



# Constraints And Strategies for Accentuating Occupational Health and Safety in Business Education

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## Abstract

*Occupational health and safety continues to be a fundamental tenet of modern organizational practice, encompassing safeguarding and promoting wellbeing within the workforce as well as consideration of employees' interaction with workplace environments. It is widely defined as the coordinated efforts and actions to protect and promote the health of workers by maintaining and improving the physical, mental, and social well-being of people at work in all occupations. Gradually, it has shifted from a risk-based reductionist view of the field to becoming an integrative paradigm encompassing health and healthy lifestyles, involving personal and professional dimensions. Within business education, the successful instruction of occupational health and safety relies on the ability of educators to pre-assess learners' prior knowledge base; it also depends upon enriching learning opportunities through coherent content organization and pedagogical approaches that facilitate meaningful understanding. This drives the need to employ a variety of strategies direct, indirect and resource based in order to foster higher level thinking in students. Structured learning engagements and good teaching principles are also fundamental to effective learning activities. Given these factors, this study supports the need to embed OHSC into business education as a means of ensuring that students develop the requisite skill set for maintaining workplace standards in their careers. Thus, business education organizations are advised to institutionalize and enforce existing health and safety regulations including those proposed by the International Labour Organization in order to improve both staff and student welfare. Furthermore, awareness campaigns that can deepen stakeholders' knowledge of workplace safety — its impact, benefits and consequences — should be conducted at regular intervals.*

## Original Research Article

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## Introduction

Occupational health in Nigeria was practically nonexistent until around the late twentieth century, but has its early roots as far back as the 1930s when a few of these services were introduced to serve limited public enterprises mostly operated by government-owned bodies such as the railway systems and coal mining companies. The idea of protecting workers' health was first introduced into Nigeria and the wider West African region through British colonial factories. Over time it became popular within nationalist movements calling for independence, building up to become a broader reflection of humanitarian priorities. Yet while this historical progression has taken place, with increased attention being paid to occupational health and safety in

Nigeria, the landscape of workplace wellness shows that much work lies ahead. Despite some multinational companies taking positive measures to establish safety measures, indigenous enterprises—mainly small industries—belonging to these nations have largely failed. As a response to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, managers have focused more extensively on workplace hazards and environmental conditions, but the response has varied across sectors.

Occupational health covers a global view for the assessment of workers' overall well-being through their changing relationship with work environments. Previous understandings of work-related health were traditionally limited to first aid provision and the

treatment for cases of industrial injury and occupational disease, particularly in manual or industrial employment. But the scope of occupational health has greatly been expanded through joint integrated activities, such as those by the World Health Organization (WHO) and International Labour Organization (ILO), so as to now cover all forms of work—industrial work on one hand and administrative or commercial work on the other. One of the key objectives of a functioning occupational health and safety framework is to protect workers from hazards related to work while fitting into their job requirements to individuals' physical, psychological and emotional ability. Such alignment contributes to personal safety at work and the well-being of workers' families. Particularly in developed countries, where access to occupational services is essential for minimizing exposure to work-related hazards across different sectors, the structures and delivery of such service are more advanced and better organized.

Health has evolved from a discipline focused almost exclusively on risk to an approach that considers physical, mental, and social health within a wider context of personal development. This evolution is being ably driven by frameworks put forth by the World Health Organization as well as principles articulated in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development that highlight that “humans are at the center of concerns for sustainable development” who have a right to healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature. In this perspective, health is not only understood relative to the absence of disease but helps in deriving productive processes that meet material needs without endangering human health, ecological balance or community well-being over time and over generations. Thus, occupational health is at an intersection between social welfare and public health on a larger scale of sustainable development.

