



STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE SKILL ACQUISITION BY BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS: IMPLICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine how exposure to workplace apprenticeship of undergraduates of business education could influence post graduation employability and job creation. Specifically, the study seeks to determine what skills business education graduates need to succeed (that is get employment) in the 21st century workplace and how that ties, into bringing them out of economic recession. Three research questions guided the study. The design is descriptive survey and instrument used was questionnaire. The respondents were 55 postgraduate students of a Nigerian university in Anambra State purposively selected. The findings of the study revealed that there are several teaching methods and that business educators' should evaluate their disadvantages so as to utilize the most appropriate strategies that could impact positively on business education students' skills for competitive market. Also that demonstration was rated as the best method of teaching because of students' active participation, making learning more effective, not relying on rote learning, and this method develops creativity among students among other. Students' perception and ratings about the interesting and effective teaching methods is a way to suggest improvements in teaching/ learning process. Amongst others, it was recommended that business educators' need to educate students in effective ways of giving precise feedback that addresses specific aspects of their learning experience by making their teaching interesting.

Keywords: *Strategies, Effective Skill Acquisition, Sustainable human capital development*

Introduction

Global trends in education have shown that students of various disciplines including business education students leave school without acquiring the prerequisite skills that foster individual, community or national development (Chertavian, 2014). According to ASTE (2016) teaching strategies are the most prominent among several reasons which impact on students' acquisition of effective skills needed to be professional and active participators in creative building. There is an assumption that students learn with different styles, at different speeds, different levels of prior knowledge and different environments when the subject matter is given by way of a variety of teaching strategies (Shinn, 1997). The author defined teaching strategy as a complex educational behaviour of a teacher in using methods, techniques, tools, discipline and communications in order to achieve goals. Instructional methods and teaching methods mean the same thing. Kizlik, (2017) also states that teaching strategies, for all practical purposes, mean the same thing. Regardless of what we call such processes, they are primarily descriptions of the learning objective-oriented activities and flow of information between teachers and students. Business education students need skills in order to be effective in their workplace and business education



must be taught with the right teaching strategies so as to inculcate the right skill and attitude to the students.

In order to realize fully the potential contributions of skill acquisition to sustainable human capital development emphasis must be placed on the broad goals of business education and business educators' approach towards achieving the objectives. The aim of business education is to offer training to its recipients that will enable them to acquire adequate attitudes, concepts, knowledge, understanding and skills for business and about business, for personal usage as administrators, managers, teachers' in or whichever work environment they may find themselves. To achieve the above goals business educators must play vital role. The ways in which business educators teach exert a powerful influence on the students' sustainable livelihood. For Cole (2017) today, as in the past, teachers are being challenged to broaden their repertoire of teaching strategies to meet the needs and strengths of students from a tremendous diversity of backgrounds and cultures. Business education students like every other learner in Nigeria face societal problems, some live in conditions of poverty, or both. Teaching strategies go a long way to build skill base of a nation's human capital development. According to Godstime (2016) there are various methods of teaching and the choice of teaching method/s to use is affected by many components such as content, time, ability of pupils, group size as well as the teachers' personal preference. Kizilk (2017) concurred with Godstime when the author stated that instructional method is "right" for a particular lesson depending on many things, and among them are the age and developmental level of the students, what the students already know, and what they need to know to succeed with the lesson, the subject-matter content, the objective of the lesson, the available people, time, space and material resources, and the physical setting. Another, more difficult problem is to select an instructional method that best fits one's particular teaching style and the lesson-situation. There is no one "right" method for teaching a particular lesson, but there are some criteria that pertain to each that can help business educators' make the best decision possible.

Hence, a fundamental feature of business education is to prepare individuals for the acquisition of the needed skills to survive in a highly competitive labour market. Being an integral part of vocational and technical education (Amoor, 2014), states that business education not only prepares individuals for responsible citizenship, it also imbues in them the capacity to generate new ideas that could foster economic growth. In the vein where business education has not achieved this ideal, high rate of unemployment, weak economy and low technological development persist (Eze & Okorafor, 2016). It has therefore become pertinent that business education students acquire the skills commensurate with the programmes of the course, to display the applications of professional skills in job market and self reliance. Thus, business educators should judiciously follow or implement the programmes of business education using methods which enhance the acquisition of skills if students must be equipped for the competitive market economy.

