

Globalizing Business Education Curriculum Experiences in Nigeria Higher Education for Enhanced Students' Employability

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ABSTRACT: *The growing challenges of globalisation, internationalization and labour market are pushing universities to rethink their curriculum learning experiences in developing economies. Hence the study seeks ways to strengthen the business education curriculum learning experiences in order to improve creativity and innovative capacities of students in knowledge - based economy. The survey study used 120 business educators involve in curriculum planning and design from four selected universities in the Niger Delta States. Internal consistency of the measured scale was determined by using split-half method correlated with coefficient alpha to obtain 0.75. Quantitative data analysed using descriptive statistics revealed the need to expose the students to multi-cultural environments, critical and analytical perspectives of global economic opportunities, and entrepreneurial skills that can help them function actively in domestic and international business environments. In conclusion, the paper charged stakeholders to incorporate into the business education programs global practices to enrich students' employability status.*

KEYWORDS: Globalisation, Curriculum Experiences, Employability, Internationalization.

INTRODUCTION

Influx of graduates yearly into the labour market with limited hope for gainful employment has become a worrisome experience in developing countries. This unusual trend has been attributed to economic changes in countries and global labour market which increasingly resulted in new requirements to the quality of graduates and new approaches to their competitiveness (Aimzhan, Gaukhar, Zhanar, Turar, Laura & Kulzinat, 2015), disparity and inconsistency of the curriculum to current economic realities (ABEN, 2003), Again, critics have equally lamented the slow adaptation of business education in Nigeria to research and technological challenges (Ekpenyong & Nwabuisi, 2003), Okoro & Ihimekpen (2003), increasing changes pose by technology, inadequate teaching resources and teaching methods which negatively affected effective teaching and learning experiences (Coker, 2001). The above scholarly arguments indicate that the business education in Nigeria curriculum lack broad –based learning experiences and is inconsistent with its philosophy of employability. Many graduates unfortunately in Nigeria have retired by age while waiting consciously either for employment in government owned parastatals or in the organized private sector. National Bureau of Statistics (2016) captured the current economic reality of unemployed or underemployed at 24.4 million in first quarter of the year to over 26.06 million with negative consequences on the Gross Domestic Product. The GDP growth plummeted deeper from 0.36 in first quarter to 2.06 percent year-on-year in second quarter with over 16 percent inflation. The current labour market according to Emiefele (2016) represents about 48 percent of the workforce. Bamber (2012) in rethinking education forum organized by the European commission lamented the increasing proportion of youth unemployment in Europe. Oliveira

(2010) also noted that more than 50 percent of Portuguese unemployed university graduates are out of work for more than six months against the OECD average 42 percent framework. This figure however portrays a total disconnection between what education offer and the needs of labour market. The curriculum structure of business education varies from one country to another. Business education in Nigeria is at variance with global business education standards. It is sacrosanct, a mix of business and education. Although envisioned to adequately prepare graduates its curriculum has been education dominated in Nigeria with well over 30 percent non-business courses. What we teach can hardly prepare graduates to have global understanding of international economy.

Although unemployment debacle is not an Africa experience alone but a global phenomenon, the Nigeria's experience is a call to question the extent business education curriculum is globalized and employable in higher education institutions (HEIs). The content and provisions of business education curriculum in Nigeria is yet to be relevant in the 21st century especially with the overwhelming influence of globalization, internationalization, information and communication technology rapidly shaping the world. In higher education settings, globalisation refers to flow of technology, economy, and knowledge, mobility of people, values, and ideas across borders. According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 1999) globalisation affects countries in different ways due to nation's peculiarity, cultural orientations, history, traditions and priorities. Green & Baer (2000) view the adoption of 'globalisation' by many universities in their mission statements as a way of producing globally competent graduates with rich inter-cultural understanding. In actual sense, universities are more entrepreneurial and competitive nowadays in their quest to produce globally relevant graduates. These institutions sell or export their educational programmes and services attracting other country nationals, engage in collaborations, development assistance, and offer training courses through distance learning, e-learning or direct recruitments of students. Globalisation, therefore, is concerned with the teaching and learning processes that enable students have global perspectives of issues, events, opportunities and rich knowledge of cultural diversity, languages to function in different cultural environments. All these to a large extent not only project the institutional outlook but exact pressure on the academic programme's curriculum, teaching and learning experiences that we want the students learn, understand and think globally. Therefore, it is absolutely wrong to do something the same way and expect different results.

