PERCEIVED EFFECTIVE WAYS FOR INTEGRATION OF BUSINESS ETHICS COURSES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

Okoli, Constance I. Ph.D[1]&Okeke, Bethel A.[2]

[1]*Department of Technology and Vocational Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, E-mail: ci.okoli@unizik.edu.ng*

[2]*School of Business Education, OTM Department, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze, Email: okekebethel@gmail.com*

Abstract

The study ascertained the effective ways for integration of business ethics courses into the business education curriculum as a strategy for training students for improved performance in business organization, in the perception of business educators in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 144 business educators in tertiary institutions in the South East, Nigeria. One research question guided the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. A nine item questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was tested for validity and the instrument determined for internal consistency using Cronbach alpha, which yielded a score of 0.74. The data collected were analysed using mean score, standard deviation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). 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 was used in testing the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed among others, providing foundational ethics courses in business education and discussing case studies in ethics in business education classes as effective ways of integration of business ethics courses in business education curriculum in tertiary institutions and a strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations. Furthermore, the findings revealed that years of teaching experience of the respondents did not significantly influence their mean ratings on the effective ways of integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum, as a strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations. It was recommended among others, that administrators of business education programme in tertiary institutions should apply the effective ways discovered in this study to integrate business ethics courses in business education curriculum for training of students and for improved performance of her graduates in business organisations.

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This will enable students to be theoretically and practically equipped for the labour market and the demands of the real world.

Keywords: Integration, Business Ethics, Courses, Strategy, Effective, Training, Improved, Performance, Business Organizations

Introduction

The high rate of unemployment amongst graduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria has increased the call for curriculum planners and management of tertiary education to seek effective strategies that will be used to train undergraduates for the world of work. Tertiary education is the education given after post basic education. This level of education according to Aluede, Aluede and Ufah, (2004), has been identified as the process that helps develop the whole man physically, mentally, morally and technologically, to enable one function effectively in any environment in which one finds oneself so as to become more productive, self-fulfilling and self-reliant. Idogho (2011) and Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) further noted that the goals of tertiary education in Nigeria include, to contribute to national development through high level manpower training; to provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities through formal and non-formal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; to promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service and to reduce skill shortages through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market among others.The above goals as enunciated by the Federal Government of Nigeria on her national policy on education are laudable enough for consideration and utilization by educational managers for the purpose of improving and sustaining Nigerian educational system which the business education programme is an integral part.

Business education is an aspect of the vocational education programme offered at the tertiary level of education which prepares students for careers in business. Business education is the education that prepares individual for business competencies necessary for teaching business attitudes, concepts, skills and knowledge. Similarly, Chukwurah (2007) defined business education 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. It is also an aspect of educational training received for personal or vocational usage, and/or for careers as administrators, managers and teachers wherever they may find themselves in the business world. According to the American Vocational Association, in Okoro (2013), business education programme is a broad and comprehensive discipline whose instructional programme encompasses knowledge, skills, vocation and

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aptitude needed by all citizens in order to effectively manage their personal businesses and also function in the economic system. Business education students are therefore expected to possess relevant skills, competencies and knowledge in major aspects of business.

Business educators are professionals with various level of working experiences. In this light Jimoh-Kadiri (2012) averred that these characteristics could also affect their abilities to perform their duties optimally. However, Oduma and Ndinechi (2007) stated that business educators are essential to the training and development of competent business education graduates. Uzodi (2012) opined that business education is value-oriented education.Business education has the potential of equipping the students for entrepreneurship, white collar jobs and turning out creative graduates who can fend for themselves all through their lives (Okoli & Ibeh, 2017; Oduma and Ndinechi, 2007).

