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ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND SCHOOL-INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP AS: TOOLS FOR PREPARING TERTIARY BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the extent academic research and school industry partnership can be vital tools for preparing tertiary business education programme for global competitiveness. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 117 business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire which was validated by three experts in education. The test of reliability on the instrument yielded coefficient values of 0.75 and 0.78 for Sections A and B respectively with an average reliability coefficient of 0.76. The mean value was used to answer the research questions while the standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' ratings. Findings revealed that academic research and school-industry partnerships are tools for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness to a high extent. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that business education can attain global competitiveness if adequate attention is given investment in academic research and promotion of school-industry partnerships. The researchers recommended among others that special attention should be paid to improving the quality of academic research in the tertiary business education programme by ensuring that benchmarks for research are formulated

Keywords: Academic Research, School-Industry Partnership, Business Education, Global Competitiveness

Introduction

Education is a tool that facilitates development. It is the means through which people gain new skills and knowledge required to deal with life situations. In Nigeria, education is regarded as instrument per excellence because it is seen as that tool that guide individuals with the requisite knowledge, skills and competences needed to function actively in the society. Tertiary education is one of the levels of formal education in Nigeria. It is that level of education that prepares students for work life. Tertiary level of education is integral to the production of human capital of Nigeria in that it is that level of education that produces

professional work force of a nation. The business education programme is one of the academic programmes at the tertiary level of education. It is an academic programme that is hailed for its role in the social and economic development of a nation (Okoro, 2018). According to Obiete, Nwazor and Vin-Mbah (2015), business education programme is unique because of its ability to equip its recipients with skills to function independently as self-employed and employers of labour.

According to Okoro (2018), the objectives of business education include among others, providing opportunity for practice job preparation or vocation studies for students in order to make them render effective and efficient services in office, distributive and service occupations and preparing students based on interests and aptitudes with the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to enter into a business occupation, advance and profit in it. However, the changes in the business environment have made it necessary that business education should not only prepare students for office occupation and business management but should also prepare students for global business leadership. This means that business education should be able to produce graduate who are globally competitive in the business world.

Global competitiveness can be defined as ability and performance of a form, sub-sector or country to sell and supply goods and services in a given market, in relation to the ability and performance of other market (Ogudus & Crossdale-Ovwido, 2020). Karma (2012) defined global competitiveness as involving an extensive knowledge base and technology, a global human network, and Internet technology to succeed against international competition (regionally, nationally, or internationally). Thus, global competitiveness in this study can be defined as the ability to modernize the content of business education curriculum, collaborate with other business experts and integrate of technology in order to produce graduates that can succeed in the local, national and global business environment. In order for business education to achieve global competitiveness authors like Avolio, Benzaquen and Pretel (2019) noted that business education needs to take into cognizance the need for academic research and the facilitation of collaboration between school and industry.

Although ongoing disputes show that there is a gap between business management research and teaching of business education, academic research must be matched with the needs of stakeholders. Academic research frequently overlooks the practical significance, real-world application, and consequences. The business education program, like other management programs, has been chastised for putting too much emphasis on teaching-related research and performing restricted, unnecessary, and impracticable research studies. To address the needs of stakeholders, Avolio et al (2019) argued that business education will have to be more purposeful about their research investments and more explicit about analyzing the return. According to Oviawe and Uwameiye (2020),

business education must educate students for the changes that are occurring in the business world today by ensuring that research is relevant to the demands of stakeholders.

According to Bryan and Henry (2012), the relationship between business and the local school system involves a number of stakeholders cooperating to achieve common goals. Business leaders, on the other hand, want to collaborate with schools in more meaningful ways than just sponsoring events (Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012). Therefore, stakeholders in business education need to be more active in the program's operation. Students, businesses, the government, the local community, faculty, and staff cannot be separated from one another. The extent to which increased interaction between school and industry as laying emphasis on academic research would prepare tertiary business education for global competitiveness has not been empirically ascertained in Anambra State. The researcher therefore determined through empirically investigation business educators rating of academic research and school industry partnership as tools for preparing tertiary business education programme for global competitiveness in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Business education as a skill development programme is supposed to position its recipients with 21st century office skills required in the global business environment. However, rising unemployment in Nigeria among graduates (including business education graduates) has indicated that the business education programme seem to be finding it difficult to equip its students with the needed skills. Some authors seem to suggest that innovations in information and communication technology is drastically changing the way traditional business operations are carried out and the business education programme is struggling to "catch up" when they are supposed to be the trend setters. The researcher wonders why the tertiary business education programme in Nigeria is still fixated with teaching old principles and concepts in business while the global business environment is riddled with lots of innovative financial technological practices. This appears to show lack of innovative and spells doom for the development of Nigeria's business outlook.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent is academic research a tool for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness?
2. To what extent is school industry partnership a tool for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness?

