

## **Synergy and Collaboration among Business Educators in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined Synergy and Collaboration among Business Educators in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of business education lecturers in all the universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged Synergy and Collaboration among Business Educators Questionnaire (SCBEQ). The questionnaire is made up of 40 items were placed on 4 point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagreed (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. The instrument was face validated by three experts in University of Calabar. The Cronbach Alpha reliability test was used to determine the internal consistence of the instrument which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.79. based on the findings, conclusion were made while the following recommendations were made: Nigeria institutions offering business education should collaboration with relevant bodies such as ABEN, AVTEN, NUC to ensure maximum productivity; Business education should collaborate with industry to give the students with more opportunities for practical industrial work experience and acclimatizing them with real work situation; Business education should be involved in international collaborations to improve the quality and the value of the education system; Business education should identify with others individual, association and others organization for maximum productivity.*

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**Keywords:** Synergy, Collaboration, Business education

### **Introduction**

Synergy is the concept that combined value and performance of two parties will be greater than the sum of the separate individual efforts. Synergy is defined by as a cooperative or combined action, and occurs when diverse or disparate individuals or groups collaborate for a common cause. The objective is to increase effectiveness by sharing perceptions and experiences, insights, and knowledge (Lewis and Parker 1990). It is usually when two parties collaborate and create a culture of excellence that is mutually beneficial. This can be broadened outside of an organization. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (third edition) look at synergy as the combined power of a group of things when they are working together which is greater than the total power achieved by each working separately. Collaboration is the action of working with individual or organisation to produce something better than the effort of a single person (Lewis and Parker 1990).

The Perspectives of the synergy model is describe as Strategic synergy: this is to ensure that the participants have a common ground and that their individual objectives and expectations

are understood and are consistent with competencies and contribution of each partner, as well as the additional value and competitive advantage to be delivered through the collaboration; Operational synergy: is to ensure that each partner's internal management processes and difficulties are understood and resolved, and that customer focused operational systems extend across organizational boundaries; Cultural synergy: To ensure that the mindset, organizational culture and management styles are compatible between partners and there is a sufficient level of trust and commitment in place; Commercial synergy: To ensure that the short and long term expectations, benefits and risks are understood and appropriate agreements have been put in place with regards to distribution of risks, as well as benefits arising from collaboration (Akeke, Aluko, and Atah, 2019).

Collaboration literally means working together. The term is often used when individuals or organizations work together towards some common aims and objectives. Collaboration also means Joining of power between two or more companies, institutions or individual from the same country or different countries in order to implement a particular operation (Parker 1994). It is a distinct mode of organizing with a positive, purposive relationship between organisations that retain autonomy, integrity and distinct identity, and at the same time, the possibility to withdraw from the relationship (Cropper 1996). Collaboration is a process in which organisations exchange information, alter activities, share resources and enhance each other's capacity for mutual benefit and a common purpose by sharing risks, responsibilities and rewards (Hill and Brian 2006). Collaboration is equally a positive form of working in association with others for some form of mutual benefit (Huxham1996). Collaboration is a links between companies to create and support a service or product for its service life, including final disposal (Jordan and Michel 2000). Collaboration is also a number of autonomous organisations working together, pooling and sharing resources, information, systems and risk for mutual benefits. In other word, before institution or organizations collaborate there must be a target benefits and a purpose of collaborating. Just like others organsiations collaborated to achieve a desire goals, business education needed to be collaborated because when collaborating, organizations share resources in common and equally exchange information that complement each other's weaknesses.

Interestingly, collaboration had it foundation in the bible. The Holy Bible teaches us that God the father the creator of heaven and the earth partnered with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit to get things done to fulfill the purpose of creations. The reason why we are having a successful and a perfect creation is because God partnering with the trinity to get things done. If God could be involved in partnering with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit then, there is a need for individuals, organization and the institutions to understand the gravity and benefits of partnering or collaborate with one another for effective teaching and learning process. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; *"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil for if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken"*. In other word, when the two organization or institutions collaborate together it have a good productivity than single universities.

