



IDENTIFICATION OF STRATEGIES FOR PREPARING BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract

The study was aimed at identifying the strategies for preparing business education students for global competitiveness. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 58 business education lecturers teaching at tertiary institutions in Imo State. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts and the reliability of the instrument was ensured using pilot test technique. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha formula which yielded reliability index of 0.91. Data related to the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings arising from the study revealed that business education lecturers' in tertiary institutions in Imo State agreed on the strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness and that they also agreed on the professional developments of teachers for preparing business education students for global competitiveness. Findings also indicated that there was no significant difference among the three groups in terms of their mean ratings on the strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness and professional development of teachers based on years of teaching experience. Based on the findings, it was concluded that business education lecturers should therefore make effective use of these strategies for proper delivery with the ultimate aim of improving the entrepreneurial competencies of business education students. It was recommended among others that the government should ensure consistent training and retraining of business education lecturers to ensure that they are abreast of trends in the changing society.

Keywords: Business education, global competitiveness, strategies, preparing, tertiary institutions

Introduction

Education at all levels is a major factor for national development and a means for the empowerment of citizens towards nation building. This is particularly the case of today's globalized information and knowledge based economy (Ekpiken & Ukpabio, 2015). Similarly, business education is one of the technical and vocational courses offered in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is seen as a programme of study offered to learners in order to prepare them as producers and wise consumers of business products. This is to say that business education prepares students for work and world of work. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) stated in the National Policy on Education that there is need for functional education to be relevant, practical and acquisition of appropriate skills and development of competencies as equipment to the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Onojetah (2014) defined business education as a vocational discipline that prepares its recipients with skills that will enable them to contribute significantly to the economic development of



a nation. In this regard, a graduate of any business education programme is expected to possess both intellectual and vocational abilities which will help him/her to earn a living in a contemporary and ever changing business environment. By and large, business education equips individuals with skills that can help them gain employment or create jobs.

In order to achieve the above points, Okoye (2017) stated that training institutions should employ effective strategies during the programme instructions so as to produce highly innovative, efficient and competent minded business education graduates. The business dictionary defined Strategy as a method or plan chosen to bring about a desired future, such as achievement of a goal or solution to a problem. Strategies, according to Heinz (2005), is the determination of the (or the fundamental purpose) basic long-term objectives of an enterprise, followed by adoption of courses of action and allocation of resources necessary to achieve these aims. Okoye citing Nwazor and Okwuanaso (2000) also advocated that Strategies entails skills in managing an affair or matter in hand, and tactics for achieving an objective.

In this context, strategy refers to the method, ways, techniques, activities, behaviours adopted by the teacher to deliver his lesson. Similarly, Utoware and Eneogwe (2017), said that Strategies are tactics for achieving an objective. Ugwuanyi (2012) postulated strategy as a broad basic plan of action by which individual(s) or organization(s) intend to reach its/their goals. The instructional strategies are used by lecturers to shape learning environment and represent professional conceptions of teaching, learning and the learners. In order to prepare the students for a future of work, it is believed that business education teachers and other educational stakeholders should focus on real-world problems and processes, support inquiry-based learning experiences, provide opportunities for collaborative project approaches to learning and focus on teaching students how to learn (above “what” to learn). These innovative strategies include work-based learning, problem-based learning, digital learning, project based and design based learning.

Work-based learning (WBL)

Work-based learning is an educational strategy that provides students with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills and develop employability skills. Work-based learning experiences occur in a work setting, typically at an employer's worksite. Work-base learning should be integrated into the entire curriculum from basic school through graduate level rather than viewed as an isolated unit of instruction studied at a particular time and level. According to Baba (2013), for functional education to be achieved, there should be some form of school work based learning incorporated in some studies as part of national economy development strategies.

Problem-based Learning

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional strategy that challenges students to “learn to learn”, working in groups to seek solutions to real world problems. The process replicates the commonly used systemic approach to resolving problems or meeting challenges that are encountered in life and will help prefer students for their careers. (Merlot, 2014). Kehinde (2017) allured that in teaching business education courses, the course contents reveal that there is need to move beyond the traditional method which is lecture method to a more proactive, practical, and functional and result oriented. Strategy, according to Kehinde (2017) observed that in conventional approaches to learning, faculty members provide students with theories and concepts to situation. AwutuEfebo (2003) and Ojo (2011) further explained that despite its' limitations the traditional method of teaching has the following benefits:



