



CURRICULUM REFORM FOR REQUISITE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to determine the extent to which curriculum reform in business studies impact skills development among secondary school students in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Three specific objectives, 3 research questions and three statement of hypotheses guided the study. Survey research design was adopted for this study. A sample of 170 JSS2 students was selected from the population of 350 students who offered business studies in Junior secondary schools in the five public secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. The sample was determined using Taro Yamene and was selected using proportionate sampling technique. A researcher-made questionnaire tagged "Curriculum Reform for Requisite Skills Development Questionnaire (CRRSDQ)" was used to elicit responses from the respondents. Validity of the instrument was ascertained by two business educators, and a measurement and evaluation expert university of Calabar. Cronbach reliability was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient of .85. The questionnaire was rated thus: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). Data collected was analyzed using mean and independent t-test. Findings reveal that reform in curriculum contents impact skills development of secondary school students in Abi Local Government Area. It was concluded that content of business education curriculum should be designed to include ICT literacy skills, media literacy skills and creativity education to enhance requisite skills development among business education students in secondary schools.

Key Words: Curriculum Reform, Business Education, Skills, Requisite Skills, Skill Development

Introduction

Skill development is the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some gainful exercise, work or job. According to Cohen and Volkmar (2017), skill development is an intervention or behavioral technique that is designed to teach new and alternative skills to reduce the frequency and severity of maladaptive behaviours among students. Skill development also denotes the process of introducing/developing skills, attitude, aptitude, abilities and competency growth (NSDA, 2023). The objective of skill development is to create a workforce empowered with the necessary upgraded skills, knowledge and internationally recognized qualifications to gain access to decent employment and ensure a country's competitiveness in the dynamic global market. It is aimed at increasing the productivity and employability of workforce both in the private and the public sectors (NSDA, 2023).

Considering the level of skills acquisition among secondary school students in the country, it is necessary that our curriculum be revisited and revitalized to introduce a difference form of educational system that produces students with requisite skills for employment from the junior secondary school. Reform is to reshape, reconfigure, restructure, reorganized a thing to empower it to be more useful or meaningful. It is the act of introducing new concepts or complete change of a process for better output (Ben, 2020). A mere change does not mean improvement, so too with reform. Thus, the saga of re-form that review here is not intended to imply an evolutionary development (Ogwu, Omeje, & Nwokenna, 2024). Reformers themselves generally hope that their brand of reform will bring improvement; it is their inspiration to pursue their cause. Therefore, as we think about the past fifty years of curriculum reform, we need to ask whether the re-forms carried out were improved upon or not (Ogwu, Omej & Nwokenna, 2024). The curriculum has undergone several reforms. During the British era, the curriculum was 7-5-4 which represents 7 years of primary education, 5 years of secondary education and 4 years of tertiary education. In some regions, it was 6-5-4 across the three tiers respectively. This educational system was later replaced for the entire country in 1983 by the 6-3-3-4, that is, 6 years of primary education, 3 years of junior secondary school (JSS), 3 years of senior secondary school (SSS) and, 4 years of tertiary education. The splitting of the secondary education into 2 tiers: junior and senior secondary is the difference. Currently,



there is a quest to introduce the new basic education curriculum which will bring about the combination of primary and junior secondary education to 9 years, while the senior secondary education maintains the 3 years and university 4 years, hence, the 9-3-4 system of education. These systems sought to correct the structural imbalances in the colonial system of education (Ogwu, Omeje, & Nwokenna, 2024). According to Alade (2021), it is a reform in that introduced a 6-3-3-4 school system incorporating a nine year basic education programme as a clear departure from what existed in the past. However, the extension of basic education to cover junior secondary classes may not be the solution to lack of skills in the country.

However, reform in business studies curriculum should include skills such in learning and innovation, digital literacy as well as career and life skills. Several of these abilities are essential components of an advanced education, that business education could perhaps, aspire to have. The traditional way of teaching business studies should be replaced with student-centred methods such as collaboration, computer assisted instruction, group discussion, simulation and problem-solving methods which will enhance effective learning. In order to have a curriculum that will serve the 21st century needs, Alade (2021), maintained that modern facilities such as power point, audio teleconferencing, video conferencing, interactive board and other digital devices be introduced in the teaching of business studies in secondary schools to promote students understanding.