Business educators seem to persistently use teaching methods which does not equip students with effective skills. Thus, in the view of (Gill, 2017) some teaching methods do not promote meaningful learning as students remain passive in the class



waiting for knowledge to be poured into their brains. Such system of education is contrary to the very principle of business education. Hence, the needs to adopt strategies that could foster among students the acquisition of skills that will prepare them to be effective in the work place. Bruce and Langdon (2000) defined strategy as mapping out the future, setting out which products and services you will take to which markets and how. Strategy is deliberately choosing different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value (Amesi, 2011). Amesi, Akpomi and Okwuanaso (2014) argued that strategy is all about competitive position, about differentiating yourself in the eyes of the students or customer as the case may be, about adding value through a mix of activities different from those used by competitors. This concurs with the assertion of Education for All Monitoring Report (2012) which states that the need to develop young people's skills for work has become critical. Education for All Monitoring Report Team reported that there is a lot of generation of 200 million young people who were leaving school without the skills they need. This poses a challenge to business educators to adopt the right strategies that will resolve the overarching issue that is currently affecting the rate of unemployment as well as the rate of unskilled young people who do not qualify for jobs in Nigeria or outside Nigeria.

According to Mariani (2002) strategies play a cognitive role in learning, because they facilitate and optimize processes, especially in new tasks, where one cannot rely on routine, automatic behaviour; in tasks which require and/or allow conscious thinking and accuracy. Teaching method is a systematic way of doing something. It implies an orderly logical arrangement of steps. It is more procedural. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (2017) had tried to list over 145 techniques that could play a cognitive role in learning. However, in brainstorming within small group, out of these numerous techniques, the students identify a list of techniques and strategies that best fit their class.

Yinusa (2014) opined that the most appropriate teaching methods to adopt in teaching skill acquisition should be that which can motivate the students and sustain their interest in the course of instruction. The author suggests that, in terms of practical skills acquisition, it is very appropriate to adopt a teaching method that can bring out the manufacturing process and exploration of materials into the classroom situation. Godstime (2016) suggested that regular embarking on excursion, use of apprenticeship system, students' industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) programme, and skills acquisition programme, use of models and computer simulations and Cooperative training programmes are relevant alternatives to the teaching of practical skills vocational education institutions in Nigeria. Researchers further suggested that in countries with high shares of university graduates with major difficulties in finding adequate jobs a major option is to make academic training more labour market-oriented, incorporating internships with employers into academic curricula so that some experience with current work practices in the private sector can be acquired (Jackson, 2012).

Learning strategies are essential components of a curriculum, as it bridges between competence and process. In the light of this belief, the approach to strategies education should be explicit, experiential, embedded and evaluative - what is known as "4E approach". Such an approach seems to be promising in that it offers task-based



value - because strategies are first and foremost applied to specific tasks. The National Standards for Business Education are based on the conviction that business education competencies are essential for all students.

The curriculum as a whole focuses on continuous quality education. Students master the knowledge, applications, and attitudes that will reinforce workplace competencies. This concept is illustrated in the National Standards for Business Education Curriculum Model. Assessment is both a measure of competence and a teaching strategy; what is not mastered at one level becomes the focus of successive learning experiences. As the nature of work continues to change, business education becomes increasingly important for all students. National Business Education Association (NBEA) and its members believe that if young people are to take their rightful place in society as productive and responsible citizens, they should have the chance to study the principles of business as they relate to their personal and professional lives. There are values which need to be inculcated to business education graduates to ensure workplace competencies and relevance. These are skills-based value, course curricular value and lifelong learning value.

- a. *Skills-based value* - because strategies can be developed across language skills and communicative activities;
- b. *Cross-curricular value* - because strategies can be made to overflow through the watertight compartments of school subjects; and, last but not the least,
- c. *Lifelong learning value* - because strategies can be part of our effort to equip students with learning tools for the rest of their lives.

Statement of the Problem

In this era when every sector of the economy is clamouring for sustainability, service delivery and development, research has proved that there are skills and competencies gap – both real and perceived among business education students and that it needs to be closed. Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) state that education in Nigerian tertiary institutions has not realized its vision of equipping graduates with employable skills as is indicated in the level of rising un-employability. The alarming incidence of skill mismatch and the consequential declining employability has become a key challenge to governments, educational institutions and employers of labour at large. Hence, it appears that business educators teaching strategies influence of the traditional method which restricted effective skill acquisition still holds sway today.

