THE ROLE OF PROCESS OPTIMIZATION IN MODERN BUSINESS EDUCATION-BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

[1]Lydia Udeh Opara, [2]Akudolu, Chikerenma Adanma, PhD & [3]Nwatarali, Chinwe Nene, PhD
[1,2&3]Department of Business Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
[1]lu.opara@unizik.edu.ng, [2]ca.akudolu@unizik.edu.ng, [3]cn.nwatalari@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract
This study aimed at examining the role of process optimization in modern business education-bridging the gap between theory and practice. The study employed descriptive research design to study a population of 554 of business studies teachers in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area. Random sampling technique was employed to select 21 business studies teachers from 4 selected secondary schools. This gave a total of 84 business studies teachers. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection from the respondents. Mean statistics was employed to analyze the data collected. 2.5. point was set for accepting the mean. The findings of the study indicated that process optimization in business education programme is important on the areas of curriculum improvement by incorporating microelectronics, telecommunication equipment, internet and computers, Canvas, Zoom, Blackboard, Moodle and Microsoft Teams applications into business education curriculum. The study concluded that process optimization is needed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of business education programme imparting the required skills, competence, knowledge and attitudes on students to be able to cope in the present-day technology labour market. Hence, the study recommended that there should be optimization and restructuring of business education curriculum include artificial intelligence, Canvas, Zoom, Blackboard, Moodle and Microsoft Teams technologies to enhance e-virtual teaching and students' acquisition of employability skills.
Keywords: Role, Process, Optimization, Modern, Business, Education.

Introduction

The process optimization in business transformation is under researched. The emergency and implementation of modern technologies in business has resulted in improvement in efficiency, effectiveness, increased knowledge, ideas, learning, flexibility, agility, easier compliance with regulations, better customer experience, reduced costs, and higher revenues (Moran, 2022.). The improvement of business processes began as part of efforts to restructure business processes that promised exceptionally high results. Process optimization in business has undergone fundamental changes in order to significantly increase productivity. According to George and Kostas (2017), the goal of process optimization in business is to improve processes and reduce costs. However, scholars who have tried to optimize processes in business literature claimed that they support the improvement of business management.

Optimization is a discipline focused on adjusting a process to make the most effective use of a specified set of parameters without violating certain constraints. It involves selecting the best course of action based on specific criteria and strategies to maximize efficiency. In contrast to broad descriptions of process improvement, optimization is a more focused, scientific approach aimed at achieving a better outcome (Carissimo & Korecki, 2024). The process optimization involves analyzing, streamlining and refining existing work-flows to eliminate redundancies, reduce wastes, minimize costs, and ultimately achieve better results. The goal of process optimization in business is to increase organization's productivity and efficiency in operations. Process optimization can be used for particular sections, single processes, and inside as well as outside procedures. Those functions best, nonetheless, when a company tries to enhance all of its procedures (Taylor, 2022). Process optimization in business has received less attention than the numerous suggested company process modelling tools and qualitative evaluation methods that may be identified in academia (Vergidis, 2008). The process optimization in business can assist firms in being more successful, efficient, and adaptable to changing circumstances. Also, it can enhance the caliber of goods and services, augment client contentment, adhere to legal requirements, and cultivate superior cooperation and staff involvement. Businesses have demonstrated benefits from the effective application of PO techniques,

including decreased costs associated with subpar quality, increased revenue, and overall improved corporate performance and efficiency (Tanner, 2023).

However, Business Education is a broad and diverse discipline that is included in all forms of educational delivery systems in primary, secondary and higher institutions. FRN (2004) define business education as a conglomerate of courses that is concerned with the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper values for the survival of the individual and the survival of the individual and the society. Business education is a programme of study that provides individuals with specific knowledge and skills in identified business area, along with general education, to equip them with competencies for the business world (Okon, 2020). Employers, as Donna (1996) opined that business education emerged out of yearning for skilled and capable workforce that can be effective and productive in the labour market. Business education impart knowledge, skills and ideas that enable students become being employed. Nwachukwu (2017) stated that business education equips individuals for and about business, equip individuals to fulfill effectively to produce and distribute goods and services as workers, use the results of production as consumer, make judicious socioeconomic decision as citizens to succeed in those careers. In other words, business education is lauded with skills development programme, geared towards bridging the gap between theories learnt in the classroom and the actual practice. However, the question is how effective and efficient is business education in the present day in bridging this gap between theory and practice? To answer this question, evidence in the society today proved that students of business education do not acquire the necessary skills, competencies, ideals, knowledge and attitudes to copy with modern office work and self-employment, hence unemployment continue on the increase. This is evident that business education has failure to deliver the practical and employable skills that the students required for labour market. This raises another question whether there is different between theory and practice in the classroom? Because the entrepreneurial skills and competencies expected of business of education graduates are not there. This situation calls for process optimization in business education to improve its efficiency, productivity and as well bridge the gap between theory and practice. The process option in business education programme in this study will focus on curriculum improvement and training of teachers in the field of technology for curriculum implementation.

