educators in Asaba Metropolis of Delta State. The application of the Cronbach Alpha reliability test on the returned data yielded coefficient values of 0.82 and 0.84 for clusters A and B with an average reliability co-efficient of 0.83. Out of the 109 copies of questionnaire administered 88 copies were returned in good condition and used for analysis of data for the study. The mean value was used to answer the research questions while the standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' ratings. In analyzing the mean value, any item with mean value equal to 2.50 and above was High Extent while any item below 2.50 was Low Extent.

### **Results**

#### **Research Question 1**

To what extent is school-industry collaboration a curriculum challenge in preparing business education students for the changing business world?

**Table 1: Respondents Mean Ratings on School-Industry Collaboration as a Curriculum Challenge in Preparing Business Education Students for the Changing Business World**

S/No.	Item Statements	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
-------	-----------------	-----------	----	----------



1.	Disagreements between school and industry on what should be taught	3.45	0.88	HE
2.	Disagreement on structures related to coordination of business education programme	3.30	0.83	HE
3.	Disagreements on types of internships to be adopted	3.42	0.85	HE
4.	Disagreements on funding contributions of each party	3.24	0.81	HE
5.	Lack of commitments towards improving skills capacity of students	3.26	0.80	HE
6.	Corruptions among leadership of the school or industry	3.48	0.88	HE
7.	Lack of enabling government policies to strength school-industry collaboration	3.10	0.79	HE
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.32</b>		<b>High Extent</b>

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents all rated all items (1-7) on school-industry collaboration as a curriculum challenge in preparing business education students for the changing business world to a high extent with mean ratings ranging between 3.10 to 3.45 and standard deviations ranging between 0.79 to 0.88. The cluster mean of 3.32 indicate that school-industry collaboration is a curriculum challenge in preparing business education students for the changing business world to a high extent. The standard deviation scores show that the respondents' opinions were close.

### Research Question 2

To what extent is academic research a curriculum challenge in preparing business education for the changing business world?

**Table 2: Respondents Mean Ratings on Academic Research as a Curriculum Challenge in Preparing Business Education Students for the Changing Business World**

S/No.	Item statements	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
8.	Lack of funds for research	3.67	0.92	HE
9.	Failure to link research to needs of industries	3.12	0.80	HE
10.	Lack of corporation from industries in the release of data for research	3.20	0.83	HE
11.	Poor library system	3.08	0.78	HE
12.	Lack of data analyst for quality research	2.98	0.77	HE
13.	Duplicity of research studies	3.35	0.83	HE
14.	Inability to link research in business education to global expectations	3.40	0.87	HE
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.25</b>		<b>High Extent</b>

Data in Table 2 reveal that the respondent rated all items (8-14) on academic research as a curriculum challenge in preparing business education students for the changing business world to a high extent with mean ratings ranging between 2.98 to 3.67 and standard deviations ranging between 0.77 to 0.92. The standard deviation scores show that the respondents' opinion is close. The cluster mean of 3.25 indicate that academic research is a curriculum challenge of preparing business education students for the changing business world to a high extent.



### **Discussion of Findings**

Findings of the study revealed that school-industry collaboration is a curriculum challenge in preparing business education students for the changing business world to a high extent. Findings further revealed that disagreements between school and industry on what should be taught, disagreement on structures related to coordination of business education programme, disagreements on types of internships to be adopted, disagreements on funding contributions of each party, lack of commitments towards improving skills capacity of students, corruptions among leadership of the school or industry and lack of enabling government policies to strength school-industry collaboration are curriculum challenges of preparing business education students for the changing business world. This finding is in agreement with Onajite and Oyerinde (2017) who stated that the business education programme is hampered by its inability to effectively collaborate with industry leadership in terms of funding, training and curriculum development. Onajite and Oyerinde noted that the impact of constant and rapid access to technology and innovation on business education students has transformed their learning requirements. This is exacerbated by multiple demands from education stakeholders demanding excellence in education. According to Bryan and Henry (2012), the interaction between business and the local school system comprises numerous stakeholders working together to achieve mutual goals. Business leaders, on the other hand, desire to work with schools in ways that are more substantial than surface-level sponsorship (Gross, Haines, Hill, Francis, Blue-Banning & Turnbull, 2015). It is therefore pertinent that both parties work together in facilitating measures that would promote skills acquisition and competencies for global leadership among business education students.