Business educators' seems to be victims of the cause of the difference which exist between the skills that employers' need, and the skills that are available among their students' as prospective employees. Business educators appear to be facing obstacles such as technology-driven disruption and proper teaching method application. There are expressed fears on employers of labour unpreparedness to employ graduates of our tertiary institutions because of their un-skillfulness, business education inclusive. They are only willing to engage highly skilled workforce that is diverse and vibrant. But the reality is that business educators must do more to embed these creative, innovative, communicative, problem solving and collaborative practices in their normal teaching activities.



In Nigeria, business education can drive sustainable human capital development in all its dimensions from employment to social cohesion but how poor strategies sometimes undermine business education promise becomes a concern. Unfortunately, there seems to be lack of proper strategies to assist business educators ensure that when improvements do happen, they happen system-wide and not just in localized and often unsustainable interventions. Therefore, the general problem of the study is to find out strategies for effective skill acquisition among business education students for achieving sustainable human capital development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which strategies for effective skill acquisition by business education students in South-East and South-South States tertiary institutions are needed for sustainable human capital development environment and the diversity of learners for sustainable human development. Specifically the study sought to:

1. determine the extent to which business education students need creative and innovation strategies for effective skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South as a remedy for sustainable human capital development
2. determine the extent to which business education students need critical thinking and problem solving strategies for effective skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South as a remedy for sustainable human capital development
3. Determine the extent to which business education students need communication and collaboration strategies for effective skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South as a remedy for sustainable human capital development.

Research Questions

The following research questions were stated to guide the study:

1. To what extent do business education students need creativity and innovation strategies for effective skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South as a remedy for sustainable human capital development?
2. To what extent do business education students need critical thinking and problem solving strategies for effective skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South as a remedy for sustainable human capital development?
3. To what extent do business education students need communication and collaboration strategies for effective skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South as a remedy for sustainable human capital development?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in the mean score of effective skill acquisition strategies for business educators for sustainable human capital



development of business education students in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The study will be of immense benefit to business educators in that they will be able to select and use the most appropriate strategies and materials in their teaching for effective skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in south-East and South-South of Nigeria. Business educators and their students will realize that the understanding of lessons for effective skill acquisition can be highly improved through demonstration strategy rather than any other strategy.

Method

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South States of Nigeria. The population comprised 58 business educators from the study area who were at the post graduate level in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. All the members of this population were used as sample for the study because the number was relatively small. The sample was located through the post graduate defence attendance for 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic year.

A questionnaire developed by the researcher for the study was the instrument used for collecting data for the study. A five point rating scale of Very High Extent, High Extent, Moderate Extent, Low Extent and Very Low Extent was used. To test the instrument's validity and reliability, pilot test was conducted on 20 post graduate students outside the area of the study. The instrument was tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha reliability method which yielded coefficient values of 0.76, 0.81, and 0.79 respectively. The 55copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents and all were collected back. Mean rating was used to answer the three research questions while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics at 0.05 levels of significance was used to test the null hypothesis. The boundary limits of numbers were used to facilitate decision making for research questions.



Results

Results are presented in Tables according to research questions and hypotheses in the study.

Research Question One: What is the mean score of business educators' effective skill acquisition strategy for sustainable human capital development through creativity and innovation?

Table1: Mean Response of business educators' strategy for effective skill acquisition for sustainable human capital development through creativity and innovation?

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Students who can adapt easily to situations are more likely to be employed	4.08	0.66	Great Extent
2.	Students who are able to maintain effective performance under pressure are more likely to meet organization's competitive achievement	4.25	0.72	Great extent
3.	Relationships that exist between skills acquisition and post graduation employment are very problematic	4.04	0.74	Great extent
4.	Students who are able to generate and apply new ideas to achieve organizational goals are likely to be employed	4.35	0.65	Great Extent
5.	Students with skills are able to diagnose their organization success needs. Most post graduate students lack verbal communication skills that prevent good relationship	4.01	0.75	Great extent
6.	Students with skills are able to help organization achieve its goals. Most graduates lack communicating words and tone carefully in order to deliver the message accurately while maintaining a good relationship	4.00	0.94	Great extent
7.	Most graduates lack team spirit which is needed for maintaining social responsibility	3.75	1.06	Great extent
8.	Inability to create a vision and sell it hinders employment opportunities after graduation	4.15	0.64	Great extent
9.	Elaborates, refines, analyzes and evaluates their own ideas in order to improve and maximize creative efforts	4.06	0.72	
Cluster Mean		4.08	2.63	Great Extent



Table 1 reveals that all nine items of strategy for sustainable human capital development through creativity and innovation have mean scores ranging from 3.75 – 4.35. This means that business education students in South-East and South-South need them at a great extent. However, the cluster means of 4.08 shows that business education students in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South need creativity and innovation to a great extent for effective skill acquisition. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range showing that respondents are not apart in their response.

