

Perception of Business Educators on the Relevance of Integrating Globalized Workplace Skills in the Business Education Curriculum in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

The need to revitalize business education programmes in Nigeria necessitated this study which sought to determine the relevance of integrating globalized workplace skills in business education curriculum in universities in South South, Nigeria. Two research questions and four hypotheses guided the study. A survey research design was adopted. The population consisted of 133 business educators in universities in South South, Nigeria. A validated 30-item structured questionnaire on a 4-point rating scale was used for data collection. It was subjected to face and content validity by experts in Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question and determine the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' views. Z-test was used in the testing of hypotheses. The study revealed that integration of technology and soft skills in business education curriculum was perceived very relevant by business educators in South South, Nigeria. The relevance of integrating of technology and soft skills in business education curriculum by the respondents was not significantly influenced by gender and school type. It was concluded that graduates of business education programmes would easily familiarize themselves with the diverse operations of the globalized workplace upon graduation when relevant technology and soft skills are integrated and implemented in content of business education curriculum. Therefore, it was recommended among others business teachers' education curriculum designers should incorporate the relevant technology and soft skills of the globalized workplace in the teaching and learning of business education courses.

Keywords: *Globalization, Business education curriculum, Business educator*

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Background to the Study

Globalization is the inter-connectivity and acceptance of idea, information and culture between systems of the world without barriers. Globalization refers to liberalization and intensification of international linkages in trade, finance, markets, production, research, transportation, medicine, education, politics and culture (Ajayi, 2004). To this extent, the once portray world wide world has become a small village and the formation of a globalized workplace is the new reality in the world of work. Dlabay (2003) defined globalization as the process of expanding business activities in order to gain a worldwide perspective. Consequently, in the face of globalization, the activities of workplace cannot be operational, if it is not equipped with workers who possess the requisite skills to excel and understand the reality of the today's globalized workplace.

Technological advances and globalization have transformed the world of work into a paperless workplace characterized with cross-cultural dimensions. Business education is a branch of vocational education concerned with exposing its recipients to the internal and external foundations and functioning of the workplace. According to Ugwoke (2011), business education is a work-focused, skill-based, result-oriented and technology-based educational programme. With the knowledge of business education, students are better informed and groomed with skills and understanding to cope with the unpredictable challenges of the business environment. Therefore, business education programmes which is charged with the responsibility of unveiling the dynamics of the world of work must ensure that its recipients possess the relevant skills needed for effective entry and efficient participation in the globalized workplace. Graduates of business education programmes are expected to possess the academic awareness and employability skills needed to enter, compete and survive in the global business world. Hence, Onyesom and Okolocha (2013) defined business education as the intellectual and vocational preparation of students for earning a living in the contemporary industrial and business environment.

Succinctly, business education is that aspect of general education that prepares students' for employment and advancement in a broad range of office occupations, accounting professions, marketing occupation, teaching profession and entrepreneurship venture (Onokpaunu, 2016). However, the reliable medium, through which the mission and vision of business education programmes can be achieved, stems from effective implementation of its curriculum. Curriculum is the official blueprint through which the laid down educational philosophies of a nation are translated into concrete reality. It encompasses the goals and objectives of a particular course of study, organization of the content area and evaluation of students' academic achievement in that particular course of study. Thus, business education curriculum is a set of learning experiences designed to enable students attain the objectives of business education programme.

In the era of globalization, a worthwhile and functional curriculum always changes to meet the present needs of individual, workplace and the society at large. According to Isyaku (2006), business education curriculum should be dynamic and relevant with societal and ICT oriented courses that will boost students' knowledge, manipulation competencies, attitudes and values with which to compete for jobs in real work setting. The impact of globalization demands that global literacy and awareness of the workplace should be inculcated into the content of business education curriculum to enable students acquire cross-cultural and employability skills to perform the required activities of the globalized workplace. In order to prepare

students for the globalized workplace, business education programmes need to keep pace with the requirements of globalization through the integration of various forms of skills trending in today's workplace.