Policy makers, non –governmental organisations and the academia especially in developing countries must be more concerned with how to strengthen creativity and innovative capacities of students in ways that are relevant to employability. A challenging problem that requires business educators to be more concerned with how students' learn, assume new and different roles in the ever – changing world. Thus, increasing academic, technical, employability knowledge and soft skills are critical occupational requirements if business education curriculum must improve students' entrepreneurial skills and personal worth. Specifically, curriculum must have value-goal –oriented learning contents that is capable of producing the desirable changes in behaviour. Samuel & Alamina (2007) referring to the progressives' approach to curriculum planning advocate for change in the conception of knowledge, scientific knowledge and learning process and connecting the formal education to the life of the learner and changing demands of the larger society. The above scholarly proposition is in congruence with the study position that the business education curriculum in higher education today should be re –examined to prepare graduates with analytical and critical skills to play key role in global economy, explore domestic and multi-cultural business environments and in

society. The learning experiences in business education appear to have not achieved these objectives as evident in its low employability status and products' inability to meet the demands of employers and society. In fact, great disparity exists in its course content, context, staff /student mix, quality of teaching, and funding in Nigeria compare to what is obtained in developed countries. Traditional business education practised by most higher education institutions has been roundly criticized for its inability to meet the needs of business graduates who aim to be competitive in the global market (Kao & Mao, 2011, Hawawini, 2005). These pertinent issues raised form the basis for investigation and provide the alibi for contributing to the growing body of knowledge in business education literature.

Research Questions

The research questions set for the study include:

1. How employable is the current business education curriculum learning experiences?
2. What are the consequences of globalization to business education learning experiences?
3. How do the global best practices that could be adopted enhance business education employability skill development?

Globalization and Employability Content of Business Education Curriculum

Business education an essential aspect of vocational education provides students self-actualization and self-reliant skills to actively contribute to individual economy, local and national industrial growth. It produces army of entrepreneurs that explores, expands the frontiers of domestic and international economy, turn natural resources into finished goods and services to create opportunities for others. Thus, business education promotes the understanding of business environment, economic literacy and ability to be successful in variety of careers. Curriculum modernization is crucial if the business education objectives of producing graduates who can participate in global economy, function in domestic and international business environment, develop information technology skills, and integrate business concepts and skills with relevant academic knowledge must be attained. Kao & Mao (2011) emphasized the need to develop customizable curricula by business schools to assist students in identifying and learning critical skills, knowledge and attitudes to compete in their targeted global markets. Business education employment potential cannot be overemphasized in an era of economic recession. All over the world, higher education institutions factored employability and creativity into their curriculum to provide potential students desirable learning experiences culminating into productive knowledge, skill and attitude (KSA) in life. Current scientific literature contends that the workplace is dynamic and business education graduates need more than academic knowledge to be successful as employees and entrepreneurs. Technical competency is no longer sufficient as success in national and global workplace is dependent largely on development of human relation skills, self- management and workplace enhancement skills such as decision making and critical thinking. Therefore, the usual teaching philosophy and learning experiences in this new globalised age will only succeed to make business graduates more globally deficient and unfit. Besides, critics have even cautioned that as the social, political, individual, and business needs are rapidly changing, business education curriculum must equally respond smartly to meet the needs. In view of the above, diffusion of innovation theory was adopted to explain the connectivity between globalization and higher education precisely business education in the 21st century.

