



SCHOOL-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION IN BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR DEVELOPING WORK- READY GRADUATES IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined school-industry collaboration in business education programme for developing work-ready business education graduates in Delta State. Two research questions guided the study while two null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised 76 business education lecturers from tertiary institutions and 80 registered small-scale business enterprise in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts in Business education from Madonna University Nigeria. Test-re-test method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. Data collected to answer the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested using independent t-test. Result revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of lecturers of business education and industrialists on the areas of collaboration between schools and industries in promoting business education programme. The result also showed that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of lecturers of business education and industrialists on the benefits of collaboration between schools and industries in promoting business education programme. Conclusion was drawn and recommendations proffered among others that business education programme should be linked with employers of labour and industries to give business education students practical knowledge of the world of work and work-ready on graduation

Keywords: School-industry, collaboration, Developing, Business Education graduates, work-ready

Introduction

There is a growing awareness in many parts of the world of the importance of industry's role in matters affecting education. Ekpenyong (1988) asserted that in the United Kingdom, new concepts such as "teacher into industry", "schools into industry" have continued to be echoed in national conferences and seminars as well as in the school system generally. In Nigeria, such awareness has been evident in the activities of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) which includes setting and assessing curricula standards for Polytechnics and Technical Colleges, and in those of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) which include placement of University and Polytechnic students whose courses have direct relevance to industry for industrial work experience. Despite these interventional initiatives to ensure theory is matched with practice, there seems to exist a wide gap in the expectations and perceptions of both institutions and industries, probably as a result of poor understanding of the indices that form collaboration. Thus, there is a skill gap between what business education students are taught in schools and colleges and what employers of labour are actually looking for when hiring fresh graduates.

The issue of skill gap over time has manifested itself in form of under-employment and in a more serious case, unemployment among business education graduates. According to Unachukwu (2013), graduate unemployment is one of the major problems facing Nigeria. It is believed that Nigerian graduates do not possess the skills suitable for work. A number of factors have been advanced to be responsible for



the rise in the number of unemployed graduates from tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Njoku (2013), affirmed that, the lack of required facilities and conducive learning environment are the hindrances to effective business education programme in Nigeria.

Business Education is a programme widely known for skill acquisition, vocational and competency. Okpara (2014), opined business education as a component of Vocational Education which involves the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competence which make its recipients or beneficiaries proficient. It is a programme of study that inculcates employable skills into the recipients in addition to general education. Iwuoha (2016) however, noted that the rapid change in the world of work makes it a vital prerequisite to improve business education to produce employable individuals or work-ready graduates. School collaboration with the industry to provide the needed assistance towards helping business education students acquire the necessary skills relevant to the world of work is therefore required.

Collaboration can be thought of as the process in which two or more independent people or organizations work together to complete a task or achieve a goal. Uzundu (2016) sees, school industry collaboration as an arrangement of two or more people or organizations working together to achieve a common goal; school and business co-produce progress in job-specific skills, integrating formal education and employment in mutually accepted training partnership in which school learning experience and skills are complemented through industrial training experience. Institutional collaborations from the point of view of Czajkowski (2007) entails a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. Wood and Gray cited in Czajkowski (2007) define institutional collaboration as a process that occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain. Institutional collaboration is a process, and not an invent that seems to work best provided a win-win interaction is established. It is the most formal inter-organizational relationship involving shared authority and responsibility for planning, implementation, and evaluation of a joint effort.

It can be perceived as a way by which a gap is bridged between the less experienced and more experienced. Effective collaboration relies on openness, knowledge sharing and adaptability on the part of the institutions and industries. Wagner and Ramsey (2019) opined school- industry collaboration as when a school and industry join together to share resources. This may take the form of monetary donations, contributing time from local professionals, donating equipment, offering internships depending on what the school needs and how the industry can provide a joint effort to meeting those needs. School industry collaboration is an opportunity to access untold resources which stand to benefits in no small way. When school collaborates with the industry, they tend to reinforce each other.