It is suitable for large classes communication

Students are exposed to unpublished or not readily available materials

It complements certain individual learning preferences

It helps to cover a large number of topics

Problem-based learning is highly context specific. Students learn how contents are taught through skills and its application in real world as example of what they would see when they become practitioner of their discipline. Also, In PBL, students are presented with authentic scenario from which they must identify a problem that merits solving, a problem solving approach to develop and analyse alternative solutions recommended and define an optimal solution. There is no right or wrong answers, rather there are reasonable solutions based on the ability to think critically, Charles, Baker, Chaves and Fisher (2006). Also, Mike (2012), stated the pedagogical value in PBL, which includes exposing students to real world challenges, higher thinking skills, interdisciplinary learning, independent learning, information mining skills, team work and communication.

Through problem based learning, students learn how to solve problems that are ill-structured, open ended and ambiguous. It also engages students intriguing real and relevant intellectual inquiry and allows them to learn from life situations.

Discussion Strategy

Osuola (2009) stated that discussion method is a good way to help students of general business to understand current events, analyze and relate facts to real-life situations. It is also an effective way of reviewing knowledge of facts, increasing understanding and developing learning to a mastery level. He marshalled out three approaches used in discussion which includes: adversary approach: this method is suitable for teaching of business law and economics. Thus, in order to help the student develop the need to defend principle, a policy or an opinion, the teacher assumes the role of “Devil's Advocate” and pretends to disagree with the principle or policy, or refutes the facts under discussion.

Panel discussion: the panel discussion is a planned informal reporting on a topic by a group of students who have researched a topic. For example, the students, can investigate into “Personal Accident Insurance” and discuss their findings with the members of class.

Small Group Discussion

This is a good technique for teaching the slow student in any general business subject. It enables the student to interact with small group.

Similarly, Okwuanaso and Nwazor (2000) opined that strategy is for effective class-group teaching. Starting point is to rearrange the seats so that students see one another (circle or half circle). Also, the topic should be known before hand, example where it is a negotiation. In discussion, everyone should have opportunity to speak and finish before the next person commences. Discussion strategy helps to improve students' communication, interpersonal and thinking skills.

Project-based Learning

Levy (2017) stated that Project-Based Learning or PBL is a form of experiential learning that exposes students to real-world problems that requires a blend of skills and knowledge to tackle. PBL experiences are sourced and designed within companies and organizations that welcome the insights of students with discipline-specific knowledge. Project-Based Learning is a student-centered approach, meaning that it is a learning approach that goes beyond the “one size fits all” style of learning and brings in formats that appeal to a variety of learning styles and learning needs. Within this



model, it is the role of the teacher to help the student build a scaffolding of knowledge, but then it is up to the student to initiate a real and intentional application of the knowledge. Once they have been able to practically learn through this process, they bring what they have discovered back into the classroom and apply it back to their academic studies.

Project-based Learning is particularly useful in business education due to the high degree of knowledge and skill transferability between jobs in the real world. Students in higher education business programs are equipped with a strong theoretical understanding on certain business areas such as Management, Accounting, Finance, and Marketing, and they can identify natural fits and applications for their knowledge and skill sets in clearly-defined, client-based, experiential learning projects. In business education, Project-based Learning works best when students are tackling open-ended, realistic, complex challenges that require theoretical knowledge, business acumen, critical thinking skills, and personal experiences.

Design-based Learning

Design based learning from Wikipedia definition is also known as Design-based instruction, meaning an inquiry-based form of learning, or pedagogy, that is based on integration of design thinking and the design process into the classroom at the K-12 and post-secondary levels. Design-based learning environments can be found across many disciplines, including those traditionally associated with design (e.g. art, architecture, engineering, interior design, graphic design), as well as others not normally considered to be design-related (science, technology, business, humanities). Design-based learning has been shown to have the most impact in the areas of math and science (Darling-Hammond et. al., 2008). Popular design-based learning activities include robotics competitions wherein student teams design, build and then pilot their robots in a series of competitive challenges. Research has found that students who participate in learning by design projects have a more systematic understanding of a system's parts and functions that control groups (Hmelo, Holton, Kolodner, 2000). Furthermore, as an example, Design based Learning (DBL) methodology suggests that "creative expression" should not be conned to the visual, performing and language arts, but integrated with the rest of the curriculum, and that the use of design and multimedia should not stop at term project PowerPoint presentations.