Chukwurah and Atah (2019) agreed that the synergy and collaboration in business education will bring job creation, recognition and opportunities among business educators' to interact and learn from others institutions what one could not have at a moment. When universities, industry and organisations collaborate, this would give them the opportunities to make

available use of facilities and equipment of others universities have to contribute to the teaching and learning process in Nigeria institutions. This facilities refer to immovable property, physical structures, assets and facilities belonging to or allocated to an educational institution, used primarily for educational purposes and activities, these include classrooms, laboratories and equipment, libraries, hostel furniture, staff quarters, playground (Atah, 2019). Chukwurah and Atah (2018) affirmed that if business educators and others universities/organizations collaborated it will bring relationship among the universities. Bessong, Atah and Ugbadu (2019) agreed that synergy and collaborate will help the organization to share facilities such as intranet which is a computer network, using shared world internet web language to transmit data among the collaborators for effective teaching and learning process of business education curriculum content. Agim, Ochui, & Atah (2020) opined that, technology keeps on advancing and it is becoming very essential in our lives, everyday people use technology to improve on the way they accomplish specific tasks and business education will not be exceptional. If business educators in various institutions collaborate with one another it will go a long way improving the system. For example, we use technology in education to improve on the way we learn, we use technology in business to gain competitive advantage (Agim, Ochui, & Atah, 2020). Synergy and collaboration with others institutions is highly needed especially in this season of global pandemic to give room to universities collaborated to manipulate software programme like MS Excel, MS term, Zoom and Peer tutoring in training students of universities to acquire vocational skills (Atah, Ukah and Crossdale 2019).

Collaboration is often used when individuals or organizations work together towards some common aims and objectives. Goals are what individuals or organization is intent to achieve in a given period of a time. Business education is “education for and about business (Tonne and Nanassy, (1970). Education for business refers to vocational business education (VBE) and involves the acquisition and utilization of business knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes specifically for career/vocational purposes. This aspect could further be described as a training programme or course of study through which recipients acquire knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes that enable them to teach or work in any of the following business areas: Office Technology and Management (OTM)/Secretarial jobs, Accounting/book keeping jobs, Marketing/distributive jobs, Administrative/clerical jobs, Word processing/computing jobs (Okon, 2015). From this perspective, business education is a core component of technical and vocational education (TVE) designed to prepare persons for specific business careers. Inclusive in this career/vocational option is the preparation for teaching business and business-related subjects/courses. Business education is specifically designed to prepare recipients for careers in either business or teaching occupation. There is also sufficient preparation for self-reliance and entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, education about business refers to General Business Education (GBE) which encompasses all programmes of study whether formal or informal, apprenticeship schemes, seminars and workshops, publications, computer assisted/ managed instructions, training courses, exhibitions and even television programmes which are designed to make recipients knowledgeable and intelligent consumers of business products and services. It means preparing all learners for the various roles they will play as economically literate citizens. The medical doctor, lawyer, engineer, nurse, pharmacist, lecturer, scientist and indeed everybody need basic computer skills and an understanding of general business, entrepreneurship, money and banking mainly for personal use. Provision of this kind of knowledge to this group of learners is one of the dual missions of business education. Business education can collaborate with others institutions and private sectors to get certain issues in education resolve especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century class room setting. This means that

government has not fully responded to its proposed determination to invest in business education. Consequently, presently, business education has not been able to meet the requirements of Commerce and Industry, which has gone globalised. Thus, it becomes imperative to adopt a suitable strategy to reposition business education along with diversification drive for sustainable development (Okon, 2015). In line with the topic, no others strategy could be more suitable than Collaborative business education with other universities for maximum productivity.

Collaborative Business Education is a functional business education programme through partnerships with relevant bodies to enhance effective teaching and learning for the production of graduates with practical skill competencies and knowledge relevant to the work and business demand of the contemporary global community. Nigeria, like most other countries in Africa is attaching more importance to business education. The nature of delivery of Business Education is such that students are exposed to general knowledge and skills through training. Knowledge and skills can be acquired through learning and training experiences in academic institutions, training centres and business organisations. The schools provide knowledge and practical experiences but are sometimes short-lived due to inadequacy of facilities and equipment that can provide the needed skill level for ever-changing work environment as technologies keep pushing for new application of work skills, techniques and approaches. The only option is for schools to locate different organizations with different degrees of technologies, where the schools can collaborate for students' exposure through school – employer partnership for students industrial work experiences. Despite these bilateral approach to handling students' skill needs, most students still afford themselves training opportunities either on graduation or while undergoing course of study in preferred training centres (Okon, 2015).