Business Education as a core course under the Technical Education programme, is loaded with rich contents that can be subjected into judicious use in order to improve quality of life of the individual and society by arming them with suitable scientific and technological skills, attitudes and values that are derivable from business education for a productive and effective life (Ogbuzuru, 2011; Okparaeke, 2004). It is designed to raise experts in business and education that can compete comparatively in the industrial sphere. Generally Business Education has a strategic goal that is anchored on providing cognitive knowledge and

technical skills in Technical Education that are highly requisite for the development of the education industry so as to create skilled and enterprising youths for socio-economic development of the society. Thus, the pivot of Business education is to broaden the intellectual know-how and creative skills of its recipients geared towards making them self-dependent and self-sufficient (Maurice, Asu-nandi & Ntui, 2019; NBTE, 2001).

It follows that, the aspect of knowledge and safety in business education will start from the level at which teachers duly recognize the students' existing know-how or understanding as it relates to the discussion being presented and are able as well to organize what to expound on including milestones achievement were only strictly necessary. However, these vital aspects that can bring about effectiveness in the teaching of health and safety are (Kyriacou, 2009); ability of the teacher to be clear and pitched at the required level, ability of the teacher to meaningfully segment and comment the ideas and materials together in a logical and coherent manner, ability of the teacher to be explicit combined with good questioning skills, ability of the teacher to adopt good articulation and maintain body language that can sustain attention and interest, ability of the teacher to avert the use of over complex language and explicate the new ones, ability of the teacher to use examples especially those ones that have a systematic connection with the experience and interest of the learner and ability of the teacher to monitor and check the level of students' understanding.

Human capital investment in business education profession is very important and demand for deployment of high and low direct and indirect cost teaching strategies to engender high level of intellectual know-how in the life of the students also teachers occupational health and safety. The effectiveness of these methods depends on the flexibility of thought from the teacher. However, to support these teaching strategies, the teacher will need to use some academic work including structured reading and writing tasks; small group work; experiential learning; inquiry activities; and individualized programmes of study. Considering real teaching in Building Technology in Technical Colleges, it is equally important for the teacher to take adequate note of the individual differences of students. This allows for the teacher to be more attuned with how he/she sets up the context for that learning experience and what approaches will contribute towards this actually happening with a given student at any point in time (Kyriacou, 2009).

## **The Concept of Occupational Health**

Occupational health, according to the Joint Committee of the International Labour Office and the World Health Organization in Maji (2006), is a systematic process advocating and maintaining the highest degree of physical and mental well-being among workers in all lines of their work. This field is divided into two defined domains, which are interrelated: occupational medicine and occupational hygiene. Occupational medicine is mainly an individual-level field that investigates how work conditions lead to health status and overall well-being whereas occupational hygiene focuses on identifying, evaluating, and controlling environmental factors at the workplace impacting health outcomes.

Functional definition Occupational health is a multidisciplinary field of activity that includes not only but also routine medical surveillance, health education programmes, pre-employment medical examination and environmental monitoring and health records maintenance, primary healthcare service and social support systems (Maji 2006). Yet beyond these duties of an operational character, it is viewed as a multidimensional activity focused on increasing employees' physical, mental and social well-being in manners that sustain and augment their potential to do competently at work. As per the information gathered from WHO (2001), one of the prime objectives of occupational health is to avoid any instance or cause leading to injury/experience at work by removing the harmful factors affecting through which employees would be able to lead productive life in order to deliver enormous amounts for economic activity and sustainable development.

Another Important development is the Evolution & context of Occupational Health] \* Over decades, occupational health transitioned from a constricted, risk focused field to an integrative narrative working on multidimensional prospects- be it with shall PHYSICAL HEALTH or Mental Soundness or SOCIAL functioning. This expanded perspective is consistent with key principles enshrined in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which states that human well-being is at the core of sustainable development and that everyone has a right to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. In this context, occupational health is interpreted as compliance of economic and production activities with material needs without harming human health, integrity of ecosystems or welfare of society in the short or long term. Thus it is a key nexus between public health and

social responsibility within the larger sustainability agenda.