Digital Learning

Digital learning means any instructional practice that effectively uses technology to strengthen a student's learning experience and encompasses a wide spectrum of tools and practices, including: (a) Interactive learning resources software, or simulations, that engage students in academic content. (b) access to online database and other primary source documents (c) online and computer-based assessments, (d) learning environments that allow for rich collaboration and communication. (e) Hybrid or blended learning which occurs under direct instructor supervision at a school or other location away from home. Asele (2013) noted some of the various types of digital tools commonly used in teaching and learning business education include audiocassette tapes, radio, videotapes, CD-ROM, internet/web-based training, audio conferencing, video conferencing, audio graphics, interactive television, and wireless technology. Other ICT tools for teaching/learning business education include multimedia system, multimedia projector/PowerPoint, E-library/Virtual library, Blog, Database, Asynchronous web based software (black/white board), synchronous web based software, Voice over internet protocol (VOIP), E-mail, learning portal among others. These ICT skills when acquired by business education graduates will save companies time and money by providing workers with word processing, spreadsheets, database management and digital skills needed to function optimally in a contemporary organizations.



Professional Development of Business Education Lecturers for Preparing Students for Global Competitiveness

Teachers will need to meet the demands of the global economy by exemplifying and embedding in instruction, the mastery of these skills, also known as the 21st century skills such as (critical thinking, technological skills, leadership skills, collaboration and teamwork, creativity, ICT and entrepreneurial skills) through infusing these strategies that they are encouraging their students to excel in. Teachers will have to take conscious efforts to communicate and collaborate with each other and with students, become flexible with managing new classroom dynamics; be able to support and enable independent student learning, and be willing to adapt their teaching styles to accommodate new pedagogical approaches to learning. In essence, teachers will need professional development and strong support systems by the government.

Professional development refers to planned and organized processes that actively engage educators in cycles of continuous improvement guided by the use of data and active inquiry around authentic problems and instructional practices (Cogshall, 2012). The primary purpose of professional development is instructional improvement; thus, the content of the learning is around the content knowledge, skills, and dispositions teachers need to help students perform at high levels. Professional learning is typically collaborative and is embedded in teachers' daily work throughout the school year. Professional learning is aligned with teachers' professional goals as well as with school and district improvement goals and priorities. Professional learning is sustained through follow-up, feedback, and reflection to support transfer to teachers' schools and classrooms. From the 21st century skills, the learning environments are systems that

- Creates learning practices, human support and physical environments that will support the teaching and learning of 21st century skill outcomes
- Supports professional learning communities that enable educators to collaborate, share best practices and integrate 21st century skills into classroom practice.
- Enables students to learn in relevant, real world 21st century contexts (eg. through project based or other applied work)
- Allows equitable access to quality learning tools, technologies and resources
- Provides 21st century architectural and interior designs for group, team, and individual learning
- Supports expanded community and international involvement in learning, both face-to-face and online.

Teacher's professional development is an on-going process of inquiry into and reflection on their practice and programs designed to enhance their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes. This process of growth and development provides opportunities for teachers to examine and challenge their assumptions about their role and experiment with teaching strategies. It also develops a deeper understanding of their subject content, the students they teach and how their students learn (Jensen, 2014). The outcomes of effective professional development align with student content standards, teacher performance standards and goals of high-priority initiatives to build coherence between teacher learning and student success.

The influencing factors to the strategies for preparing business education students for global competitiveness in Imo State can be teaching experience. These variables are likely to affect their mean ratings on the strategies that could lead to effective teaching of their courses. Therefore the effects of this variable on the mean ratings of the respondents will equally be determined. Jimoh-Kadiri (2012) noted that less experienced teachers (who have taught for less than six years) may not be competent enough in using some teaching strategies. In this study the research categorizes teachers



experience into three. The researcher view a less experienced teacher as one who has been teaching between 1-5 years, while moderately experienced teacher is a teacher who has been teaching between 6-10 years and a highly experienced teacher who has been teaching above 10 years. However, these views and teaching strategies are either theoretical assumptions and have not been empirically proven to be effective in teaching vocational skills. It is against this background that the researcher intends to empirically determine the strategies for preparing business education students for global competitiveness in Imo State.

