



**PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF WORK-BASED LEARNING
AS A STRATEGY FOR STUDENTS TRAINING FOR IMPROVED
PERFORMANCE IN BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS
IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA**

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Abstract:

The study determined work-based learning as a strategy considered effective for training students for improved performance in business organizations in South East, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study was 144 business educators in tertiary institutions in the South East, Nigeria. One research question guided the study and one hypothesis was tested. An 8 item validated structured questionnaire was used for data collection and the reliability of the instrument established at 0.86 alpha. The data generated from the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation and Analysis of Variance. The mean ratings were used to answer the research question while standard deviation was used to determine the closeness of the respondents' means. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that the respondents considered engaging students in work-based learning as an effective strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations. Furthermore, the findings revealed that years of experience of the respondents did not significantly influence their mean ratings on the effectiveness of engaging students in work based learning as a strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations. It was recommended among others, that administrators of business education programme should go into partnership with private organization so as to work out a work-based learning arrangement that will improve students' work skills. It was also recommended that work-based learning programme should be integrated into business education programmes as a full course by the administrators of business education programme in tertiary institutions.

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1. Introduction

Business education is the education that prepares individual for business competencies necessary for teaching business attitudes, concepts, skills and knowledge. It is also defined as an aspect of educational training process which business teacher-trainees receive with the primary motive of enabling them acquire adequate attitudes, concepts, knowledge, understanding and skills in business activities (Chukwurah, 2007). According to Okoro (2013), business education programme is a broad and comprehensive discipline whose instructional programme encompasses knowledge, skills, vocation and aptitude needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal businesses and also function in the economic system. The objectives of introducing business education at the tertiary level of education are: (1) to produce competent graduates who can be self-employed; (2) to produce competent graduates who can teach business education courses in secondary school and higher institutions; (3) to produce competent degree graduates who can inculcate business ideas into the economy; (4) to produce competent graduates who can help in formulating economic policies and (5) to produce competent graduates who can employ other persons to reduce unemployment (Okoro, 2013). However, it appears that objectives for the establishment of business education programme seem to be defeated.

This assertion is evident in the high rate of unemployment among graduates (business education graduates inclusive) of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It has been suggested by scholars like Okoli and Ibeh (2017) and Obiete, Nwazor and Vin-Mbah (2015) that the factors that necessitated the high rate of unemployment among business education graduates is not unrelated with poor training strategies that have failed to expose business education graduates to real life work situation. In the same vein, Nwazor (2012) noted that the quality of the teaching personnel in the educational institution has been a contributing factor to the decline in quality of graduates produced from the business education programme. The situation is not helped by the lack of faith of most business organizations especially the banking sector who employ Nigerian graduates from tertiary institutions abroad (Sokunbi, 2006).

Obiete, Nwazor and Vin-Mbah (2015) posited that the reason why graduates from business education programmes are unable to get jobs in corporate organization is because the graduates lack the requisite corporate skills to function in the corporate environment. Obiete et al (2015) concluded that business education students and graduates alike lacked training in corporate governance and this has hindered their ability to get employment. The authors averred that even when this graduates get jobs in corporate organizations, their lack of training in specific aspects of corporate governance has hindered their rise on the corporate ladder. This is why Obiete et al (2015) called for the use of a strategy that will help to instill in business education the necessary skills needed for them to function effectively in business organizations.

Strategy can be defined as a plan designed to achieve a particular purpose. According to Amesi, Akpomi and Okwuanaso (2014), strategy is deliberately choosing different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of value. Amesi (2011) argued that strategy is all about competitive position, about differentiating oneself in the eyes of the students or customers as the case may be, about adding value through a mix of activities different from those used by competitors. In the context of this study, strategy can be defined as the ways and means through which training objectives are achieved. Engaging students in Work-Based Learning is another strategy that has been suggested as effective for training students for improved performance in business organization.