According to Abraham and Abdullah (2015), at the conference on “modern chemistry in industries” in March 1968, the need for closer collaboration between institutions and industry was recommended, and it was agreed to adopt the “link scheme”, a concept devised to involve industry in institution’s programmes. The basic aim was to improve mutual understanding and the exchange of ideas between institutions and industry, and the objectives were among others to:

- i. Help younger people obtain a clear picture of industrial life with opportunities and challenges.
- ii. Enable employers and industrialist become more aware of the pattern and philosophy of educational programmes in the institutions.
- iii. Provide institutions (on request) with career advice.
- iv. Assistance with projects and the development of courses on industrial topics.

Aina and Akintunde (2013) posited that the aim of schools and industrial partnership is to execute or jointly carry out projects with the aim of sharing the profits and risk together. Secondly, it is a relationship in which the government and private resources are voluntarily put together mainly for achieving educational goals. Panarinam (2015) noted that schools-Industries collaboration will build a knowledge base economy by enhancing and accelerating technology–transfer initiatives. The collaboration is characterised by sharing of investments, risks, responsibility and reward between partners. Panarinam added that, school–industry collaboration activities include:

- a) Workshops, Conferences, Tours, and Exchange programmes, Classroom visits, Seminars and Presentation.
- b) Work experience programmes, Internship, Tutor, Skills training, Career development activities,
- c) Mentoring, Job-shadowing, Apprenticeship, on- the- job training.
- d) Recruiting, training, school to career information, guidance.
- e) Curriculum support, teacher development and teacher’s placement.

Panarinam also noted that the objectives of a school–industry collaboration may:



- a) Improve the quality of work place.
- b) Provide employees with learning experiences and a new understanding of the educational system.
- c) Provide opportunities for student's career exploration.
- d) Bring resources to enrich the curriculum.
- e) Ensure that school teaching is relevant to the skills required of industry.
- f) Improve the education setting through upgrading facilities or equipment.
- g) Integrate young people into the labour market by involving them in cooperative education experiences.
- h) Connect schools with local business
- i) Assist with curriculum development, new learning opportunities and skill development.
- j) Meet the labour market needs of business and industry.

Sherman, (1983) recalled that, the concept of education and industry and business entering a partnership is not new. He observed that industries of the United States have been cooperating with schools to educate youths and admits for more than a century and that the value of industries input into the educational arena is reaching new heights. According to Sherman, this collaboration is viewed as one method of providing innovations and quality for schools of the future. Roth (1987) reported the four ways in which collaboration may benefit schools and industries as presented by Madelein (1984) of the National Alliance of Business by:

- i. Providing other individuals and the institutions, opportunities to perceive another organizations point of view and a chance to win an ally.
- ii. Expanding the capabilities of participating institutions to deal with the challenges that each entity must meet in its line of operations and helping to build the kind of understanding that creates support.
- iii. Serving as a means of contributing to quality education programme.
- iv. Bringing increased access to and knowledge, access time human resources and financial assistance from other sectors in the community as well as reducing the cost and liability of doing business for each participant.

In a report titled, computerized manufacturing, automation, employment, education and the assessment (1984) in Abraham and Abdullah (2015), made the following recommendations for education, training and re-training. A key ingredient for successful programmable automation instructional programmes was identified as; close cooperation between industry, education, labour and government in such areas as skills assessment, curriculum design, equipment acquisition, location of qualified instructors and job placement. Moser as cited by Abraham and Abdullah (2015) reported that two key factors which influence establishing linkages between Business/Industry and higher institutions include among other things;

- i the way educational institutions carry out its philosophy, and
- ii the related working of the internal college process.

He emphasized that, if the educational institution's philosophy includes a firm commitment of serving the business sector, certain process must remain flexible, some of those include the institutions willingness to;

- i. Revise, which may include updating current curricula
- ii. Customize the institution to a company's specific needs. This may include conducting needs assessment, in addition to developing new materials which could be present in a variety of formats, such as short courses or workshops.
- iii. Offer instruction on site and provide training using the company's equipment.
- iv. Whenever possible, institutions policies should allow provision for awarding credit or certification for job skill training which may be applied towards a degree or certificate programme and instruction, which should be shared or jointly conducted by company representatives.