Statement of the Problem

Business education in this era of new technology requires competent business educators who are well equipped with current skills, knowledge and attitudes required in the business world. Business educators are expected to always make proper and adequate use of approved teaching strategies, instructional facilities and materials for effective teaching of the courses. Despite national aspiration for vocational education and various efforts by key educational stakeholders to improve students' performance, the conventional strategy of imparting knowledge in business education has not done so much in internalizing the learning outcomes required of business education students. As a result of this students will not acquire the desired skills that will enable them function well in the field of work. Emeasoba and Igwe (2016) observed that the teaching strategies adopted by most business educators are more of theory than practice and inquiry, and therefore, no longer relevant for teaching in the present information technology era. To ensure proper acquisition of skills by business education students, teachers should identify effective strategies of teaching and make appropriate use of them during lesson delivery. When business education students are given performance based education rather than certificated based, they acquire innovative skills that will make them independent and employable both in the local and globalized market.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain the strategies for preparing business education students for global competitiveness in Imo State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Identify strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness.
- Determine the professional development of teachers for preparing business education students for global competitiveness.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

What are the strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness?

What are the professional developments of teachers for preparing business education students for global competitiveness?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education lecturers on the strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness based on years of teaching experience.



There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education lecturers on their professional development for preparing business education students for global competitiveness based on years of teaching experience.

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The researcher considered this design appropriate for this study since it collected data from business educators in selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria as a basis for generalization. The population of the study consisted of 58 business education lecturers in Imo State. Data for the study was collected using questionnaire. The questionnaire was validated by three business educators. Their comments enhanced the content validity of the instrument. To establish the internal consistency of the research instrument, a pilot test was conducted and Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to test data collected using the application of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The analysis yielded a co-efficient score of 0.91. The questionnaire was structured on a five-point scale, with response categories as “Strongly Agree”; “Agree”; “Moderately Agree” “Disagree” and "Very Strongly Disagree". The administration of the instrument was carried out personally by the researcher with the aid of two research assistants. Data collected regarding the research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) while the analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses. In testing the null hypotheses, where the calculated p-value is less than the stipulated level of significance (0.05), it meant that there was a significant difference and the hypothesis was rejected. Conversely, where the calculated p-value is equal to or greater than the stipulated level of significance (0.05), it meant that there was no significant difference and the hypothesis was not rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness?

Table 1: Mean ratings on the strategies for preparing business education students for global competitiveness. N= 58

| S/N | Strategies | Mean | SD | Decision |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------|----------------|
| 1. | Work-based learning strategy | 3.86 | 0.57 | Agree |
| 2. | Problem-based learning strategy | 4.50 | 0.48 | Strongly agree |
| 3. | Discussion strategy | 4.04 | 0.52 | Agree |
| 4. | Project-based learning strategy | 0.59 | 0.49 | Strongly agree |
| 5. | Design-based learning strategy | 4.30 | 0.46 | Agree |
| 6. | Digital learning strategy | 4.63 | 0.48 | Strongly agree |
| Grand Mean | | 4.32 | | Agree |

As indicated by the grand mean of 4.32 in Table 1, business education lecturers in Imo State agreed on the strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness. The

item by item analysis shows that items 2, 4 and 6 with the mean ratings ranging from 4.50 to 4.68 are strategies rated as strongly agreed, while items 1, 3 and 5 with the mean ratings ranging from 3.86 to 4.30 are strategies rated as agreed. There was homogeneity in items amongst business education lecturers' responses.

Research Question 2

What are the professional developments of teachers for preparing business education students for global competitiveness?

Table 2: Mean ratings of business subject teachers on teachers' professional learning as an effective strategy for teaching of business subjects. N= 285

| S/N | Teachers Professional Development | Mean | SD | Decision |
|-----|---|-------------|------|-----------------|
| | Empower teachers to develop their knowledge and skills actively and experientially. | 4.11 | 0.70 | Agreed |
| | Training and retraining through research, seminars, workshops and conferences | 4.00 | 0.44 | Agreed |
| | Provide an authentic learning environment so that teachers engage in concrete tasks within realistic scenarios. | 4.20 | 0.40 | Agreed |
| 10. | Promote cooperative and collaborative learning. | 4.09 | 0.54 | Agreed |
| 11. | Assess students' learning to identify their next stage of learning. | 4.19 | 0.75 | Agreed |
| | Effective mentoring and coaching helps teachers diagnose their students' learning needs | 4.30 | 0.78 | Agreed |
| | Teachers improve by observing each other's classrooms, identifying and solving problems as they arise. | 4.20 | 0.75 | Agreed |
| | The process helps teachers to evaluate their own teaching. | 4.50 | 0.67 | Strongly agreed |
| | Teacher appraisal and feedback has a positive impact on teachers' job satisfaction and self-efficacy. | 4.00 | 0.63 | Agreed |
| | Classroom observation and feedback provides constructive and immediate feedback for teachers. | 3.87 | 0.74 | Agreed |
| | Grand Mean | 4.15 | | Agreed |

The grand mean of 4.15 displayed in Table 2 indicates that business education lecturers in Imo State agreed on the professional developments of teachers for preparing business education students for global competitiveness. The item by item analysis shows that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 with mean ranging from 3.87 to 4.30 are teachers' professional development rated as strongly agreed. Item 8 with mean 4.50 is rated as agreed. There was homogeneity in items amongst responses indicating a greater consensus of opinion.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education lecturers on the strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness based on years of teaching experience.

