

IMPROVING DIGITAL SKILLS AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS FOR EMPLOYABILITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Digital skills have become essential requirements for employability in the twenty-first-century workforce. In Nigeria, the rapid growth of information and communication technology (ICT) and the digital economy has transformed the nature of work, thereby increasing the demand for digitally skilled graduates. However, many business education students in Nigerian tertiary institutions still lack adequate digital competencies required for effective participation in the modern labour market. This paper examines digital skills, benefits of digital skill among business education students. The paper further identifies strategies for improving digital competency through integration of practical-based learning approach, provision of ICT facilities, participation in on-line programmes, among others. The study concludes that enhancing digital skills among business education students will improve their employability, entrepreneurial capabilities, and overall contribution to national economic growth. It is recommended that today's business education students and graduates should always update their knowledge of digital skills in order to be globally employable, among others.

Keywords: Digital Skills, Business Education, Employability, Digital Competencies

Introduction

Business Education is an integral part of the general education. It is that part of Education which prepares the recipients to acquire competencies that will enable them function well in business environment either as employees or employers. It is a programme that inculcate necessary skills in the areas of accounting, marketing and office technology and management into the minds of prospective graduates in order to be employable and contribute to the growth of the nation's economy. Thus, Idialu in Aina and Onajite (2023) defined business education as a programme of study organised to prepare the learner for entrance into a particular vocation or to upgrade employed worker. It is therefore a programme that is expected to provide recipients with the knowledge, skills and

competencies for the workplace as well as for general living.

In view of the foregoing, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (2013) listed the goals of business education to include: application of the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired through the study of business to a variety of learning tasks and relate them to business phenomenon at local, national and global levels; gaining an understanding of business concepts through the study of subjects such as accounting, entrepreneurship, information and communication technology, marketing and business leadership, among others.

Also, Owojori (2010) remarked that vocational education, of which business education is an integral parts has the following objectives:

- (a) to provide functional education for Nigerian citizens
- (b) to provide further education for different categories of people in order to improve their basic knowledge and skills
- (c) to provide in-service and on the job training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills.
- (d) to provide opportunity for each individual to exploit his interest, aptitude and intrinsic intelligence to the highest possible degree, and
- (e) to provide every occupation with the necessary skills peculiar to their specific occupation.

In Nigeria context, business education programme is designed under three options, which are accounting, marketing and OTM, where students are initially introduced to the basics of business education for the first two years. Thereafter, students are trained in their specialised interest for the last two years to ensure competency. By this, Odunaike and Amoda in Onajite, Olaniyi, Oyerinde and Aina (2023) remarked that the objectives of business education include development of skills for personal use in the future and developing basic skills in office occupation, among others. Thus, it is a programme designed for effective participation in economic activities, which equips learners with practical and theoretical knowledge in business areas. Osuala (2009) noted that business education is expected to provide students with employable skills necessary for self-employment and national development.

In support of the above, the United Nations, in a bid to ensure sustainable development, has rolled out 17 goals in order to make life more comfortable for the individuals. Out of the goals, this study is therefore, related to Goals 1, 4 and 8 of the United

Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 1 targets means of putting an End to Poverty in all its forms everywhere, Goal 4 pays attention to Quality Education which ensures inclusive and equitable quality education. Also, Goal 8 concentrates on Decent Work and Economic Growth. The goal is expected to promote productive employment and economic growth. The foregoing goals can be achieved through business education programme that is effectively delivered, with the help of technologies that are globally available. In today's digital age, business education experts are expected to incorporate the use of technologies into the teaching and learning of the course contents. This will enable business education graduates to be more versatile and eventually become global workers through digital skills.

Digital Skills:

The introduction of technologies, especially computer and internet, into education has made digital skills to become indispensable. With changes in business environment in the mode of operations, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2020) stated that with digital technology, the role of TVET teachers is increasingly not to deliver information, but to assist in interpreting information. This is expected to enhance the employability of graduates of business education programme. In their contributions, Ogbuene (2025), Amesi, Amaewhule and Akoku (2022), Amesi and Allison (2022) listed the digital skills expected of business education graduates to include software skills in word processor, spreadsheets, powerpoint, desktop publishing, Microsoft excel, graphic, Microsoft word, corel draw, among others.

