

Challenges of Integrating Transferable Skills in Business Education Programme in Nigerian Colleges of Education

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Abstract

Challenges of integrating transferable skills into the business education programme in Nigerian colleges of education necessitated the study. Two research questions and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The study employed survey research design and the population was 71 business educators from two public colleges of education in Anambra State. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research question while t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of this study revealed that communication skills, information technology skills, research skills and professionalism and work ethics were identified as key transferable skills that should be integrated in business education. The study further identified lack of adequate lecturers with the required competencies; deteriorating infrastructure; inadequate ICT facilities for simulations and poor funding of business education programme as some of the challenges of integrating transferable skills into business education programme. The test of hypotheses indicated generally that there was no significant difference in the opinions of experienced and less experienced business educators on transferable skills that should be integrated in business education as well as the challenges of integrating these skills in business education in Nigerian colleges of education. It was recommended, among others, that proper workshop on how to integrate transferable skills should be organized for business educators in order to enable them have in-depth knowledge and high level of competence in this area and also that business educators should adopt teaching methods that are activity based in order to enhance the development of transferable skills in the students.

Keywords: Transferable skills, business education, challenges, colleges of education, integrating, employability

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, rapid technological advancement, new economic challenges and social transformations are some of the characteristics of the world today. Consequently, employers of labour are looking for more than in-depth knowledge, understanding and completion of relevant academic tasks from their employees. Graduates' technical know-how is already by default a factor that enables them to be employed. However, the transferable skills are equally important for graduates to use their technical skills more effectively (Nasir, Noordin, & Noordin as cited in Arpita & Hala, 2017). It is thus not enough to be academically strong, an employee needs to work with other cultures, communicate well, be creative, solve complex problems and make sound decisions, among others. The task of producing graduates with academic excellence and a wide range of skills necessary for launching and managing their professional careers in the knowledge based economy now lie with tertiary institutions. Kapranos (2014) opined that academic institutions have to respond to these challenges by revising their curricula and offering more integration across subject areas; practice-based pedagogical tools; and more teamwork learning opportunities through

collaboration with industry and business that are meaningful, relevant and lead to lifelong learning skills.

Business education is about facilitating learning of job-related behaviors in order to improve individual and corporate performance (Krishnan, 2008). According to Esene (2012), business education is education for and about business and training in business skills that will enable the graduates to set up their own businesses and run it successfully without failure. However, due to business and economic changes that has been altering the workplace; it has become imperative for business education students to be better prepared for the world of work. To achieve this, graduates are expected to acquire some degree of competence in a range of transferable skills in order to enhance their employability.

McCauley (2011) defined transferable skills as those skills that are central to occupational competence in all sectors and at all levels and include project management, leadership, communication, working in teams and problem-solving skills. The term transferable skills according to Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD], 2016) refers to skills that can be used in most occupations such as ICT skills, problem-solving, team working, among others; including core skills such as literacy and numeracy, which are essential in all occupations and required for learning new skills. In Nigeria, other terms used interchangeably with transferable skills include soft skills, employability skills, life skills, work skills, people skills and generic skills.

Chadha in McCauley (2011) posited that higher institutions are currently under great pressure to develop abilities in their students that are transferable to another situation outside their field of study. In order to prepare business education graduates to be flexible workers, there is need to integrate these transferable skills in teaching business education courses. Integration of skill is mostly developed in line with core disciplines, with the same amount of emphasis. Therefore, transferable skills should be integrated in business education courses by finding learning outcomes that involve team, leadership, presentation, interviews or panel discussions. According to Gomez (2017), the most effective and efficient methods of assessing and developing transferable skills are hands-on, experiential leaning exercises where students are given the opportunity to apply knowledge, make decisions and behaviorally demonstrate their capabilities. These behaviour-oriented methods include:

- i. Service learning opportunities where students work on projects for real life organizations
- ii. Simulations where students are required to make decisions that integrate functionality as they operate a simulated business
- iii. Peer evaluation that utilize multisource feedback to allow students obtain different perspectives of their current skill proficiency
- iv. Assessment centers where students are placed in managerial roles in which they must respond to a variety of situations and stimuli.

However, these aforementioned methods require resources in order to be effective. Resources according to Offorma (2005) are of great importance in carrying out planned activities like that of teaching and learning. Ogbodo as cited in Dodo, Ajiki and Abimiku (2010) and Obi (2013) opined that resources are those human and materials that facilitate teaching and learning of subjects in our schools. These include teachers, laboratories, teaching aids and devices such as modern educational hardware and software. Apparently, there is dearth of information regarding the challenges Nigerian tertiary institutions especially colleges of education face in the integration of transferable skills. Perhaps, the influencing factor in the context of business educators' level of awareness of low medium

scale could be level of experience. The study is therefore aimed to contribute to knowledge by establishing an empirical evaluation of the challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme in Nigerian colleges of education and also the differences in opinion by level of experience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education. Specifically, the study determined:

1. The transferable skills to be integrated into the business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education
2. The challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What transferable skills should be integrated into the business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education?
2. What are the challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education?