The theory developed by Everett Rogers in 1962 elucidates how, over time an idea or product gain momentum, diffuses or spreads through a specific population or social system. It simply enables community of adopters' behave or do things differently rather than bureaucratic resisting innovation in organizational settings. According to Sahin (2005), Sherry and Gibson (2005) the process of adopting new innovations has been studied for over 30 years. Rogers' diffusion of innovation has been popularized by increasing scientific interest amongst researchers who use the model successfully to develop framework in political science, public health, communication, economic, technology and education (Dooley, 1999 and Stuart, 2002). Innovation is spread basically through itself, communication channels, time and social system build around human capital. In this case, innovators are institutional leaders usually driven by passion for innovation, venturesome and always willing to take risks to implement new ideas in higher education institutions. Adoption of globalisation and internationalization is conceived as an innovative approach to business education curriculum modernization. Importantly, Globalisation and internationalization is rapidly changing what and how we teach, learn and inventing new employable skills. Gibb, Haskins & Roberson (2009) refer to internationalization as part of competitive strategy employs by higher education institution for enriching student experiences and existing staff development that consequently leads to curriculum development and innovation, greater cultural sensitivity, promoting partnership with academic and industry. Again, internationalization is just a way higher education institutions (HEIs) respond to the global pressures and opportunities. Thus, institutions increasingly perceive themselves as being in an internationally competitive market place, for staff, for students, for income generation and for research (UNESCO, 2003, Altbach & Knight, 2006). Innovative approach to education presupposes developing all inclusive curricula irrespective of student nationality, cultural and social class or gender identities that prepares them to engage in a culture of communication and work that is fast becoming global (Haigh, 2002). Jones and Killick (2007) refer to internationalization of the curriculum as encompassing all learning experiences leading into development of student cognitive, attitudinal and affective domains while studying. It inculcates in students' wide range of values – openness, tolerance, and culturally inclusive behaviour that enable them adapt swiftly to global environment thereby improving their chances in global labour market. However, graduate employment futures, in the context of a global labour market, are characterized by frequent job, occupational and locational change involving potentially periods of involuntary self or contract employment (Rajan et al in Gibb, Haskins & Robertson, 2009). Globalisation, therefore, places great burden on graduates to develop their capacity to be entrepreneurial-driven in local and global economy.

Employability is an idea that individuals are now increasingly responsible for their own welfare and that of society hence they must acquire specific knowledge and skills employers need. The concept connotes the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and take new employment if required (Oliveira, 2015). Employment refers to productive and profitable engagement of individuals using acquired knowledge, skill to contribute meaningfully either as employee, or self –employed entrepreneur to generate wealth. Again, employment can be seen as profitable engagement in actual performance using acquired knowledge, skill or capability either as a paid employee or as a self-employed businessman. The ability of any individual to scout for and secure employment also depends largely on availability of jobs in the labour market. This further implies the fewer the jobs available, the lower the employability despite individual's level of education and skills. Employability must be seen as share responsibility between internal, external stakeholders and labour market that defines the content of what universities undertake. However, policy makers and employers believe

institution of higher learning have entrusted responsibility to enrich graduates' employability through their teaching and non-teaching experiences and research; therefore, they constantly guarantee the conditions for developing students' transferrable skills. Thus, institution of higher learning must persistently commit themselves to transferrable skills development by actively integrating academic with other relevant extra-curricular activities and work experience that can directly improve students' employability. Gibb, Haskins & Robertson (2009) noted that student ability to develop this capacity is largely determined by the nature of the university itself and its strategies to bridge the local and global interface. The capability of students' skills and their future work context increases overtime when students' self-knowledge is more developed potentially contributing to higher levels of performance and satisfaction (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). The concern for transferrable skills development is the basis for university and employers understanding of employability.