Globalized workplace skills consist of a range of ideas, attributes, thinking, knowledge, behaviours and technical competencies which an employee uses to function efficiently and efficiently without any form of constraints in the globalized workplace. Generally, globalized workplace skills consist of technology and soft skills. Technology skills are skills associated with working with equipment and software which workers must possess in order to function in specific occupation (Guy, Sitlington, Larsen, & Frank, 2008). Technology skills are technical, hands-on, job-specific skills that focus on the know-how or practical expertise rather than theoretical knowledge of the workplace (Davis, 2009). Turner in Nwokike and Eya (2015) categorized technology skills into word processing skills, spread sheet, database, electronic presentation, web navigation, web site, design, e-mail management skills, digital cameras, computer networking knowledge, file management and windows explorer and downloading software from the web among others.

On the other hand, soft skills are inter-personal, human, people or behavioural skills needed to apply technology and soft skills in the workplace (De Villiers, 2010). According to Rousa in Nwokike and Eya (2015), soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, career prospects and job performance in the globalized workplace. Soft skills are fundamental in breaking new frontiers in the business world. In the view of Perrault (2004), soft skills relate to the way individuals interact with each other. Perrault stated that soft skills include leadership abilities, team player skills, communication ability and motivating team members. Klaus (2007) suggested that soft skills consist of all forms of personal, social, communication and self-management behaviours. In addition, Hargis (2011) mentioned work ethic, critical thinking and problem solving skills as soft skills.

The integration of technology and soft skills in business education curriculum will efficiently give business education students the competitive edge to stay in touch with the changing conditions of the globalized workplace without any form of pressure. Technology and soft skills stands to enhance the academic credentials of business education students because employers of labour recognize them as the prerequisite requirements of the globalized workplace. The goal of business education programme, therefore, is to ensure that there is a transfer of relevant workplace skills to and fro the world of work and business education that goes beyond the theoretical contents of business education curriculum. In bid to prepare students for the globalized workplace, business education curriculum must be subjected to international and multi-cultural standards to enable domestic and foreign business education students acquire the same global workplace skills in their different learning communities.

Business educators are professionally trained teachers of business subjects who are competent in teaching the content of business education curriculum in the faculty of education in universities and colleges of education. According to Osuala (2004), a business educator is any person who plays a critical role in making business education viable and visible in the community, plays the critical role of agent of change in business education, delivers high quality instruction in business education and is able to identify problems facing teaching and learning in the field as well as speculate solutions to such problems.

In the process of integrating globalized workplace skills into business education curriculum, business educators must stay abreast of impacts of globalization in the workplace in order to promote the employability prospects of business education graduates. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities in Diane and Ellen (2011), to create a relevant business education curriculum, business educators need to become aware of the skills and competencies needed in the globalized workplace and the entry-level job criteria for graduates of business education programs. The geometric influence of globalization makes it a challenge for curriculum planners and business educators to integrate global workplace skill into the curriculum. It is against this backdrop, this study was designed to determine the perception of business educators on the relevance of integrating globalized workplace skills in the business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the perception of business educators on the relevance of integrating globalized workplace skills in the business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Perception of business educators on the relevance of integrating technology skills in the business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria
2. Perception of business educators on the relevance of integrating soft skills in the business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the perception of business educators on the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria?
2. What is the perception of business educators on the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents on the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents on the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria based on school type.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents on the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria based on gender.
4. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the respondents on the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria based on school type.

Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 133 business educators in public tertiary universities in South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. There was no sampling since the population was manageable. The instrument for data

collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Relevance of Globalized Workplace Skills in Business Education Curriculum Questionnaire (RGWSBECQ)”. The questionnaire contained 30 items according to the research questions on a 4-point rating scale of very relevant, relevant, irrelevant and very irrelevant. Content and face validity of the instrument was determined by one expert in the department of Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation all from Delta State University, Abraka. A pilot test was conducted to establish the reliability of the instrument by administering it to 20 business educators in Enugu State which were not part of the study and the data collected were analyzed with Cronbach Alpha. Reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained for the instrument. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and determine the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' views. Decisions on the research question were based on the grand mean in relations to the real limits of numbers. Therefore, items with mean ratings of 0.50 - 1.49 are rated very irrelevant, those with 1.50 - 2.49 are rated irrelevant, items with mean ratings of 2.50 - 3.49 are rated relevant and those with 3.50 - 4.00 are rated very relevant. For hypotheses, if the calculated z-value is equal or greater than the critical z-value, it was rejected. If otherwise, it was accepted.

