

BUSINESS EDUCATION AND DIGITAL SKILLS: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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Abstract

This paper focused on the conceptual review of business education and digital skill. It examined the concept of business education and the development of digital skills for the 21st century business education students. The world is a global village as advancement in technology has taken over the traditional way of teaching and learning and the world of work in general the need for business education graduate to be technologically incline cannot be over-emphasised. Thus; the need for 21st century Business Educators to teach students skill that are most relevant, useful, current and globally applicable is of utmost importance. The performance of Business Education graduates in the business world will greatly depend to a larger extent on the appropriate digital skills acquired that will enable them fit into the world of work and the society at large. The paper concludes that digital skills are necessary skills that business education students need to acquire as the world has gone pass traditional world practices in the work place. Business Education graduates can only out-perform only if they are well grounded with relevant 21st century digital skills they need to succeed in life. The paper therefore recommends among others that Business educators/teachers at tertiary institutions should go for refresher courses to update their digital skills and government should adequately fund business education programme and provide computer laboratories with internet facilities.

Keyword: Business Education, Digital Skills, Refresher Courses, ICT

Introduction

The world is a global village and this globalisation has affected all sectors and the traditional way of doing things. The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has not only affected teaching and learning but also the business world. Employers require prospective employees to be ICT inclined and digitally oriented; thus; prospective employees are expected to possess the 21st century digital skill needed to excel in their chosen careers. It is not an overstatement to state that digital skills are dynamic and changes the way people work in this 21st century, providing opportunities and risks. Millions of job opportunities are at risk of being replaced with automation or robot, especially jobs that involve repetitive or routine tasks (Gonzalez-Vazquez et al., 2019). Although, jobs could be replaced by automation due to the advent of advance technology, the fact cannot still be denied that digital skills could increase job opportunities and employability of Business Education graduates. The use of digital technologies has greatly increased mainly because many people now work and learn remotely and manage health, social life, and household chores in a digital environment (Olaniyi, 2022). However, digital skills can only be developed by Business Education students only when Business Education programme is well designed to incorporate digital literacy and when Business Educators/ teachers are digitally literate.

Business Education is one of the occupational areas that refer to a programme of instruction that offer various skills in book keeping and accounting, office technology and management and marketing. Major topics include: office practice, book keeping, business mathematics, business communication, secretarial duties, word processing, typewriting and advertising (Ajisafe et al., 2015). The actual goals of Business Education shall be 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, which incorporates ICT (Edokpolor & Egbri, 2017).

Concept of Business Education

Business Education by its curriculum content and its objectives in the National Policy on Education is expected to be a skill driven course poised to make its students distinguished from among the graduates in

the labour market. In the view of Koyosaki (2013) business education is the type of education needed in the 21st century, which has an in-built mechanism for developing skills in almost all disciplines specifically, accounting, investment, marketing, insurance, office practices, law and information communication and technology in the learner. Business education is that aspect of educational programme purposively designed to provide individuals with the required practical vocational and business attitudes, knowledge, skills and values that will enable him or her function effectively in the society (Ubulom & Ogwunte, 2017, as cited in Ore, 2022).

According to Okoro (2013), business education is a broad and comprehensive field of study whose instructional programme is endowed with the is a broad and comprehensive field of study whose instructional programme is endowed with the capacity to provide knowledge, skills, vocation and aptitude required to effectively manage personal businesses and at the same time function in the economic system. A remarkable attribute of business education programme is that business education graduates can function and perform independently as an entrepreneur and employers of labour. As a result, there are lots of job prospects for business education graduates even from the junior secondary level to the graduate level. Included in this spectrum are: teaching careers, entrepreneurship, office environment, vocational practices (Aquah, 2014 as cited in Ore, 2022).

Concept of Digital Skills

Digital skills are abilities required to use digital technologies. The ability to use various digital technologies or applications and the knowledge of various networks to manage and access information is referred to as digital skill. These are skills that enable people to create and share digital content, communicate and collaborate, and solve problems for effective and creative self-fulfilment in life, learning, work, and social activities. A typical example of this multidimensional concept is the Information and Communication Technology, which has created new global networks, dismantling national boundaries and barriers and generating a global village where one can access information from any part of the universe within seconds (Olaniyi, 2015).

Digital skills are set of skills that allow a person to strategically make use of information through information technology. They can also be said to be set of skills, tools, and knowledge necessary to use networks, digital devices and different applications on online mediums that facilitate the management of information for specific requirements of working environment, learning environment, and problems solving situations. It refers to an individual's ability to find, evaluate, and clearly communicate information through typing and other media on various digital platforms. It is evaluated by an individual's grammar, composition, typing skills and ability to produce text, images, audio and designs using technology. Digital skills are the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills (Digital Literacy, 2017). While digital skills initially focused on computers alone, the advent of the internet and use of social media has resulted in the shift in some of its focus to mobile devices.