This framework further recycles into job environments where employers out-rightly provide training opportunities for varying periods depending on pre-work schedule for both new and existing personnel. Other collaborative agents include government ministries, regulatory agencies, professional bodies and the public. Employers of labour provide the school-employer approach to individuals who are exposed to hand-on-practical learning in the real work environment. Those exposed to this approach include both employees and students from tertiary institutions who are placed on Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). Employers of Labour are mostly business establishments and government ministries, department, agencies and parastatals that hire the services of business educators as workforce. Employers of business educators as workforce indirectly have roles to play in the development of Business Education.

Therefore, in repositioning the programme, they equally have important role to play. Ministry of Education and Regulatory bodies and other government agencies are establishments, with major stakeholders, who formulate educational policies, including educational laws guiding the practice and operation of education in Nigeria. Ministry of Education (MOE) is the highest policy making body in the educational system. Professional bodies such as Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN), Association of Vocational and Technical Educators of Nigeria (AVTEN), among others have vital roles to play in collaborating Business Education. Professional bodies such as ABEN and AVTEN have pools of intellectuals in Business Education and Vocational education at large with potentials to develop contents, methodology and delivery of Business Education at different levels of the educational system. They organize resources for the actualization of the lofty goals and objectives of the business education Programme. Members of the public are also

collaborative agents for collaborative Business Education. The involvement of the public is needed in the repositioning of business education Programme.

The collaboration can be done locally and international, business education Joining of power between two or more private sectors from the same or different countries in order to implement a particular operation in class room setting (Parker 1994). Edet and Atah (2019) opined that, when institutions are collaborated there will be Job creation mentality among graduate of the universities by engaging they brain in a deep-seated thought with positive ideas nurtured that could create jobs. Synergy and collaboration play a vital role among the collaborators. It could bring security in institutional programme by sharing scar resources among the collaborated universities to fulfil it programme. Security is the dynamic condition which involves the relative ability of a state to counter threats to its core values and interest and their primary beneficiaries are the collaborators (Atah, 2019). It is necessary for the universities and others institutions to get involved in synergy and collaboration to ensure in the share of resources to inculcate growth and development among business educators in Nigeria universities. Atah and Abeng (2019) also agreed that, synergy and collaboration will allow the universities to share institutional variables that are centered on students supports provided by the colleges and universities that the students attend. Such institutional variable include classroom climate which referred to as the learning environment, as well as atmosphere, ambience, ecology, and milieu.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study is to examine synergy and collaboration among business educators in universities in Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to examine:

1. The benefits of synergy and collaboration among business educators in universities in Cross River State.
2. The challenges of synergy and collaboration among business educators in Universities in Cross River State.

### **Research questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions

1. What is the benefits of synergy and collaboration among business educator in Universities in Cross River State
2. What is the challenges of synergy and collaboration among business educator in Universities in Cross River State

### **Methodology**

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of business education lecturers in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged Synergy and Collaboration among Business Educators Questionnaire (SCBEQ). The questionnaire is made up of 40 items were placed on 4 point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagreed (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. The instrument was face validated by three experts in University of Calabar. The Cronbach Alpha reliability test was used to determine the internal consistence of the instrument which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.79. The 31 copies of questionnaires were administered by the researchers to the lecturers in the universities in Cross River State and the questionnaires administered were collected back from the respondents. Mean rating and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected for the study. The mean rating of



2.50 was used for decision regarding the research questions. This was calculated based on the 4 point using interval used in the study. Items with mean values of 2.50 and above were considered as agreed while items with means value below 2.50 were considered as disagreed respectively.