The industry has a chance to give back to the society and at the same time allowing benefiting students to acquire education-for-work/employability skills.

The concept of employability/work-ready is subjective and dependent on contextual factors. Employability or work-ready does not only depend on whether one is able to fulfil the requirements of specific jobs, but also on how one stands relative to others within a hierarchy of job seekers. Education-for-work/employability encompasses all forms of education, training, and development activities that (a) prepare people for work or assist them in current employment and (b) engage in the development and refinement of competencies, attitudes, and knowledge through formal and informal means (Nadler, 1985). For school and industry to develop and adopt education-for-work they will need to have a well-defined



philosophic principle that will guide, support, create practice in changing workplaces. In order to meet the needs of the workplace of today and the future, school and industry must be conversant with the philosophies that promote the needs of both personal development and technical-vocational of which business education is an integral part. Education-for-work practitioners (school and industry) must identify philosophic foundations for practice, using them to prepare a workforce (Business education graduates) that will meet the needs of the workplace of the future.

Statement of the Problem

The drastic change in the world of work indicates a great need for a change in the university programmes and business education being a programme that equips its recipients with business, vocational and technical skills for paid and self-employment is not an exemption. Thus, Avolio et al. in Okeke (2022) noted that for business education to meet up with the demands of ever-changing business world it requires a review that is all encompassing with the needs of the global community. This requires a major realignment of the curriculum of business education programme to meet with these changes in the global business environment. In addition, it calls for collaboration of employers of labour and the schools in the curriculum development. Nigeria graduates are facing the challenge of high level of unemployment and the labour market is looking for graduates not just with certificate but for those with global skills. Olatunji (2009) observed that over 60 percent of graduates produced from the Nigerian Universities were not qualified for employment at the global level. Thus, appears millions of graduates from Nigerian educational institutions of higher learning in the labour market are not qualified to be employed due to lack of skills and competencies. This situation may not be unconnected to the lack of practical experience due to inadequate facilities and technology in the universities. Therefore, the study is poised to investigate how schools-industries collaboration will promote business education programme so that its graduates will be well equipped and work-ready for global competitiveness.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the areas of collaboration between schools and industries in promoting Business Education programme?
2. What are the benefits that can be derived from schools and industries collaboration in promoting Business Education programme?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of Business Education lecturers and industrialists on the area of collaboration between schools and industries in promoting Business Education programme.

E_{H02}: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of Business Education lecturers and industrialists on the benefits of schools and industries in promoting Business Education programme

Method

The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised 76 Business Education lecturers in Delta North Senatorial District in Federal Technical College Asaba and Delta University Agbor and all the registered members of Small-Scale Enterprises in Delta North Senatorial District totalling 954. The entire Business Education lecturers were used while a sample of 80 registered small scale enterprise respondents were selected using stratified random sample technique; totaling 156 respondents. A four- point scale questionnaire with two sections and 23 items was employed. The instrument was validated by three experts from Madonna University Nigeria. Test-re-test method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Data were collected by the researchers with the help of two research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Any item with a mean value of 2.50 and above was regarded as Agreed and below 2.50 was regarded as Disagreed. For the hypotheses, when the T-cal. is greater than T-critical the hypothesis was accepted and when the t-cal. is less than t-critical, the hypothesis it was rejected.



Results

Research Question One: What are the areas of collaboration between schools and industries in promoting business education programme?