However, it appears that despite the laudable expectations of what can be achieved through the study of business education, the business education programme in tertiary institution may have failed to meet its stated goals. This is evident in the views of Essia (2012) and Obiete, Nwazor and Vin-Mbah (2015) who decried the apparent failure ofeducation offered in tertiary institutions especially in the business education programmes, inpreparation of students and graduates for real life situations and corporate leadership. Elucidating further, Lioyde and Tokunbo (2002) observed that the cause of increased rate of unemployment amongst university graduates in Nigeria is manifested in lack of functional education that could equip graduates for creativity and innovativeness. These views are accentuated by the increasing rate of unemployment among graduates in Nigeria, business education programmes inclusive who have failed to gain employment in companies in the business sector of the country due to inadequate employability skills and attitudes acquired(Okoli and Ibeh, (2017). Ohiwerei (2009) specifically noted that the inability of business education graduates to gain employment in various corporate bodies and organizations resulted from incompetence. This incompetence is traceable to shortages of business education teachers, lack of maintenance of equipment, inaccessibility of teaching facilities, low teachers and students interest, inadequate textbooks and workbooks and other business teaching materials and Nigerian higher institution graduate certificate centred mentality. Ohiwerei further alluded that the over-bearing emphasis placed on paper qualification is the reason for the mismatch between the quality of business education graduates and their employability in the real world of business.

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)

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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 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 the graduates get jobs in corporate organizations; their lack of training in specific aspects of corporate governance hindered their rise on the corporate ladder.

Obiete et al (2015) noted that corporate governance ensures that the board of directors is accountable for the pursuit of business objectives and the business itself conforms to the laws and regulations. Corporate governance refers to the collection of activities that executives make the best decision for shareholder profitability (Fryer, 2014).Robertson & Athanassiou (2009) viewed ethics as one of the most important issues in corporate governance and most publication and researches that focused on business ethics and corporate governance revealed that the main thematic clusters within these researches are ethical judgment analyses, violation of laws and regulations, national moral environment and corporate governance.

Neubaum, Pagell, Drexler, McKee-Ryan and Larson (2009) averred that ethics can be taught, and that educational programmes that integrate the study of ethical theory with its practical application can be highly effective. In consonance, Cavico and Mujtaba (2009) opined that if the society is concerned about the behaviour of its business people, then it is quite appropriate that a business ethics course becomes a required course in school curriculum.

Experience is an essential variable in education. Obodo in Uzodi (2012) observed that experience of an educator is a very significant factor in the teaching and learning of a course. Similarly, Jimoh-Kadiri (2012) stated that some strategies are better used based on an educators' experiences and competences. 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, the effective ways of integrating business ethics in business education curriculum are not well known, hence the need for the study. It is against this background that the researcher intends to empirically ascertain in the perception of business educators in tertiary institutions in South-East States of Nigeria theeffective ways of integration of business ethics courses in business education curriculum, as a strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations.

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Statement of the Problem

In recent times, the rate of unemployment among youths in Nigeria has become alarming as graduates roam the streets without jobs. This calls for great concern among the employers of labour, government and educational institutions who are not meeting up with their programme objectives, business education inclusive. Unfortunately, the training given to students while in school and which is expected to equip them adequately for the world of work andto become self-employed is in greater part theoretically based.

The researchers observed that 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 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 business organizations. This poor state of art prompted the search for effective ways in the integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum for the training of the undergraduates for improved performance in business organizations.

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 in the ratings of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria, the effective ways of integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculumas a strategy to train students for improved performance in business organizations.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine effective ways of integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum as a strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations, in the ratings of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria.

Research Question

What is the rating of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria on the effective ways of integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum as a strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations?

Hypothesis

Business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria do not differ significantly in their ratings on the effective ways of integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum as a strategy for training

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students for improved performance in business organizations based on teaching experience (0-5years, 6-10years and Above 10years).

Method

The research design adopted in this study was descriptive survey. The study was carried out in the South east, 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 researchers. The instrument was titled: Effective Ways of Integration of Business Ethics Courses as Strategy for Training Students for Improved Performance in Business Organizations Questionnaire(EWIBECSTSIPBOQ). It has two main sections – A and B. Section A contains one item on respondents' background information covering years of teachingexperience; while section B contains eight items on effective ways for integration of business ethics courses in business education curriculum as training strategies. Section B was structured on a 5- point rating scale ofVery Effective (VE), Effective (E), Moderately Effective (ME), Ineffective (IE) and Very Ineffective (VIE). Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A value of 0.74 was obtained and was deemed reliable for the study. Out of the 144 copies of the questionnaire administered, 128 copies were returned, given a return rate of 89 percent and used for data analysis. Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive of 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 closeness of the respondents' ratings. The decision rule was based on the real limit of numbers on the 5-point rating scale as shown below:

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	1.00 - 1.49

For the hypothesis, 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.