In view of the above, Aina (2024) presented the following digital skills as

very important which cannot be overemphasized for employment among business education graduates.

(a) Computer Skills

The input and output units can be likened to an official who is working at his desk with an 'in tray' where files and documents requiring his attention are kept. After he has processed them, he then passes them out into the 'out tray'. Although the computer processes data, it does not 'think' for itself. For instance, if the data fed into the computer are wrong (garbage in) the result produced will be wrong (garbage out).

(b) Word Processing Skills

Word processing refers to the use of computers to handle text and produce printed document. These texts are in the form of memos, letters, reports which are keyed into the computer, retained on memory, manipulated electronically and printed or sorted in a storage medium. In word processing, text can be viewed on a display screen during typing and editing and changes can be made easily. As such a perfect copy can be produced on the screen before printing.

(c) Internet Skills

It is sometimes referred to as information 'super highway'. The internet enables the user to exchange information with other users anywhere in the world provided the computer (PC) is connected to the internet you can send perceive information on a wide range of subject areas or access information on business, science and technology and education among others. The internet enhances the easy flow of information through different interconnected computer networks. It is a quick and easy way of sending messages and it guarantees confidentiality of messages

sent. All these skills are acquired through mastery of the computer keyboard.

Orji, Okanazu and Ali (2015) defined digital skills as the ability to locate, organise, understand, evaluate and create information using digital technology. It is the basic understanding of how to interact with a computer in order to make it do what you want in real time. Also, the Digital Marketing Institute (2017) Future Learn (2020) and Digital Skills Global (2021) explained that digital skills needs in the 21st century include emailing, social marketing skills, business data analytical skills and coding skills. By this, Aina, Oyerinde and Enijuni (2023) also listed digital skills required of business education graduates to include graphic design, word processing, online research, web design, e-commerce, online learning development, e-mailing, proof reading, e-editing, among others.

As earlier revealed, business education is aimed at producing skillful personnel who will be employable in the world of work or create their own employment opportunities and later become employees. Therefore, employability can be referred to as the ability to possess skills, knowledge, attitudes and personal qualities that make business education graduate attractive to employers.

It is expected that in today's business environment, graduates of business education programme with strong digital skills in addition to academic knowledge will be highly employable. Samson (2013) described employability as highly human skills that included social skills, basic thinking skills and responsibility. In their contribution, Blackmore, Bulaitis and Tan (2016) remarked that employability has assumed a global recognition and therefore increasing attention is being given to the role of higher education in

developing employability skills. It is the combination of knowledge, personal attributes and competencies that ensure employment after graduation and foster continued progress in career progression.

(d) **Cloud Computing**

Cloud computing is a paradigm shift which provides access to storage, data bases, networking and servers through the internet instead of relying on physical infrastructure or local computers. Foster Zhao Raicu and Lu (2008) opine that cloud computing is a new paradigm which provides applications and services that can be accessed through the internet with the ability to share, manage and store data which is physically hosted on remote servers instead of using in-house resources or personal machines.

By this, Mell and Grance in Victor-Igwe (2022) remark that cloud computing is a model for convenient and rapid network access to a shared pool of computing resources that can be provisioned with minimal efforts or service provider interactions. The scholars further attest that it comprises of five essential characteristics which are:

- i. **On demand self-service:** Using Cloud Computing, a consumer can unilaterally access provision to computing capabilities as needed automatically without requiring human interaction from each services provider.
- ii. **Broad network access:** Cloud computing makes capabilities available over the network which is accessed through standard mechanisms thus promoting the use of heterogenous thick or thin client platforms such as mobile phones, laptops and PDAS.
- iii. **Multi tenancy:** It allows the computing resources of the provider

to be pooled to serve multiple consumers using a multi-tenant model with different physical and virtual resources dynamically assigned and reassigned according to the demands of the consumers.

- iv. **Rapid elasticity:** Here, the capabilities can be rapidly and elastically provisioned, in most cases automatically, to quickly scale out the rapidly released to quickly scale in.
- v. **Measured service:** The cloud service providers automatically control and optimize resource use by leveraging a metering capability at some level of abstraction appropriate to the type of service.