Occupational health is at the centre of sustainable development in the following ways (WHO, 2001); it helps in the prevention of occupational accidents, injuries and diseases and the protection of workers against physical and psychological overload, it provides an effective and cost-effective impact on environmental protection from the industry, it provides services that are geared towards ensuring worker's health, safety, working capacity and well-being, it enhances the facilitation of undisturbed production that increases the quality of products, productivity and process management which helps to prevent an unwanted impact on the environment, it makes for early knowledge of processes and agents that may be hazardous to the environment which enhances the primary prevention strategy, it helps to provide an early warning mechanism and preventive models for some hazards that can cause damage to the environment, it provides an organized social protection system that prevents the loss of life, health and working capacity of a worker upon whom other members of the family are dependent upon for basic needs in the society and it provides an occupational health legislation which makes for the use of best available production technology for the purpose of bringing about healthy and safe work environment.

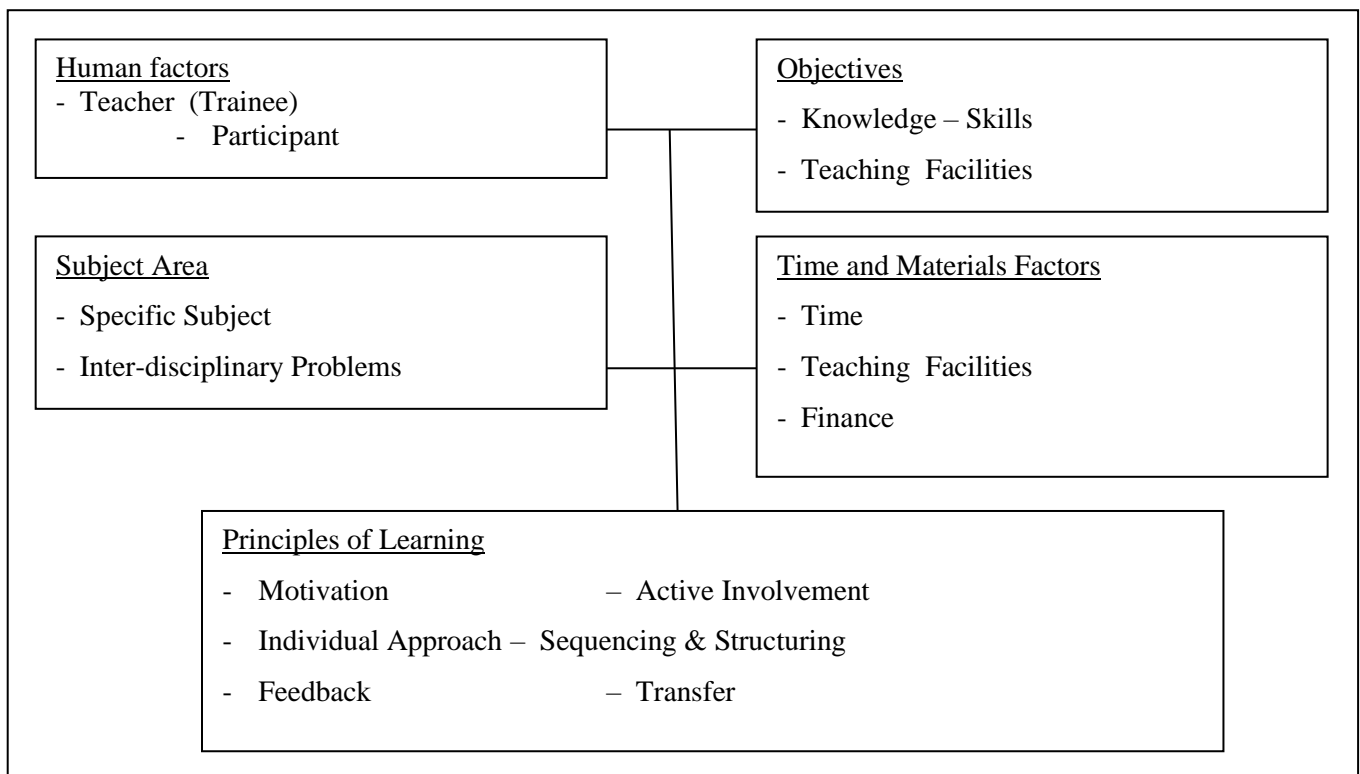
## **Occupational Health and Safety in Business Education**

