

BUSINESS EDUCATORS' PERCEPTION OF DIGITAL SKILLS NEEDED FOR EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE IN THE WORLD OF WORK

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Abstract

This study examined business education perception of digital skills needed for effective performance in the world of work. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design while the population consisted of two hundred business educators lecturing in twelve public colleges of education in southwest Nigeria. The study sample comprised one hundred and thirty- two respondents that were selected using the stratified random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. From the data gathered, simple percentage, frequency tables, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics were used to test the null hypothesis. Findings from the study revealed that business education students need digital foundation, communication and marketing skills to a high extent for effective performance in the world of work. Findings also revealed that less experienced and highly experienced business educators did not differ significantly in their perception of digital skills needed by business education students for effective performance in the world of work. The study concluded that digital skills are very much needed by business education students for effective performance in the world of work. Finally the study recommended among others that business education should undertake regular and consisted training in digital skills acquisition and that digital skills should embedded in the business education curriculum.

Keywords: Business education, Competence, Digital skills, Skills acquisition, World of work.

Introduction

Globally, the use of digital technology which gives people access to huge amount of information has necessitated the acquisition of a new set of skills to access, manage, integrate and evaluate information. All over the world, the workplace is changing as a result of computerization, automation and mechanization of which Nigeria is not an exception. Business education needs the acquisition of new sets of skills which are referred

to as digital skills. This is so because both the public and private organization worldwide are embarking on digitalization of their services which is becoming a challenge to workers that are not digitally compliant. The danger of becoming digitally excluded poses a threat to all individuals who do not have the necessary skills to handle the digitalization of the various spheres of human endeavours.

Every facet of human endeavour is it in the areas of healthcare delivery, business system, knowledge dissemination, education and others is now revolutionized with digital technology. Digital skills entail knowledge of the use of digital technologies for communication, collaboration and professional development, to enhance learners' active engagement. Digital technologies in teaching and learning include sourcing, creating and sharing digital resources, enhancing assessment by enabling learners to use digital technologies creatively and responsibly for information, communication, content creation, well-being and problem solving.

According to Abubakar (2019), the role of digital skill cannot be over-emphasized. Digital skills allow educators to offer a number of approaches to learning and offer the opportunity to collaborate online with others from across the world.

As the digital transformation is moving ahead, the question of digital skills has become a societal challenge. Iordeiche, Marien & Badden (2017) stated that people should be equipped with the right skills to make use of the new technologies in their work. This is because labour markets are changing due to technology development.

As pointed out by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) the need for mid-skilled labour has decreased while that for high-skilled labour, often university graduates, has increased over the last decades. Digital technologies have the potential to change the way we work and interact, which likely to create new opportunities, but also challenges (Thomas, 2019). It is based on these challenges that digital skills acquisition for business education students in tertiary institution in Nigeria becomes a necessity.

The need to prepare business education students to fit into the global market of the 21st century and beyond require the acquisition of digital skills. Digital skills refer to the skills needed to "use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information," from basic online searching and emailing to specialist programming and development (Norris, 2019). At their core, these skills help secretaries to communicate and collaborate, develop and share digital content, and problem solving at work.

According to Oboreh and Nnebe (2019) digital skills involve the knowledge and ability to determine information needs from digital technology sources, and to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to input, access, organize, integrate and assess digital resources as well as to construct new knowledge, create media expressions and communication. Digital skills involve the critical and secure use of information technology for work, leisure and communication. They encompass a set of skills, knowledge, attitudes and strategies required for using digital media and information and communication

technology. Furthermore, digital skills involve the ability to use computers to find, evaluate, store, produce, present and exchange information and to communicate and participate in collaboration networks through the internet (Gidado & Daramola 2021).

Despite the huge benefits presented by new technologies, many individuals and corporate organizations have not gone digital due to some challenges which include:

1. **Inadequate or lack of modern facilities and equipment:** Omidiji & Ogwu (2019) argued that the automated office uses sophisticated equipment which provides information faster. Nevertheless, it is expensive, therefore many public organizations are unable to acquire the facilities in sufficient quantity..
2. **Erratic power supply:** Technological equipment used includes computers, projectors, scanners, printers, smart phones etc. These cannot be utilized without power supply. Constant power supply is therefore needed for maximum utilization of those technologies. Buttressing this, Umar (2019) asserted that electricity power has been erratic to allow for proper functioning of equipment in Nigeria.
3. **Insufficient funding:** Grace (2018) identified lack of funds to be another challenge affecting the acquisition of new technology equipment in some public offices; thereby complete digitization is not feasible.
4. **Inadequate training and retraining:** Many business educators do not have adequate training in the use of digital tools. The failure of many business educators to embark on self-development programmes will hamper the acquisition of new skills and competencies needed for the operation of modern equipment. The invention of new technologies therefore calls for acquisition of new skills. Resultantly refresher courses are very germane to the utilization of new technologies.
5. **Poor knowledge of new technologies:** Poor knowledge of the adoption of new technologies in teaching could affect efficient acquisition of new technologies by students. Onwukwe and Aliche (2021) asserted that lecturers are duty bound to help students acquire and develop needed skills and attitudes for employment by aligning curriculum with practice. The lack of those skills could also affect effective acquisition and utilization of new technologies which may render the secretary unemployable.