The effectiveness of the use of cloud computing is however, closely related to the knowledge acquired in digital skills. These skills will help in messaging tools like google mail, real time analysis, team collaboration, support service among others.

Benefits of Digital Skills to Business Education

The importance of digital skills among business education graduates cannot be underestimated as it is no longer optional but highly necessary for entering the workforce either as employees or self-employed. In today's technology driven world, it is also important to possess these skills to enable business education graduates to handle information and communicate effectively. It also helps in problem solving manage business relationships adequately.

With digital skills, business education lecturers need to teach concepts and techniques to allow students to work with any digital device or tool, and adopt to new technology for better understanding. Thus, Dayagbil

and Boholano in Amesi et al (2022) reported that business education lecturers can readily connect their students not just in their own localities, their places of learning to each other, but also to a huge and ever expanding diversity of social, cultural, political networks and therefore to multiple ways of being knowing and communicating. With digital revolution altering conventional workplace functions and designing new jobs, there is a pressing need for business education students to develop and deepen their digital skills for improved work quality after graduation and stay employable. In view of this Osborn (2021) outlined the importance of digital skills to include increasing revenue, building stronger customer relationships, having a competitive edge over competitors, providing new strategies and approaches to working, improving productivity and effectiveness. In addition, Future Learn (2020) stated that it will boost the career of those who want to embrace the flexibility of freelance work, enhances personal and professional skills that gives more options for getting a job.

It is on the foregoing, that the researchers note that acquisition of good digital skills will enhance employability improves productivity, promotes entrepreneurship, facilitates communication and collaboration. By this, it is expected that the emergence of remote work will provide new opportunities for digitally competent business education graduates.

Ways of Improving Digital Skills among Business Education

It has been established that knowledge of digital skills is germane for employability of business education graduates in the current dispensation. The acquisition of digital skills needed for enhanced employability can therefore be

improved through different ways which include:

- **Integration of practical based learning approach:** This is the incorporation of activity oriented and real-life learning experiences into the teaching and learning processes of business education programme. This will help in digital skill development which may be through demonstrations, industrial training or internship because it will focus on learning by doing. By this, Addah (2008) remarked that the keyboard is the most important and frequently used device and that prospective keyboard user should master the keyboard for effective manipulative skills. Based on the foregoing it is therefore very important for prospective business education graduates regardless of their options to have good mastery of the keyboard as this will enhance their digital skill acquisition for employment opportunities.
- **Participation in on-line programme:** All virtual engagements involve in the manipulation of digital skills. Business education students are expected to develop interest in virtual learning which will encourage them to be more versatile and be more relevant in their workplace after graduation. Through regular participation, in the use of tools such as spreadsheet, word processor, power-point, among others. Baland (2017) opined that students' motivation can be improved thereby facilitating students' academic learning and achievement.

Other ways of improving digital skills among business education include provision of modern digital facilities,

implementation of self-directed learning, integration of information and communication technology into the teaching and learning processes of business education programme, among others. Supporting the foregoing, Ezeani and Falade (2017) reported that the ability to use computer is an essential part of every one's life because the demand for ICT literacy is increasing in Nigeria as employees and employers realised that ICT enhances job efficiency. Also in his contribution, Olaniyi (2024) remarked that, to remain in the rapidly evolving digital era, businesses and organisations across major industries must adopt mode strategies and technologies. Thus, these observations can only be made manifest if the digital competencies of the employees are high.

Conclusion

The need for digital skill across the workforce will continue to increase all over the world for communication, marketing, record keeping and financial data analysis. In view of this, it is concluded that business education students who intend to be gainfully employed are expected to equip themselves with adequate digital skills required in the contemporary business world, which will thereafter contribute to the nation's economic growth.

Recommendations

- (1) It is recommended that today's business education students and graduates should always update their level of digital skill in order to be more employable globally.
- (2) Institutions offering business education programme should equip their business education laboratory with adequate digital facilities in order to expose these students to the real-life experience in today's

workplace environment for enhanced job opportunities.

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