Business studies is the sum total of knowledge, skills and attitude that are required for successfully promoting and administering business enterprises either as an employee, or entrepreneur. Likewise, Nwaokolo (2018) viewed business studies as skills, attitude and knowledge acquired from secondary school and post-secondary institutions for performing business operations of personal or corporate nature. Business studies at the junior secondary school level comprised of the following subjects being taught as pre-vocational and as an integrated subject (Anao in Ugwu (, 2016). They include; introduction to business studies, office practice, commerce, book-keeping, shorthand keyboarding/typewriting. According to Obi (2018), senior secondary level business subjects are made up of the following vocational subjects; accounting, economics, commerce, computer studies/keyboarding, business method and Shorthand. However, whether at the junior or senior secondary level, the principal objective of these subjects is to inculcate in students the relevant job skills, knowledge and attitude necessary for paid or self-employment as well as for higher education in business area (Ugwu, 2016).

In the same vein, business education refers to business studies in junior secondary schools in Nigeria, whichever the name is, its purpose is to create financial literacy, enterprise awareness, economic and business understanding. In including the business studies subjects in the secondary school curriculum, it was supposed to envisage an education system that empowers citizens to become producers of goods and services at low cost and produce entrepreneurs who are jobs creators and establishers of new enterprises. Worldwide, the course has been taught successfully by adopting various teaching and learning methods (Kimotho, 2016).

Emphasizing the need for curriculum reform in business education for secondary schools in Nigeria, Osuala (2019) suggested that junior secondary school courses should be both prevocational and academic. In SS 1 the following subjects should be taught: Mathematics, English, Biology, and Introduction to Business Management, Economics, Geography, Commerce, Computer, Word processing, Business Communication, Salesmanship, and Language. While SS 2 subjects should include: Mathematics, English, Chemistry, and Introduction to Business Management, Economics, Geography, Commerce, Computer, Word processing, accounting, Business Communication, Salesmanship, and Language.

According to Osuala (2019), the first and second years of secondary education, subjects should be compulsory and introductory in nature. However, in the third year, students should be allowed to choose subjects in their-area of specialization. Osuala stressed that the programme is designed to make students who will not further to senior secondary school employable at this level. At the third year, Osuala (2019) categorized business education into different specializations to include: Computer education, book-keeping and accounting, selling occupations, and clerical occupations. He further, asserted that in the senior secondary, curriculum should be designed to broaden the students' knowledge and outlook in the business world. The programme at this level will be basically be the same as the junior secondary school programme except that the following new subjects will be added to the major groupings: Office management, data processing and cooperative work for book-keeping and accounting group.

If a country is to remain competitive in an ever-increasing global economy, then it becomes increasingly important to hire workers who are adequately prepared to utilize current and future information technology. In order to build and sustain information technology proficiency, people must have formal and informal opportunities to interact with computers. Early development of computer literacy may be as critical as reading and writing literacy (Grant, Malloy & Murphy, 2019).



Computer literacy is defined as an understanding of computer characteristics, capabilities, and applications, as well as an ability to implement this knowledge in the skillful, productive use of computer applications suitable to individual roles in society (Simonson, Mauer & Toradi; Whitake in Grant, Malloy & Murphy, 2019). Computer proficiency is the knowledge and ability to use specific computer applications (spreadsheet, word processors, etc.). Computer literacy and proficiency are often used interchangeably; however, it is our belief that increasing computer proficiency positively impacts computer literacy (Grant, Malloy & Murphy, 2019).

Owens in Johnson, Baitholomew and Miller (2016), identified database concepts, general computer concepts, Internet concepts, presentations, spreadsheets, web authoring, word processing, and ethics as key areas of computer literacy. Other definitions of computer literacy focus on two areas: “whatever a person needs to know and do with computers in order to function competently in our society” and “a measure of competency to exploit computer technology” (Halaris & Sloan in Johnson, Bartholomew & Miller, 2016).

Preparing students for employment and beyond require that the current and emerging needs of industry be assessed in an effort to ensuring that graduates are equipped with toolkits to be productive (Johnson, Bartholomew, & Miller, 2016). The primary responsibility for teaching computer skills during the last two decades has been placed in business education programs, which often teach business related applications such as spreadsheet, word processing, and databases (Tesch, Murphy, & Crable, 2016). Educators are facing tremendous challenges in identifying, developing and designing curriculum that will prepare undergraduates in the next century (Wang, 2017).

Statement of the problem

Nigerian educational sector has engaged in several curriculum reforms with the aim of turning out well trained individuals that would impact on the business world. Prior to the present National Policy on Education in Nigeria (FRN, 2024) which provides for the 6-3-3-4 system of education, there have been criticisms and counter-criticisms about Nigerian education, which the training system was placed under two major categories. In the first place, the old system of 6-5-2-3 was described as deficient because it was not geared effectively enough to the realities and needs of the labour market, or simply put; it was not adequately employment oriented. Secondly, that there was insufficient application of the system’s facilities and manpower towards the solution of the country’s pressing development problem, that is, it was not adequately service-oriented. That called for a reform which brought about the 6-3-3-4 system of education. The 6-3-3-4 system has lasted for decades now and the problem of lack of skills still lingers on.