**Table 1**

Distribution of population and sample of business educators' in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

S/No.	Name of institutions	No. of lecturers
1.	University of Calabar, Calabar	32
2.	University of Cross River State	10
	Total	32

**Results**

**Table 2: Mean Rating and Standard deviation benefits of synergy ad collaboration among business educators in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria**

S/NO	Items Statement	X	SD	Remark
1	Synergy and collaboration will raise awareness about brand and activities in the space of sustainability among Partnering universities	2.88	1.29	Agree
2	Synergy and collaboration with others universities will bring innovative ideas among business educators	3.35	0.93	Agree
3	Synergy and collaboration with others universities will bring opportunities to recruit the best minds among business educators	2.74	1.5	Agree
4	Collaborating with others institutions and organization provides content delivery of business education programmes	3.79	0.52	Agree
5	Synergy and collaboration with others universities will bring about sustainability of universities goals	2.79	1.29	Agree
6	Synergy and collaboration with provides a range of relevant stakeholders and likeminded universities to share resources	3.28	0.89	Agree
7	Synergy and collaboration bring Collaborative learning among students of business education	3.36	1.07	Agree
8	Synergy and collaboration build trust among business educators for the achievement of universities goal	2.78	0.91	Agree
9	Synergy and collaboration improve the quality of the work place environment	3.37	0.42	Agree
10	Synergy and collaboration provide business educators with learning experiences and a new understanding of the educational system	3.78	0.51	Agree
11	Synergy and collaboration Provide opportunities for student's of business education for career exploration	3.51	0.66	Agree
12	Synergy and collaboration bring resources to enrich the curriculum development among universities	3.51	0.66	Agree

13	Synergy and collaboration ensure that school teaching is relevant to the skills required by world of work.	3.88	0.45	Agree
14	Synergy and collaboration improve the education setting through upgrading facilities or equipment among universities	2.76	1.12	Agree
15	Synergy and collaboration integrate business education students into the labour market by involving them in cooperative education experiences	3.12	0.89	Agree
16	Synergy and collaboration connect universities with local and international businesses partnership	3.51	0.66	Agree
17	Synergy and collaboration meet the labour market needs of business and universities	3.01	1.01	Agree
18	Synergy and collaboration recognizing opportunities for change among institutions	3.08	0.83	Agree
19	Synergy and collaboration developing a vision of long-term change among business educators	3.89	0.45	Agree
20	Synergy and collaboration give birth to support and involvement from partners	3.01	0.99	Agree
21	Synergy and collaboration bring about an effectiveness among participants	3.37	0.46	Agree
22	Synergy and collaboration can lead to new discovery ways of doing things for better results among universities	2.78	0.55	Agree
23	Synergy and collaboration through workshops, conferences, tours, exchange programs, classroom visits, workplace visits, science fairs, guest speakers; seminars; presentations brings proper orientation among business educators	2.78	0.98	Agree
24	Synergy and collaboration will enable industry to provide learning experience to students through SIWES	3.37	0.46	Agree
<b>Aggregate means and standard deviation</b>		<b>3.24</b>	<b>1.88</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 2 revealed that the respondents were unanimous in their responses to all the constructs in the above table, as they all agreed to all the 24 constructs. This agreement was very evident as all the mean scores are above the fixed decision value of 2.50. There was also significant by the aggregate mean and standard deviation of 3.24 and 1.88 respectively. The implication is that synergy and collaboration among business educators' benefits in the development of business education programme in Nigeria Universities especially universities in Cross River State.

**Table 3: mean Rating and Standard deviation of the challenges of synergy and collaboration among business educator in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.**

