



School-Industry Partnership and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State Universities

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated School-Industry Partnership and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State Universities. Four objectives and four research questions were raised to guide the study while four null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The researcher adopted a correlational survey research design for the study. The population of the study consisted of 511 final year Business Education Students from two Universities: Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. No sampling was carried out for this study due to the manageable size of the population. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researcher titled "School-Industry Partnership and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State Universities (SIPBEESRSU)". The instrument was validated by three experts: two from the field of Business Education and the other from the field of Measurement and Evaluation. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (r) Formula was used to test the reliability of the instrument and co-efficients of 0.87 and 0.76 were obtained. Data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to answer the four research questions and hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance and T-transformation was used to test the strength of the hypotheses. Findings from the study showed that SIWES, Teaching Practice, Workshops/Conferences and Entrepreneurial Practice enhances Employability Skills of Business Education Students in Rivers State Universities. It was recommended that students should be given active supervision in their various places of attachment to enable them acquire the required practical skills for Employability.

Keywords: School-Industry Partnership, Employability Skills, Business Education and Students

Introduction

In contemporary times, employability is becoming one of the main goals for educational programmes with the rapid rise in globalization. Economy is advancing, also, industries and businesses are making fundamental shifts in the way they organize and operate in the new world economy. Business Education programme is required to produce highly skilled graduates who are able to respond to the ever-changing and complex needs of the workplace. Employability is a lifelong process that encourages students to develop variety of skills, knowledge, behaviors and attitude that enable them to succeed (Tanius, 2018).

Employability of graduates especially those of Business Education is rapidly gaining serious attention among stakeholders. Employers require graduates who are adaptable and have strong characteristics such as self-determination, highly innovative, creative, and competitive and possess employability skills in order to achieve a goal and face challenges of globalization in the current knowledge and technology (Imeokpara & Ediagbonya, 2012).

Employability skills are those transferable skills required by students to get, keep and progress successfully in an organization (Msheli, 2019). Employability skills are used not only to find a job but important for job effectiveness and job, employment retention (Okolocha & Odimmega, 2019). A major concern of students knowledge of on what constitutes employability skills because the skills possessed by them may seem to be different from what the employers want. Iwu (2019) noted that the employability skills needed to equip graduates of business education to be able to face the challenges of work expectations are: communication, ability, teamwork, self-confidence, resilience (ability to absolve pressure or shock), technological ability, professional ethics, thinking/analytical ability, positive attitude, willingness to learn, human relations abilities etc. Acquisitions of these employability skills are crucial for students to be effective in their chosen field of endeavour. It is pertinent and also expected that stakeholders in tertiary institutions should be able to capture some specific and basic skills required for the world of work and also identify a possible mismatch between what is taught and the needs of employers of labour.

Business Education is an aspect of vocational and technical Education, a specialized programme of instruction designed to provide students with appropriate skills, knowledge and attitude, leading to employability and career attainment in organizations. Ezeanyawu and Oguejiorfor, (2020) defined Business Education as the training and re-training of the learner to become productive in a paid employment or to be self-employed. Amesi, (2010) affirmed that Business Education covers a wide spectrum of livelihood activities, pedagogical and desirable business competencies required for employment or being employed with a view to making its recipients self-reliant with appropriate infrastructures and equipment for learning. It is an

educational programme that prepares students to gain employment, progress successfully and also handle their own businesses.

Business Education has a vital role to play in today's dynamic global era where at every moment the new challenges need to be met. Azuka and Nwosu (2018) suggested that in order to keep Business Education programme in line with the demands of our ever-changing business environment, there is need for School-Industry Partnership.

School-industry partnership is the collaboration between formal education and industry to create enabling training environment for students to acquire hands-on experience, knowledge, skills and appropriate attitude to work (Emeasoba and Mmuo, 2018). It also enriches the educational process through the ideas, skills, competencies and talents of industrial managers and also gives Business Education Students the opportunity to receive appropriate training from the real work environment which helps to bridge the gap between the needs of the employers of labour and classroom experience. Ejeka and Ebenezer (2018) noted that school-industry partnership involves a bilateral agreement formal or informal to foster collaboration in education.