Business education which its principal objective is to prepare learners with the relevant job skills, knowledge and attitude necessary for paid or self-employment as well as for higher education in business area has failed to deliver its mandate in secondary schools, especially, in the junior classes. It is surprising that learners pass through the programme with little or no skills. The students do not demonstrate the skills that the programme was designed to equip the learners with. It is upon this backdrop that this study seeks to find out if curriculum reform in business studies can enhance skill development among students in Secondary Schools in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Hence, the finding of the study would be of benefits to curriculum planners, government, students and the general public.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. To what extent does reform in curriculum contents impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area?
2. To what extent does innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area?
3. To what extent does modern infrastructural facilities impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which reform in curriculum contents impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area
2. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area.



3. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which modern infrastructural facilities impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for this study. Isangedighi (2012) described survey research design as a design used to find out what situation, events, attitudes or opinions are occurring in a population. The design was adopted because the study seeks the opinion of business studies students on their preference of reform in business education curriculum. A sample of 170 JSS2 students selected from the population of 350 students who offered Business Studies in Junior secondary schools in the five public secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area of Cross River State. The sample was determined using Taro Yamene and selected using proportionate sampling technique. A Researcher-made 21-items questionnaire tagged “Curriculum Reform and Requisite Skills Development Questionnaire (CRRSDQ)” was used to elicit response from the respondents. The questionnaire items were structured under four-point scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). The validity of the instrument was ascertained by three experts; two business educators, and a measurement and evaluation expert in the university of Calabar. Data collected were analyzed using mean to answer the research questions and independent t-test for test of hypotheses.

Results

Research question 1: To what extent does reform in curriculum content impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools Abi Local Government Area?

Table 1

Mean score showing the extent to which reform in curriculum content impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools n = 170

s/n	Item	Mean	Std.	Decision
1	ICT literacy	2.77	.74	Agree
2	Media literacy	2.93	.92	Agree
3	Creativity and innovative education	2.86	.55	Agree
4	Flexibility and adaptability education	3.22	.64	Strongly Agree
5	Productivity and accountability education	3.06	.81	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.97	.73	Agree

Table 1 shows the extent to which reform in curriculum setting impact requisite skills development among business studies students in secondary schools. It reveals that the mean score for all the items lie between 2.50 and 3.49 which imply that respondents agree that ICT literacy, media literacy, creativity, flexibility and productivity education to a high extent impact on skill development of secondary school students. Furthermore, the grand mean of 2.97 indicates that to a high extent, reform in curriculum setting impact on skill development of students.

Research question 2: To what extent does innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area?

Table 2

Mean score showing the extent to which innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools n = 170

s/n	Item	Mean	Std.	Decision
1	Interactive teaching	2.86	.56	Agree
2	Computer assisted instruction	2.73	.62	Agree
3	Problem-solving technique	2.90	.45	Agree
4	Group discussion	3.05	.70	Agree
5	Simulation	2.88	.65	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.88	.60	Agree

Table 2 shows the extent to which innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact skills development of secondary school students. It reveals that the mean score for all the items lie between 2.50



and 3.49 which imply that respondents agree that interactive teaching, computer assisted instruction, problem-solving technique, group discussion and simulation to a high extent impact skill development of secondary school students in business studies. Furthermore, the grand mean of 2.88 indicates that to a high extent innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact skill development of students

Research question 3: To what extent does modern infrastructural facilities impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area?

Table 3:

Mean score showing the extent modern infrastructural facilities impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools. n = 170

s/n	Item	Mean	Std.	Decision
1	Use of power point	2.90	.60	Agree
2	Interactive white board	2.82	.68	Agree
3	Audio teleconferencing	2.74	.58	Agree
4	Video conferencing	3.00	.87	Agree
5	Internet	2.80	.68	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.85	.68	Agree

Table 3 shows the extent to which modern infrastructural facilities impact skills development of secondary school students in business studies. It reveals that the mean score for all the items lies between 2.50 and 3.49 which imply that respondents agree that use of power point presentation, interactive white board, audio teleconferencing, video conferencing and internet facility to a high extent impact on skill development of secondary school students. Furthermore, the grand mean of 2.85 indicates that to a high extent selling occupation as reforms in Business Education curriculum impact on skill development of students.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which reform in curriculum contents impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area

Table 4

Independent t-test of the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which reform in curriculum contents impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area (N=170).

s/n	Variables	Categories	N	Mean	Std.	Df	t-v	P-v	Dec
1	Curriculum contents	Male	75	2.95	.27	168	.97	.024	NS
		Female	95	2.99	.28				

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

From the result on Table 4, the p-value of .024 is greater than 0.05 significant levels with a degree of freedom 168. This implies that the result is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. This means that, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which reform in curriculum contents impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area. This result implies that ICT literacy, media literacy, creativity, flexibility and productivity education enhance skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area.

