

Application of Innovative Practices by Business Educators for Improving Societal Values in South-East Nigeria

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Abstract

The increasing level of moral decadence among the people of South-East Nigeria necessitated the study to determine innovative practices being applied by business educators to improve societal values in the area. Two research questions guided the study and four null hypotheses were tested. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The entire population of 215 business educators in all public tertiary institutions in the area was studied without sampling as the researchers were able to manage the size. A validated Likert scale questionnaire containing 24 items in two clusters was used for data collection. The instrument was tested for reliability and an overall reliability coefficient value of 0.76 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using the arithmetic mean to answer the research questions and standard deviation to determine how homogenous the respondents were in their views. ANOVA was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that the subjects apply the two innovative practices in the study at a great extent. The respondents differed significantly in their extent of application of social responsibility principles as a result of educational attainment and experience but did not in ICT competencies. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the business educators were applying innovative principles that could lead to improved societal values and that if lectures in other fields follow suit, graduates of tertiary educational institutions would demonstrate appropriate values to reduce the level of moral decadence. Consequently, it was recommended that management of tertiary educational institutions in the area and governments should encourage the business educators and lecturers in other fields of learning to widely apply innovative practices for improved societal values by adequately providing instructional resources and sponsoring them to seminars, conferences and short courses to acquire the relevant skills and competencies.

Key words: application, innovation, principle, society, value

1. Introduction

Education is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction especially in a school or university. Different nations of the world invest in education because it is considered a major instrument for individual and national socio-economic development. Ezenwafor and Achugamonye (2018) defined education as a deliberate conscious effort being made to create an atmosphere in the learning process so that learners can actively develop their full potential, have spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character and the skills necessary for themselves and other citizens. Onyesom (2013) citing Ohiwerei defined education as the development of a person's head, heart and hands for their self-fulfillment and optimum service to humanity. Tertiary educational institutions play a critical role in producing the required social capital for building a healthy civil society by imparting norms, values, attitudes and ethics in students who after graduation enter the world of work as employees or employers of labor. Currently, it appears that lecturers of tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria generally and the South-East in particular are not upholding the noble ethics of the teaching profession which is important for developing moral values among the students. As a result of the apparent failure to guide students morally and ethically, the society reaps a harvest of immoral leadership, corruption, waste and poverty (Ihejirika, 2021).

Business education is an academic program in universities and colleges of education in Nigeria aimed at producing competent teachers for different levels in the education system. The program is popularly defined as education about business and for business aimed at equipping students with skills in the areas of accounting, marketing, office management and office technology management among others to enable them contribute to the development of society on graduation as office employees and entrepreneurs (Ezenwafor & Achugamonye, 2018). The extent this program achieves its noble objectives depends, to a very large extent on the quality and competencies possessed by the lecturers who are known as business educators as well as the innovative practices they apply to facilitate effective learning and character development. This requires that business educators should apply different innovative practices, hence the study which determined the innovative practices being applied by business educators in South-East Nigeria. The study covered four innovative practices which business educators are expected to apply, namely: pedagogical principles, social responsibility principles, information and communication technology competencies, and cooperative learning principles.

2. Review of literature

Nuland and Khandelwal (2009) posited that upholding professional codes of conduct is what makes teachers see themselves as true professionals. The Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) has the mandate of superintending over the practices of serving teachers and inducting education graduates into the profession. One of the aims of TRCN is to avail teachers the opportunity for continuous professional development in order to remain relevant in the present information age. It has a set of codes of conduct intended to encourage teachers to adopt an informed approach to their functions in order to reflect good and correct professional practices. According to Ihejirika (2021), TRCN requires teachers to be a role model and act within the community in a manner that promotes the prestige of the teaching profession. This requirement can only be achieved if teachers apply interesting and innovative practices to facilitate effective teaching and learning as well as development of students' attitudes and character.