Work-based learning is a training programme that gives students opportunity to learn on the job. According to Obiete, Nwazor and Vin-Mbah (2015), work-based learning is a form of experiential learning, which involves students learning directly from experts at the work place. One of the key strengths of WBL is that it is a very effective way to develop expertise and the kind of skills and competence that are highly relevant to a given profession and, even more so, to a specific workplace. This is demonstrated by the long history of this model, which stretches back to the middle ages, when it was the main form of training for craftsmen (Darche, 2009). The advantages for developing technical skills and acquiring disciplinary knowledge have also been demonstrated by a number of studies, including Billett (2001), Darche (2009) and Field, Hoeckel, Kis and Kuczera (2009). The skills generated through WBL are enhanced by the greater proximity of learning to production compared to school-based vocational and technical education programmes because the learners are exposed to both the production methods corporate social responsibilities, ethics and the work requirements of actual and normally economically viable workplaces' (Ryan, 2011). The nature of the WBL process (learning by observing and doing) supports the development of tacit knowledge (know-how and procedural knowledge) for any job whether academic or non-academic. It is therefore pertinent that business educators should in conjunction with administrators of business education programme in tertiary institutions adopt work-based training programmes for business education students in their schools. However, the extent to which they consider work-based learning strategy as effective for training students for improved performance in business education could be influenced by factors such as experience.

According to Uzodi (2012), experience is a very significant factor in the teaching and learning of a course. Jimoh-Kadiri (2012) in consonance stated that some strategies are better used based on an educator's experience. The author further asserted that less experienced educators (who have taught for less than six years) may not be competent enough in the use of some teaching strategies. However, this strategy for training business education students for improved performance in business organizations and the variable that could affect its application are either theoretical in views and do not seem to have been empirically proven to be effective in training business education graduates for corporate governance in South East States of Nigeria. It is against this background that the researcher intends to empirically ascertain work-based learning as

a strategy considered effective for training students for improved performance in business organizations in South-East States of Nigeria.

2. Statement of the Problem

Tertiary institutions are expected to be the production life wire of a nation's human capital. However, the training programmes in the country at the tertiary levels have concentrated more on teaching knowledge and skills in principles devoid of practical experiences in related fields. This is as result of the lack of prerequisite corporate skills amongst business teachers and educators. This situation has resulted in the production of graduates who cannot demonstrate the required corporate skills needed to function effectively in corporate organizations. This poor state of art prompted the search for strategies for training students for improved performance in business organization. Engaging business education students in work-based learning is seen as a strategy that could be employed to foster students' acquisition of knowledge on business organizations by business education students. The strategy seems not to be known or embraced by business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria. The problem of this study therefore is to ascertain how business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria considered this strategy as effective to train students for improved performance in business organizations.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the extent to which business educators in tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria considered engaging students in work-based learning as an effective strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations.

2.2 Research Question

To what extent do business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria consider engaging students in work-based learning as an effective strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations?

3. Method

The research design adopted in this study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in the south eastern part of Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 144 business educators from 13 public and private tertiary institutions offering business education in the zone. The instrument for data collection was a validated structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument is titled: Work-Based Learning Strategies for Training Students for Improved Performance in Business Organizations Questionnaire (WBLSTSIPBOQ) with two main sections – A and B. Section A contains one item on respondents' background information covering years of experience; while section B contains eight items on work-based learning strategies.

Section B is structured on a 5- point rating scale of Very Effective (VE), Effective (E), Moderately Effective (ME), Ineffective (IE) and Very Ineffective (VIE). The application of Cronbach Alpha on the obtained data yielded a score of 0.86 for internal consistency which was deemed reliable for the study. Out of the 144 copies of the questionnaire administered, 128 copies were returned. These 128 copies representing an overall return rate of 89 percent were deemed adequate for the study and were used for data analysis. Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. 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. The decision rule was based on the real limit of numbers on the 5-point rating scale as shown below:

3.1 Response option Values Real Limit

Very Effective	5	4.50-5.00
Effective	4	3.50-4.49
Moderately Effective	3	2.50-3.49
Ineffective	2	1.50-2.49
Very Ineffective	1	0.50- 1.49

For the hypotheses, ANOVA was employed to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Where the calculated f value is less than the critical value of f, it means that there was no significant difference and the hypothesis was not rejected. Conversely, where the calculated f value is equal to or greater than the critical f value, it means that there was a significant difference and the hypothesis was rejected.

4. Results

4.1 Research Question

To what extent do business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria consider engaging students in work-based learning as an effective strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations?