Teaching and learning in Business Education is a serious matter that must involve a scrupulous process. Teachers in this area must in themselves; possess all the relevant theoretical and practical professional and occupational competencies and skills required for them to discharge their role of teaching effectively and efficiently. In order for there to be teachers with the right combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes which will help them perform their duties professionally; vocational colleges should ensure that proper selection of academic staff and adequate development of human capacities are meticulously embarked upon. This endeavour will help them select the right person (square peg in a square hole).

Business education should be strategically designed to integrate instruction in occupational health and safety with professional competencies and job-related skills building capabilities designed to improve performance outcomes. With the changing times, the teaching-learning process should retain practical and endurable

skills so as to enable them confront new problems in scholarly and industrial landscapes. In doing so, the teaching process should not only transmit theoretical knowledge but also cultivate adaptive capabilities that are necessary for competitiveness in modern workplaces. A range of learner-centered and experiential instructional methods also need to be incorporated to foster ongoing enhancement in the teaching of occupational health and safety. These have varied from project approach, programmed instruction, excursions, sensitivity training, brainstorming sessions (cases) study/analysis of the problem to guided discussions on role play and role modelling/collaborative team activities/simulations/field trips/business gaming techniques (Martin et al. 201405; Guide for Trainers 2018).

These skills when used effectively in teaching health and safety principles will ensure that students in business education acquire skills in a safe environment, receive feedback and reach some degree of professional competencies before they begin to practice them in the real and industrial world (Kneebone, 2003). However, different constraining elements can be identified as being the possible factors that can be highlighted as affecting teaching health and safety in business education (Guide for Trainers, 2018); human factors, learning objectives, subject area to be taught, time and material resources and learning principles to be adopted. These factors are however, encapsulated in the figure below



**Figure 2.4: Factors Affecting Teaching of Health and Safety**

(Guide for Trainers, 2018)

To ensure that some of these encumbering factors that could possibly hinder the teaching of health and safety in business education are surmounted during teaching process, business educators could consider fracturing the process into management steps such as; ask the students to verbally repeat the steps and provide repetition to reinforce learning in the students and also correct some errors in the learning process, Walker and Peyton in Lake and Hamdorf (2004) and Munster, Stosch, Hendrichs, Franklin & Matthes, (2016) suggested the following four (4) step approaches;

1. **Demonstration:** the teacher performs at average speed devoid of comments. This step is taken to provide a benchmark.
2. **Deconstruction:** in this step, the teacher demonstrates and also describes the steps simultaneously. The skills are divided into bit.
3. **Comprehension:** here, the teacher demonstrates and asks the students to explicate the steps. Explanation and implementation is not simultaneous.

4. **Performance:** the students are asked to demonstrate and also elucidate the steps simultaneously.

#### **Applicable Principles for Teaching Occupational Health and Safety in Business Education**

Teaching occupational health and safety effectively also requires the use of reliable and potent principles. The essence of the principles is to provide for a systematic approach. One of such principles is that which affirms that the use of questioning skills and reliable feedback mechanisms are indomitable for a healthy teaching endeavour. These questioning skills in the opinion of Kerry, (2002), if used professionally will encourage thought, understanding of ideas, phenomena, procedures and values, allow expression of feelings, views and empathy among students, review and re-affirm newly learnt skills or idea and then to check the understanding of the students in that regard. Alexander (2008) is of the opinion that principle of dialogic teaching should be promoted in the teaching of occupational health and safety. For Alexander (2008), these principles are characterized by structuring questions to provoke thoughtful answers.

