



BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND EMPLOYABILITY OF GRADUATES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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Abstract

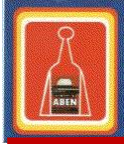
The study investigated Business Education curriculum for quality assurance and employability of graduates in South-South, Nigeria. Three research questions were answered while three null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted descriptive survey research design while multistage random sampling was employed in selecting the respondents (Business Education Lecturers) for the study. At the first stage of the selection, two states (Delta and Bayelsa) were randomly selected from the six south-south states. At the second stage, eight tertiary institutions comprising three Universities and five Colleges of Education offering Business Education were purposively selected. There are a total of 123 Business Education lecturers from the selected tertiary institutions which constituted the sample. The third stage of the selection involved sampling of all the existing 123 Business Education lecturers (45 Business Education Lecturers from Universities and 78 Business Education Lecturers in Colleges of Education). The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha reliability method which yielded a coefficient of 0.842. Data for the study were collected by the researcher with the help of seven research assistants. Out of the 123 copies of the questionnaire administered, 118 copies were duly filled and retrieved representing 95.9% rate of return. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and independent samples t-test statistics. The results of the study identified 33 strategic measures for retooling Business Education curriculum for quality assurance and employability of graduates in South-South, Nigeria. The results of the hypotheses tested revealed no significant ($p < 0.05$) differences for hypotheses 1 and 3. However, there was significant ($p < 0.05$) difference in hypothesis 2. Hence, the study concluded that improved industrial training, funding and curriculum reviews of Business education programme will enhance the employability of the graduates in South-south, Nigeria. The study recommended among others proactive students' training through students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) for possible improvement and sustainable achievement of its objectives and that of Business Education.

Keywords: *Business Education, curriculum, quality assurance, employability*

Introduction

Business education is one of the vocational programmes in Nigerian tertiary education for saleable skill training of youths and graduates. Business education according to Sherif (2021) is a vocational subject that provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competence they need to carry on their businesses both small, medium, and large scale businesses. In the opinion of Gidado and Akaeze (2014), Business Education is a vocational subject offers its recipients the opportunity to make contribution to the economic system of his or her country and equips them with lifelong skills that would enable them to make reasonable judgement as a producer (entrepreneur), employee or consumer of goods and services. Suleiman (2017) described Business education as an area of education which deals with the study of the subject of related to or dealing with the art of shorthand writing, typewriting, accounting, business mathematics, secretarial duties, and commerce and office practice. Nwuzoh (2016) viewed Business education as the type of education that gives individual the needed skills and knowledge to succeed in either small, medium or large scale businesses.

Business Education is a broad district of knowledge that deals with a nation's fiscal structure and also identifies and explains the rate of business gratification and experience that train persons for valuable involvement as citizens, workers and consumers (Osuala, 2004). The goal of Business education as noted by Okifo and Ayo (2015) is the production of manpower who possesses the requisite knowledge, skill and attitude for harnessing other resources and bringing them into a cooperative relationship yielding the goods and services demand by society for the satisfaction of their wants and needs. The objectives of Business education as highlighted by Edokpolor and Egbri (2017) include preparation of students for specific career in office occupations, equipping students with the requisite skills for job creation and entrepreneurship and



expose students with knowledge about business, including a good blend of computer technology, which incorporates Information and Communication Technology. These objectives cannot be effectively achieved without a robust Business education curriculum.

A curriculum is the plan that focuses and guides classroom instruction and assessment. Curriculum, according to Alade (2005) is a programme of education prepared for definite group of learners within a time frame in order to achieve the intended learning and behavioural outcomes. It is a sequential plan for instruction that specifies student memorization of number facts before going on to multiplication or division algorithms. Hence, Sage (2019) described curriculum as a set of plans made for guiding learning in the schools, usually represented in retrievable documents of several levels of generality, and the actualization of those plans in the classroom, as experienced by the learners and as recorded by an observer; those experiences take place in a learning environment that also influences what is learned. According to RIDE (2022), a curriculum is a standards -based sequence of planned experiences where students practice and achieve proficiency in content and applied learning skills. It is the central guide for all educators as to what is essential for teaching and learning, so that every student has access to rigorous academic experiences. Hence, the curriculum ensures that students have the prerequisite skills necessary for success in the next unit or grade level through sustainable quality assurance.