Hypothesis

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

1. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of experienced and less experienced business educators on the transferable skills that should be integrated in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of experienced and less experienced business educators on the challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive survey research design due to the fact that the population under study could not be observed directly; hence questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. The population of the study consisted of 71 business educators from two Colleges of education in Anambra State. The researchers believed that business educators in these colleges of education are in a better position to appreciate the integration of transferable skills in business education. The entire population was used for the study.

A structured questionnaire developed by the researchers was used to collect data for the study. The instrument had 47 – items in two parts (A and B) structured on a Likert type four-point scale. The instrument was validated by three experts and the internal consistency determined using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient which yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.83 and 0.89 for the two sets of item. The high positive correlation shows that the instrument was reliable and therefore acceptable. The instruments were distributed by the researchers to the respondents with the help of two trained research assistants. Out of 71 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 51 were duly filled and used for data analysis.

The mean with standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was based on the principle of upper and lower limits of the mean thus: strongly agree (SA): 3.50-

4.00; agree (A): 2.50- 3.49; disagree (D): 1.50- 2.49; strongly disagree (SD): 1.00- 1.49. The hypothesis was accepted where the calculated table value was less than the critical table value, and rejected where the calculated table value was more than the critical table value.

RESULTS

The results of the study were presented according to the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

Research Question 1: What transferable skills should be integrated into the business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the responses on the transferable skills that should be integrated into the business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education

S/N	Item Description	Mean		Decision
		N=51	Std. Dev	
1.	Communication skill	3.63	.564	Strongly agreed
2.	Interpersonal skills	3.33	.554	Agreed
3.	Decision making skills	3.18	.478	Agreed
4.	Analysis skills	3.22	.545	Agreed
5.	Multitasking skills	3.06	.645	Agreed
6.	Information technology skills	3.50	.579	Strongly agreed
7.	Adaptability skills	3.16	.703	Agreed
8.	Management skills	3.35	.594	Agreed
9.	Linguistic skills	2.88	.711	Agreed
10.	Teamwork	3.20	.633	Agreed
11.	Negotiation skills	3.18	.623	Agreed
12.	Self-management skills	3.24	.737	Agreed
13.	Problem solving skills	3.38	.697	Agreed
14.	Critical thinking skills	3.39	.666	Agreed
15.	Presentation skills	3.29	.610	Agreed
16.	Leadership skills	3.24	.586	Agreed
17.	Multicultural competence	2.96	.692	Agreed
18.	Entrepreneurial skills	3.34	.626	Agreed
19.	Character skills	3.18	.560	Agreed
20.	Research skills	3.64	.598	Strongly agreed
21.	Professionalism and work ethics	3.53	.578	Strongly agreed
22.	Conflict resolution skills	3.29	.701	Agreed
23.	Global awareness	3.29	.642	Agreed
24.	Emotional intelligence	3.12	.711	Agreed
25.	Aesthetic Skills	2.98	.678	Agreed
26.	Social Skills	3.24	.551	Agreed
27.	Competitive Skills	3.31	.616	Agreed
28.	Numeracy Skills	3.18	.740	Agreed
29.	Collaboration skill	3.18	.623	Agreed
Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation		3.26	.629	Agreed

The result of the analysis in Table 1 indicates that the respondents strongly agreed that communication skills (3.63), information technology skills (3.50), research skills (3.64) and professional and work ethics (3.53) are the transferable skills that should be integrated into the business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education. However, the cluster

mean of 3.26 shows that the respondents agreed that all the itemized skills should be integrated in business education programme. The cluster standard deviation of 0.63 indicates that the opinions of the respondents are homogenous.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the responses on the challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education