Table 1: Mean Responses of Business Education Lecturers and Industrialists on areas of collaboration between Schools and industries in promoting Business Education programme.

| S/N | Item Statement | Lecturers | | | Industrialists | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | Mean | SD | Decision | Mean | SD | Decision |
| 1. | Joint Curriculum development | 3.70 | 0.73 | Agree | 3.54 | 0.64 | Agree |
| 2. | Industries funded scholarships business education programme | 3.17 | 0.69 | Agree | 3.56 | 0.67 | Agree |
| 3. | Knowledge transfer via seminars, workshops etc | 3.44 | 0.71 | Agree | 3.34 | 0.60 | Agree |
| 4. | Awarding consultancy project to industries in collaboration with university in the areas of Business Education | 3.10 | 0.54 | Agree | 3.23 | 0.59 | Agree |
| 5. | Attracting business representatives in the universities management | 3.73 | 0.81 | Agree | 3.63 | 0.78 | Agree |
| 6. | Attracting academia on the board of management of industries | 3.65 | 0.70 | Agree | 3.81 | 0.83 | Agree |
| 7. | Provision of infrastructure and equipment to the universities by the industries for business education programme | 3.18 | 0.63 | Agree | 3.08 | 0.54 | Agree |
| 8. | Engaging business people as resource persons in university | 3.38 | 0.65 | Agree | 3.59 | 0.68 | Agree |
| 9. | Joint development project initiatives between schools and industries in the areas of business education | 2.81 | 0.51 | Agree | 3.08 | 0.68 | Agree |
| 10. | Career guidance to business education students while in school by industrialists | 2.91 | 0.60 | Agree | 3.01 | 0.63 | Agree |
| 11. | Graduate Placement in industries in order to promote business education | 2.74 | 0.45 | Agree | 2.96 | 0.57 | Agree |
| 12. | Financial assistance for equipment of laboratories for business education programme. | 3.63 | 0.73 | Agree | 3.51 | 0.61 | Agree |
| 13. | Joint development project initiatives between schools and industries in the areas of business education | 3.03 | 0.47 | Agree | 3.76 | 0.68 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | | 3.57 | 0.59 | Agree | 3.81 | 0.71 | Agree |

Data in Table 1 show that all the items have mean scores between 2.74 and 3.81 which indicated that the respondents agreed that these items are the areas schools and industrialists can collaborate to promote Business Education programme. On answering the standard deviation, it was discovered that the scores range between 0.45 and 0.83 which indicated that the response of the respondents were tightly clustered around the mean



Research Question two: What are the benefits of schools and industries collaboration in promoting Business Education programme?

Table 2: Mean Rating of Business Education Lecturers and Industrialists on Benefits of Schools and Industries Collaboration in Promoting Business Education Programme.

| S/N Item Statement | Lecturers | | | Industrialists | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Mean | SD | Decision | Mean | SD | Decision |
| 1. Help students to match theory with practice | 3.40 | 0.92 | Agree | 3.50 | 0.63 | Agree |
| 2. Enable students to acquire work-ready skills | 3.00 | 0.77 | Agree | 3.29 | 0.45 | Agree |
| 3. Enhances education training to meet market needs | 3.70 | 0.46 | Agree | 3.64 | 0.48 | Agree |
| 4. It creates opportunities for knowledge sharing between industries and schools | 3.10 | 0.94 | Agree | 3.64 | 0.48 | Agree |
| 5. Enhances entrepreneurial skill acquisition in schools | 3.03 | 0.67 | Agree | 2.65 | 0.42 | Agree |
| 6. Enhances innovation in schools to meet industries needs | 3.32 | 0.75 | Agree | 3.61 | 0.67 | Agree |
| 7. Increases research and training | 3.55 | 0.55 | Agree | 3.47 | 0.78 | Agree |
| 8. The collaboration will reveal Weakness and suggest ways to promote knowledge | 2.91 | 0.34 | Agree | 3.01 | 0.81 | Agree |
| 9. Improves teaching methods | 3.22 | 0.87 | Agree | 3.36 | 0.73 | Agree |
| 10. Serving as a means of contributing to quality education programme | 3.00 | 0.67 | Agree | 3.29 | 0.77 | Agree |
| Grand Mean | 3.21 | 0.83 | Agree | 3.69 | 0.69 | Agree |

Result in Table 2 show that all the items have mean scores between 2.65 and 3.70 which indicated that the respondents agreed that these items are the areas schools and industrialists can collaborate to promote Business Education programme. On answering the standard deviation, it was discovered that the scores range between 0.34 and 0.94, which implies that the response given by the respondents were tightly clustered around the mean.

