

DIGITAL SKILL AND FUTURE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT : The concept of 21st century learning and skill development involves learning motivated by practice of teaching students the most relevant, useful, current and globally applied digital skills. How well Business Education students will fare in the business world depend greatly on the appropriate skill they have acquired that will enable them fit into the society and the world of work. Hence, this paper discusses digital skill and the future of business education students. It looks into digital skill and business education development for the 21st century, digital marketing and business education, social media and business education and skill-sets for success in the 21st global economy. The paper concludes that the future of Business Education in Nigeria depends heavily on digitalization and its effective usage by Business Education students. Business Education Graduates can only achieve the designated role in the society when they are well grounded with relevant digital skills they need to succeed in the 21st century. The paper recommends among others that there should be training courses for both teachers and students on digital skills as it is the new and future yardstick to thrive in the world of business and the society at large.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is observed that technological advancement has taken over different aspects of work and life at large and this has made digital skills become more relevant especially in this 21st Century. The rapidly changing global environment provides both opportunities and threats. It is difficult to find a business today that is not affected in some way by global developments. Business education which is an aspect of the total education programme is not unaffected by the penetrating wind of modern technology. It is very important and timely to consider the need for Business Education to be repositioned and enhanced its comparative advantage to its recipient in this digitalized and global workforce (Olaniyi, 2015).

The ability to use various digital technologies or applications, also the knowledge of various networks to manage and access information is referred to as digital skill. It enables people to create and share digital content, communicate and collaborate, and solve problems for effective and creative self-fulfillment 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, thereby generating a global village where one can access information from any part of the universe within seconds (Olaniyi, 2015). The COVID-19 lockdown measures have made digital skills even more relevant. The use of digital technologies has substantially increased, largely because many people now work and learn from home, and manage health, social life, and household chores (e.g., shopping) in a digital environment. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed gaps in digital skills as well as the existing risks and limited knowledge in using a range of digital technologies for different purposes. During lockdown in 2020, teachers, parents, and students found remote schooling extremely challenging, partly due to their low level of digital skills (not to mention the inequalities in access to digital devices and infrastructure) (Carretero *et al.*, 2021).

It is not an overstatement to state that digital skills are changing the way people work in recent times, revealing opportunities and risks. Millions of jobs are at risk of being replaced with automation, especially jobs that involve repetitive, routine tasks (Gonzalez-Vazquez *et al.*, 2019). In as much as jobs could be replaced by automation due to digitalization, the fact cannot still be denied that digital skills could increase employability and earnings. A considerable number of companies, particularly large companies with more than 250 employees, need digitally competent workers. Curtarelli *et al.* (2017) illustrated that almost 60% of employers in large firms believed some of their staff were not fully proficient in digital tasks, while less than a quarter of employers at small firms (10 to 249 employees) expressed the same concern. Moreover, workers with moderate or advanced use of ICT have a higher probability of having high-paid jobs, compared to those with little or no use of ICT.

Business education on the other hand is one of the occupational areas that are richly provided by vocational and technical education in Nigeria. Business education refers to a programme of instruction that offers various skills in accounting, marketing and Office Technology and Management (OTM). Major topics include: office practice, book keeping, business mathematics, business communication, secretarial duties, word processing, advertising (Ajisafe, Bolarinwa&Edeh 2015). Edokpolor and Egberi (2017) had stipulated that the actual goals of business education shall be to: prepare students for specific career in office occupations, equip students with the requisite skills for job creation and entrepreneurship, and expose students with knowledge about business, including a good blend of computer technology, which incorporates Information and Communication Technology (ICT). They further explained that the first two goals involve education 'for' business, which is aimed at equipping recipients with the requisite attributes (digital skills, knowledge, competencies, and attitudes) to become gainfully employed in the world of work, whereas the later addresses education 'about' business, which is aimed at providing a sound basis for further studies at the graduate and post-graduate levels.