Table 3: Summary of analysis of variance on mean ratings of business education lecturers on the strategies for preparing business education students for global competitiveness

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | P-value |
|----------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|------|---------|
| Between Groups | .004 | 2 | .002 | .422 | .656 |
| Within Groups | 1.286 | 55 | .004 | | |
| Total | 1.290 | 57 | | | |

As shown in Table 3 there is no significant difference among the three groups in terms of their mean ratings on the strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness based on years of teaching experience (0-5 years, 6-11 years and above 11 years), as the F-ratio (2, 55) was .422 and *P-value* (.656) was greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.

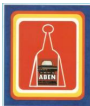
Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education lecturers on their professional development for preparing business education students for global competitiveness based on years of teaching experience.

Table 4: Summary of analysis of variance on the mean ratings of business education lecturers' on their professional development for preparing business education students for global competitiveness based on years of teaching experience.

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | P-value |
|----------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|------|---------|
| Between Groups | .000 | 2 | .000 | .002 | .998 |
| Within Groups | 3.690 | 55 | .013 | | |
| Total | 3.690 | 57 | | | |

As shown in Table 4 there is no significant difference among the three groups in terms of their mean ratings on their professional development for preparing business education students for global competitiveness based on years of teaching experience (0-5 years, 6-11 years and above 11 years), as the F-ratio (2, 55) was .002 and *P-value* (.998) was greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis was not rejected.



Discussion

Findings of the study revealed that business education lecturers' in tertiary institutions in Imo State agreed on the strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness. This finding is in consonance with that of Bala (2013); Kehinde (2017) and Levy (2017) that innovative teaching strategies such as work-based learning, problem-based learning and project-based learning are forms of experiential learning that exposes students to real-world problems that requires a blend of skills and knowledge and challenges students to “learn to learn”, working in groups to seek solutions to real world problems. Also Asele (2013) stated that digital learning is any instructional practice that effectively uses technology to strengthen a student's learning experience and encompasses a wide spectrum of tools and practices to fully prepare students for world of work. Findings from the test of first hypothesis indicated that there was no significant difference among the three groups in terms of their mean ratings on the strategies for preparing business education students for the global competitiveness based on years of teaching experience. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Results of the study indicated that business education lecturers in Imo State agreed on the professional developments of teachers for preparing business education students for global competitiveness. The findings of the study corroborates that of Coggshall (2012) who stated that professional development empowers teachers to develop their knowledge and skills actively and experimentally, in a variety of learning environments such as learning strategies, encompassing direct instruction, deduction, discussion, drill and practice, induction and sharing among others. Professional development is aligned with teachers' professional goals as well as with school and district improvement goals and priorities.

This is supported by the view of Cole (2012) that effective professional learning focuses on concrete classroom applications of general ideas; it exposes teachers to actual practice rather than to descriptions of practice; it involves opportunities for observation, critique and reflection; it involves opportunities for group support and collaboration; and it involves deliberate evaluation and feedback by skilled practitioners with expertise about good teaching. Professional development focuses on developing the core attributes of an effective teacher. It is directed towards providing teachers with the skills to teach and assess for deep understanding and to develop students' meta-cognitive skills. Findings from the test of second hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference among the three groups in terms of their mean ratings on their professional development for preparing business education students for global competitiveness based on years of teaching experience. Therefore, it followed that the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that work-based learning, problem-based learning, learning discussion, project-based learning, design based learning and digital learning strategies are effective strategies for teaching in tertiary institutions in Imo State. Effectiveness of business education is largely related to the teacher's skills and his (or her) knowledge of using different teaching strategies. Business education lecturers should therefore make effective use of these strategies for proper delivery with the ultimate aim of improving the entrepreneurial competencies of business education students.



Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that:
Business education lecturers should adopt the use of innovative instructional strategies in educating their students on business ethics, business presentation, risk management practices, management practices and regulatory practices of business organizations in the country. This can be done through online collaboration with established industry experts. Government should ensure consistent training and retraining of business education lecturers to ensure that they are abreast of trends in the changing society.

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