Partnership has been deduced as the interaction or cooperation of two or more organisations or agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects (Oyinloye&Asonibare, 2020). Industries through partnership with schools could be made to meaningfully contribute to the training of students in appropriate and contemporary skills that relate to their interest (Rossi, 2010). It is imperative for industries to become actively involved in training students to complement classroom experience in order to acquaint them with practical skill for employability after graduation. Business Education lecturers and organisational managers need to apply synergies in their partnership with industries to achieve the objectives of the training. Okoro (2010) stated that as the industries participate in the training of students, certain deficiencies that existed in the training of the students will be reduced or completely eliminated.

Although, Business Education students are exposed to Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) and teaching practice, it still appears that the knowledge and skills gained and acquired from the schemes are not sufficient to enable them be at their effective best. Schools need to partner with industries for research assistance and collaboration, curriculum-planning, infrastructural provision/scholarship work shop/conferences, field trip and many others. Ogonda (2017) asserted that some ways school-industry can partner together in Business Education programme apart from SIWES and Teaching Practice include: workshops/conferences, curriculum planning, Students Internship, monetary contribution, research grants and field trips. However, the researchers consider some of these aspects of school-industry partnership as provided by Ogonda (2017) to constitute the focus of the research.

As one of the pertinent indices of school-industry partnership, Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) is regarded as one of the trainings required of every student in vocational or Business Education programme to gain, and it was introduced in 1974. It was also designed to expose and prepare students to meet practical aspects of their training in industry. One of the principles underlying any Industrial Work Experience Scheme for students in Institutions of learning is the desire to marry the practical aspect with the theoretical learning which characterises conventional classroom situations with a view to striking a balance between theory and practice (Ekpenyong, 2011). Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) plays significant roles to Business Education Students as regards professional development without which transition from the classroom to the world of work will be inadequate and haphazard. Without this training, students will graduate as half-baked.

Teaching Practice is designed to give the students an opportunity to put into practice the theories relating to the principles and purpose of education, which they have learned. It also exposes the students to the real school and class situation where he/she acquires some practical experiences in the art of teaching as well as get adapted or acquainted with the social settings of the institution.

Workshops/conferences are programmes that contribute in activating and reactivating the knowledge ability of students in different aspects of their academic pursuit. Schools need to partner with industries to equip students with current innovation with new-age technologies. Ensuring a proper flow of knowledge, conferences and workshops assist in passionate interaction and active participation, boosting the skills of students, Workshops and conferences are an innovative and welcomed development towards modern education, its prime objective is to assemble the like-minded intellectuals and professionals to trade ideas, thoughts, and views related to a specific topic. Generally, when schools partner with industries to organise workshops and conferences, it helps to enhance students' employability skills, gain expert knowledge, and renewing motivation and confidence. It also improves students' hands-on skills to try out new method to meet real life environment.

Entrepreneurial Practice is a process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas, combining them with management and organisational skills in order to meet an identified need and thereby creating wealth (Adebisi, 2015). Business Education teaches students the entrepreneurial skills that enable them to be employed and also manage economic stability. Entrepreneurial Practice builds competencies in learners and increases their capabilities for putting knowledge into action and developing enterprises. Thus, students with entrepreneurial skills have better employability skills and are of advantage to the workforce, the community and the country's economy.

Statement of the Problem

The objective of school-industry partnership is to relate theory to practice. Before a Business Education Student graduates, the student is expected to marry theory and practice because Business Education is a programme in which a graduate is required to demonstrate thorough practical and mental skills. Thus, the training ought to be approximate situations in the real world of work, especially with compulsory industrial training requirement.

Despite this requirement, it has been observed that the quality of skills imparted to students does not meet the standard demanded in Industries and has contributed to unemployment, poverty, and low economic growth in the nation. Okeke-Ezeanyanwu & Oguejiofor (2019) stated that employers mostly complain of possession of inadequate skills, low practical know-how and lack of confidence among Business Education graduates. Could this be as a result of failure within the supervision component of their training, lack of proper placement of trainees by some organisation or that the students do not seem to be mindful of those exercises?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine school-industry partnership and business education students' employability skills in Rivers State Universities. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the relationship between the experiences gained from teaching practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State Universities.
2. Determine the relationship between the experiences gained from Entrepreneurial Practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State Universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between the experiences gained from teaching practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State Universities?
2. What is the relationship between the experiences gained from Entrepreneurial Practice and Business Education Students' Employability skills in Rivers State Universities?