S/NO.	Items Statement	X	SD	Remark
1	Lack of commitment by business educators can hinder Synergy and collaboration among universities	3.5	0.61	Agree
2	Failure to identify a common ground can be a challenge of Synergy and collaboration to drive among universities	4.01	0.81	Agree
3	Unrealistic objectives of partners can be a challenge of Synergy and collaboration to be achieved	3.42	0.92	Agree
4	Failure to fulfil objectives and needs of partners can affect Synergy and collaboration among business educators	3.76	0.56	Agree
5	Focusing on individual short-term benefits rather than focusing on long-term benefits collectively can be a challenge of Synergy and collaboration among business educators	3.89	0.45	Agree
6	Unfair distribution of benefits due to ignorance of each other's competencies and contribution can be a challenge to Synergy and collaboration	3.22	0.89	Agree
7	Absence of an operational system to manage the collaborative enterprise can be a challenge in Synergy and collaboration	3.35	0.93	Agree
8	Challenges of Business educators relationship can affect Synergy and collaboration	2.74	1.5	Agree
9	Synergy and collaboration may be faced with inadequate supply of zoom and term facilities	3.09	0.52	Agree
10	Poor business educators perception is a challenges confronted Synergy and collaboration	4.05	0.80	Agree
11	Corruption among business educators can be a challenge to Synergy and collaboration	3.09	0.82	Agree
12	Scarcity of machine and equipment can be a challenge of Synergy and collaboration	3.12	0.89	Agree
13	The shortage of equipment and facilities ca be a challenge of Synergy and collaboration	3.96	1.22	Agree
14	Lack of cooperation among business educators can be a challenge of Synergy and collaboration	3.67	0.61	Agree
15	Lack of managerial competencies can be a challenge of Synergy and collaboration	3.02	1.02	Agree
16	Lack of professional personnel can be a challenge of Synergy and collaboration	4.11	0.72	Agree
<b>Aggregate means and standard deviation</b>		<b>3.50</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>Agree</b>



Table 3, it was revealed that the respondents agreed in their responses to all the constructs in the table above. This is the evident that all the mean score are above the fixed decision role of 2.5. The aggregate mean and standard deviation was 3.50 and 1.67 respectively. This implies that, despite the numerous benefits of synergy and collaboration among business educators' in universities in Cross River State, there are still challenges that will hinder the achievement of the partnership among Nigeria universities.

### **Discussion of findings**

The study examined the synergy and collaboration among business educators in universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study found out that, synergy and collaboration between universities will be of many benefits to all business educators and universities at large. Such benefits have the potential to truly transform business education students to be exposed to workplace-based learning. It will provide professional development that will equip the universities students with skills needed to function effectively in the world of work. When business educators collaborated it will promote mutual understanding between universities and the organization to contribute to shared resources for sustainability of business educational programme in Nigeria universities. The finding of the study shown that synergy and collaboration will provide opportunity needed for employability skills needed by employers to be taught to students and reinforce in the classroom environment. This finding supports the finding of (Okon, 2015). Who stated that when universities collaborate with others institutions, it will bring a new direction to the achievement of the set goals among the institutions of learning. This means collaboration exposed business education graduates to re-training programmes like SIWES and teaching practices among others

Oyinloye, and Asonibare (2019) study also found that synergy and collaboration between universities will face challenges among which include; inadequate supply of MS term, zoom equipment, facilities, poor and outdated universities training facilities and inadequate practical training to meet the modern trends in the 21<sup>st</sup> century E-learning. Also corruption, lack of cooperation is synergy and collaboration between universities partnership. This means that despite the numerous benefits of synergy and collaboration among universities and organization, there are still challenges that will hinder the achievement of goal of collaborating. Atah (2019) address these challenges and established the link between universities and others institutions. Okon (2015) stated that universities need to restructure it programmes to be responsive to the needs of the job market, especially the 21<sup>st</sup> century global competitiveness.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study which revealed that synergy and collaboration among business educators in universities in Cross River State have a lot of benefits which include among other things; share of physical resources and facilities. Synergy and collaboration between universities partnership will enhance lecturers, students, staff support and increased efficiency among business educators. This means the universities will be repositioned and this will bring a new direction of doing things in a nascent way. However, synergy and collaboration is perceived to face challenges but the benefits to be achieved outweighed the challenges among the collaborating universities.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the research work the following recommendations were made:

1. Nigeria Universities offering business education should collaboration with relevant bodies such as ABEN, AVTEN, NUC to ensure maximum productivity.

2. Business education should collaborate with industry to enable the students with more opportunities for practical industrial work experience and acclimatizing them with real work situation and work environment
3. Business education should in breast international collaborations to improve the quality and the value of the education system
4. Business education should identify with others individual, association and others organization for maximum productivity

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