The quality assurance process involves setting up standards and ensuring that the standards established are kept and reviewed periodically (Arikewuyo, 2004). It entails procedure for assessing quality parameters, quality standards, regular quality assessment, periodic review of set standards and evaluation. Obadara and Alaka (2013) described quality assurance is a way of measuring, improving, and maintaining the quality of any human activity that has a value. In the opinion of Ogunlana and Amusa (2008), quality assurance has to do with standard for the various process and activities that leads to the production of a product and services. Odukoya, et al (2015) noted that quality assurance in academic system is a multidimensional concept embracing functions and activities such as student admission, promotion and certification process, staff recruitment and promotion, curriculum development, teaching, learning, research, infrastructural development, equipments, community development and related issues. In affirmation, the report of UNESCO (2021) showed that quality assurance of an educational programme can be enhanced through strategic curriculum review, improved funding and integration of technologies.

The increasing rate of unemployment among Nigerian graduates including Business education graduates is worrisome. This is due to lack of required competence and skills for self or paid jobs in the labour market. Erunke (2021) noted that most of the graduates produced in various universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria do not have specific skills required for the job market (market-relevant skills). This has resulted in rising cases of anti-social behaviours such as cyber fraud (yahoo) and other forms of criminality among the youths, graduates inclusive. The ugly trend can only be addressed by retooling the training curriculum to make Nigerian vocational education programme responsive to the saleable skill needs of the teeming youths and graduates. It is therefore believed that retooled Business education curriculum is a guarantee for quality assurance of Business education programme for employability of graduates in competitive Nigerian labour markets.

Research Question

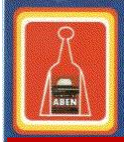
1. What are improved industrial training measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in south-south, Nigeria?
2. What are improved funding measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in South-south Nigeria?
3. What are strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in South-south, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on improved industrial training measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of graduates in south-south, Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on improved funding measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in South-south Nigeria.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in South-south, Nigeria.



Methodology

The study examined the retooling of Business Education curriculum for quality assurance and employability of graduates in South-South, Nigeria. Three research questions were answered while three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study was carried out using descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey design is the type of research design in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people or items considered to be the representative of the entire group. In survey research design, the researchers obtain vital information and facts about people, their beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behaviours (Osuala, 2005). Multistage random sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents (Business education lecturers and instructors) for the study.

Firstly, random sampling was used to two out of the six south-south states. The two states randomly selected are Delta and Bayelsa States. Secondly, the eight tertiary institutions involving universities and colleges of education offering Business education programme in Delta and Rivers States were purposively selected. The institutions are: (i) Delta State Colleges of Education Warri, (ii) Delta State Colleges of Education Mosogar, (iii) Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba, (iv) Delta State University, Abraka, (v) University of Delta, Agbor, (vi) Bayelsa State College of Arts & Science, Elebele, (vii) Bayelsa State College of Education, Sagbama and (viii) Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island with a total number of 123 Business Education Lecturers comprising 45 from Universities and 78 from Colleges of Education.

The instrument for data collection was a 33-item questionnaire structured into three major sections in line with the three specific purposes of the study. Section one was structured to obtain data on industrial training measures, section two focused on data collection on improving the funding of Business education programme while section three of the questionnaire was made to gather data on strategic reviews of Business education curriculum. The response options of the questionnaire were 4-point rating scale of: Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagreed (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. The instrument was validated by three experts in Business Education, University of Benin. The comments of the experts were used to improve the quality of the final draft of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained by trial testing 15 copies of the instrument on 15 Business Education lecturers and instructors in University of Benin, Edo State. Data collected from the trial testing were analysed using Cronbach Alpha reliability technique which produced a reliability coefficient of 0.842.

