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BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF CURRICULUM INFORMATION HANDBOOK ON CHOICE OF CAREER PATHWAYS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract
This study explored perceived influence of curriculum information handbook of business education on students' choice of career pathways as regards their course selections in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. One research question guided the study, and one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study was carried out in four public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 902 business education students and a sample size of 277 was drawn from the population. An 8-item questionnaire was used for data collection, which was validated by experts in the field of education. The Cronbach's alpha method was used to test the reliability, resulting in 0.79 reliability coefficient. Data analysis was done using mean, standard deviation and t-test. The findings revealed that curriculum information handbook of business education provides enough information that helps students to understand the various career pathways inherent in business education and in their career pathway decision-making with respect to their course selections. Consequently, it was concluded that business education department should provide updated handbooks to enable the students make informed and quicker decision relating to their career.
Keywords. Business Education, Career Pathways, Curriculum information handbook

Introduction

Business education, a wide range of career opportunities, is described as an aspect of total education programme which provides the recipients with the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes needed to perform well in business world as a producer, entrepreneur or consumer of goods and services (Akaeze, 2014). Edokpolor and Owenvbiugie (2017) sees business education as a skill-based programme that provides opportunities for young adults to make choices among varieties of career options. Abraham-Ibe (2021) noted that business education skills play major role in equipping students with desirable office/business skills that are imperative for job opportunities and sustainability in the world economy today. Edokpolor and Oduma (2018) also acknowledged that a well-implemented business education programmes is aimed at achieving three broad goals which include: to prepare recipients for career in office occupations; to equip recipients with requisite attributes for job-creation and entrepreneurship; and to expose recipients to the knowledge about business, including a good blend of computer technology (ICT).

With specific course or subject name, business education is offered at different levels of education (e.g., primary school, secondary schools, and tertiary institutions - Ezeani & Ogundola, 2016). Amoah, Kwofie and Kwofie (2015) believed that tertiary institutions are crucial for students to become prepared for transitions from school to work. At the tertiary school level, business education

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is offered viz.., Accounting education, Entrepreneurial education, Marketing and Distributive education and Office management education, where students are empowered with desirable skills, knowledge and value to perform specific functions so as to become self-reliant and contribute to economic development of the nation.

Consequently, business education programmes or specialties are expected to equip the students with saleable skills for job opportunities. Oguejiofor and Onwuna (2021) noted that there are many job opportunities open for the survival of graduates of business education that include; establishment of business centers, consultancy (giving expert advice), establishment of private vocational schools, supplying and distribution, product advertising and promotion services, estate agent, petty trading, opening of stationery shop, sales of office machines and equipment, secretarial duties, office work or paid employment such as teaching, cashier, bank officer, receptionist, marketer, computer operator, account clerks, purchasing agent, telephone operator, public relation officer, sales manager, administrative managers, among others. Notwithstanding the various job opportunities in business education, students must yet decide and choose a career path for their transition from school to work (occupational activities).

The primary focus of this study is to determine the influence of curriculum information handbook on students' choice of career pathways and course selections in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. . Career pathway is often clarified in two perspectives; the educational career pathways and the workplace career pathways (career ladder progression). On the educational perspective: career pathway is seen as a coordinated programme of rigorous high-quality education and work-related training that aligns to industrial needs and advances students in their career choice (Section 3 of the United States Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 2014). Amreen (2019) clarified same as ways in which education and specific occupations are connected. On the workplace career pathways; Hedge and Rineer (2017) described career pathway as workplace career progression or career ladder or sequence of work positions or roles held by an employee overtime. In this study, career pathways refer to clusters of occupation-related specialties in Business Education programme that enable students to progress in the programme.

