

INFUSING DIGITAL SKILLS INTO BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY ENHANCEMENT

OGUNGBOYEGA Suliyat Ajoke

Business Education Department, School of Secondary Education,
Vocational and Technical Education Programme,
Federal College of Education. Oyo.

Abstract

The new millenium age workplace requires the specific digital skills necessary to boost the employability of Business Education graduates. A survey research design was adopted for the study. Sample size comprised of sixty randomly selected participants of forty final year business education university students and twenty business education lecturers chosen from the two selected universities in Oyo State. Items on students questionnaire were drawn from research questions one and two tagged Digital Skills and Competencies integration in Business Education Curriculum (DSCIBEC), while the lecturers' items were generated from research questions three and four which was tagged: Digital Skills, Business Education Graduates' Employability and Impendiments (DSBEGEI). The study made use of four likert scale of Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Strongly Disagreed and Agreed. Data were collected through validated questionnaire, demonstrating a reliability coefficient of 0.82, confirming the study's validity and dependability. The results depict that the level at which digital skills are integrated to the teaching of business education curriculum is low. The research thereby recommends among others that adequate funding should be earmarked for the universities to acquire digital tools for skill acquisition in a bid to bridge the gap between the school and the industries for enhancement of business education graduates' employability.

Introduction

Business education is a course of study aiming at imparting skills, attitude, knowledge and values capable of fitting its recipients into the world of work after graduation. It serves as a platform for preparing students for careers in business and related fields. Business education is an aspect of vocational education that is being incorporated into Nigerian educational system right from elementary level. Onojaife. (2019) viewed that Business education as an aspect of vocational education that is incorporated into the Nigerian system right from the junior secondary school for gradual skill development of the learner. Business education is a broad area of knowledge

that deals with the entire enterprise system, preparing recipients for roles in business as employees or employers. The actual goals of business education are to: prepare students for specific career in office occupations; requisite skills' acquisition for job creation and entrepreneurship and exposure of students with knowledge about business, including digital skills' acquisition by incorporating information and communication technology (ICT) (Edokpolor and Egbri, 2017).

According to the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (2024), the unemployment rate rose to 5.3% in the first quarter of 2024, marking a continued increase for the third consecutive quarter

since the second quarter (Q2) of 2023. The rise in unemployment has been more pronounced in urban areas than rural regions, further aggravating inflation and reducing purchasing power, which soared from 30.5% in Q3 of 2023 to 36.9% in Q1 of 2024. This economic turmoil has profoundly affected Nigerian youths with post-secondary education, many of whom find themselves unemployed, underemployed, or disengaged from socioeconomic activities. The National Bureau of Statistics (2023) has noted that the unemployment rate among graduates (persons with post-secondary education) has persistently exceeded the national average of 8% in the second quarter of 2023, making it the highest among all educational groups, apart from those with less than elementary education (NEET) which is 13%. Alarudeen (2019) highlighted that despite many empowerment initiatives and an increasing number of tertiary institutions to cultivate a skilled labour force, job postings for graduate roles remain abundant across various sectors in Nigeria. The rapid advancement of technology has transformed educational landscape globally. In the field of Business Education, digital skills have emerged as essential tool for both teachers and students, enabling more interactive, efficient and flexible teaching and learning processes.

Digital skills are regarded as technical abilities, knowledge and competencies required to apply digital devices,, communication applications and network to access, manage, evaluate, create and communicate information. These skills range from basic computer literacy to advanced digital content creation and online collaboration. Digital skills are no longer optional but essential in today's economy

that is being driven by technology especially in business education field where competence is germane to employability.

The shortage of qualified, tech-savvy workers in specific roles is frequently ascribed to universities and other higher education institutions not providing students with essential employability skills that correspond with labour market demands. This challenge arises from an insufficient emphasis on entrepreneurship and digital skills within the Nigerian educational system. According to Akpan, Akpan and Homevor (2023), 82% of job openings require digital skills. Integrating digital skills into the educational curriculum is not just essential, but it also holds the potential to transform graduates' job prospects. These skills are increasingly vital across all job sectors. This integration is particularly crucial in addressing the high unemployment rates among graduates, especially in Business Education. By incorporating these skills, business education graduates can acquire a comprehensive skill set that enhances their competitiveness in the job market (Nguyen & Sit, 2024). This research aims to address this issue by identifying the specific digital skills that can enhance the employability of Business Education graduates.

However, the dynamic nature of the labor market, driven by globalization and rapid technological advancements, necessitates a shift from traditional teaching methods to digitally enriched learning. This study examines how incorporating digital skills into business education can enhance the employability of graduates, making them more competitive and adaptable in a digital economy.

