

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to assess the challenges and opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State. Two specific objectives, research questions and hypotheses guided the study. Survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was one hundred business educators in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The sample of the study comprised forty (40) Business Educators.. A structured questionnaire was used for study. The instrument was validated by two experts, one in business education and the other in measurement and evaluation. Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used. Co-efficient values of 0.95 and 0.94 and an overall reliability value of 0.90 were obtained. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Result of the study revealed that Business Education curriculum development have many challenges such as inadequate provision of finance, lack of highly qualified professional teachers, use of outdated content of curriculum, lack of modern facilities, politicized curricula, low public interest, lack of government support to business education, poor planning of business education curriculum, low emphasis on technology and poor monitoring and evaluation. Also, the result revealed that there are opportunities in Business Education curriculum development. The paper recommended amongst others that curriculum development process evaluation should be done with positive intention to ensure critical analysis of the new challenges facing the business education teachers and students. Also, Federal and state ministries of education and other stakeholders should help provide the colleges of education and universities offering Business Education with needed instructional resources for effective implementation of curriculum.

Keywords: Challenges, Opportunities, Curriculum Development, Business Education,

INTRODUCTION

The Business Education programme in Nigeria requires a positive and effective evaluation that can bridge the gap between theory and practice. This will go a long way in ensuring the correlation between skills and competency displayed by graduates of business education and the certificate they obtain to parade looking for white-collar jobs in the world of competition. Business education is one of the occupational areas that are richly provided by vocational and technical education in Nigeria. Business education refers to a programme of instruction that offers various skills in accounting, marketing, office technology and management (OTM) and recently entrepreneurial education. Major topics include: office practice, bookkeeping, business mathematics, business communication, secretarial duties, word processing, advertising (Ajisafe, Bolarinwa & Edeh, 2015). Also, Edokpolor & Egbri (2017) had stipulated that the actual goals of business education shall be to prepare students for specific career in office occupations, equip 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 (ICT). It was further explained that the first two goals involve education 'for business, which is aimed at equipping recipients with the requisite attributes (knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes) to become gainfully employed in the world of work, whereas the later address education 'about business' which is aimed at providing a sound basis for further studies at the graduate and postgraduate levels. The concept of development has to do with

the identification of basic needs of families, individuals, interest groups, communities and their abilities to meet; these needs, which are channeled or targeted towards sustainable development (Ogunduyile, 2016). To achieve development, there is need for curriculum development in Business Education programme in Nigeria.

A curriculum is an embodiment of all knowledge, skills and attitudes which a nation, through her schools, imparts to her citizens by knowledge in the definition, we mean all facts, theories, principles/generalizations and rules needed to be acquired to be certified as competent in a field. Curriculum also involves acquisition of skills needed to perform tasks programme for effective teaching and learning. In actual sense, a curriculum is an educational programme without which education could hardly be organized. Education is said to be formalized because it is organized and goes with a programme of experiences under the guidance of the school. Any education that is not organized does not go with formal curriculum. Thus, informal education has no formal curriculum. According to

Therefore, Onwuka (2017) defined curriculum as a process of learning which takes into account all human activities such as human sensitivity, could be political, economic or professional. According to him curriculum could also be considered as the deliberate systematic and planned attempts made by the school to change the behaviour of the members of the society in which it situates. Nnachi (2019) viewed the curriculum as a vehicle through which the school could strive towards the achievement of educational ends. Such ends could be those of the nation, State and local governments of communities. Also, Ben-Yunusa, (2018) describe the curriculum as that content and those processes designed to bring about learning of educational value. By this definition, curriculum is considered to include both what is to be taught and by what means it is to be taught. He further defines curriculum as the set or sequence of potential experiences set up in the school for the purpose of disciplining children and youth in group ways of thinking and acting. However, Knight & Trowler (2020) opined that the curriculum is an account of the content to be studied, its organization, the learning and teaching methods and the arrangements for evaluating student learning. In addition, they remark that there are distinctions between the three types of curriculum: the planned curriculum, the delivered curriculum and the received curriculum. Also they explain the curriculum intentions become changed as they are created in teaching and learning situation and assessment regularly shows that what learners understand is different from what was planned and created. Therefore, the knowledge that there are "slippages" between the three.

Hence, Trauth, Farwell & Lee (2017) refer to these "slippages" as curriculum gaps. Also, Preedy, (2021) in describing the curriculum management process identifies three stages of the curriculum: the intended curriculum - what is planned; the offered curriculum - what teachers teach; and the received curriculum - what students actually experienced in the classroom. She remarks that a major task is to ensure the three stages 'are in harmony' and integrated appropriately. Also, Oluwadare, Adekunle & Ebiniyi (2019) submitted that the smooth running of an educational system depends largely on the availability and adequacy of facilities and equipment in place. Once they are lacking students are not exposed to the use of machines and basic hand tools found in the work place.