Innovation is the path to progress for any professions, professionals and nations. According to Das (2015), the future of a nation is in its classrooms. Innovation is the key to improvement in education because it produces a change from old practices by introducing novel ideas, concepts and strategies to improve the quality of education (Shramsunder in Garba et al., 2013). Where business educators are adequately skilled and apply innovative practices in performing their roles, the nation will reap a harvest of graduates with knowledge and character to contribute to national socio-economic development.

Business education is an integral part of education which is primarily aimed at developing the competencies (knowledge, attitude and skills) of learners for optimum service delivery in the society on graduation and self-fulfillment. Ohiwerei and Azih (in Mahmoud, 2015) defined business education as an integral part of vocational and technical education which involves the development of a person's head, heart and hands for personal self-fulfillment and optimum service to humanity. Furthermore, Udoh (2013) explained that business education is a study that prepares recipients to be knowledgeable and skillful for teaching, office management and entrepreneurship. According to Imeokparia and Ediabonyia (2012), business involves the development of appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding required to fit into and progress in a chosen occupation. The Association of Business Educators of Nigeria has stipulated standards that demand members to hold

themselves to the highest level of behavior (Ihejirika, 2021). They are expected to uphold professional values and behave ethically (morality), possess skills and remain committed to the national goals of education by applying innovative practices in their teaching functions.

This study covers two innovative practices which business educators are expected to apply, namely; social responsibility principles and information and communication technology competencies. Social responsibility is an ethical theory in which individuals are accountable for fulfilling their civil duty in a way that their actions benefit the society at large. According to Berman (in Sihem, 2013), it is a personal investment in the well-being of others and of the planet. Investopedia (n.d.) explained that social responsibility means that individuals and companies must act in the best interests of their environment and society as a whole. Furthermore, Indeed.com (2021) posited that social responsibility is an ethical framework in which individuals or corporations are accountable for fulfilling civic duty and taking actions that will benefit society as a whole. This facilitates balance between the economic growth of individuals and the welfare of society and the environment. In education, it is a process whereby the whole community transmits to the next generation appropriate values, traditions, skills and cultural norms and service which promote good deeds. It demands that a teacher not only cares about actual students but also must understand and prepare them to fit into the society as good citizens.

Adeyanju (2012) explained that the goal of application of social responsibility principles by teachers and lecturers is to encourage students to engage in activities that develop leadership skills, principles of service to the community and personal responsibility. Examples of social responsibility principles include managing conflicts appropriately, participating in community activities, creating structures in the classroom so that students feel included, treating all students fairly and respectfully, showing care and concern to students with family problems and using effective problem-solving strategies in community matters among others.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is an umbrella term that includes any communication device, encompassing radio, television, cell phones, computer and so on as well as the various services and appliances such as video conferencing and distance learning (Ezenwafor & Okolochi, 2021). Clarke (2006) explained that ICT covers a whole range of applications, techniques and systems. Ezenwafor and Soneye (2018) acknowledged that globally, ICT has initiated a transition from analogue to digital operations in all spheres of human endeavor and makes it possible to carry out a lot of activities speedily, easily, accurately and at less cost. However, effective utilization of ICT resources for any personal or business activities requires adequate possession of relevant competencies. The Ministry of Education (2006) asserted that ICT competencies provide a range of tools that can significantly extend and enrich teachers' instructional strategies and support students' learning in business education.

According to Ezenwafor and Okolochi (2021), ICT competencies involve the ability to use computer hardware and software resources for different personal and business transactions. Okoye (2017) averred that business educators require ICT competencies for effective instructional delivery. Olisa and Ihimekpen (in Ezenwafor & Okolochi, 2021) outlined relevant ICT competencies for business educators to include the ability to use different computer hardware and software devices as well as different electronic media for effective communication. Furthermore, Ihejirika (2021) outlined ICT competencies required by business educators for improving societal values to include ability to use digital library, share and exchange learning experiences, motivate students to study, use ICT tools to gather

information on societal norms, use interactive whiteboard, model environment for instructional delivery, develop students' employability skills and ability to use different computer applications among others.

3. Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey design since data were collected from the subjects using a questionnaire to determine their application of innovative practices for improving societal values. The study was conducted in South-East Nigeria comprising the five Igbo speaking states. The entire population of 215 business educators in the area was studied without sampling as the researchers were able to manage the size. A Likert scale questionnaire containing 24 items in two clusters with very great extent (VGE), great extent (GE), moderate extent (ME), small extent (SM) and very small extent (VSE) which was validated by three experts was used for data collection. Cronbach alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument and a reliability coefficient value of 0.76 was obtained. 206 out of the 215 copies of the questionnaire distributed (representing 96 percent response rate with an attrition rate of 4 percent) were duly completed and retrieved. Arithmetic mean was used to answer the research questions and decision was based on the cluster mean score in relation to the real limits of numbers on a 5-point scale, Standard deviation was used to determine the closeness of the respondents' means while ANOVA was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A null hypothesis was rejected where the p-value was less than the alpha value ($p < 0.05$) and not rejected where the p-value was equal to or greater than the alpha value ($p > 0.05$).

4. Results

Table 1: Respondents' mean ratings on their extent of application of social responsibility practices

S/ N	Social responsibility principle	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Participating in activities in the community	3.11	0.57	ME
2.	Managing conflicts between school and community appropriately	3.20	0.39	ME
3.	Using suitable problem-solving strategies in community matters	3.50	0.50	GE
4.	Treating all students fairly and respectfully	4.19	0.60	GE
5.	Upholding the rights of students in the community	4.90	0.54	VGE
6.	Seeking students' inputs in school participation in social activities	4.09	0.54	GE
7.	Using students' interests in involving them in community events	3.40	0.49	ME
8.	Creating structure in the classroom where students feel included and appreciated	4.40	0.49	GE
9.	Demonstrating care and concern to students with problems	4.30	0.78	GE
10.	Willingly contributing to general well-being of community where school is located	3.29	0.63	ME
	Cluster mean score	3.84		GE

Table 1 shows that the cluster mean score is 3.84. This means that business educators in South-East Nigeria apply social responsibility principles to a great extent for improving societal value in the area. The standard deviation scores for all the items are within the same range which implies that the respondents were homogeneous in their mean ratings.

Table 2: Respondents' mean ratings on their extent of their application of information and communication technology competencies

S/ N	Information and communication technology competencies	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Using digital libraries and internet to enrich curriculum content	4.90	0.49	VGE
2.	Sharing and exchanging learning experiences using social media platforms	4.92	0.49	VGE
3.	Using ICT resources for collaborating with colleagues	4.93	0.50	VGE
4.	Using technology to stimulate students' interest in learning	3.83	0.58	GE
5.	Using the web to gather information on new trends for enhanced performance	4.60	0.56	VGE
6.	Using web-based assessment to cater for students needs in the instructional process	2.57	0.69	ME
7.	Using web-based presentation of curriculum before and during semester	3.60	0.58	GE
8.	Using email in teaching and learning activities	2.87	0.66	ME
9.	Using web-based diagnostic, formative and summative assessment	2.83	0.62	ME
10.	Using ITC software to develop students' literacy skills	2.90	0.66	ME
11.	Using interactive whiteboard to promote class discussion	4.53	0.53	VGE
12.	Using simulated environments in instructional delivery	3.87	0.59	GE
13.	Using interactive whiteboard to promote students' presentation skills	3.84	0.63	GE
14.	Using word processing programme for language and literacy practices	3.86	0.55	GE
	Cluster mean score	3.86		GE

Table 2 shows that the cluster mean score is 3.86. This means that business educators in South-East Nigeria apply social responsibility principles to a great extent for improving societal value in the area. The standard deviation scores for all the items are within the same range which implies that the respondents were homogeneous in their mean ratings.

Table 3: ANOVA summary of difference in respondents' mean ratings on their application of social responsibility principles based on level of education

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-value	Remarks
Between Groups	3.336	2	2.168	83.03	.000	Significant
Within Groups	4.839	203	.025			
Total	8.175	205				

Table 3 shows that the p-value of .000 is less than the alpha value of 0.05 ($p=.000<@=0.05$). This means that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of business educators in their application of social responsibility principles for improving societal values in South-East Nigeria as a result of level of education. The hypothesis was, therefore, rejected.