Besides, literature has constantly stressed the importance of competency – based approach to curriculum modernization which focuses on the development of practical knowledge. Exploring further, the Kerr's model 'changing the curriculum' (1968) in Samuel & Alamina (2007: 120) believed that the reason for any curriculum reform or innovation is to update knowledge so that the bridge between the researcher at the forefront of knowledge and the teacher can be narrowed. Cedefop (2008) supporting this argument noted that the shift from content-led curriculum to learning - outcomes approach is an integral part of the diverse framework for success, independence and participation beyond local environment. Linberg (2003) therefore caution curriculum planners that although specific competencies have been and still remain, hard to predict as society and technical development changes, young people need to be prepared for a changing society and for structural changes in the labour market. The 21st century employers place great premium on range of wider skills of problem solving, teamwork, resilience, entrepreneurialism supported by functional skills and technical expertise. In view of the above, many scholarly arguments tend to support problem –based learning curriculum which involves expansive experiences that enable students develop real –world problem solving abilities in order to contribute to business successes and develop worthwhile careers. Competency – based learning (CBL) is more of real – world learning experience that supports and challenges critical thinking, provide opportunities to take responsibility and develop alternative ideas and strategies. Thus, competence is performance – based education which major aim is to train specialists or professionals who can successfully compete in the labour market (Berkaliev et al, 2007). European Training Foundation (1997) refers to competence as the ability to do something well or effectively, correspondence with the demands for a job; the ability to perform specific work function. In other words, competence is person's ability to perform activity on the basis of life experience, acquired knowledge and skill. Also contributing to the frontier of knowledge (Asimov et al, 2009) described competence as a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities formed in the process of learning of a particular discipline. This innovative approach to learning transcends beyond knowledge transfer but focus more on mastery of core competencies.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was adopted to gather and quantify numerical data by conveniently using survey to collect data from predetermined instruments and generate statistical data (Creswell, 2003). In this case, 120 business educators consisting of academic heads, professors, lecturers and coordinators involved in curriculum planning and design in Rivers State University, University of Benin, University of Calabar, Delta State University and University of Uyo selected represent the population in Southern geo- political zone. Respondents were selected from state-owned universities offering business education and the measurement scale of 31-item was used for data collection directly from respondents. The measuring scale structured in Likert options was pilot tested in Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island Amassoma, Bayelsa State situated in Southern Nigeria to determine the reliability index. Split-half method divides the data into two unequal sections and then correlated with Cronbach Alpha to obtain 0.76 internal consistency index. Research assistants selected from each university assisted the researcher to gather 110 completed copies of questionnaire. Data analysed with mean and standard deviation validates and explains how the globalization of the business education curriculum experiences could help improve its employability value in Nigeria.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Table 1: Mean analyses of the Employability status of Business Education Curriculum in Higher Education Institutions

S/N	item	n = 110	\bar{x}	sdv
1.	The content is adequate for self-employment		2.16	0.90
2.	The objectives are appropriate for knowledge development		2.80	0.87
3.	Teaching and Learning experiences are practically-oriented		1.87	0.77
4.	Competencies acquired by students meet labor market demands		1.77	0.68
5.	Skills are adequate for employability		1.64	0.69
6.	The derivable values are adequate for self –reliance		2.39	0.99
7.	The content of the curriculum enriched with entrepreneurial skills		2.03	0.97
8.	Students adequately prepared to assume new roles in multi-cultural environment		2.06	0.87
9.	Students are prepared to have global perspectives		2.01	0.82
10.	Students are trained to be analytical and critical thinkers		1.86	0.87

Despite appropriateness of its objectives for knowledge development the curriculum content, competencies and skills which deciphers into learning experiences point out how the business education is inadequate and of low-employability status. Furthermore, the curriculum lacks practical and entrepreneurial -oriented content for preparing students to be analytical and critical thinkers and work in multi-cultural environments.