Alexander (2008) is of the opinion that using students responses to establish dialogue and developing a strand of thinking through the use of dialogue is however, characterized by the following principles; teachers and students should jointly partake in every learning task, teachers should be the ones to plan and direct the discussion towards the attainment of specific educational goals, students should be given a free and clement learning atmosphere where their ideas could be expressed, both teachers and students should develop on each other's knowledge or ideas and both teachers and students should imbibe the spirit of mutual listening and sharing of ideas. Another principle is that which emphasizes the need for business educators to possess personal and pedagogical attributes. These personal and pedagogical attributes in the perception of Haydn (2007) should be that which can bring about positive influence in the students' learning culture and attitude. These 'personal' and 'pedagogical' attributes includes; being friendly, approachable and accessible, ability to talk to the students normally, ability to create humour, ability to be enthusiastic about the course, ability to demonstrate good understanding of the course, ability to simplify complex concepts with ease, ability to build the interest of the students in the topic and ability to control and manage the classroom for the good of all classes of students

Teaching and learning of occupational health and safety in business education also requires a teaching plan which is a veritable tool via which students are professionally taught. It includes information about the topics to be covered and the time frame of a specific teaching endeavour. However, the crafting of a teaching plan in business education will mean to (Frettloh, 2002); state the needs as regards skilled workforce, transcription of such needs into competencies, segmentation

the expected professional competencies into learning modules and single learning steps, develop learning objectives, earmark a time frame and specify entry requirements for potential learning working experience, educational qualification, etc. Teaching of Building Technology requires some cognitive competencies which are (Igborgbor, 2006); direct or indirect understanding of some vital information usable in particular scenario, improved capacity to think critically that can result in a better comprehension of situations, in-depth comprehension of principles, theories and practice in one's locality and ability to creative and incredibly motivational in nature. Different elements could be identified as constituting some difficulties in curriculum execution of health and safety in business education. Odu (2011), identified some of these challenges as follows; contents overload and wobbling, pedagogical issues such as professional competence and effectiveness of teachers and paucity or dearth of instructional materials like; workshops, Laboratories, studios, equipment, among others.

The fundamental idea behind this principle as recommended is to prevent work-related injuries, illnesses and death, financial suffering and hardship among workers in the construction industry. The principle maintains that until good occupational safety and health cultures and practice are being developed and promoted among business educators, improvement in service delivery and quality will be retarded, better employee morale will be lost, employee recruiting and retention will continue to decline and finally a more favourable image and integrity if the internal and external customers of the educational industry will be tarnished (OSHA, 2016). The principles of an occupational safety and health program include management leadership, worker participation, hazard identification and assessment, hazard prevention and control, education and training, program evaluation and improvement, and communication and coordination for employers on multi-employer work sites. Following this principle, '*nine systematic steps*' were developed to enhance its applicability within the construction industry. These steps are presented as follows (OSHA, 2016);

- **Step 1:** Set safety and health as basic priority (safety and health prioritization)
- **Step 2:** Lead by example by championing the principle and practice of health and safety and making it a daily conversation within the company
- **Step 3:** Craft and present before the workers simple procedures to enable them easily report any iota of injuries, illnesses, and incidence, hazard or safety and health concerns.
- **Step 4:** Train construction site workers on how to identify and control hazards using global benchmark.
- **Step 5:** Conduct inspection on the job site with the workers on site and ask them to identify any activity, piece of equipment or material that concerns them.

- **Step 6:** Collect hazard control ideas by discussing with the construction workers about their ideas on safety improvement throughout the project.
- **Step 7:** Implement hazard control measures by assigning workers the task of choosing, implementing and evaluating the solutions.
- **Step 8:** Address emergencies through the identification of foreseeable emergency scenarios and develop instructions requisite for each situation.
- **Step 9:** Make improvements by setting aside a regular time to discuss safety and health issues with the goal of identifying ways to improve the program.