Data were collected by the researchers with the help of seven research assistants. The eight research enumerators covered data collection from the eight tertiary institutions. Out of the 123 copies of the questionnaire administered, 118 copies were duly filled and retrieved representing 95.9% rate of return. Data extracted from the 118 retrieved copies of the questionnaire were analysed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. In taking decision on the research questions, criterion reference point of 2.50 was used on 4-point rating scale. Based on the obtained criterion reference point value, any item with mean value of 2.50 and above was interpreted as "Agreed" while items with mean values less than 2.50 were interpreted as "Disagreed". The hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted when the p-value was greater than 0.05 level of significance while hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected when the p-value was less than 0.05 level of significance

Results

Research Question One

What are improved industrial training measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in south-south, Nigeria?

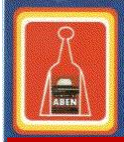


Table 1: Industrial Training Measures for Retooling Business Education Programme for enhanced Employability of Graduates (n = 116)

SN	Industrial training measures for retooling Business education are:	\bar{X}	SD	Rmks
1	Increase industrial training (IT) period of Business Education students to one full year with intensive training in relevant companies.	3.66	0.52	Agree
2	Make Business Education training reflects the modern day world of work environment.	3.48	0.48	Agree
3	Recruiting competent staff to teach the use of the facilities in the Business Education.	3.59	0.52	Agree
4	Formulate relevant policies for industries acceptance of Business Education students on industrial training	3.62	0.49	Agree
5	Ensuring that industries hosting SIWES students enjoy tax rebate and holidays	3.48	0.50	Agree
6	Ensure ITF regulate students posting to industries of relevance for practical skill acquisition	3.72	0.44	Agree
7	Payment of monthly stipends to IT students throughout the one year training period instead of six months.	3.70	0.47	Agree
8	Compiling list of industries of relevance for Business Education IT students.	3.46	0.51	Agree
9	Introduce central industrial training exam for students after every session of training.	3.60	0.55	Agree
10	Efficient monitoring and follow up of Business Education students throughout the training	3.33	0.48	Agree
11	Employ students IT assessment on problem solving in a particular industrial area.	3.54	0.50	Agree
12	Training of the institution based supervisors on the training needs of students for better assessment.	3.65	0.47	Agree
13	Creating training units for fresh trainees in all the industries hosting SIWES Business Education students	3.44	0.62	Agree
14	Allowing students on training guided access to all the needed information, facilities, equipment and machines	3.61	0.49	Agree
15	Constant visiting and assessment of IT Business Education students by ITF staff.	3.57	0.50	Agree
Pooled Mean		3.56	0.50	Agree

Note: \bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = number of respondents.

The result in Table 1 showed that the mean (\bar{x}) values of the 15 items ranged from 3.33 to 3.72 which are all greater than the cut-off point value of 2.50. This indicates that the 15 identified items in the Table are improved industrial training measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability in south-south, Nigeria. The standard deviation values of the 15 industrial training measures ranged from 0.44 to 0.62 which suggests that the responses of the respondents are close to the mean and one another.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on improved industrial training measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in south-south, Nigeria.

The data for testing hypothesis one are presented in table 2 below.



Table 2: Test of no significant difference in the mean ratings of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on improved industrial training measures for retooling Business education programme.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	t- Cal	p-value	Level of Sig.	Rmks
Uni Lecturers	43	3.58	0.48	116	0.37	0.89	0.05	NS
COE Lecturers	75	3.54	0.57					

Note: NS = Not Significant at 0.05.

The result presented on the t-test statistics in Table 2 above revealed that the p-value of 0.89 is greater than 0.05 level of significance at 116 degree of freedom. This implied that there is no significant ($p < 0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on improved industrial training measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant ($p < 0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of the Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education is accepted for hypothesis one.

Research Question Two

What are improved funding measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in South-south Nigeria?