Research Method

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 117 business educators in tertiary institutions (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (24), Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbaria Campus (5), Federal College of Education

(Technical), Umunze (71), NwaforOrizu College of Education, Nsugbe (10) and Madonna University, Okija (7) in the State. The instrument was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was titled "Academic Research and School Industry Partnership as Tools for Global Competitiveness in Business Education Questionnaire (ARSIPTGCBEQ)". The instrument was structured on a 4- point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The instrument contains 16 items split in two sections according to the research questions. Section A contains eight items on academic research as tool for improving global competitiveness of the business education programme while Section B contains eight items on school industry partnership as tools improving global competitiveness of the business education programme. The instrument was validated by three experts in the Department of Technology and Vocational Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument was further subject to a pilot test on 20 business educators in Delta State. The application of the Cronbach Alpha reliability test on the returned data yielded coefficient values of 0.75 and 0.78 for Sections and B respectively with an average reliability coefficient of 0.76. The researcher administered the questionnaire by sending copies of the questionnaires to the e-mails and Whatsapp messages of the business educators. In cases where it was difficult administering the instrument electronically. An appointment was made and the instrument was administered on the spot and retrieved. Out of the 117 copies of questionnaire administered, 88 copies were returned in good condition and were used for the collection of data for the study. The mean value was used to answer the research questions while the standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' ratings. In analyzing the mean value, the decision rule will be based on the real limit of numbers as shown below:

Response option	**Values**
Real Limit	
Very High Extent	4
3.50-4.00	
High Extent	3
2.50-3.49	
Low Extent	2
1.50-2.49	
Very Low Extent	1
1.00- 1.49	

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Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: To what extent is academic research a tool for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness?

Table 1: Respondents Mean Rating on the Extent Academic Research is a Tool for Preparing Tertiary Business Education for Global Competitiveness

S/N	Items	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remarks
1.	Ensuring that funds are made available to business educators for research	3.06	0.73	High Extent
2.	Employing more research assistants to help in research activities in business education	3.18	0.76	High Extent
3.	Providing free internet services for research activities	3.20	0.78	High Extent
4.	Providing an automated library system in the business education programme	3.11	0.70	High Extent
5.	Ensuring that research is targeted at meeting needs of industry	3.35	0.84	High Extent
6.	Ensuring that research is aimed at improving teaching of business education	3.15	0.75	High Extent
7.	Encouraging business educator to engage in collaborative research works with their colleagues abroad	3.33	0.82	High Extent
8.	Providing a benchmark for research works in the business education programme	3.28	0.86	High Extent
	Cluster Mean	3.20		High Extent

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents rated all the items (1-8) with mean ratings ranging from 3.11 to 3.35 and standard deviations ranging between 0.70 to 0.86 on the extent academic research is a tool for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness to a high extent. The cluster mean of 3.20 indicate that academic research is a tool for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness to a high extent.

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Research Question 2: To what extent is school-industry partnership a tool for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness?

Table 2: Respondents Mean Rating on the Extent School-Industry Partnership is a Tool for Preparing Tertiary Business Education for Global Competitiveness

S/N	Items	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remarks
1.	Sending lecturers to industries periodically to upgrade and modernize their practical knowledge on workplace technologies	3.10	0.71	High Extent
2.	Inviting business experts in public tertiary institution as guest speakers in conferences, symposia, seminars and workshops in private business organizations	3.23	0.75	High Extent
3.	Institutionalizing exchange programmes between business education lecturers and industry experts	3.18	0.80	High Extent
4.	Increasing partnership with industry in the area of curriculum development	3.09	0.78	High Extent
5.	Using public private partnership to create sustained academic and career navigation supports for students	3.28	0.76	High Extent
6.	Utilizing school-industry partnership to provide resources for business education	3.04	0.70	High Extent
7.	Engaging business experts in technology integration process of the business education programme	3.37	0.85	High Extent
8.	Co-investing (government and industry) in facilities and equipment	3.19	0.81	High Extent
	Cluster Mean	3.18		High Extent

Data in Table 2 reveal that the respondents rated all the items (1-8) with mean ratings ranging from 3.04 to 3.37 and standard deviation ranging between 0.70 to 0.85 on the extent school-industry partnership is a tool for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness to a high extent. The cluster mean of 3.18 indicate that school-industry partnership is a tool for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness to a high extent.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that academic research is a tool for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness to a high extent. Findings further reveal that ensuring that research is

targeted at meeting needs of industry, encouraging business educator to engage in collaborative research works with their colleagues abroad, providing a benchmark for research works in the business education programme, providing free internet services for research activities and employing more research assistants to help in research activities in business education would help business education in its preparation for global effectiveness. This finding is in agreement with Avolio et al (2019) held that for business education to achieve global competitiveness that the programme will have to be more purposeful about their research investments and more explicit about analyzing the return. According to Ogudus and Crossdale-Ovwido (201220), business education must educate students for the changes that are occurring in the business world today by ensuring that research is relevant to the demands of stakeholders.

Findings also revealed that school-industry partnership is a tool for preparing tertiary business education for global competitiveness to a high extent. Finding further showed that engaging business experts in technology integration process of the business education programme, using public private partnership to create sustained academic and career navigation supports for students, inviting business experts in public tertiary institution as guest speakers in conferences, symposia, seminars and workshops in private business organizations, co-investing (government and industry) in facilities and equipment, institutionalizing exchange programmes between business education lecturers and industry experts and increasing partnership with industry in the area of curriculum development among others would help business education in its preparation for global effectiveness. This finding is in line with Bryan and Henry (2012) who stated that collaboration between public and private stakeholders is key to achieving global competitiveness in the business education programme. According to Willems and Gonzalez-DeHass (2012), school industry partnership should move beyond donating items and facilities to school to stakeholder having a say on what should be taught in the business education programme.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that business education can attain global competitiveness if adequate attention is given investment in academic research and promotion of school-industry partnerships. The researchers therefore believe that placing emphasis on research and improving collaborations between business education and industry will improve the quality of the business education products and make them competitive in the global business market.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the researchers recommend among others that:

1. Special attention should be paid to improving the quality of academic research in the tertiary business education programme by ensuring that benchmarks for research are

formulated. Government should also ensure that funds are readily provided for research activities.

2. The Federal and state government should adopt a regulatory framework for the institutionalization of collaborative or public private partnership (PPP) programmes for business education programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

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