### **Constraints to Teaching of Occupational Health and Safety in Business Education**

Like other human resources of organization, there exist some identifiable challenges of teaching and learning that can be attributed to students. These debilitating factors as may be associated with the students can either be genetic or acquired. According to the survey conducted by Gimba, Hassan, Yaki and Chado (2018) and Olayiwola (2014), it was discovered that students also exhibit some attributes that hinder teaching and learning endeavours in the educational process. They presented these constraints as follows; poor foundation in their chosen courses of study, psychological fear emanating from previous unfavorable experiences, lack of interest in hard work and diligence, lack of interest in learning and inability of students to possess writing and instructional materials. Also, the challenges of teaching and learning as it pertains to the students could be highlighted as follows;

1. *Time management:* colleges are much more challenging academically. For many technical colleges, course requires much more effort than high school classes did.
2. *Inability to pay tuition fees:* students find it difficult at times to pay their tuition fees which also often times occasioned by the hike in other fees like, house rent.
3. Ill-health as a result of stress in the teaching and learning process. Heightened stress, poor self care and inadequate rest at the end of the day cause the students some level of discomfort which can culminate in poor learning capacity.
4. Rise in stress level of students which in turn contributes to low learning interest.
5. Social problems arising from the possible association of students with friends and social groups which most times, result in conflict thereby, disrupting teaching-learning process.
6. Patronage and abuse of drugs among students can lead to some risky behaviour, health risks and deadly situations. This condition has the capacity to affect the disposition of the students to learn during teaching.
7. Emotional imbalance and psychological trauma being faced by a student sequel to a heart break as a

result of loss of loved one or disappointment from a trusted ally. This can affect the psychological disposition and emotional stability of the student thereby bringing about poor learning capacity.

8. Making a wrong choice in the process of choosing the right area of specialization that suits one's potential in life.

According to Akindutire and Ekundayo (2012) and Odu (2011), the challenges of teaching occupational health and safety as it relates to teachers includes; inadequate funding of teacher training institutions in order to increase the production of quality teachers, poor society perception of teacher education which creates lack interest on the part of the members of the society to embrace teaching as their profession, problem of attrition in the teaching force dwindling enrolment for instance. It means that the working condition of service for teachers in Nigeria is such that it does not attract or retain the best brains, that most teachers are not committed to the job, are not motivated enough so as to give their maximum input and productivity in teaching, poor teaching strategies, lack of qualified teachers, industrial experience for practical on course experience etc., inability of teachers making their subject attractive enough for student(s) with relation to social needs. In addition, Dussault (2018) purposefully identified the following as constraints to teaching occupational health and safety for business educators; lack of teamwork, empathy and support among teachers, teachers playing too many role simultaneously no time to consider bodily function, too much responsibility attached to one teacher than necessary by making him responsible for everything not just looking after students body change, excessive amount of data working done due compulsory paper qualification demanded by school administrators rather than what a student should know etc.

Odu (2011) wrote that the constraints to teaching and learning caused by the school administration are as follows; failure of school authorities to establish acceptable value and ethical system, poorly planned expansion and enrolment, inadequate administration in the areas of supervision and planning, inadequate evaluation of education outcome through continuous assessment, failure of school administrators to provide adequate guidance and counseling for students, failure of school administrators to execute educational policies, poor maintenance culture of school administrators and lack of will power and capacity of school administrators to provide purposeful leadership and administration. The following are the challenges relating to teaching of health and safety in business education (Ogbuagwu, Eyibe & Okoli, 2017); dearth of textbook and workbooks, non-availability of standard and functional workshop, lack of technological tools and equipment and insufficient power supply that makes it possible for the operation of basic technology.

## **Strategies for Teaching Occupational Health and Safety in Business Education**

Teaching and Learning involves fundamental processes in general education spectrum. They require effective and efficient strategies in order to minimize some of the observable constraints that have bedeviled the processes in contemporary times. In the implementation of these strategies however, all the critical stakeholders such as teachers, students, parents, school administrators, government regulatory agencies and other educational policy implementers have a major and pivotal roles to perform.