Table 2: Mean analyses of Consequences of Globalisation on Curriculum Provisions of Business Education

S/N	item	n = 110	\bar{x}	sdv
11.	Changing employability knowledge in labor market		3.00	0.68
12.	Language barrier to work outside home country		3.03	0.69
13.	Technological challenges to teaching and learning		2.94	0.71
14.	Mobility and outsourcing of workforce in global labor market		2.92	0.64
15.	Wider access to different learning modes and programmes		2.67	0.97
16.	Increasing need for openness and tolerant values		2.72	0.61
17.	Demand for rich understanding of cultural diversity		2.67	0.70
18.	Complexity of global economic opportunities		2.68	0.97
19.	Increasing need for human relations in global workplace		2.85	0.74
20.	Constant changes of workplace conditions		2.86	0.83

The above psychometric scale clearly revealed the resultant ways globalization influenced curriculum provisions which of course has frequently put pressure on employability knowledge, language barrier in workplace, challenges of technology to teaching and learning, facilitate job mobility and outsourcing, increase access to variety of learning modes and programmes and demand for cultural understanding amongst others.

Table 3: Mean analyses of Global Practices for Enhancing Learning Experiences and Business Education Employability Knowledge

S/N	item	n = 110	\bar{x}	sdv
21.	Enhancing innovative and creativity learning experiences		2.85	0.89
22.	Injecting competency –based learning to meet the demands for jobs		2.75	0.87
23.	Making learning –based outcomes integral aspect of curriculum		2.70	0.84
24.	Adopting real-world situations to sharpen their critical thinking		2.87	0.76
25.	Infusing problem-based learning is critical to the curricula		2.72	0.667
26.	Problem-based learning enables students develop alternative ideas		2.68	0.67
27.	Prepare students to take responsibility in learning and in life		2.77	0.78
28.	Prepare students to meet structural changes in labor market		2.63	0.58
29.	Prepare students to be more resilient in real-life situations		2.61	0.60
30.	Students are more productive in global learning environment		2.77	0.78
31.	Enhancing students' performance –based ability		2.55	0.49

The analyses articulated some global practices that could be adopted in business education to improve the variety of learning experiences and employability. The empirical evidence affirmed the need to make the curriculum competency and problem –based in order to sharpen students innovative and creativity skills, critical thinking ability and take responsibility in learning environment.

DISCUSSION

Globalisation is one major challenge of higher education in less developed economies. Its resultant consequences have increasingly impacted on business education and employability of its various learning experiences. Despite the appropriateness of the objectives of business education in Nigeria for knowledge development the various learning experiences lack

practical and entrepreneurial skills needed by students to be analytical and critical thinkers and have global perspectives of economic opportunities. Employability status of the various learning experiences in business education has been inconsistent with Nigeria labour market realities as many graduates are yet to use acquired skills productively to effect economic change. Skills, values, and competencies embedded in business education are yet to sufficiently promote self – reliance, self –employment, a deficiency many believe is inconsistent with economic changes and responsible for the ever –increasing unemployment and under-employment. The curriculum is education dominated with well over 30 percent non-business courses and content of what is taught can hardly prepare graduates to work productively in multi-culture environment and participate in international economy. The study scientifically has discovered that the changing nature of employability and labour market complexity is largely caused by the intricacy of language and cultural barriers, job mobility and labour outsourcing, the growing need for technological integration into the teaching and learning experiences in response to the impact of globalisation and internationalization. Globalisation facilitating rapid flow of ideas, technology, knowledge and mobility of people less cumbersome changes what and how we teach and the way students learn. The empirical viewpoint is justified by Samuel & Alamina (2007) proposition that the conception of knowledge, learning process of formal education must reflect the changing demands of the larger society. Innovative curriculum is not just urgent but a necessity to help business education in Nigerian universities prepare graduates who can cope with the complexity of global economic opportunities and constant changing conditions of the workplace. Kao & Mao (2011) emphasized the need to develop customizable curricula by business schools to assist students in identifying and learning critical skills, knowledge and attitudes to compete in their targeted global markets. Business education is an essential aspect of vocational education popularly recognized for promoting the understanding of business environment, economic literacy and ability to be successful in variety of careers must embrace global trends to remain relevant. Curriculum modernization is crucial if the business education objectives of producing graduates who can participate in global economy, function in domestic and international business environment, develop information technology skills, and integrate business concepts and skills with relevant academic knowledge must be attained.