The information and communication Technology (ICT) has revolutionized every activity in the society. Usoro (2010), added that the introduction of Microelectronics, telecommunication equipment, internet and computers to modern offices have changed the ways offices perform their function, this situation calls for optimization of business education curriculum in primary, secondary and higher institutions to use artificial intelligence and other technologies in the classroom instruction.

On a similar note, the situation calls for training and development of competent business education teachers who will be equipped with ICT knowledge in the area of artificial intelligence, internet, and use of e-learning resources such as Canvas, Blackboard, Zoom, Moodle, and Microsoft Teams for virtual teaching. Andreas et al. (2013) emphasized that the use of these technologies helps to facilitate deep learning and can allow business teachers to better respond to students' different needs. Ilag and Sabale (2022), and Nguyen and Duong (2021), opined that business education teachers can be trained in Microsoft Teams channel so that they can give students most attention quickly because the platform facilitatees information sharing and collaboration among team members, especially when it comes to interacting through messaging, calling, chatting, meetings, and content sharing. This platform competes favourably with others and some business education teachers can use this channel to teach their students when it becomes impossible for them and the students to meet in a physical classroom. According to research, Micrsoft Teams is a kind of platform that facilitates online instruction and learning and ease communication between teachers and their students. The platform can give groups of people access to voice, video, and content sharing capabilities as well as information sharing. This is done by leveraging on other Microsoft resources which include the ability to store data across all of the platform's features.

Similarly, there are other channels of communication such as zoom that business education teachers can be trained to make use of in teaching business education. The Zoom channel is popular since after pandemic despite the fact that it has been in existence for some time and some educators found this medium useful and easy to use for instructional delivery. However, there are limits to the number of students that the teacher can host on the platform like some other channels and this are some of the determinants of which channel a teacher may eventually decide to use. More also, business education teachers can be trained on Skype technology for virtual teaching. This platform provides same opportunity for several people to engage in videoconferencing where teaching and learning can take place. Other platforms such as Google meet, can help business teachers to deliver their lessons when needed. The only thing business education teachers need to be familiar with the existence of these channels and acquire knowledge and skills on how to use them to engage in virtual teaching irrespective of the level of education. Hence, this study aimed at examining the role of process optimization in modern business education: bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Statement of the Problem

Business education is a systematic programme of instructional delivery aimed at equipping students with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes to explore entrepreneurship activities and further education at the graduate and post-graduate levels. Despite these laudable objectives and missions, available evidences have shown that Nigeria is handling this programme with carelessness (Obunadike, 2015; Oladunjoye, 2016). This situation has consequently starved business education with adequate provision of financial resources, adequate provision of manpower in terms of quality and quantity, adequate supply of the state-of-the-art facilities, and proper utilization of quality curriculum, coupled with proper attention. As a result of inadequate optimization of resources in terms of quality and quantity, the instructional delivery of business education tends to be more theoretical in nature, and as such making the programme not to be capable of equipping her students with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes to explore entrepreneurial opportunities in post-oil boom economy. The implication is that graduates of business education would not be prepared well enough and lack basic skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes for employment and self-reliance. Hence, unemployment continues escalating on daily basis.

Research Questions

1. What are the roles of process optimization in improving business education curriculum?
2. What are the process optimization needs on the training of business studies teachers for curriculum implementation?

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design. The study collected data from primary sources. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled ‘Role of Process Optimization in Modern Business Education (RPOMBE)’and made up of 10 items. The population of study consisted of 554 business studies teachers in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area. Random sampling technique was employed to select 21 business studies teachers from 4 selected secondary schools. This gave a total of 84 teachers. Structured questionnaire designed to collect data from the respondents was validated by two experts. One expert from the Department of Business Education, and the other from the Department of Education Management and Policy, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The questionnaire was administered to 84 teachers in the study areas with the help of a research assistant but only 64 copies were properly filled and retrieved. The scale used for answering the questionnaire were strongly agreed (SA-4), agreed (A-3), disagree (D-2) and strongly disagree (SD-1). The mean statistics was employed to analyze the data collected. The study set 2.5-point scale as the mean for accepting the responses or reject the responses at less than 2.5 mean point.