The definition of digital skills has been refined and fleshed out in several studies over the years, in the work of Jan Steyaert and Jos de Haan (2001) in Fau and Moreau (2018) categorises digital skills into three typologies and distinguished the three levels of digital skills as:

Instrumental Skills: this skill relates to the basic technical and operational know-how and usage of technological devices and appliances.

Structural or Informational Skills: these are skills that relate to a cognitive dimension about the usage of technological devices and appliances which include: seeking, selecting and processing online information and also understanding, interpreting and evaluating it.

Strategic Skills: this refers to the ability to use the information proactively to affect one's professional and/or personal environment. It is the ability to make use of information for strategic decision making.

Basic Digital Skills Required of a Business Education Graduate

Futurelearn (2020) outlined a framework for basic digital skills under six areas. These areas are subdivided into skills for life and additional skills for work as explained below:

- **Digital Foundation Skills** – this skill relates to the fundamentals of being able to use digital technologies, such as using a browser, connecting to the internet, and keeping passwords secure.

- **Communicating** – this basic skill involves the ability to sending emails securely, using attachments, and participating on social media.
- **Handling information and content** – this refers to the basic skill of using search engines, being aware that not all online content is reliable, accessing content across devices.
- **Transacting** – ability to set up accounts to use or purchase goods/services online, using different secure payment methods, filling in online forms.
- **Problem-solving** – finding solutions to problems using frequently asked questions, tutorials, chat, presenting solutions through software, and improving productivity.
- **Being safe and legal online** – understanding best practice in data storage/sharing, updating and keeping passwords secure, and taking precautions against viruses. These skills as identified are expected to be the prerequisite skills that must be possessed by every Business Education students in order to excel in the business world of today.

However, apart from the basic digital skills, those looking to work in the growing digital sector itself will need to possess more advanced skills pertaining to specific areas of digital business. These include, but are not limited to the following areas; social medial skill, digital marketing skill, web analytic, user experience and artificial intelligent (Futurelearn, 2020).

Business Education and Digital Skill Compliance in the 21st Century

The ever dynamic business environment has shifted emphasis and focus on digitalization of operations. The goal of Business Education is to produce self-reliant graduates who are expected to be job creators and not job-seekers. Educational institutions need to be proactive and respond quickly to the ever changing technological advancement by creating enabling environments where learners can develop a wide range of general and specialist digital skills that are vital for life-long learning. Unlocking the digital potential and capabilities of Business Education students will be of great benefit to individuals, the economy and society.

Integration of ICT and the teaching and learning of Business Education will go a long way in developing students' 21st century ICT skills and competencies needed to be self-employed and digitally inclined through the effective usage of ICTs communication, technology and management skills. Business educators should embrace enormous changes in digitalization in the teaching and learning process in order to produce quality graduates who will become successful in the modern business world. Turner (2005) Business Educators are expected to possess and effectively make use of information and communication technology skills in the impartation of digitalized entrepreneurial knowledge to the students.

Students should be adequately prepared for a digital world in which they can make safe, secure and informed choices that capitalise on new opportunities and allow them to play a full part in making the society a digital village. Educational planners have a unique role in ensuring that curriculum for excellence is supported by a good school infrastructure and highly skilled teachers who can foster innovative practice in the use of digital technology for learning and teaching (Education Business, ND). Business Education students must be taught different skill from those of 20th century. The innovation and advancement in technology has made some of the courses in the Business Education curriculum to change, for instance typewriting has changed to word/data processing technology.

Conclusion

Digital skills are important because they underpin so much of how modern work is conducted. For many modern professions in which Business Educators are one, digital skills are simply essential skills. The future of Business Education depends to a large extent on the digital skill acquired by Business Education graduates during the period of study. Business Education graduates are trained to become entrepreneurs and educators; today, entrepreneurs transact businesses on a global market which happens to be the internet, and learning classroom is now moving on-line. Therefore, the versatility of business education students/graduates in the usage of digital devices and appliances (digital skill) will determine their performance.

Recommendations

The following were recommended by the researcher:

- i. Business Educators must be willing to upgrade their skills on regular basis so as to be able to impart the skills and knowledge to students. Hence, there should be training courses, refresher courses and professional ICT development skills courses for business teachers.
- ii. Students should be trained on the usage of digital devices and appliances as it is the new and future yardstick to thrive in the 21st century world of business and the society at large
- iii. Business Education students must be taught different skill from those of 20th century to the 21st century digital skills.
- iv. Well experienced Business Educators/ personnel with ICT (digital) knowledge should be employed to teach Business Education at tertiary institutions.

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