Digitalisation in Business Education programme will go a long way in developing the students' ICT skills, intellectual and competencies needed in the establishment of business enterprise and also make them employable in the work force. For effective entrepreneurial practice in the present technological dispensation, the acquisitions of the basic digital skills by graduates of business education are of paramount importance vis-a-vis ICTs communication, technology, organization and management skills. Business education should embrace enormous changes in digitalization in a bid to produce quality students who will become successful in the modern business world. Turner (2005) contended that those in education (business education inclusive) have moved at light speed in the area of education technology. Business educators should possess and make effective use of information and communication technology skills in the impartation of digitalized entrepreneurial knowledge to the students. They should make use of a variety of digital tools such as email, desktop conferencing, online programmes such as web CT and Blackboard as well as video conferencing in their instructional activities so as to impart the necessary skills to business education students for self-sustenance after graduation.

Concept of Digital Skill : Digital skills are set of skills that allow a person the strategic use of information through information technology. These are abilities required to use digital technologies. 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 according to specific requirements of working environment, learning environment, and problems solving situations. Digital skills 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. The American Library Association (ALA) defines digital skills as "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 skill 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. Digital skills does not replace traditional forms of literacy, but instead builds upon and expands the skills that form the foundation of traditional forms of literacy. Digital literacy therefore, should be considered to be a part of the path to knowledge (Jenkins, 2009).

To realize opportunities presented by digitalization, governments need to understand how jobs and the skill sets demanded by these jobs are changing. Digital skills have moved from 'optional' to 'critical' and need to be complemented with transversal 'soft skills' such as the ability to communicate effectively in both online and offline mediums. In developing countries, digital skills are also in high demand and greatly improve prospects for decent employment. They are linked to higher earning potential, and experts have predicted a growing number of jobs for people with advanced digital skills. Not only are there new jobs available, some of them are actually going unfilled, making the provision of advanced digital skills part of a solution to unemployment.

Business Education: Business education programme from primary, secondary and tertiary level were designed to offer knowledge and skill in the subject areas such as Accounting, Management, Secretarial Studies, Office Practice, Information and Communication Technology and Management. According to Koyosaki (2013) Business Education is the type of education needed in the 21st century, which has a built-in mechanism for developing skills in almost all disciplines viz accounting, investment, marketing, law and information communication and technology (ICT) in the learner. Knowledge and skills and its application to problem solving are essential attribute of any good educational model. The world through digitalization has become a global village, making internet a meeting point for everybody and in carrying out most activities. Conducting businesses via the internet system is trending and this has made internet an important new market place. The

internet market offers lots of potential for start, growth and development of businesses because of its global appeal that involves billions of people converging in one place. Many businesses are now keying into the on-line model of business and any organization that are not yet tapping into this new business model does so at a great risk. Developing the capacity to do business utilizing on-line and off-line facilities in the business environment requires appropriate skill-sets demanded of today's entrepreneur who must understand the dynamics of business and the technology that drives the 21st century businesses. The unique nature and potential of internet businesses makes it imperative that nowadays business education students should be well trained to be digital literate or attain ICT skill compliance. This will enable them develop the know-how in registering, managing and optimizing their business potential on-line for local and global impact. Business Education is important because it teaches how the office functions, how to keep accounts and enter transactions into different books; it teaches how to keep documents, how to own and run small business enterprise, and to manipulate the keyboard of a typewriter and the computer for the enhancement of business. It also intends to make the student technologically literate and to acquire skills that exposes them to the world of work. Components of business studies include: Office practice, Book-keeping, Commerce, Keyboarding and Computer studies.

Business activity affects the daily lives of all Nigerians as they work, spend, save, invest, travel and play. It influences jobs, incomes and opportunities for personal enterprise. Business has significant effect on the standard of living and quality of life of people, and on the environment in which they live and which future generations will inherit (Ekanem, 2008). Eventually, all students will encounter the world of business, whether they work in urban or rural areas. They must be prepared to engage in business activity with confidence and competence.

Digital Skill Compliance and Business Education Development for the 21st Century : Business education involves the learning of different types of business related skills such as improved decision-making skills, identification and utilization of business opportunities, setting up and properly running an enterprise and recently, skills to access information and use different digital tools to create better working space (DeFaoite, Henry, Johnson, & Van derSijde, 2003). Digitalization now the major driver in today's global economy has become one of the most sought after skill-sets of the 21st century. The internet is now the new and obviously the biggest market place worldwide, and digital skills are the key to unlocking the potentials in this new market place. The global market system of today needs new sets of skills for marketing, advertising and business promotional activities necessary for setting-up, growing and effective management of businesses. Students need full range of such digital skills in order to meaningfully participate in the 21st century global economy (Barbara, 2017).