Hypothesis H0₁: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of business education lecturers and industrialists on the areas of collaboration between schools and industries in promoting business education programme.

Table 3: t-test analysis of mean differences in the mean Rating of Lecturers of Business Education and Industrialists on the areas of collaboration between schools and industries in promoting business education programme

| Respondents | N | Mean | SD | DF | T. cal. | T. crit. | Decision |
|----------------|----|------|------|-----|---------|----------|----------|
| Lecturers | 76 | 3.52 | 0.44 | 154 | 2.674 | 2.387 | Not Sig. |
| Industrialists | 80 | 3.60 | 0.57 | | | | |

The data in the Table 3 reveals that the calculated t-value of (2.674) is greater than the critical t-value of 2.387 at 154 degree of freedom and .05 level of significance. It implies that we retain the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of business education



lecturers and industrialists on the areas of collaboration between schools and industries in promoting business education programme is accepted.

Hypothesis H0₂: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of Business Education lecturers and industrialists on the benefits of schools and industries in promoting Business Education programme.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of the Mean Differences Between the Mean Responses of the Business Education Lecturers and Industrialists on the Benefits of Schools and Industries in Promoting Business Education Programme

| Respondents | N | Mean | SD | DF | T. cal. | T. crit. | Decision |
|----------------|----|------|------|-----|---------|----------|----------|
| Lecturers | 76 | 3.52 | 0.44 | 154 | 3.464 | 2.327 | Not Sig. |
| Industrialists | 80 | 3.60 | 0.57 | | | | |

The result in the Table 4 reveals that the calculated t-value of (3.464) is greater than the critical t-value of 2.327 at 154 degree of freedom and .05 level of significance. It indicates that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of lecturers of business education and industrialists on the benefits of collaboration between schools and industries in promoting business education programme is retained.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed and identified the areas of collaboration between schools and industries in promoting Business Education programme that will enable Business Education students develop work-ready skills that are fundamentally required to prepare business education graduates for global competitiveness. In support of these findings, Rakovska et al (2012) posited that the areas of school-business cooperation includes; joint development projects, practical training, transfer of knowledge and innovations, better skills match of graduates to the labour market, boosted entrepreneurial spirit, among others. This agreed with Bandaranike (2010) who opined that graduates of business education need employability skill in order to meet the expectations of the labour market. Azubuike (2004) corroborated this assertion by saying that business education as a skilled programme is expected to produce graduates fortified and prepared for global work competition.

The identified benefits of schools and industries collaboration in promoting business education programme in the study were also upheld. In support of these findings Tumiti et al (2013) posited that there are several benefits of school-industry partnership such as: gaining of new knowledge by students, learning skills and handling challenges, student's empowerment, builds relationship with industries and universities improved academic performance of students among others. Also, corroborated the finding of Czajkowski (2007) that school-industry collaboration is mutually beneficial relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals.

Conclusion

School collaboration with employers and industry on matters on curriculum development, laboratory training, invitation of industrial workers for special lectures, supply/maintenance of school equipment and professional standards just to mention but few remain a vital prerequisite to ensuring schools are producing work-ready graduate who can quickly begin to deliver value without much additional on-the job training. There are a number of challenges facing business education programme in Nigeria. Among which are; lack of adequate training facilities and equipment, inadequate laboratory and workshop, shortage of trained manpower responsible for preparing Business Education graduates with employable skills among others. There is therefore need for schools and industries to strike a balance between the supply and demand in terms of collaboration that will guarantee sustainability of work-ready graduates in business education.

Recommendations

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

1. Business Education programme should be linked with employers of labour and industries to give Business Education students practical knowledge of the world of work and work-ready on graduation
2. The learning environment should be made a replica of the work environment to guarantee Business Education students work-ready on graduation



3. Higher education of learning must prove their strong commitment to spend time and money in transferring their knowledge to industries.
4. Government should formulate and implement strong policies that will promote schools-industries collaboration

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