However, to ameliorate the observed constraints in teaching and learning, the following points are advanced for individual and complex considerations; teachers should always ensure that they carry out pre-class, in-class and post-class evaluation before, during and after every teaching and learning endeavour to ascertain the extent to which learning has taken place, teachers should be encouraged and granted the lucrative opportunity to embark on productive and regular human capacity programmes in order to ensure that they have current instructional strategies and course contents so as to promote learning and teaching in the educational process, teachers' welfare should always be the top priority of every educational administrator. This gesture will help to boost the morale of the teachers and encourage them to put in their best in the teaching and learning process, government and other school administrators should adequate facilities like classroom blocks, laboratories, where students can have the opportunity to learn comfortably without increased level of discomfiture, parents should always endeavour to provide their children with the necessary material resources required for them to strive in their academic pursuit and teachers should adopt positive assessment and evaluation strategies that can encourage improved academic performance in the life of the students.

Additionally, Olayiwola (2014) asserted that to reduce the challenges affecting teaching of health and safety, the following measures could be taken; regular arousal of the interest of the students by the teacher in the process of broaching the topic, regular use of modern and required instructional resources and methods to enable them demonstrate effectively and also make the process appear real and lively, relate the lesson to real life situations, provision of a classroom size that the teacher can handle, subject the students into doing more practical work than theoretical ones, the learning environment should be made more conducive for effective teaching and learning to take place, the teacher should endeavour to carry all the students along taken due notice of the principle of individual differences, adequate monitoring of the activities of the students during and after lesson should be carried out by the teacher and students should cultivate impeccable reading culture during school and after school hours.

In the same vein, Ogbuagwu, Eyibe and Okoli (2019) recommended that; Teachers' Registration Council of

Nigeria (TRCN) must take care of the fact that only qualified and professional teachers who should largely be registered are allowed to exercise their inalienable right to teach in the classroom, standard and modern workshops, laboratories and studios where practical experience which is mostly required by the students should be provided in business education departments were practical experience mostly needed by students, various teaching style techniques or methods from time to time should perform during teaching and learning activities with strict relevance to minimum discipline use since every student would have must demonstrated what he has learnt after each lesson a test or assignment could also brought on board at the end of lesson to draw conclusion beyond average acceptable level as regarding whether learning has taken place.

According to Ogbuagwu, Eyibe and Okoli (2019) there can be a tremendous reduction in some perceived insuperable, usually tension related problems associated with teaching of health and safety in business education if; occasionally mediocre students are employed by intelligent students to teach them some challenging concepts during lesson for better understanding, student-centered teaching modes of delivering the lesson in the class is adopted as well as practical should be conducted in mini groups for effective monitoring, standardized test should be used to gauge student's abilities, psycho-productive test should also be used to evaluate student's practical while each participant must undergo oral examination at the end of every classes then participate fully in evaluation exercise.

## **Conclusion**

Occupational health and safety is a set of principles, theories and systematic methods which the multiple challenges to its efficacy besets with grave treatment. The enduring nature of occupational health and safety at the heart of business education can also be seen as a foundation for bettering the general state of business education. There is need for occupational health and safety in business education to prepare the students of business education with relevant skills and orientation necessary for ensuring corporate safety in the industrial sector. It is actually capable of ensuring safety practices and measures among the teachers for better job performance. Overall, an occupational health and safety in business education programme is a contemporary dependable strategy for the enhancement of job morale of business educators as it appears to positively affect their wellbeing via security assurance.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the expositions expressed above, the following recommendations are made;

1. Business educators and business education administrators should consider crafting legal frameworks through curriculum review in order to attempt incorporating the aspect of

occupational health and safety into the core curriculum of business education programme. Through this initiative, business education graduates will be able to equip themselves with relevant occupational safety practices and procedures that will enable them practice and uphold safety measures in the work place.

2. Health and safety at work is an important part of the modern business world. Business education as a corporate entity must ensure the institutionalisation and adherence to existing health and safety regulations as outlined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to further improve the working conditions of staff and students.
3. There should be regular internal campaigns to teach business education students and personnel about important issues. This will clearly be a strategic move to show them the ins and outs (implications, advantages, and consequences) of workplace safety.

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