Table 1: Respondents Mean Ratings on Engaging Students in Work-Based Learning as an Effective Strategy for Training Business Education Students (N=128)

S/No.	Work-based learning strategies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Attaching students to Accounting firms	3.64	0.73	Effective
2.	Sending students on industrial attachment in companies	4.59	1.01	Effective
3.	Involving students in mentorship programmes in banks	4.20	0.91	Effective
4.	Attaching students to understudy directors of financial institutions	3.74	0.82	Effective
5.	Involving students in internship with managers of high technology industries.	3.58	0.72	Effective
6.	Encouraging students to consistently visit business organizations and write a report of what was learnt during the visit	3.80	0.68	Effective
7.	Sending students to understudy corporate responsibility practices of	3.96	0.85	Effective

business organizations.				
8.	Mandating students to critically review the way business organizations carried out their corporate responsibilities in previous years.	4.01	0.87	Effective
Cluster Mean		3.94		Effective

Data in Table 1 reveal that items 1 to 8 are rated as effective with mean ratings ranging from 3.58 to 4.59 and standard deviations ranging from 0.72 to 1.01. The cluster mean of 3.94 indicates that business educators in South East, Nigeria considered engaging students in work-based learning as an effective strategy for training business education graduates for improved performance in business organizations. The standard deviations show that the respondents' opinions are closely related.

4.2 Hypothesis

Business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria do not differ significantly in the extent they considered work-based learning as an effective strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations based on experience (0-5years, 6-10years and Above 10years).

Table 2: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the mean ratings of respondents on the extent they considered engaging students in work-based learning as an effective strategy for training business education students

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F-ratio	F-Crit	Remark
Between groups	.142	2	.071			
Within groups	191.152	126	.685	.104	3.09	NS
Total	191.300	128				

Data in Table 2 reveal that f-ratio of 0.104 calculated at 0.05 level of significance and at 2 and 126 degrees of freedom is less than F-crit value of 3.09. Since the F-cal of .104 is less than the F-crit value of 3.09, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria do not differ significantly in the extent they consider work-based learning as an effective strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations based on experience.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that business educators considered engaging students in work-based learning as effective strategy for training business education graduates for improved performance in business organizations. This finding is in line with the findings of Udemba (2015) who reported that business educators to a high extent, considered exposing business education students to entrepreneurial work based learning as a way of preparing them for employment. In the same vein, Egbule (2016) opined that one of the key strengths of WBL is that it is a very effective way to develop

expertise and the kind of skills and competence that are highly relevant to a given profession and, even more so, to a specific workplace. This is demonstrated by the long history of this model, which stretches back to the middle ages, when it was the main form of training for craftsmen (Egbule, 2016). According to Udemba (2015), the skills generated through WBL are enhanced by the greater proximity of learning to production compared to school-based vocational and technical education programmes because the learners are exposed to the production methods, corporate social responsibilities, ethics and the work requirements of actual and normally economically viable workplaces'. The nature of the WBL process (learning by observing and doing) supports the development of tacit knowledge (know-how and procedural knowledge) for any job whether academic or non-academic.

The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of business educators in South East States on the effectiveness of engaging students in work-based learning as a strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations based on experience. This implies that the years of experience did not influence the opinion of business educators. This is in agreement with Udemba (2015) who found no significant difference in the mean ratings of business educators based on years of experience. This underscores the importance of engaging students in work-based learning as an important strategy for training business education students for improved performance in business organizations.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that engaging students in work-based learning is an effective strategy for training business education students for improved performance in business organizations. It therefore becomes imperative that concerted effort is made by administrators of the business education programme and the established entrepreneurs to align students learning to work situations that will facilitate the work based learning programme to help prepare business education students for work in business organizations.

6.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proffers the following recommendations:

- 1) Administrators of business education programme should go into partnership with private organization so as to work out a work-based learning arrangement that will improve students' work skills.
- 2) Administrators of business education programme in tertiary institutions should make it mandatory that every institution of higher learning engaged in business education should consistently invite guest speakers from corporate organizations to interact with the students and expose them to corporate governance best practices in managing business corporations.

- 3) Work-based learning programme should be integrated into business education programmes as a full course by the administrators of business education programme in tertiary institutions. This would expose students to acquire varieties of practical skills and strategies of building corporate business management after graduation.

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