Table 4: ANOVA summary of difference in respondents' mean ratings on their application of social responsibility principles based on teaching experience

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-value	Remarks
Between Groups	3.336	2	2.168	82.24	.000	Significant
Within Groups	5.839	203	.025			
Total	10.175	205				

Table 4 shows that the p-value of .000 is less than the alpha value of 0.05 ($p=.000<@=0.05$). This means that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of business educators in their application of social responsibility principles for improving societal values in South-East Nigeria as a result of level of teaching experience. The hypothesis was, therefore, rejected.

Table 5: ANOVA summary of difference in respondents' mean ratings on their application of information and communication technology competencies based on level of education

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-value	Remarks
Between Groups	.043	2	.033	1.68	1.88	Not Significant
Within Groups	1.615	203	.022			
Total	1.658	205				

Table 5 shows that the p-value of 1.88 is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 ($p=1.68>@=0.05$). This means that the respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on application of information and communication technology competencies for improving societal values in South-East Nigeria as a result of level of education. The hypothesis was, therefore, not rejected.

Table 6: ANOVA summary of difference in respondents' mean ratings on their application of information and communication technology competencies based on teaching experience

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	P-value	Remarks
Between Groups	0.43	2	.044	1.90	1.94	Not Significant
Within Groups	2.615	203	.033			
Total	2.658	205				

Table 6 shows that the p-value of 1.94 is greater than the alpha value of 0.05 ($p=1.94 > \alpha=0.05$). This means that the respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings application of information and communication technology competencies for improving societal values in South-East Nigeria as a result of level of teaching experience. The hypothesis was, therefore, not rejected.

5. Discussion

Findings of the study revealed that business educators were applying social responsibility principles to a great extent for improving societal values in South-East Nigeria. The finding agreed with the report of Sihem (2013) that business educators applied social responsibility principles by providing learning environment for all students to help them appreciate their involvement in the wellbeing of different members of the society. It further revealed a significant difference in the application of social responsibility principles by the subjects based on level of educational attainment and years of teaching experience. This disagreed with Mgbagala et al. (2013) who reported that level of educational attainment and years of teaching experience did not influence application of innovative practices such as social responsibility principles by teachers. This could be because the previous researchers lumped the innovative practices together and did not treat application of social responsibility principles separately.

The study further revealed that the business educators were applying the ICT competencies to a great extent for improving societal values in South-East Nigeria by instilling appropriate attitudes, character traits and acceptable social norms. This finding agreed with Garba et al. (2013) who reported that use of different ICT resources improved pre-service teachers' inquiry, critical thinking and problem-solving skills as well as positive attitudes and character traits for effective teaching of 21st century employability skills. In agreement with Garba et al. (2013), it was further found that the respondents did not differ significantly in their application of ICT competencies. This could be as a result of the current emphasis by the federal and state governments in Nigeria on ICT adoption in education.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that the extent of application of innovative principles by business educators was adequate in producing graduates with positive attitudes and character traits for good citizens in South-East Nigeria and that if lectures in other fields were doing so, graduates of tertiary educational institutions who occupy leadership positions would demonstrate appropriate values to reduce the level of moral decadence.

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, it was recommended that

1. The business educators should sustain and possibly increase their level of application of all relevant innovative practices to help sustain societal norms in South-East Nigeria.
2. Lecturers in other fields and all teachers should emulate the business educators by applying innovative practices at a high level to improve societal values in South-East Nigeria.
3. Management of tertiary educational institutions should adequately provide instructional resources and sponsorship to seminars, conferences and short courses for business educators and other lecturers to adequately apply innovative practices to improve societal values in the area.
4. Governments and educational authorities in the area should provide resources in schools to facilitate application of innovative practices by business educators to improve the quality of graduates for a healthy society.

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