Employability skills are indispensable in the current era of

technological disruption and globalization. Employers complain about the insufficiency of skills among the workers. Mourshed, Farrell, and Barton (2012). Approximately 75 million young people in developing countries are unemployed, and in most countries, youth unemployment rates are 2 to 4 times higher than adults. Further, education providers must support them. Graduates requires both soft and hard skills to survive in this technological driven industries. More than 50% of stakeholders could not find the right competencies in job seekers in accordance with the vacancies they provided so that more than 80% of job seekers failed to get a job Franita and Analisa pangan (2015).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing importance of digital literacy, many Business Education graduates lack the digital competencies required in the modern workplace. This mismatch between curriculum content and labor market expectations has contributed to graduate unemployment and underemployment. While the importance of digital skills in modern education is widely acknowledged, there is limited empirical evidence on how well these skills are being integrated into the teaching and learning of Business Education in Nigeria. Many teachers still rely heavily on traditional chalk and board teaching methods which are non-digital. This raises concerns about the preparedness of Business Education graduates for the modern, tech-driven workplace. There is, therefore, a pressing need to evaluate the extent to which digital skills are incorporated into the business education curriculum and how this inclusion (or lack thereof) affects employability.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are to:

- i) Examine the extent of integration of digital skills into the Business Education curriculum.
- ii) Ascertain the relevant digital skills needed by employers in the business sector.
- iii) Determine the connectivity of digital skills acquisition with employability of business education graduates.
- iv) Identify challenges inhibiting the inclusion of digital skills' into business education curriculum.

Research Questions

- i) To what extent are digital skills included into the business education curriculum?
- ii) What are the digital competencies do employers require from business education graduates to cope in business world?
- iii) How does digital skills acquisition influence business education graduates' employability?
- iv) What are impediments to the integration of digital skills into business education curriculum?

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for this research work. The population for this research comprised all final year business education students of universities in Oyo State. Lagos State University (affiliated with Federal College of Education (special), Oyo and Ekiti State University (in affiliation with Alayande University of Education, Oyo were purposively selected for this study. Multi stage sampling technique was used to select sample for the study, At the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select two universities offering business education as a course in Oyo

state. At the second stage, purposive sampling was used to choose final-year business education students for the study considering the fact that they are closer to employment. At the last stage of this selection, random sampling technique was used to choose five students and five lecturers from each of the four areas of specializations in business education in the two selected universities. The sample size therefore comprised of forty final year business education students and twenty business education lecturers. Quantitative data was used using two sets of structured questionnaires of ten items (five in each of the two research questions) titled, Digital skills and Business Education Graduates

Employability (DSBEGE). To be filled by students. The second set of questionnaire comprised of ten items (drawn from two research questions 3 and 4) meant for the lecturers. Test retest reliability coefficient was carried out on ten final year students of Lead City University at an interval of two weeks. Reliability coefficient of 0.82 was arrived at. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

Results

Examine the extent of integration of digital skills in the Business Education curriculum

Table 1: Descriptive analysis showing the extent to which basic computer literacy integrated to business education curriculum

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
y1	40	1.925	.8883145	1	4
y2	40	1.7	.9114654	1	4
y3	40	1.775	.9195177	1	4
y4	40	1.6	.7089176	1	4
y5	40	1.375	.627878	1	3

Standard point: very large extent 4; large extent 3; moderate extent 2; and low extent 1 mean of the point = 2.5

According to the table 1, mean and standard deviation of: the level at which basic computer literacy integrated to business education curriculum are 1.925 and .8883145 respectively; the extent to which internet and information technology are used in business education classes are 1.7 and .9114654; the extent to which typing and keyboarding skills incorporated in business education curriculum are 1.775 and .9195177; the extent to which

spreadsheet and data analysis handled in business education teachings are 1.6 and .7089176; and the extent to which digital marketing are taught in business education classes are 1.375 and .627878.

Therefore, from the above, the standard mean of 2.5 is greater than all the outcome means (Findings) and the standard deviations from the means are low which indicates consistence in the data where most observations are similar to the means outcomes. As a result, it implies that the level at which digital skills are integrated to the teaching of business education is low.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis showing the competencies required by from business education graduates to cope with business world

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
x1	40	3.325	.6155048	2	4
x2	40	3.425	.5006406	3	4
x3	40	3.4	.5905235	2	4
x4	40	3.475	.5057363	3	4
x5	40	3.275	.640012	2	4

Standard point: strongly agreed 4; agreed 3; disagreed 2; and strongly disagreed 1. Average mean of the point = 2,5.