Presentation of Results

Research question 1

What is the perception of business educators on the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria?

Table 1

Respondents mean ratings on the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum (N=133)

S/N	Relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	Internet skills	3.95	0.82	Very relevant
2	Computer programming skills	3.92	0.84	Very relevant
3	Intranet skills	3.87	0.80	Very relevant
4	Web page design skills	3.89	0.80	Very relevant
5	Computer networking skills	3.88	0.86	Very relevant
6	Computer security skills	3.90	0.81	Very relevant
7	Database management system skills	3.85	0.85	Very relevant
8	Computer software installation skills	3.96	0.86	Very relevant
9	Reprographics skills	3.84	0.82	Very relevant
10	Desktop publishing skills	3.91	0.84	Very relevant
11	Computer spreadsheet skills	3.89	0.82	Very relevant
12	Word processing skills	3.88	0.84	Very relevant
13	E-commerce skills	3.97	0.81	Very relevant
14	Computer maintenance skills	3.89	0.86	Very relevant
15	Electronic presentation skills	3.87	0.83	Very relevant
GRAND MEAN		3.90		Very relevant

Data in Table 1 reveal that all the 15 items had mean ratings ranging from 3.84 to 3.97 with a grand mean of 3.90. This indicates that integrating of technology skills in business education curriculum was perceived very relevant by business educators in South South, Nigeria. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range which shows that the respondents were homogeneous in their opinions.

Research Question 2

What is the perception of business educators on the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South South, Nigeria?

Table 2

Respondents mean ratings on the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum (N=133)

S/N	Relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
1	Team work skills	3.90	0.92	Very relevant
2	Written communication skills	3.72	0.94	Very relevant
3	leadership skills	3.87	0.86	Very relevant
4	Oral communication skills	3.92	0.90	Very relevant
5	Problem solving skills	3.95	0.86	Very relevant
6	Work ethic skills	3.91	0.91	Very relevant
7	Global awareness skills	3.89	0.87	Very relevant
8	Foreign language skills	3.96	0.88	Very relevant
9	Self-management skills	3.84	0.90	Very relevant
10	Quantitative skills	3.91	0.88	Very relevant
11	Self-confidence skills	3.94	0.92	Very relevant
12	Inter-personal skills	3.96	0.95	Very relevant
13	Conflict management skills	3.92	0.86	Very relevant
14	Self-Innovative skills	3.98	0.89	Very relevant
15	Adaptability skills	3.87	0.93	Very relevant
GRAND MEAN		3.90		Very relevant

Data in Table 2 reveal that all the 15 items had mean ratings ranging from 3.72 to 3.98 with a grand mean of 3.90. This indicates that integrating of soft skills in business education curriculum was perceived very relevant by business educators in South South, Nigeria. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range which shows that the respondents were homogeneous in their opinions.

Hypothesis 1

Table 3

z-test summary analysis of the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum based on gender (N=133)

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	α	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	78	3.85	0.81	0.05	131	0.34	1.96	NS
Female	55	3.80	0.85					

The result in Table 1 shows that male respondents (78) had a mean response of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.81 while the female respondents (55) had mean response of 3.80 and a standard deviation of 0.85. The calculated z-value of 0.34 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 131 degree of freedom. This revealed no significant difference and therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum.