Choosing a career pathway can be an exciting as well as daunting experience for students. Choice involves making a psychological decision, judging the outright advantage of multiple options and selecting the best or more of them (Adeoye, 2021). According to Kazi and Akhlaq (2017), the influence of career decision has a lasting impact on an individual, it serves to be a predictor and determinant of their prospective level of income, nature of work and consequently leaves a mark on the personality, demeanor and outlook of an individual. Park and Yang (2016) noted that a career path decision made by an individual may determine the individual's life style and values as well as one of the most important development tasks. Negru-Subtrica, Pop and Crocetti (2015) study revealed that adolescent's self-doubt, anxiety and uncertainty of abilities influence career decision making process. Studies have shown that the students' choice of career path generally can be influenced by numerous factors including; students' skill and abilities, personal interests and passion, values, personality type, peer influence, influence of family members, nurturing and supportive environment, influence of teachers, coaches, mentors, job security, available career opportunities, personal development needs, students' perceptions of the career path, curriculum information handbook among others (Dowd, 2021; Aboje, 2023; Shellye, 2023). All these noted factors overly influence students' choice of career pathways. The influence of gender in students' career making decisions cannot also be overlooked. When considering gender, male students are more likely to be interested and motivated by high paying jobs and status in a career path than female students (Adeoye, 2021). Similarly, Kazi and

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Akhlaq (2017), reported that financial prospects influence the choice of career pathway of men as they are faced with household expenses, whereas women are more interested and concerned with social status.

On the influence of curriculum information handbook on students' choice of career pathways, Lane (2019) posits that curriculum information handbook is an important part of the career pathways programme goals which describes the career pathways and notes courses of study for core subjects and electives for each pathway. Dolphin and Littlefield (2013) believe that information handbook serves as a guide to students' life in district, providing an orientation to new and current students. Similarly, the Department of Technology and Vocational Education (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka) believe that an informed student knows what to do and what not to do to avoid interruption of academic studies that may undermine career aspirations. The handbook, therefore has been designed to help students make informed choices as regards to their career aspirations.

Under the curriculum for business education programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, career pathways in business education are available in four major academic areas namely; accounting education pathway, entrepreneurial education pathway, marketing and distribution education pathway and office management education pathway (NUC Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), 2022). Business education students in Nigeria's tertiary institutions are to choose and align their studies to any of the four provided career pathways from their 200 level of education (CCMAS, 2022). Despite these overwhelming benefits of curriculum information handbook, it is regrettably that a closer look at the existing literatures shows that scholars have paid little or no attention to exploring the influence of curriculum information handbook among business education students in tertiary institutions especially in Anambra State, leaving this area with a gap seeking to be filled with research. It is against this background that the researcher is prompted to determine the influence of curriculum information handbook on business education students' choice of career pathways and course selections in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Making choice of career pathways has today become the major dilemma afflicting students and young people globally. Business education students in Nigeria, especially in Anambra State are not left out as they are also bewildered in the dilemma of deciding choice of career path from the varied options existing in the programme (Accounting education, Entrepreneurial education, Marketing and Distributive education and Office management education) that best suit them before and after school in confrontation with work activities upon graduation.

Notwithstanding the stated benefits of curriculum information handbook on students' academic activities, a look at existing literatures shows that scholars have paid little or no attention to exploring the influence curriculum information handbook has on students' choice of career pathways and course selection in tertiary institutions especially in Anambra State, consequently living a gap in the body of knowledge and thus studies need to be done to determine whether curriculum information handbook of business education has any influence on business education students' choice of career pathways and course selections.

Research Question

What is the perceived influence of curriculum information handbook of business education on students' choice of career pathways?

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Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education students on the influence of curriculum information handbook of business education on their choice of career pathways based on gender.

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. This study was carried out in public tertiary institutions in Anambra State that offer business education courses (viz. Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka (UNIZIK), Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam-Awkuzu, Federal College of Education Nsugbe and Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze). The population of this study comprised 902 business education undergraduate regular students of all the public tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The sample size for the study is 277 obtained using the Taro Yamane formula. Multi-stage sampling techniques involving two stages were adopted for this study. Thus, proportionate stratified and convenience sampling techniques were employed at the first and second stages respectively.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled, "Curriculum Influence on Business Education Students' Choice of Career Pathways and Course Selections Questionnaire". The instrument was validated by five experts. Cronbach's alpha method was used to test the internal consistency of the instrument, resulting in the reliability coefficient of 0.79. The data collected was analyzed using mean ratings and standard deviation for the research question and t-test for the hypothesis. The data was analyzed using SPSS Version 23. The decision rule was to accept a null hypothesis where p-value is greater than or equal to the alpha level of 0.05. The null hypothesis was rejected where the p-value is less than the alpha level; otherwise, it was accepted.