According to the table 2, the mean and standard deviation of responses on the competencies required by the employers from business education graduates are:

Ability to employ Microsoft Excel package are 3.325 and .6155048;

Ability to use power point 3.425 and .5006406;

Ability to use E-Commerce and online business tools are 3.4 and .5905235;

Ability to engage in effective digital communication are 3.475 and .5057363; and

Ability to engage in online research and information literacy are 3.275 and .640012 respectively.

Therefore, from the above, the standard mean of 2.5 is less than all the outcome means (Findings) and the standard deviations from the means are low which indicates consistence in the data where most observations are similar to the means outcome. As a result, it implies that for business education graduates to be gainfully employed, they must be able to use and be proficient in Microsoft excel package, power point, E-commerce and other online business tools, digital communication and online research and information literacy.

Table 3: Descriptive analysis showing the influence of digital skills acquisition on business graduates' employability

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
z1	20	3.6	.5026247	3	4
z2	20	3.35	.4893605	3	4
z3	20	3.4	.680557	2	4
z4	20	3.25	.7863975	2	4
z5	20	3.4	.5026247	3	4

Table 4: summary of regression analysis showing the influence of acquisition of digital skills on business education graduates' employability

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	20
Model	4.11481481	4	1.0287037	F(4, 15)	=	22.52
Residual	.685185185	15	.045679012	Prob > F	=	0.0000
Total	4.8	19	.252631579	R-squared	=	0.8573
				Adj R-squared	=	0.8192
				Root MSE	=	.21373

standard point: strongly agreed 4; agreed 3; disagreed 2; and strongly disagreed 1. Average mean of the point = 2,5.

Form the descriptive analysis table 3 showing the extent to which digital skills acquisition influence business education graduates' employability, it is revealed that the average standard mean 2.25 less than all the means outcome. Likewise, all the standard deviations are low meaning that there is consistency in the data where most observations are similar to the means outcome. It therefore, implies that acquisition and use of digital skills influence business education graduates. With the acquisition of digital skills, business education graduates are facilitated to be gainfully employed, handle difficult tasks and be able to compete favorably with their colleagues across the globe during recruitment.

From regression analysis summary table 4 which shows the influence of acquisition of digital skills on business education graduates' employability, Prob > F = 0.0000; R-

squared = 0.8573 and Adj R-squared = 0.8192 at 0.05 level of significant. It implies that digital skills acquisition has significant influence on business education employability. $R^2 = 0.8573$ ie coefficient of determination revealed that 85.73% of the factors that determined business education graduates' employability constitute digital acquisition while remaining 14.27% is left for other factors that determined business education graduates' employability. Not only that, the coefficient of correlation $r = \text{square root of } R\text{-squared } (\sqrt{0.8573}) = 0.9259$ which is greater than 0,5 at 0.05 level of significant. It implies that that there is significant relationship between digital skills acquisition and business education graduates' employability. This indicated that digital skills acquisition aids business education graduates to be gainfully employed.

Table 5: Descriptive analysis showing the impediments to the integration of digital skills courses to the business education curriculum

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
a1	20	3.3	.6569467	2	4
a2	20	3.3	.8013147	2	4
a3	20	3.55	.6048053	2	4
a4	20	3.05	.6863327	2	4
a5	20	3.05	.7591547	2	4

Standard point: strongly agreed 4; agreed 3; disagreed 2; and strongly disagreed 1. Average mean of the point = 2,5.

Form the descriptive analysis table 5 showing the impediments to the integration of digital skills courses to the business education curriculum, it is revealed that the average standard mean which is 2.25 less than all the means outcome. Likewise, all the standard deviations are low meaning that there is consistency in the data where most observations are similar to the means outcome. It therefore, implies that limited

funding, inadequate infrastructures, lack of technical know-how, poor policy implementation and resistance to changes constituted impediment to the integration of digital skills courses to the business education curriculum.

Conclusion

Digital skills are no longer luxury for business graduates but indeed necessity. Embedding them in the curriculum is not only strategic but indispensable for business education graduates' employment. Integrating

digital skills into business education curriculum will bridge the gap between training and industry demand in an era driven by technology.

Recommendations

- Business Education curriculum should be totally overhauled to reflect digital trends.
- Business Education lecturers should be trained the use of digital tools and platforms.
- Government at all levels should provide adequate ICT infrastructure and learning resources.
- Educational institutions should collaborate with industry to ensure relevance of digital skills training and preparation of business education graduates for employment

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