Data for answering research question two are presented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Improved Funding Measures for Retooling Business Education Programme for enhanced Employability of Graduates (n = 159)

SN	Funding measures for retooling Business education programme include:	\bar{X}	SD	Rmks
1	Business Education programme should be adequately funded for quality assurance.	3.74	0.45	Agree
2	School management should seek alternative sources of fund for effective realization of objectives of Business Education.	3.68	0.47	Agree
3	Ensure judicious spending of available funds and accountability in Business Education programme.	3.52	0.63	Agree
4	Relevant financial incentives should be provided to lecturers and instructors in Business Education programme.	3.56	0.54	Agree
5	Professional development of Business Educators should be adequately funded by government.	3.45	0.49	Agree
6	Monthly impress should be timely released for effective running of activities in Business Education programme.	3.47	0.50	Agree
7	Provision of intervention fund for upgrading technologies and replacement of obsolete technologies in Business Education.	3.56	0.49	Agree
Pooled Mean		3.57	0.51	Agree

Note: \bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = number of respondents.

The result in Table 3 above revealed that the mean (\bar{x}) values of the 7 items ranged from 3.45 to 3.74 which are all greater than the cut-off point value of 2.50. This implies that the seven identified items in the Table are improved funding measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates. The standard deviation values of the seven improved funding measures ranged from 0.45 to 0.63 which suggests that the responses of the respondents are close to the mean and one another.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on the improved funding measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in South-south Nigeria.



Table 5: Test of no significant difference in the mean ratings of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on improved funding measures for retooling Business education programme.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	t- Cal	p-value	Level of Sig.	Rmks
Uni Lecturers	43	3.69	0.51	116	2.08	0.02	0.05	Sig.
COE Lecturers	75	3.45	0.64					

Note: Sig = Significant at 0.05.

From the result presented on the t-test statistics in Table 4 above, it was showed that the p-value of 0.02 is less than 0.05 level of significance at 116 degree of freedom. This indicated that there is significant ($p < 0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on improved funding measures for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant ($p < 0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of the Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education is rejected for hypothesis two.

Research Question Three

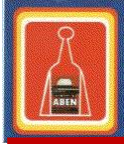
What are strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in South-south, Nigeria?

Data for answering research question three are presented in table 5 below.

Table 5: Strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of graduates (n = 159)

SN	Strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education include:	\bar{X}	SD	Rmks
1	Integrate the use of ICTs and social media as channels of instructional delivery in Business Education.	3.50	0.54	Agree
2	Identify and integrate findings of vocational studies on required ICT skills into the curriculum of Business Education.	3.46	0.51	Agree
3	Visiting industries to assess level of performance of Business Education students.	3.37	0.52	Agree
4	Inclusive education of Microsoft word and excel for various official data and record management	3.58	0.72	Agree
5	Integrate proficiency in handling data analytical packages such as SPSS in the curriculum of Business Education.	3.49	0.51	Agree
6	Collaboration of industry and training institutions on the areas where the graduates are not performing well	3.49	0.50	Agree
7	Employ curriculum experts and relevant stakeholders in curriculum review and development.	3.56	0.48	Agree
8	Allocate more time to the teaching and learning of Business Education courses.	3.66	0.52	Agree
9	Adopt the use of innovative instructional strategies for teaching and learning of Business Education.	3.56	0.52	Agree
10	Adopt the use of various modern and ICTs for instructional delivery in Business Education.	3.24	0.74	Agree
11	Carry out survey on the areas of skill improvement need of Business Education graduates for curriculum review.	3.68	0.43	Agree
Pooled Mean		3.51	0.48	Agree

Note: \bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = number of respondents.



From the result in Table 5 above, it was shown that the mean (\bar{x}) values of the 11 items ranged from 3.24 to 3.68 which are all greater than the cut-off point value of 2.50. This indicates that the 11 identified items in the Table are strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates. The standard deviation values of the 11 items ranged from 0.43 to 0.72 which indicates that the responses of the respondents are close to the mean and one another.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates in South-south, Nigeria.

The data for testing hypothesis three are presented in table 6 below.

Table 6: Test of no significant difference in the mean ratings of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education programme.

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	t- Cal	p-value	Level of Sig.	Rmks
Uni Lecturers	43	3.50	0.46	116	0.43	0.77	0.05	NS
COE Lecturers	75	3.52	0.43					

Note: NS = Not Significant at 0.05.