Due to its importance in the lifespan of educational institutions, the curriculum undergoes dynamism due to the dynamic state of our society. What then do we mean by curriculum development? Alviator (2014) saw curriculum development as planned, purposeful, progressive and systematic process employed to bring about positive renovations in the educational system. Development or changes in the world always call for development or changes in school curricula too, so as to get them updated to meet the societal needs. With formal education, curriculum development has become a systematic, planned, purposeful, progressive improvement given to educational content.

From all the foregoing discussions on Business Education and curriculum development, we can see clearly that business education prepares individual for initial office or selling jobs and for managing of individually owned control and operate business enterprise. It is a subject that provide

general knowledge and understanding for all persons not minding age, occupation, professions, social or economic status. And curriculum offerings of this subject must cater for updated requirements in the 21st century skills. And to achieve this, core and elective courses have been studied in the department of business education. In spite of these, graduates from this programmes are found in top. This indicates that there are many challenges facing business education curriculum development in Nigeria.

This situation has consequently deprived business education from adequate provision of funds, qualified manpower, modern facilities, quality curriculum and proper attention (Edokpolor & Egbri, 2017). Although business education have attracted bulk of research within these areas leaving a gap in literature pertaining to empirical support. Also, it remain unclear how the possibilities of overcoming the problems and challenges of business education would help in promoting national development. However, adequate optimization of resources for the effective delivery of business education in Nigeria is not receiving a growing attention (Edokpolor & Mafidon, 2017; Edokpolor & Oduma, 2017). This is because vocational education in general has not been considered as a viable programme that helps to promote sustainable economic growth and development (Agrawal, 2013).

Business education curriculum development is equally faced with the challenge of the use of outdated curriculum. The curricula of most business education are outdated, as such, needs overhauling. Elaborating on this, Aworanti (2015) states that it is regrettable that most vocational education curricula are outdated having been in use for over fifteen years. Looking at this situation closely, it is clear that current business education may not be able to meet the need of industries or employers of labour genuinely. This situation has consequently created a huge gap between business education and industries in Nigeria. This may be the reason why, Majumda (2016) asserts that the challenges on how to develop curriculum and training programme that would help to respond: to the skills needed by industries seem to be a common concern. He stressed that many authors have mentioned the gap between the skills needed by the industries and those students acquire at the end of training programme.

Also, It should be noted that inadequate provision of financial resources has been identified as greatest challenge facing education in Nigeria, especially vocational and technical education sector because of its capital intensive nature (Adeyanju, Adekunle, & Osifila, 2017), of which business education programme is a major component. By virtue of this nature, every item within the business education instructional environment is subjected to adequate optimization of financial resources. However, in view of the contending demands for financial resources by various sectors of the economy, business education have been finding it difficult to employ manpower in terms of quality and quantity, develop or renew curriculum and offer a wide range of modern infrastructure and facilities, such as the state-of-the-art lecture halls, workshops, studios, libraries, entrepreneurial research centres and information technology services. The existence of all these identified issues and challenges are mere pointer to the fact that business education programme is currently delivered theoretically and as such not capable of equipping recipients with the requisite attributes (knowledge, skills and attitudes) for gainful employment and further education.

Commenting on this ugly situation, Obunadike (2015) argued that the practical courses that are supposed to expose individual students to real-practical training in order to strike a balance with or match the theory learnt in the classroom have become a myriad. More so, challenge faced the business education curriculum is the low public interest in the programme. It is a general belief that business education is a form of education of the ungifted and underprivileged child. Many of parents and elites in Nigeria society believed that business education is meant for the less academically endowed. Therefore, they clamor for other types of education and only opt for business education as their last resort which resulted to low enrolment in colleges of education and universities in business education courses.

The effect of the above mentioned challenges such as inadequate provision of finance, lack of highly qualified professional teachers, lack of modern facilities, politicized curricula, outdated

curriculum and low public interest is that skilled and competent graduates may not be produced which is the output of curriculum development.

Nevertheless, there are high opportunities in Business Education curriculum development. James & Robinson (2017) opined that curriculum development in Business Education can help to serve alleviate the problem of unemployment among Business education graduates in Nigeria. . Development or changes in the world always call for development or changes in school curricula too, so as to get them updated to meet the societal needs. With formal education, curriculum development has become a systematic, planned, purposeful, progressive improvement given to educational content. .