S/N	Item Description	Mean N=51	Std Dev	Decision
30.	Lack of adequate lecturers with the required competencies	3.65	.627	Strongly agreed
31.	Deteriorating infrastructure	3.61	.532	Strongly agreed
32.	Inadequate curriculum	3.33	.622	Agreed
33.	Inadequate ICT facilities for simulations	3.39	.603	Agreed
34.	Lecturers already overloaded with core teaching	3.24	.681	Agreed
35.	Poor funding of business education programme	3.37	.564	Agreed
36.	Lack of time to explore various ways of integrating transferable skills	3.29	.540	Agreed
37.	Lack of necessary facilities for using relevant equipment in the classroom	3.33	.739	Agreed
38.	Lack of confidence in ICT and new teaching methods	3.20	.749	Agreed
39.	Poor administration and supervision	3.04	.692	Agreed
40.	Lack of standardized format for assessing students	3.16	.644	Agreed
41.	Weak database in business education for effective planning	3.18	.684	Agreed
42.	Lack of relevant software materials to be used along with equipment	3.29	.576	Agreed
43.	Integrating transferable skills in business education is difficult	2.80	.895	Agreed
44.	Lack of current texts, reference books and other relevant materials in the library	3.14	.825	Agreed
45.	Lack of administrative support	3.04	.799	Agreed
46.	Students limitations with transferable skills	3.06	.759	Agreed
47.	High student to lecturer ratio	3.00	.825	Agreed
	Cluster mean/standard deviation	3.23	.686	Agreed

The results of the analysis presented in Table 2 shows that the respondents strongly agreed that there is lack of adequate lecturers with the required competencies and also that infrastructure was deteriorating. The mean rating of the respondents ranges from 2.80 to 3.61 with a cluster mean of 3.23 indicating that the respondents agreed that the items stated above are all challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education. The overall low standard deviation of 0.69 shows that the respondent's responses are homogenous.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of experienced and less experienced business educators on the transferable skills that should be integrated in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis on the mean rating of experienced and less experienced respondents on the transferable skills that should be integrated in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education

Level of experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-val	P-value	Decision
Experienced	32	3.2737	.23631	49	.677	.503	Not significant
Less experienced	19	3.2196	.29690				

Data in Table 3 show that there is no significant difference between the opinions of experienced and less experienced respondents on the transferable skills that should be integrated in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education. Since the p-value is greater than the stipulated 0.05 significance level, the null hypotheses is not rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that the opinions of experienced and less experienced business educators do not differ significantly on the transferable skills that should be integrated in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean responses of experienced and less experienced business educators on the resource challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis on the mean rating of experienced and less experienced respondents on the challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education

Level of experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-val	P-value	Decision
Experienced	32	3.1649	.37745	49	.111	-1.623	Not significant
Less Experienced	19	3.3363	.34070				

Data in Table 4 show that p-value is more than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance; hence the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no significant difference on the opinions of experienced and less experienced business educators on the challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicated that all the 29 transferable skills itemized were identified as skills that should be integrated in business education. However, communication skills, research skills, information technology skills and professionalism and work ethics were identified as the key skills that should be integrated. These findings give credence to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) assertion as cited in Roskosa and Stukalina (2017) that over 90% of tertiary institutions offer skill development services for the enhancement of communication, problem-solving, self-awareness and team working skills. This is because skills are considered as the most important capital for the world of work. Furthermore, Yate (2018) sees transferable skills such as technical, communication, critical thinking, multitasking, teamwork, creativity and leadership as requisite skills for long term professional success.

The study also revealed that all the item statements were identified as challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education. However, lack of adequate lecturers with the required competencies; deteriorating infrastructure; inadequate ICT facilities for simulations and poor funding of business education programme were highly rated. This finding is in line with Drummond et al assertion as cited in McCauley (2011) that many excellent subject-specific academics often lack the expertise, experience and confidence to adopt new approaches to teaching. Apparently, business educators in tertiary institutions need to have the necessary pedagogical competencies in order to effectively integrate transferable skills into business education. The findings also corroborate the view of Ukoemu (2010) who attributed programme failures to lack of funds. Adequate funding is paramount for procurement of relevant ICT facilities, instructional materials, and other infrastructural facilities that would ensure effective integration of transferable skills in business education.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion and data analysis provide sufficient basis to conclude that transferable skills especially communication skills, information technology skills, research skills and professionalism and work ethics should be integrated into business education programmes of Nigerian colleges of education. Again, lack of adequate lecturers with the required competencies; deteriorating infrastructures; inadequate ICT facilities for simulations; poor funding of business education programme and inadequate curriculum are the major resource challenges of integrating transferable skills in business education programme of Nigerian colleges of education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were put forward:

1. Proper workshop on how to integrate transferable skills should be organized for business educators in order to enable them have in-depth knowledge and high level of competence in this area.
2. Proper support mechanism should be put in place for business educators both at national and institutional level by the relevant stakeholders.
3. Curriculum planners should integrate transferable skills especially communication skills, research skills, information technology skills and professionalism and work ethics into business education curriculum in order to ensure increased productivity and employability of graduates.
4. The government and other relevant stakeholders should ensure that infrastructural facilities, teaching aids, ICT facilities, guidebooks on transferable skills integration among others are made available to business educators in order to ensure effective integration of transferable skills.
5. Business educators should adopt teaching methods that are activity based in order to enhance the development of transferable skills in the students.

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