Hypotheses

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

1. There is no significant relationship between the experiences gained from Teaching Practice and Business Education Students' Employability skills in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.
2. There is no significant relationship between the experiences gained from Entrepreneurial Practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

Method

The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study was 511 Business Education Final Year Students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The entire population was used due to the fact that the population of the study was manageable. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled "School-Industry Partnership and Employability Skills of Business Education Students". The instrument was designed on a four-point rating scale of strongly agree (SA-4points), Agree (A-3points), Disagree (D-2points) and Strongly Disagree (SD-1point) respectively. The instrument was validated by three experts: two from Department of Business Education and another from Measurement and Evaluation Department, all in the Faculty of Education of Rivers State University. The reliability of the instrument was established using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient Formula. Copies of the instrument were administered to 15 Business Education Students in University of Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State who were not part of the population, using test re-test method. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Co-efficient (PPMCC) method and a reliability co-efficient of 0.87 and 0.76 was established. A total of 499 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved from the 511 copies distributed. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient to answer the research questions and hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance and T-transformation was used to test the strength of the hypotheses. A hypothesis was accepted if the r-calculated was less than r-critical and was rejected if the calculated r-value was equal to or greater than the critical r-value.

Results

The results from the study were presented as follows:

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between the experiences gained from teaching practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State Universities?

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Relationship Between The Experiences Gained From Teaching Practice And Business Education Students' Employability Skills In Rivers State Universities.

| | | Experience Gained from Teaching Practice | | Employability Skills |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Experience Gained from Teaching Practice | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | .181 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | .000 |
| | N | 449 | | 449 |
| Employability Skills | Pearson Correlation | .181 | | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | |
| | N | 499 | | 499 |

Source: SPSS (2022) (Details in Appendix C)

Table 1; The table showed that the r was 0.181 with the P value <0.001. This implies that the result strongly agreed that there is a strong relationship

between the experiences gained from teaching practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State Universities.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between the experiences gained from Entrepreneurial Practice and Business Education Students' Employability skills in Rivers State Universities?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the Relationship Between The Experiences Gained From Entrepreneurial Practice And Business Education Students' Employability Skills In Rivers State Universities.

| | Experience Gained from Entrepreneurial Practice | Business Education Students Employability Skills |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Experience Gained from Entrepreneurial Practice | Pearson Correlation 1 | .159 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 449 |
| Business Education Students Employability Skills | Pearson Correlation .159 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 499 |

Source: SPSS (2022) (Details in Appendix C)

Table 2: The table showed that the r was 0.159 with the P value <0.001 . This implies that the result strongly agreed that there is a strong relationship between the experiences gained from Entrepreneurial Practice and Business Education Students' Employability skills in Rivers State Universities.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses for this study were tested as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the experiences gained from Teaching Practice and Business Education Students' Employability skills in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

Table 1: Summary Of Calculated R Of Significant Relationship Between The Experiences Gained From Teaching Practice And Business Education Students' Employability Skills In Rivers State University And Ignatius Ajuru University Of Education.

| | Experience Gained from Teaching Practice | Employability Skills |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Experience Gained from Teaching Practice | Pearson Correlation 1 | .181 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 449 |
| Employability Skills | Pearson Correlation .181 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | N | 499 |

r-square=0.0328.

The result from Table 1 showed the summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between the experiences gained from Teaching Practice and Business Education Students' Employability skills in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education was strong ($r=0.181$). The r -squared value of 0.033 showed that Teaching Practice contributed about 0.33% to the observed variance in Employability Skills. The $p < (.001)$ showed that there is significant relationship between Teaching Practice and Business Education Students' Employability skills. The null hypothesis one was retained at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1 further showed a t -transformation value of 2.33 with a critical t value of ± 1.645 . This means that since the t -transformation value is statistically greater than the table value, there is a strong relationship between Teaching Practice and Business Education Students' Employability skills. The value of r was therefore accepted, which indicated that there is significant relationship between Teaching Practice and Business Education Students' Employability skills in Rivers State Universities.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between the experiences gained from Entrepreneurial Practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education

Table 2: Summary Of Calculated R Of Significant Relationship Between The Experiences Gained From Entrepreneurial Practice And Business Education Students' Employability Skills In Rivers State University And Ignatius Ajuru University Of Education

| | | Experience Gained from Entrepreneurial Practice | Business Education Students Employability Skills |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Experience Gained from Entrepreneurial Practice | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .159 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 449 | 449 |
| Business Education Students Employability Skills | Pearson Correlation | .159 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 499 | 499 |

r-square=0.0252.