Thus, the following are enumerated as the opportunities of curriculum development in Business Education as outlined and described by Alvir (2014). Firstly, curriculum development greatly improves the economy of a country. It provides solutions to the world's pressing conditions and problems, such as environment, politics, socioeconomic and any other issues of poverty, climate change and sustainable development. Curriculum development assists to preserve the country's national identity and to ensure its economic growth and stability. Thus, curriculum development must be geared towards the improvements in the needs of a country generally and specifically towards the schools, teachers and planners improvements. activities, or have poor knowledge of research

Also, while stressing the opportunities of Business Education curriculum development Udo (2014) notes that it helps graduates of business education programme to be able to reduce poverty and social crimes as they are able to be self-reliant through current knowledge and skills impacted through the Business Education curriculum in the 21st century driven by technology. . With curriculum development in Business Education in courses like Accountancy, Office Management, Computer, Marketing and Distributive Education, the individual will acquire saleable skills be self-employed and above all create jobs by being employers of labour. By so doing, they alleviate poverty in the society. This is in conformity with the statement made by Aben (2017) that Business Education curriculum development can be a major instrument for national development because it promotes industrialization through its entrepreneurship offerings. It is against this backdrop that the researchers seek to determine the challenges and opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Some contemporary thinkers in education and training conceive of business education as a major contributor to human resource, entrepreneurial and national development. Despite these laudable roles, available indications have shown that Nigeria have been handling business education with levity especially in the area of curriculum development. Most countries of the world especially developing countries like Nigeria are faced with poverty. At a critical time like this, what the nation needs is a theoretical and skill oriented Business Education programme curriculum that can equip the products with skills and attitudes relevant for poverty alleviation.

Unfortunately, it appears that the Business Education curriculum is battling with challenges because no effort has been made towards its development to meet the technological needs of the 21st century. Without curriculum development in Business Education, achieving and alleviating extreme poverty including hunger and promoting economic growth and decent jobs within the planetary boundaries will be difficult. The problem of this study is put in question form thus; what are the challenges and opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to assess the challenges and opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State. . Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the challenges in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State
2. Assess the opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State
2. What are the opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State.

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Educators on the challenges of Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Educators on the opportunities of Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of one hundred (100) Business Educators in tertiary institutions both colleges of education and universities in Rivers State. The sample size of the study was 40 Business educators in Rivers State. The sample was selected using the simple random sampling technique and it comprised 25 male and 15 female Business educators. A structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was used for the study. The instrument was titled "Challenges and Opportunities in Business Education Curriculum Development Questionnaire (COBECDQ)" It was divided into two sections A and B. Section A contains items on demographic data of respondents while section B contains items arranged in two clusters each cluster contains 10 items. The response options were: Strongly Agree (SA-4), Agree (A-3), Disagree (D-2) and Strongly Disagree (SD-1). The instrument was validated by two experts, one in business education and the other in measurement and evaluation. The application of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 using Cronbach Alpha reliability method yielded coefficient values of 0.95 and 0.94 and an overall reliability value of 0.90. Forty copies of the questionnaire were administered through personal contact by the researcher. The analysis was based on this number. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation (SD). Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. t-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. For the hypotheses, a null hypothesis was rejected where the P-value was less than the stipulated level of significance (.05). On the other hand, where the P-value was greater than or equal to the stipulated level of significance (.05), the hypothesis was accepted.

RESULT

Research Question 1: What are the challenges in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State

Table I: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on challenges in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State

(N= 40)

N	Challenges in Business Education curriculum development	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Inadequate provision of finance	3.55	.51	Agreed
2.	Lack of highly qualified professional teachers	3.57	.49	Agreed
3.	Use of outdated content of curriculum	3.64	.54	Agreed
4.	Lack of modern facilities	3.55	.50	Agreed
5.	Politicized curricula	3.62	.49	Agreed
6.	Low public interest	3.56	.51	Agreed
7.	Lack of government support to business education	3.65	.48	Agreed

8.	Poor planning of business education curriculum	3.43	.49	Agreed
9.	Low emphasis on technology	3.55	.53	Agreed
10	Poor monitoring and evaluation mechanism	3.54	.50	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.57	.56	Agreed

The results of the data presented in Table 1 show the mean responses of business educators on the challenges of business education curriculum development in Rivers State. The results revealed that all the 10 items, business educators agree on all the items with a corresponding grand mean of 3.57 and standard deviation of 0.56 . The mean scores and standard deviation are indications that there are lots of challenges hindering Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: What are the opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State.