Results

Research Question 1. What are the perceived influence of curriculum information handbook of business education on students' choice of career pathways?

Table 1.

Mean ratings on perceived influence of curriculum information handbook of business education on students' career pathways

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Curriculum information handbook provides more courses that I was interested in	3.93	1.07	Agreed
2	The curriculum information handbook provides same numbers of the courses that I was interested in	3.68	1.08	Agreed
3	The curriculum handbook provides fewer courses that I was interested in	3.05	1.27	Agreed

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4	Because of the curriculum information handbook, I have more understanding of my career interest	4.17	0.96	Agreed
5	Because of curriculum information handbook, I have thought more of my potential career	3.92	1.09	Agreed
6	Because of the curriculum information handbook, I have same understanding of my career pathway and future career plans	3.60	1.26	Agreed
7	Because of the curriculum information handbook, I have less understanding of my career interest	2.24	1.21	Disagreed
8	Because of curriculum information handbook, I have thought less of my future plans	2.21	1.31	Disagreed
	Cluster mean	3.35		Agreed

Table 1 shows that respondents agreed that curriculum information handbook of business education influence their choice of career pathways and course selection as can be seen on items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, with mean scores of 3.05 to 4.17. However, the respondents disagreed that items 7 and 8 have no influence on their choice of career pathways and course selection (2.21 to 2.24). The cluster mean score of 3.35 indicates that overall, curriculum information handbook of business education influence business education students' choice of career pathways and course selection in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The standard deviations show homogeneity of responses as respondents' scores range from 0.96 to 1.31. This means that their responses are closely related.

Hypothesis 1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education students on the influence of curriculum information handbook of business education on their choice of career pathways based on gender.

Table 2.
The t-test analysis of the Mean Ratings on Influence of Curriculum Information Handbook of Business Education on Career Pathways based on gender

Variable	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**df**	**ά**	***p*-value**	**Decision**
Male	99	26.70	4.43				
				275	0.05	0.78	Not Significant
Female	178	26.86	4.39				

Data in Table 2 shows that the p-value of 0.78 at 275 degrees of freedom is greater than 0.05 alpha level. This shows that gender does not significantly influence the opinion of respondents on influence of curriculum information handbook of business education on their choice of career pathways and course selection. The analysis also shows mean scores of 26.70 and 26.86 for males and females respectively. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups is upheld.

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Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study indicated that curriculum information handbook of business education influenced students' choice of career pathways in business education and course selections in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Majority of the respondents agreed that curriculum information handbook provided them with enough information that helped them in making their career pathways decisions; Because of curriculum information handbook they had more understanding of what their career pathways entail and that it had helped them to think more of their potential career. This implies that curriculum information handbook influences and plays a major role in business education students' choice of career pathways and course selections. This finding is in agreement with Salazar (2019) on the roles of information handbook wherein it was revealed that the primary duty of curriculum information handbook is to provide students with information, guidelines and policies that will enhance their adjustment in school. The finding is also in line with 2019 handbook of Department of Technology and Vocational Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, which argued that with information handbook, students are well-informed and feel balanced as they pursue their career with vigor and confidence. Findings from the test of the null hypothesis indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of respondents on the influence of curriculum information handbook of business education on their choice of career pathways and course selections based on gender. Consequently, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that curriculum information handbook of business education have crucial roles to play in the choice of career pathways and course selections of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. This implies that if business education department fails to provide students with updated handbooks, they would possibly be misguided.

This study recommends that business education department should provide updated handbooks to enable the students to make informed and quicker decision relating to their career.

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