How well Business Education student will fare in the business world depend greatly on the appropriate skill they have acquired that will enable them fit into the society and the world of work. Twenty-first century skills are not entirely a new concept; but ICT component of the skill sets are very crucial in today's global setting. Digital skill compliant of Business Education offers unique opportunity for participation in the growing digital business world and the changing dynamics of business ecosystems. The usefulness of digital skill or its compliance as important skill-sets for business development lies on the use perception, the productive function and usage frequency. A study by Gregor, & Valerij (2015) shows that e-learning courses, market research data bases and business plan software are among the digital tools that can be used for inculcating digital competencies in the students. The school system must develop the capacity to direct and provide relevant answers to such expectations that will lead to the desired future. The concept of 21st century learning and skill development involves learning motivated by practice of teaching students the most relevant, useful, current and globally applied digital skills.

Twenty first century 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. Also, the teaching of shorthand presently is sliding down into oblivion. Its relevance in the contemporary world of work has been questioned. According to Ndinechi (2001), shorthand is one of the trees in the forest of tillers under business education rubric. It has grown steadily over many years and now is dying a slow aimless death caused by rotting pockets of irrelevance. Out-dated courses, skills and techniques should be doing away with. Business education should be poised to prepare students and educators alike for jobs that do not exist yet, teaching them how to learn, unlearn and relearn. According to Salisu (2021), quoting American writer Alvin Toffler, said 'the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn'. The skill to be taught in this century should reflect the specific demands placed on today's

students by the complex, competitive, knowledge-based, information-age, technology-driven economy and society (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2016). Digital compliance is expected to deliver three forms of literacy, namely; information communication literacy, media literacy and technology literacy. Once mastered, these forms of literacies help in the mastery of other skills needed (Trilling and Fadel, 2009). Today these competencies (digital skills) may seem modest; they are not entirely new, but, just newly important (Salas-Pilco, 2013). Acquiring skills has become a lot easier these days because someone has made the processes and uploads it on the internet. This becomes advantageous to digital skill compliant students. According to MindTools (2013, 2017) and Kutzhanova (2009) various categories of entrepreneurship skills such as Personal characteristics, Interpersonal skills, Critical and Creative thinking and Practical skill can be acquired using digital tools.

Digital Marketing and Business Education : The skill competencies required for entrepreneurship include technical, human and conceptual. Technical skill competencies involve individual's knowledge and proficiency in a specialized field. Human skill deals with the ability to interact effectively with other people at all levels. While conceptual skills deals with formulation of ideas, conceptualization of abstract and complex situations, i.e. understanding relationship among various works. Successful businesses are built around effective marketing. Marketing is important to any organization to the extent that everything rises and falls on marketing. Nothing happens in an organization until a salesman makes a sale. The marketing concepts may appear the same theoretically, but the off-line or on-line component requires different mechanism or skill-set to run, maintain and manage. Digital marketing are marketing types conducted electronically or via the internet. The internet has completely changed the marketing game, bringing a level of precision and scale unknown in the pre-digital age. Specialised digital skills are required in order to navigate this new terrain, with expert practitioners often focusing on one specific discipline. These include things like pay-per-click advertising, search engine optimisation, email marketing, as well as the strategy to bring them together. Business Education Students therefore needs exposure on the new skill required for digital or on-line business development and marketing. The changing business dynamics, globalization and knowledge economy has shifted emphasis and focus on digital marketing. Business Education goal of producing self-reliant graduates who are expected to be self-employed to create jobs for others.

Social Media and Business Education: Social media digital skills are crucial to the digital marketing mix, but are worth pulling out as social media has come to play such a significant role in our day-to-day as well as professional lives. Social media management tools, performance measurement, new channel research, brand presence/voice, influencer marketing, and paid vs organic all play a part in connecting with prospective and current users. Social media comprises of activities that involve socializing and networking online through words, pictures and videos. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web2.0, and that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. It depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content. In line with this, Sherwin (2013) stated that social media introduced substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals. These changes are the focus of the emerging field of techno-self-studies.