The result presented on the t-test statistics in Table 6 above showed that the p-value of 0.77 is greater than 0.05 level of significance at 116 degree of freedom. This indicated that there is no significant ($p < 0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education programme for enhanced employability of the graduates. Consequently, the null hypothesis of no significant ($p < 0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of the Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education is accepted for hypothesis three.

Discussion of Findings

The study on research question one identified industrial training strategies for retooling Business education programme to include increase industrial training (IT) period of Business Education students to one full year with intensive training in relevant companies, recruiting competent staff to teach the use of the facilities in the Business Education, formulating relevant policies for industries acceptance of Business Education students on industrial training, ensuring ITF regulate students posting to industries of relevance for practical skill acquisition, training of the institution based supervisors on the training needs of students for better assessment and allowing students on training guided access to all the needed information, facilities, equipment and machines. UNESCO (2022) identified ways of enhancing effectiveness of vocational education instructors to include provision of relevant training facilities and equipment, recruitment of competent Vocational education teachers, regular industrial training and retraining and the use of institution based supervisors in students' training. Agboh (2016) identified recommended changes in industrial training SIWES to include assigning a staff to teach the use of the facilities in the business education model office, ITF regulating students posting to industries of relevance, government payment of monthly stipend/allowance monthly throughout the training period and training of the institution based supervisors on the training needs of the students.

The findings of this study in respect to research question two identified funding strategies for retooling Business education programme to include adequate funding for quality assurance, school management should seeking alternative sources of fund for effective realization of objectives of Business Education, ensuring judicious spending of available funds and accountability in Business Education programme, provision of relevant financial incentives to lecturers and instructors in Business Education programme and that professional development of Business Educators should be adequately funded by government among others. Eze (2013) lamented on major challenges confronting Nigerian education and recommended adequate funding, provision of ICTs and other infrastructural facilities to guarantee quality



assurance of the system. The findings agreed with the report of Industrial Training Fund (2013) that adequate financial resources should be made available to technical and vocational education that adequate funding promotes the provision of essentials materials, facilities and machines to equip laboratories and workshops with relevant textbooks and training manuals.

The findings of this study as regards research question three identified strategic curriculum review for retooling Business education programme to include: integration of the use of ICTs and social media as channels of instructional delivery, integration of findings of vocational studies on required ICT skills into the curriculum, visiting industries to assess level of performance of Business Education students, incorporating Microsoft word and excel for various official data and record management in Business education curriculum, collaborative engagement of industry and training institutions, employing curriculum experts and relevant stakeholders in curriculum review and development, allocating more time to the teaching and learning and adoption of the use of innovative instructional strategies for teaching and learning of Business Education. The findings of this study corroborated that of Okafor (2016) who identified measures for effective continuous vocational education curriculum review for contemporary relevance to include: the integration of ICT-based instructional materials and techniques, online teaching and learning and proficiency use of data analytical packages. The findings of this study also agreed with that of Awa (2023) who reported that constant curriculum review and integration of instructional technologies to teaching and learning are measures for enhancing quality assurance of vocational education.

Conclusion

This examined Business Education curriculum for quality assurance and employability of graduates in South-South, Nigeria. From the data collected and analysed, the study identified 15 Industrial Training strategies measures, 7 funding strategies and 11 strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education programme for quality assurance and employability of graduates in South-South, Nigeria. The results of the hypotheses tested revealed no significant ($p < 0.05$) differences in the mean ratings of the responses of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of education on industrial training and strategic curriculum reviews for retooling Business education programme for quality assurance and employability of graduates. However, there was significant ($p < 0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of Business education lecturers in Universities and Colleges of education on funding measures for retooling Business education programme. Hence, the study concluded that improved industrial training, funding and curriculum reviews of Business education programme will enhance the employability of the graduates in South-south, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommended that:

1. There should be more proactive students' training through students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES) for possible improvement and sustainable achievement of its objectives and that of Business Education.
2. There should be adequate funding of Business Education programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions for provision of required facilities, equipment and instructional materials for production of quality and employable Business education graduates.
3. The government through its ministry of education and parastatals should ensure regular and timely review of Business Education curriculum to meet ever changing society needs.

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