Findings revealed that academic research is a curriculum challenge of preparing business education students for the changing business world to a high extent. Findings further revealed that Lack of funds for research, inability to link research in business education to global expectations, duplicity of research studies, Lack of corporation from industries in the release of data for research and Failure to link research to needs of industries among others were some of the academic research challenges facing the business education in its preparation of students for the changing business world. This finding is in agreement with Avolio, et al (2019) who stated that academic research in business education often fails to consider the practical relevance or the real world application and the impacts. They further observed that business education has been criticized for emphasizing too much on research focused on teaching and for conducting narrow, irrelevant, and impractical research studies. Thomas (2010) held that the business education programme needs a renewed focus and engagement with the needs of practitioners. Thomas further opined that business education research needs to be relevant to the needs of the society. Emerald's Wheel of Impact in Avolio, et al (2019) aptly summarizes the six conditions of research relevance: it improves teaching and learning; it aids in the management of businesses; it influences public bodies and policymakers; it contributes to economic development; it benefits society or the environment; and it adds to the body of knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that school-industry collaboration and academic research are curriculum challenges of preparing students for the changing business world. It is therefore pertinent that all stakeholders of business education programme are committed to adopting strategies and measures that will improve the levels of school-industry collaborations and relevance of academic research in business education to the needs of the society.

### **Recommendations**

The researcher makes the following recommendations based on findings of the study:

1. Administrators of the business education programme should regularly interface and collaborate with local, national and international business and corporate leaders in terms of curriculum reviews, funding, training, and professional support.



2. Administrators of business education programmes should institute a research management teams that will assess the quality and relevance of research in the business education programme.

## References

- Akpan, U.I., Nwokocha, O.A. & Naboth, E.G. (2018). Curriculum challenges and the preparation of business education students for global competitiveness and trade liberalization. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education (NIGJBED)*, 6 (2), 131-141.
- Avolio, B.E, Benzaquen, J.B. & Pretell, C. (2019). Global challenges for business education and the new educational agenda: Graduate attributes and teaching methods. *e-Journal of Business Education & Scholarship of Teaching*, 13 (2), 80-99.
- Bryan, J., & Henry, L. (2012). A model for building school–family–community partnerships: Principles and process. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 90(4), 408–420.
- Efanimjor, I. & Okolocha, C.C. (2020). Assessment of the adequacy of curriculum content of business education for skills acquisition in colleges of education in Edo and Delta States. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 10(1), 01-12.
- Gross, J. M., Haines, S. J., Hill, C., Francis, G. L., Blue-Banning, M., & Turnbull, A. P. (2015). Strong school–community partnerships in inclusive schools are part of the fabric of the school....we count on them. *School Community Journal*, 25(2), 9–34. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>
- Iñiguez, S. (2011). The learning curve: How business schools are re-inventing education. *Journal of Management Education*, 29(5), 672-695.
- Obiete, I. A., Nwazor, J. C. & Vin-Mbah, F. F. (2015). Strategies for teaching business education students in Nigerian tertiary institutions for cooperate governance. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(18), 170-175.
- Okoro, J. (2013). Strategies for enhancing the functionality of business studies in the universal basic education programme in South South Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4 (17), 131-136.
- Onajite & Oyerinde (2017). Promoting institutional collaborations for capacity improvement of business educators in tertiary institutions in Delta State of Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8 (14), 1-9.
- Roobeek, A. & Ritter, M. (2016). *Rethinking business education for relevance in business and society in times of disruptive change*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308076039>
- Thomas, H. (2010). Impactful management research: The importance of finding the voice of practice in management research. In *From challenge to change: Business Schools in the wake of financial crisis* (pp. 4-6). Cambridge, MA: Emerald).