Table 5

Independent t-test of the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area



(N=170).

S/N	Variable	Categories	n	Mean	Std.	Df	t-v	P-v	Dec
1	Teaching techniques	Male	75	2.90	.27	168	.83	.021	NS
		Female	95	2.86	.35				

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

From the result on Table 5, the p-value of .021 is greater than 0.05 significant levels with a degree of freedom 168. This implies that the result is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. This means that, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area. This result implies that interactive teaching, computer assisted instruction, problem-solving technique, group discussion and simulation enhance skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which modern infrastructural facilities impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area.

Table 6

Independent t-test of the mean rating in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which modern infrastructural facilities impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area (N=170).

S/N	Variable	Categories	n	Mean	Std.	Df	t-v	P-v	Dec
1	Facilities	Male	75	2.82	.40	168	.98	.017	NS
		Female	95	2.88	.36				

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

From the result on Table 5, the p-value of .017 is greater than 0.05 significant levels with a degree of freedom 168. This implies that the result is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. This means that, there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent to which modern infrastructural facilities impact skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools in Abi Local Government Area. This result implies that power point presentation, interactive white board, audio teleconferencing, video conferencing and internet facility

Discussion

The finding on Table 4 revealed that to a high extent reform in curriculum contents impact skills development of secondary school students. Furthermore, male and female students did not differ in their responses on the extent to which reform in curriculum contents impact on skills development of secondary school students. This is in line with Osuala (2019) who maintained that students should be allowed to choose subjects in their area of specialization from JSS 3 class. Osuala further stressed that the programme is designed to make students who will not further to senior secondary school employable at this level. This finding is further supported by Grant, Malloy and Murphy (2019) who stated that if a country is to remain competitive in an ever-increasing global economy, then it becomes increasingly important to hire workers who are adequately prepared to utilize current and future information technology.

The findings on Table 5 revealed that to a high extent innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact on skills development of secondary school students. Furthermore, male and female students did not differ in their responses on the extent to which innovative pedagogical teaching techniques impact skills development of secondary school students. This finding is in line with AECC in Nwaigburu & Eneogwe (2023) who stated that to be successful in accounting career, accounting students need skills and abilities that are beyond accounting technical knowledge; they include communication skills, analytical skills and interpersonal skills. The finding was supported by Akande (2021) who asserted that accounting skills are the totality of skills ranging from record keeping, attention directing, financial management and reporting skills that are expected to promote effective decision, performance evaluation and business reporting of any business enterprise.



The finding on Table 6 revealed that to a high extent modern infrastructural facilities impact on skills development of secondary school students. Furthermore, male and female students did not differ in their responses on the extent to which modern infrastructural facilities impact skills development of secondary school students. This was in line with Venugopal (2015) who recommended cognitive strategies, which are customer-oriented and makes selling an enjoyable responsibility, his study made it evident that, higher level of performance salesperson is achievable if they adopt higher level of selling and emotional skill. The study suggests performance measures that are capable of identifying the customer relationship outcomes, and relying less on sales volume or profits. The finding was also support by Basir (2020) who found that effects of interpersonal skills positively influenced salesperson performance. However; unexpectedly, the findings also revealed that salesmanship skills, technical skills and marketing skills do not influence salesperson performance. In contrasts, Rajan and Srinivasan (2015) stated that the organization's sales effectiveness is the evaluation of organizational total outcome and only partial element is the sales person's contribution. It is important to note that one of the shortfalls of this study is that that was no adequate related literature to review the variables being studied, especially in the book keeping and accounting in the Junior Secondary School.

Conclusion

Business education which is also known as business studies in junior secondary school in Nigeria is designed to equip the learners with saleable skills. But unfortunately, the programme has not been able to deliver on that mandate even after several curriculum reforms has taken place in other to make the education system job oriented. Therefore, it could be concluded that this shortfall may be as the result of the combination of Office practice, Commerce, Book-keeping, Shorthand and Keyboarding/Typewriting in one subject. Business studies should be reformed both in contents and methods. Content of business education should be designed to include ICT literacy, media literacy, creativity, flexibility and productivity education. Students-centred instructional techniques should be encouraged. These techniques include but not limited to interactive teaching, computer assisted instruction, problem-solving technique, group discussion and simulation. Facilities such as power point, interactive white board, audio teleconferencing, video conferencing and internet should be provided to enhance skills development of students in business studies in secondary schools

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