Results and Discussion

Q1. 1. What are the roles of process optimization in improving business education curriculum?

Table 1: Mean responses on the roles of process optimization in improving business education curriculum.

SN	Areas of Curriculum Improvement	X	Remarks
1.	Process optimization can incorporate micro electronics, telecommunication equipment, internet and computers into business education curriculum.	3.5	Agreed
2.	Process optimization can improve business education instruction by adopting artificial intelligence as teaching aid.	3.6	Agreed
3.	Process optimization can improve business education curriculum by integrating Canvas application for virtual teaching.	3.5	Agreed
4.	Process optimization can help to design business education curriculum to use Blackboard and Zoom technologies for instruction.	3.4	Agreed
5.	Process optimization can incorporate Module, and Microsoft Teams business education curriculum.	3.4	Agreed
	Total	3.5	Agreed

Table 1 above analyzes data on the roles of process optimization in improving business education curriculum. The result showed that the computed mean of the items from 1-5 was 3.5, accepting mean 2.5. This means 3.5 - 25 =1. Since the computed mean at 3.5 is greater than accepting mean by 1 point, the result indicated that process optimization incorporates microelectronics, telecommunication equipment, internet and computers into business education curriculum, improve business education curriculum by integrating Canvas, Blackboard, Moodle and Microsoft Teams applications virtual teaching aid,

Q2. What is the process optimization needs for business studies teachers curriculum implementation?

Table 2: Mean responses on process optimization needed for business education teachers curriculum implementation.

SN	Needs	X	Remarks
1	Training of business studies teachers on ICT skills and knowledge to effectively handle computers and internet for instructional delivery.	3.5	Agreed
2	Training of business studies teachers to be able to handle artificial intelligence technology.	3.5	Agreed
3.	Training of business education teachers to be able to handle Canvas and Zoom application for virtual teaching.	3.5	Agreed
4.	Training of business studies teachers to be able to handle Blackboard technology as virtual teaching aid.	3.4	Agreed
5.	Training of business studies teachers to be able to handle Moodle, and Microsoft Teams aids.	3.4	Agreed
	Total		

Table 1 above, analyzed data on the process optimization needed for business education teachers curriculum implementation. The result showed that the computed mean of the items from 1-5 was 3.5, accepting mean 2.5. This means 3.5 - 25 =1. Since the computed mean at 3.5 is greater than accepting mean by 1 point, the result indicated that process optimization in business education call for business studies teachers to be able to handle ICT, artificial intelligence technology, Canvas and Zoom technology, Blackboard, Module, and Microsoft Teams technologies as for instructional delivery.

Discussion

Considering the state of business education such as poor funding, outdated curriculum, and inadequate facilities among other that hindered the programme from imparting employable skills, competencies and attitudes on students for labour market, the study found that process optimization is imperative. The study discovered that process optimization in business education programme is needed in the area of curriculum improvement by incorporate micro electronics, telecommunication equipment, internet and computers into business education curriculum. Also, optimization on teaching aids to include Canvas, Zoom, Blackboard, Module and Microsoft Teams applications for virtual instructional delivery. More also, process optimization is important in the training of business studies teachers to acquire technology skills, competences and knowledge to be able to handle computer, internet, Microsoft Teams, Canvas, Zoom, Blackboard and Moodle technologies to teach through online.

Conclusion

The study aimed at investigating the role of process optimization in modern business education-bridging the gap between theory and practice. The study was conducted in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area. Descriptive research design was adopted to study a population of 554 business education teachers in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area. Random sampling technique was employed to select 21 business studies teachers from 4 selected secondary schools. This gave a total of 84 business studies teachers. Structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection in the study. Mean statistics was employed to analyze the data collected. Hence, the study concluded that process optimization is needed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of business education programme imparting the required skills, competencies, knowledge and attitudes on students to be able to cope in the present-day technology labour market.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations weremade;

1. There should be optimization and restructuring of business education curriculum including artificial intelligence, Canvas, Zoom, Blackboard, Module and Microsoft Teams technologies to enhance e-virtual teaching and students' acquisition of employable skills.
2. Government should organize massive retraining programmes for business studies teachers through seminar, conferences and workshop to acquire knowledge and skills on the use of teaching aids such as Canvas, Zoom, Blackboard, Module and Microsoft Teams.

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