The result from Table 2 showed the summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between the experiences gained from Entrepreneurial Practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education was strong ($r=0.159$). The r-squared value of 0.025 showed that Entrepreneurial Practice contributed about 0.03% to the observed variance in Employability Skills. The ($p<.001$) showed that there is significant relationship between Entrepreneurial Practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills. The null hypothesis two was retained at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 2 further showed a t-transformation value of 2.09 with a critical t value of ± 1.645 . This means that since the t-transformation value is statistically greater than the table value, there is a strong relationship between Entrepreneurial Practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State Universities. The value of r was therefore accepted, which indicated that there is significant relationship between Entrepreneurial Practice and Business Education Students' Employability Skills in Rivers State Universities.

Discussion of Findings

The first findings revealed that Teaching Practice Exposes students to test theories learnt and idea within the classroom as they come in contact with real life situations; Teaching Practice exposes students to the concept of the way to manage classroom interactions and students' behaviour to make a secure, conducive learning atmosphere; Teaching Practice Exposes students towards to demonstrate self-confidence and knowledge of content and also the importance of curriculum to students' daily life, Teaching Practice Exposes students to the acceptable assessment tools and methods to determine students' learning; Teaching practice serves as a means whereby schools can assess the standard of training being provided by teacher training institutions; Teaching practice facilitates the reduction of recruiting and retention costs. The finding is in line with the work of Emerole and Muraina (2015) which shows that teaching practice is an integral component of teacher training. It grants student teachers experience in the actual teaching and learning environment. Teaching practice is a form of work-integrated learning that is described as a period of time when students are working in the relevant industry to receive specific in-service training so as to apply theory in practice (Emerole and Muraina, 2015). Ajileye (2012) research shows that teaching practice as an exercise that offers the teacher trainees opportunity of putting into practice all they have gained during their exposure to different forms of principles and courses. Teaching practice is an essential component of teacher education which is capable of creating the potential teacher fit well into the teaching profession. The present NCE teacher education lays great emphasis on teaching practice (Olusanya, 2020). The new NCE standards spell out that teaching practice should be done in the first semester of the third year for a period of six months. The prerequisite to teaching practice is a pass in micro-teaching. Students who fail micro-teaching shall not proceed on teaching practice. It is essential, therefore, that NCE-Awarding institutions make sure that methodology courses and their related content courses are planned along with micro teaching opportunities are fully covered before teaching practice (NCCE, 2012). Ubolom and Enyakit (2015) revealed that teaching practice is directed towards developing the learner to become productive in teaching, paid employment and self-employment.

The second findings revealed that Entrepreneurial Practice enhances the skills of students to become job creators, reduce high rate of poverty, insecurity and violence; entrepreneurial Practice enhances students' ability to identify and exploit a business opportunity, Ability to organize the necessary resources to respond to the opportunity, Students experience what it means to own and manage real enterprise, Allows students with the opportunity to undertake an authentic learning experience with an innovative and entrepreneurial focus, Provides students with enough training that will enable them to be creative in identifying new business opportunities. The findings are in line with the work of Oduma (2012) who found out that entrepreneurial practice and business education programme are part of the education programme that prepares individuals to undertake the operation of small business enterprises. It is a programme of instruction that enables the beneficiaries to be properly equipped to establish and operate profit-oriented business ventures. Entrepreneurial practice has the potential to equip business education students with the relevant entrepreneurial skills for economic empowerment and employment generation (Nwokike, 2016). Entrepreneurial practice provides Business Education students with the needed skills and ability to exploit an idea and create an enterprise not only for personal gain but also for social and developmental gain (Olagunje, 2014).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that school-industry partnership is a good programme that helps to ensure positive collaboration between school and the industry. The programme enables Business Education students to be equipped with required skills needed by organizations for employment.

Recommendations

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

1. Students should be given active supervision in their various places of attachment to enable them acquire the desired practical skills.
2. Industrial Training Fund should make adequate provision for Industrial Training placement for IT students
3. Department of Business Education should seek partnership with companies to seek placement opportunities for Industrial Attachment and other related business activities.
4. Entrepreneurial Practice should be encouraged and taken seriously by the Department of Business Education through organising skills acquisition programmes that will enhance student abilities and skills.

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