Social media's most distinctive aspects are that it has the potential to transform from a way of pushing content outward to a way of inviting conversation, of exchanging information, and of invoking unparalleled individual, industrial, societal, and even global changes. The availability of high speed internet broadband connection with massive use of desktop computer, laptops, e-readers, facebook, youtube, and smartphones enables millions of people to actively engage in social media, text messaging, content sharing, online-learning and much more. Ezenwafor (2012) observed that since technology is ruling the world in all disciplines and activities, the modern office ranks highest in innovation development and use of the ever changing technologies requiring adequate integration of digital skill in business education. Business Education goal of producing self-reliant graduates who are expected to be self-employed to create jobs for others need proper exposure to some of the under listed skill-sets for success in the 21st global economy and digitally transformed economic system (Anireh&Amadi, (2020):

Skill-sets for Success in 21st Century

How to register business on-line with Google, Facebook and other social Media

Capacity to maintain and sustain on-line presence

Skill for Social Media Marketing
Getting to know online customers
How to use business goals to improve performance
How to stand out from competition on-line
Product promotion and merchandizing
Website marketing
Understanding of websites basics
Relate website development with business goals
Using tools such as Analytics and Web scanners for success
Effective use of Search Engine Marketing (SEM)
Search Engine Optimization/Maximization (SEO or SEM)
How to be noticed during Search Adverts
How to use Google Analytics for market Segmentation
Using Data to understand audience
On-line business security for networks, systems and softwares improvement
Creating a secured online customer experience
Building local and international on-line presence
Choosing the right format for on-line contents
Writing for on-line customers
Measuring your success in content marketing
Connect through e-mails Measuring success in e-mail marketing
Managing successful e-mail campaigns
Advertise in other Websites
Search advertising and display advertising
Targeting and retargeting advertising
Receive payments and managing orders on-line
Creating a smooth e-commerce experience
Expand your business internationally Advertise across-boarders
Delivering to customers across the globe
The support system you will need for global business

Mastering and utilizing the above listed skill-sets will enable Business Education students create, manage and optimize their engagements in online businesses and marketing. These skill-sets are considered useful and its impact cut across all spectrum of e-Business; (e-Trading, e-Marketing/Merchandizing, Drop shipping and Social Media Marketing such as, the use of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Whatsapp, Youtube and Mobile Application usage/Development) for business promotion activities.

II. CONCLUSION

Digital skills are important because they underpin so much of how modern work is conducted. For many modern professions, digital skills are simply essential skills. It can be thus be said that the future of Business Education depend to a large extent on the digital skill acquired. Business entrepreneurs today transact on a global market which happens to be the internet, and how versatile one's digital skill is determines how well the performance. The need for digital skills will only continue to increase as the society will see a greater drive towards automation and cross-system data exchange, with two consequences: the loss of roles as they are automated, and a greater demand for those with advanced digital skills. Finally, it is observed that the coronavirus pandemic has put a further spin on matters. Businesses that previously relied on in-person interaction now are compelled to use digital technologies to carry out their day-to-day functions. The pandemic might not last forever, but it is likely that remote working will become a more deeply-ingrained part of everyday business life. It is on this note that this paper concludes that the future of Business Education in Nigeria depends heavily on digitalization and its effective usage by Business Education student. Business Education Graduates can only achieve the designated role in the society when they are well grounded with relevant digital skills they need to succeed in the 21st century.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

- There should be awareness creation for Business Education students about the potentials and prospects of acquiring digital skills in Nigerian institutions of higher learning.
- Bearing in the mind that the educational system of any society cannot grow above the level of the teacher who implements it. 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 for both teachers and students on digital skills as it is the new and future yardstick to thrive in the world of business and the society at large.

- Computer laboratories with internet facilities should be provided for all business education departments in universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria.
- Alternative power supply should be made available in the departments of Business Education in all schools to ensure constant power supply for internet services.
- Business Education student should upgrade to digitisation of their existing skillsets and the creation of new digital skills because remote and flexible working are more possible than ever.

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