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Results

The results of the study are contained in tables 1 and 2

Research Question: What is the rating of business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria on the effective ways of integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum as a strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations?

Table 1: Respondents Mean Ratings on Integration of Business Ethics Courses in the Business Education Curriculum as an Effetive Strategy for Training Students (N=128)

S/N	Business ethics knowledge strategies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Providing foundational ethics courses in business education.	3.53	0.71	E
2	Discussing case studies in ethics in business education classes.	3.67	0.76	E
3	Instituting business ethics competition among business education students.	3.55	0.81	E
4	Facilitating business education students' discussions with white collar defaulters.	3.05	0.61	ME
5	Supporting the development and growth of students programs focused on ethics-related issues, such as Net Impact.	4.21	0.93	E
6	Engaging students in ethics based service learning for instance involving students in providing free business consultancy to local business owners in their community.	3.70	0.84	E
7	Inviting guest lecturers to talk to students on business ethics	3.68	0.74	E
8	Instituting departmental ethics in transactions in the business education programme.	3.04	0.60	ME
9	Encouraging new ethical understandings of business; including greater perspective of who is affected by corporate activities decisions.	3.50	0.70	E
	Cluster	3.55		E

Note. E = effective, ME = moderately effective

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents rated seven items (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9) as effective with mean ratings ranging from 3.04 to 3.67 and standard deviations ranging between 0.61 to 0.93. They also rated items 4 and 8 as moderately effective with mean ratings of 3.05 and 3.04 and standard deviations of 0.61 and 0.60 respectively. The cluster mean of 3.55 indicates that business

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educators in South East, Nigeria considered integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum as an effective strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations. The standard deviations show that the respondents' opinions are closely related.

Hypothesis: Business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria do not differ significantly in the extent they considered integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum 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 ANOVAofthemeanratingsofrespondentsontheextent they consideredintegration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum as an effective strategy for training business students

Sources	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-ration	F-crit.	Remark
Between groups	.192	2	.096	.111	3.09	NS
Within groups	240.091	126	.861			
Total	240.283	128				

Note.NS = not significant

Data in Table 2 reveal thatF-ratioof0.111calculated at0.05levelofsignificance andat 2 and 126degreesof freedomislessthanthe F-crit value of 3.09. SincetheF-ratioof 0.111is lessthantheF-criticalvalueof 3.09, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, business educators in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria do not differ significantly on their ratings on effective ways of integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum as a strategy for training students for improved performance in business organizations based on teaching experience.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicated that business educators rated providing foundational ethics courses in business education, discussing case studies in ethics in business education classes, instituting business ethics competition among business education students, supporting the development and growth of students programs focused on ethics-related issues, such as net impact, engaging students in ethics based learning service such as involving students in providing free business consultancy to local business owners in their communi;Inviting guest lecturers to talk to students on business ethics and inviting guest lecturers to talk to students on business ethics as effective ways of integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum as a strategy for training students for improved

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performance in business organizations. Others as, instituting departmental ethics in transactions in the business education programme and facilitating business education students' discussions with white collar defaulters were rated as moderately effective ways. This findings is in line with that of Wong and Wong (2016) who reported that the integration of ethics courses helps to educate students on the expected behaviours in a corporate environment. According to Petcu and Dinu (2014), important goals of ethics education include building the skills, the confidence, the moral muscle, and the habit of voicing one's values. Helping students understand their own values and how to articulate them can give the students the courage to make decisions and take actions based on those values.

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 the integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculum 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 opinions of business educators. This underscores the importance of teaching ethics courses as an important strategy for training business education students for improved performance in business organizations.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that the integration of business ethics courses in the business education curriculumis an effective strategy for training business education students for improved performance in business organizations. It therefore becomes imperative that concerted effort be made by administrators of the business education programme and curriculum planners to map out more business ethics courses that will expose business education students to the value of business ethics in improving business performance.

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Recommendations

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

1. Administrators of business education programme in tertiary institutions should integrate business ethics courses in the business education curriculum. If this is done, it will enable students to be theoretically and practically equipped for the labour market and the demands of the real world.
2. Heads of reputable business organizations should be invited to educate business education students on business ethics and the importance of ethics to improved business performance.
3. Administrators of business education programmes should consistently organize seminars and workshops were business education students will be exposed to the various aspects of business ethics and their usefulness to business.

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