New mission, objectives and content must constantly be infused into the academic programmes offer by business education in higher education institutions for knowledge development, formation of practically oriented skills and competencies to meet challenges of globalization. Green & Baer (2000) globalization is adopted by many universities to produce globally competent graduates with rich inter-cultural understanding. Such broad – based curriculum connected with labour market demands for workplace enhancement skills supported with academic and technical expertise is a key occupational requirements employer’s need from prospective job seekers. However, some global practices unearthed that could improve business education have apparently been affirmed by scholarly literature. Many studies supported the infusion of learner –based outcome approach, competency –based learning (CBL) and real-world problem solving as an essential aspect of curriculum development (Cedefop, 2008, Linberg, 2003, Berkaliev et al, 2017 & Azimov et al, 2009). Young people which are mainly students must be well prepared for a changing society and the dynamic changes in labour market. It has been found that employers have strong preference for job seekers with problem-solving skills, teamwork, resilience, and entrepreneurialism. Competency and problem –based model sharpen the innovative and creativity, critical thinking ability of students and make them take responsibility in learning. Competence is therefore

integrating relevant knowledge, skills and abilities with the process of learning to prepare students for career-centred employment.

Implication to Research and Practice

The expository research inadvertently unearthed the consequences of globalization in higher education and the inadequacy of business education. The gap between theory and practice in Nigeria is becoming more complicated by the constant international economic changes and the current labour market requirements for multi-cultural literacy, soft and workplace enhancement skills, global mobility and labour outsourcing. Obviously, business educators must rejig the business education curriculum with global practices and innovative pedagogy that will enhance students' knowledge development, enrich various learning experiences and strengthen their analytical and critical thinking capacity. In other words, global practices such as learner-based outcome, real – world problem solving and competency –based learning experiences use by business educators strengthen the students innovative and creativity capacity. Innovative curriculum that is practically and entrepreneurially oriented is not just fundamental but has direct implications for developing graduates' employability skills and entrepreneurialism for the future domestic and international economy.

CONCLUSION

Globalization is a key driver of change in business education and its resultant impacts has redefined the employability context of its curriculum. Business education must not be unfit in the face of globalized economy rather the skills, values, and competencies embedded in business education should adequately include workplace enhancement skills to meet new labour market expectations. Upgrading the operational curriculum by incorporating international business culture is what is needed to make business education in Nigeria more relevant to employability and self-reliant. In this way, the curriculum responds actively to the intricacy of languages and cultural barriers, job mobility and outsourcing of workforce, technological challenges in teaching and learning. Students therefore have the opportunity for inter-cultural orientations, develop critical and analytical perspectives of global issues and opportunities, and develop entrepreneurial skills to function actively in domestic and international business environments. Such broad – based curriculum connected with learner – based outcome approach, competency–based learning (CBL) and real-world problem solving expand students' capacity to develop teamwork skill, resilience and entrepreneurialism that meets labour market demands. Therefore, business educators must exploit beyond academic and technical curricula experiences by integrating the knowledge, skills, values, and competencies embedded in business education to multi-culture environments and labour market realities so as to sufficiently promote employability.

Future Research

The underlisted research focused areas are just few of the researcher pool of scheduled work

- Cultural diversity and Social integration influence on business Educators performance in Nigeria Higher education
- Another focal point will be the interplay of multi-culture learning environment impacts on the organizational climate in Nigeria higher education.

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