Hypothesis 2

Table 4

z-test summary analysis of the relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum based on school type

(N=133)								
School type	N	\bar{X}	SD	α	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Federal university	79	3.92	0.79	0.05	131	0.46	1.96	NS
State university	54	3.86	0.70					

The result presented in Table 3 shows that the calculated z – value of 0.46 is less than the critical z – value of 1.96 ($0.46 < 1.96$) at 0.05 level of significance and 131 degree of freedom. This means that respondents from federal and state universities did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on relevance of integrating technology skills in business education curriculum and hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 3

Table 5

z-test summary analysis of the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum based on gender

(N=133)								
Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	α	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	78	3.87	0.93	0.05	131	0.56	1.96	NS
Female	55	3.78	0.85					

The result in Table 5 shows that male respondents (78) had a mean response of 3.87 and a standard deviation of 0.93 while the female respondents (55) had mean response of 3.78 and a standard deviation of 0.85. The calculated z-value of 0.56 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 131 degree of freedom. This revealed no significant difference and therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum.

Hypothesis 4

Table 6

z-test summary analysis of the relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum based on school type

(N=133)								
School type	N	\bar{X}	SD	α	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Federal university	79	3.96	0.84	0.05	131	0.66	1.96	NS
State university	54	3.84	0.75					

The result presented in Table 6 shows that the calculated z – value of 0.66 is less than the critical z – value of 1.96 ($0.66 < 1.96$) at 0.05 level of significance and 131 degree of freedom. This means that respondents from federal and state universities did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on relevance of integrating soft skills in business education curriculum and hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the integration of technology and soft skills in business education curriculum was perceived very relevant by business educators South South, Nigeria. This finding corresponds with the discovery of McIntosh (2013) which reported that the integration of technology and soft skills in the curriculum make graduates report for work with the right attitude. Hence, Gordon-Brydson (2013) averred that graduates lack the relevant work experience of the globalized workplace due to shallow integration of technology and soft skills in the process of learning. Similarly, Heimler (2010) opined that integrating technology and soft skills in higher educational curriculum are very relevant for successful job retention and career advancement among employees. It is imperative for business educators to equip their students with technology and soft skills for them to measure up to the expectations of the globalized workplace. This support, Kazilan Hamzah and Bakar (2009) that industries must collaborate with technical and vocational educators to evaluate the degree of business education to enable students possess the relevant technology and soft skills prior to graduation.

Furthermore, findings of this study reveal that gender and school type does not significantly affect respondents' mean ratings on the relevance of integrating technology and soft skill in business education curriculum. This finding agrees with the discovery of Ann-Marie (2015) who reported that it is the responsibility of educators and tertiary institutions to identify, integrate and implement relevant technology and soft skills in their curriculum to help students perform effectively in the globalized workplace. The outcome of this study also agrees with the finding of McIntosh (2013) who averred that the integration of technology and soft skills in the business education curriculum will make employers of labour recruit vocational business education graduates to fill vocational careers because they would be prepared for the globalized workplace. This is in agreement with the position of Abraham and Karns (2009) that educational institutions running business education programmes needs to include technology and soft skills in their curriculum because preparing students for employment in the globalized workplace is the mission of business educators and educational institutions.

Conclusion

Business education programmes will have no global focus in the era of globalization, if the educational experiences of business education curriculum cannot empower students to meet the impacts and challenges of globalization. The advent of globalization has brought about the new development, knowledge and skills into the business world. It is therefore expected of business education programmes to equip students with globalized workplace skills so that they can notice a trend and create wealth with it. view of the finding of this study, It was concluded that graduates of business education programmes would easily familiarize themselves with the diverse operations of the globalized workplace upon graduation when relevant technology and soft skills are integrated and implemented in content of business education curriculum.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Equipping business education students with the relevant technology and soft skill needed in the globalized should be the priority of business educators.
2. ICT manufacturing companies, internet service providers, employers of labour and international communities should support business education programmes in Nigeria by providing affordable computers and telecommunication gadgets, reliable internet services as well as sponsor in-service training courses for the acquisition of technology and soft skills for business educators in the country.

3. Business teachers' education curriculum designers should incorporate the relevant technology and soft skills of the globalized workplace in the teaching and learning of business education courses.

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