Research Question Two: What is the mean score of business educators’ effective skill acquisition strategy for sustainable human capital development through critical thinking and problem solving?

Table 2: Mean response of business educators’ strategy for effective skill acquisition for sustainable human capital development through critical thinking and problem solving?

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
10.	Uses various types of reasoning as appropriate to the situation	4.11	0.92	Great Extent
11.	Recognizes how the parts of a system work together to accomplish something	3.51	1.21	Great extent
12.	Is effective in analyzing and evaluating evidence, arguments, claims and beliefs	3.30	1.24	Moderate extent
13.	Effectively analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view	4.44	0.51	Great extent
14.	Effectively synthesizes and makes connections between information and arguments	4.47	0.53	Great extent
15.	Effectively synthesizes and makes connections between information and arguments	4.00	0.55	Great extent
16.	Reflect critically on learning experiences and processes	3.89	1.18	Great extent
17.	Effectively solve different kinds of non-familiar problems in both conventional and innovative ways	4.33	0.68	Great extent
18.	Effectively identify and ask significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions	4.60	0.51	Very Great Extent
		4.01	0.97	Great Extent
19.	Working in a respectful and friendly manner with all customers and coworkers	4.04	0.89	Great Extent
		4.35	0.85	Great Extent
20.	Respecting cultural differences encountered in the workplace			
		4.09	0.84	Great extent
Cluster Mean		4.11	1.36	Great extent

Table2 reveals that item18 had a mean score of 4.60. This means that business education students in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South States of Nigeria need strategy for effective skill acquisition for sustainable human capital development through critical thinking and problem solving to a very great extent. Items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20 and 21 had mean score ranging from 3.89 – 4.47. This means that business education students in South-East and South-South need them at a



great extent. Item 12 had mean score of 3.30. This means that business education students in South-East and South-South need them at a moderate extent. However the cluster Mean of 3.75 shows that business education students in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South need creativity and innovation to a great extent for effective skill acquisition. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range showing that respondents are not apart in their response.

Research Question Three: What is the mean score of business educators’ effective skill acquisition strategy for sustainable human capital development through communication and collaboration?

Table 3: Mean Response of business educators’ involvement in effective skill acquisition of business education students as a strategy for sustainable human capital development through communication and collaboration?

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
22.	Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts	4.65	0.57	Very Great Extent
23.	Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions	3.51	1.14	Great Extent
24.	Use communication for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade)	3.30	1.04	Moderate Extent
25.	Utilize multiple media and technologies, and know how to judge their effectiveness as well as assess their impact	4.59	0.59	VeryGreat Extent
26.	Communicate effectively in diverse environments (including multi-lingual)	4.57	0.61	VeryGreat Extent
27.	Demonstrate ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams	4.00	1.01	Great Extent
28.	Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal	3.89	1.05	Great Extent
29.	Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member	4.33	0.67	Great Extent
Cluster Mean		4.11	2.35	Great Extent

Table 3 reveals that items 22, 25 and 26 had a mean score of 4.57 - 4.65. This means that business educator students in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South States of Nigeria need strategy for effective skill acquisition for sustainable human capital development through critical thinking and problem solving to very great extent. Items 23, 27, 28 and 29 had mean score ranging from 3.89 – 4.47. This means that business education students in South-East and South-South need them at a great extent. Item 24 have mean score of 3.30. This means that business education students in South-East and South-South need them at a moderate extent. However, the cluster mean of 4.13 shows that business education students in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South need creativity and innovation to a great extent for effective skill acquisition.



Null Hypothesis 1 Business education students in Federal, State and private owned tertiary institutions in the South-Eastern and South-South States of Nigeria do not differ significantly in strategies for effective skill acquisition for sustainable human capital development

To test this null hypothesis the following computation which is shown in Table 4 was done.