(N= 40)

S/N	opportunities in Business Education curriculum development	Mean	SD	Remark
11.	Equips its graduates with necessary skills and potentials, that will make them perform very well in business and also take to teaching as a profession.	3.70	.46	Agreed
12.	Educates individuals for and about business	3.68	.31	Agreed
13.	Provides the recipients' with necessary skill for transition into labour market	3.55	.31	Agreed
14.	Provides effective learning for the recipient for lifelong livelihood	3.62	.49	Agreed
15.	Help the recipients to be producers and distributors of goods and services	3.64	.50	Agreed
16	Acquisition of skills and ideas for creating employment for oneself and others	3.64	.48	Agreed
17.	The environment in which the learner is Trained should be replica of the environment in which he must subsequently work	3.30	.49	Agreed
18	prepares and exposes recipients to real life learning experiences to think, take risks, manage circumstances	3.53	.56	Agreed
19.	equip the students with skills for constant improvement and innovation in their undertake	3.44	.51	Agreed

20.	Produce graduates that are job creators not job seekers	3.57	.50	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.56		Agreed
		.56		

Data in Table 2 shows that all the items have mean scores between 3.11 and 3.72 which indicates that the respondents agreed that the items are the opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State. The standard deviation scores indicated that the respondents were homogenous in their responses.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Educators on the challenges of Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State
 Table 3: Summary of t-test result of business educators on the challenges of Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State

	N	Mean	SD	df	t	α	Decision	Inference
Male	25	3.63	0.06	38	.266	.05	Not significant	Diff. not sig.
Female	15	3.51	0.07					

Data in Table 3 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Educators on the challenges of Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State. This is shown by the p-value of .266, which is greater than the significant level of .05. This shows that there is no significance difference in the mean responses of business educators. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Educators on the opportunities of Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State
 Table 3: Summary of t-test result of business educators on the opportunities of Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State

	N	Mean	SD	df	t	α	Decision	Inference
Male	25	3.44	0.08	38	.095	.05	Not significant	Diff. not sig.
Female	15	3.42	0.06					

Data in Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Educators on the opportunities of Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State. This is shown by the p-value of .095, which is greater than the significant level of .05. This shows that there is no significance difference in the mean responses of business educators. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups is accepted.

DISCUSSION

Findings of the study from research question one and hypotheses revealed business education educators agreed that there are lots of challenges hindering Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State. these challenges as revealed from the findings include inadequate provision of finance, lack of highly qualified professional teachers, use of outdated

content of curriculum, lack of modern facilities, politicized curricula, low public interest, lack of government support to business education , poor planning of business education curriculum , low emphasis on technology and poor monitoring and evaluation mechanism. This finding is not surprising because curriculum development in Business Education is been handled with levity. The findings is in accordance with Oladunjoye (2016])where he argued that the inadequate provision of funds, qualified manpower, modern facilities, and quality curriculum, coupled with low public interest, are some of the possible challenges facing the development of business education curriculum as well as delivery of business education in Nigeria. Ekpenyong and Edokpolor (2015) also argued that this situation would consequently affect the production of competent graduates that are useful for poverty alleviation and unemployment eradication.

Findings of the study from research question two and hypotheses also revealed that the opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State are numerous. It equips its graduates with necessary skills and potentials, that will make them perform very well in business and also take to teaching as a profession, it educates individuals for and about business , it provides the recipients' with necessary skill for transition into labour market. Also, it provides effective learning for the recipient for lifelong livelihood and help the recipients to be producers and distributors of goods and services. This finding is in line with Alvior (2014) that curriculum development greatly improves the economy of a country. It provides solutions to the world's pressing conditions and problems, such as environment, politics, socioeconomic and any other issues of poverty, climate change and sustainable development. Curriculum development assists to preserve the country's national identity and to ensure its economic growth and stability. The finding also revealed that other opportunities in Business education curriculum development is that it helps in acquisition of skills and ideas for creating employment for oneself and others. this finding is in agreement with Udo (2014) that Business Education curriculum development helps graduates of business education programme to be able to reduce poverty and social crimes as they are able to be self-reliant through current knowledge and skills impacted through the Business Education curriculum in the 21st century driven by technology. This is in conformity with the statement made by Aben (2017) that Business Education curriculum development can be a major instrument for national development because it promotes industrialization through its entrepreneurship offerings. It is against this backdrop that the researchers seek to determine the challenges and opportunities in Business Education curriculum development in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

The opportunities of business education curriculum in Nigeria is considered promising and calls for government and other stakeholders to show commitment to the agenda so that the challenges of business education curriculum development can be addressed. Business educators therefore, should see curriculum development as a continuous process which should be conducted on a regular basis because continuous evaluation provides basis for adjusting programmes to meet the manpower needs of the country. Hence, it provides the best means of quality control for our programmes. . If curriculum development process is properly addressed with positive approach, business educators will be in a better position to critically analyze and determine how effective education changes are to be handle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Curriculum development process evaluation should be done with positive intention to ensure critical analysis of the new challenges facing the business education teachers and students.
2. Curriculum development/evaluation should also be based on the behavioural outcome or objectives of the programme.
3. . Feedback should follow curriculum development/evaluation and should be made available to the appropriate stakeholders for effective implementation and follow-up.

4. Federal and state ministries of education and other stakeholders should help provide the colleges of education and universities offering Business Education with needed instructional resources for effective implementation of curriculum.

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