Table 4: ANOVA on the Mean Ratings of the Extent strategies for effective skill acquisition by business education students based on the Ownership of their Institutions.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	Cal. F	Crit. F	P> .05
Between Groups	14995.560	2	7497.780	10.517	3.00	S
Within Groups	50035.580	18	12.430			
Total	65031.141	37				

Discussion of Findings

In table 1, all the items obtained mean rating above 3.30. This show that business educators agreed to great extent that effective skill acquisition of business education students as a strategy for sustainable human capital development through creativity and innovation are important. Creativity and critical thinking are seen as the most desired skills needed by employers. This confirms the un-employability of business education graduates to lack of creativity and innovation. The core set of 21st century skills include capabilities in analytical problem solving, innovation and creativity, self-direction and initiative, flexibility and adaptability, critical thinking, and communication and collaboration skills (Autor, Levy, & Murnane, 2007). As a result of these recent findings, there have been multiple calls for educators at all levels to recognize the challenges and opportunities in today's economy and make the necessary changes to educational programmes such that students develop "21st century" knowledge, skills, and abilities they will need as employees, managers and business owners in the new economy

The recent employment and Manpower reports noted that despite the recession, 31 percent of employers throughout the world struggle to find qualified workers because of “a talent mismatch between workers’ qualifications and the specific skill sets and combinations of skills employers want.”(Thoughtful Learning Newsletter, 2017).To cope with the demands of the 21st century, “the report states, ”students need to know more than core subjects. They need to know how to use their knowledge and skills by thinking critically, applying knowledge to new situations, analyzing information, comprehending new ideas, communicating, collaborating, solving problems and making decisions.”

Both employers and the general public agree that the kinds of skills that current students will need to succeed in the workforce of the future are very different from those that served previous generations. Both employers and the general public



appear to be concerned that the educational experience of today's young people has not evolved enough to take them to the level needed in order to compete in a much more aggressive global economy.

The emphasis on knowledge, service, and information in the new economy creates space for more new firms to emerge, and exerts pressures on existing companies to hire employees with higher level skills in order to compete successfully. The increased demand for a highly skilled workforce has contributed to the rising importance of obtaining a college education. However, recent studies indicate that newly hired college graduates do not excel in these higher-level knowledge and information based skills at the level that employers desire. Entrepreneurs have also indicated that the shortage of highly skilled workers inhibits the growth and development of new entrepreneurial firms. In response to this, there have been multiple calls for educators at all levels to recognize the challenges and opportunities in today's economy and to ensure that students develop the "21st century" knowledge, skills, and abilities they need.

One of the key points to learning in the 21st century is that teachers are defining essential skills too narrowly. "As our nation focuses on the basics, it is noteworthy that government, educators, and private industry are unified in underling that 21st century skills must be part of today's basic. However, by encouraging creative thinking, you can also help your people become more engaged with what they do, increase their self-confidence, and improve their morale. Human beings, no matter who they are or what they do, have an innate desire to think and act creatively. The key findings of this study is that business education graduates lack mastery of attitudinal and behavioural skills, social skills, job search skills, and 21st century skills which employers greatly require.

Conclusion

The rationale for strategies for effective skill acquisition of business education students in tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South of Nigeria is to impart the basic scientific knowledge, attitudes and practical know-how necessary for human capital development. The practical skills can only be imparted through the use of appropriate and effective teaching strategies that are capable of spurring the learners to creatively explore their potentials and maximize them for the betterment of the society. Business education offering institutions in Nigeria should not rely on the traditional methods of teaching, because imparting practical skills is paramount. Therefore, they should exhaust all effective measures to imparting the knowledge, attitudes and skills required for the individual to function effectively in the society. Providing business education students an opportunity for them to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-life experiences has proven to be an effective way of both disseminating and integrating knowledge. The demonstration method is an instructional strategy that recommends giving students ample time for practice and reduces problems that arises in practical application.

Recommendations



1. Business educators should utilise strategies to support continued economic growth by training workers that possess the appropriate skills sets needed for industrial development
2. Education policies must promote critical reflection, interdisciplinary learning and innovation in order to support students in their transition to active citizenship.
3. To evaluate teaching strategies effectiveness for skill acquisition different methods can be used including: discussion, guided discovery, self-evaluation, teaching portfolios, student achievement and students' ratings of teaching methods used by business educators in the discharging their responsibilities.
4. Business educators' need to educate students in effective ways of giving precise feedback that addresses specific aspects of their learning experience by making their teaching interesting.
5. Because of the important influence that business educators' teaching method has on the quality of teaching and learning and business education students success in effective skill acquisition, education authorities need to examine the elements of a successful business educators' programme.
6. Tertiary institutions in South-East and South-South States business educator should feel the pressure to skill deficits, to make learning environments more interactive, to integrate technology into the learning experience, and to use collaborative learning strategies when appropriate.

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