Akudolu and Agbo (2021) investigated digital skill gap among business education graduates of tertiary institutions in Anambra state: implication for programme re-adjustment. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design while three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. Two hundred and sixty six (266) employers formed the population in the study. There was no sample since the population was manageable. A structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The structured questionnaire was validated by three experts in the field of business education and measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha formula which yielded reliability coefficient of 0.83. The mean, standard deviation and t- test statistics were used for data analysis. Findings showed that business education graduates possess digital foundation skills to a moderate extent while they possess digital communication skills and cloud computing skills to a low

extent. Findings also revealed that years of working experience was not a significant factor influencing the opinion of employers regarding the extent the three digital skills covered are possessed by business education graduates. Umeano (2021) conducted a study to identify and determine the challenges to acquiring digital skills by business education graduates for employability in North- East Nigeria. The paper adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of fifty-eight (58) business education lecturers in Federal polytechnics in North-East Nigeria which were all accommodated as sample size for the study. The reliability coefficient was computed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula which yielded a coefficient of 0.71 for sections A and B respectively. Findings revealed that there was no significant difference in male and female lecturers' perception of the need for digital skills by business education graduates for employability in North- East Nigeria. It was equally revealed there was no significant difference in the perception of male and female lecturers concerning the challenges of acquiring digital skills by business education graduates for employability in North- East Nigeria. It is therefore imperative to investigate business educators' perception of digital skills needed for effective performance in the world of work.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to examine business educator perception of digital skills development for effective performance in the word of work. Specifically the study sought to identify:

1. Digital foundation skills needed business education students in colleges of education
2. Digital communication skills needed by business education students in colleges of education.
3. Digital marketing skills needed by business students in colleges of education.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

10. To what extent do business education student need digital foundation skills for effective performance in the word of work?
11. To what extent do business education students need digital communication skills for effective performance in the world of work?
12. To what extent do business education students need digital marketing skills, for effective performance in the world of work?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H01: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business education lecturers concerning digital foundation skills needed by business education students.

H02: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of highly experienced and less experienced business education lecturers' curriculum digital communication skills needed by business education students.

H03: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of business education lecturers in federal and state colleges of education concerning digital marketing skills needed by business education students.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design while the population consisted of two hundred business educators lecturing in Federal and State Government owned Colleges of Education in South West, Nigeria. The sample comprised one hundred and thirty-two respondents based on the recommendation of the research advisors (2006). The stratified random sampling technique was used for selecting the respondents. A structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by three experts from the Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED) Ijebu-Ode. A pilot study was conducted at the Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin. Results of the pilot study yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.77 using the Cronbach alpha formula. Therefore the instrument was adequate and reliable for gathering data for the study. Copies of the instrument were administered on the respondents and were retrieved. The data gathered were analyzed using the simple percentage, frequency tables, mean, standard deviation for the research questions based on the following boundary limits.

Response Category	Points	Real limits
High Extent (HE)	4	3.50 – 4.00
Moderate Extent (HE)	3	2.50 – 3.49
Low Extent (LE)	2	1.50 - 2.49
No Extent (NE)	1	0.50 – 1.49

The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics.

Results

Research question 1: To what extent do business students need digital foundation skills for effective performance in the world of work?

Table 1: Mean responses on the extent to which business education students need digital foundation skills.

S/N	Digital Foundation Skills	Mean	SI	Remark
1.	Ability to operate computer	3.78	0.77	High Extent
2.	Ability to send and open SMS	3.54	0.74	High Extent
3.	Ability to make video calls	3.51	0.68	High Extent
4.	Ability to send and receive Whatsapp messages	3.56	0.61	High Extent
5.	Ability to operate Facebook account	3.58	0.82	High Extent

N =132, Decision Rule= 2.50 weighted mean (SI)=3.59/0.72

Results in Table 1 indicated that business education students need digital foundation skills to a high extent based on the weighted mean of 3.59 and standard deviation of 0.72.

Research question 2: To what extent do business education students need digital communication skills for effective performance in the world of work.

Table 2: Mean responses on the extent which business education students need digital communication skills for effective performance in the world of work?

S/N	Digital Foundation Skills	Mean	SI	Remark
6.	Ability to compose mails and memos	3.63	0.72	High Extent
7.	Ability to send and open e-mails	3.53	0.62	High Extent
8.	Ability to save and open documents in the computer	3.65	0.83	High Extent
9.	Ability to chat online	3.58	0.79	High Extent
10.	Ability to organize zoom meeting	3.55	0.76	High Extent

N =132, Decision Rule: =2.50 weighted mean (SI) =3.59/0.74

With a weighted mean of 3.59 and standard deviation of 0.74, results in Table 2 revealed that business education students need digital communication skills to a high extent for effective performance in the world of work.

Research question 3: To what extent do business education students need digital marketing and skills for effective performance in the world of work?

Table 3: Mean responses on the extent to which business education students need digital marketing skills for effective performance in the world of work?

S/N	Digital Foundation Skills	Mean	SI	Remark
11.	Ability to design business logo using digital application	3.64	0.81	High Extent
12.	Ability to design product/ services catalogues	3.80	0.87	High Extent
13.	Ability to undertake market segmentation Via the internet	3.70	0.76	High Extent
14.	Ability to send and receive order for Goods and services through social media	3.61	0.89	High Extent
15.	Ability to conduct e-transactions	3.79	0.78	High Extent

N =132 Decision Rule =2.50 weighted mean (SI)=3.71/0.82

With a weighted mean of 3.71 and standard deviation of 0.82, results in table 3 should that digital marketing skills are needed by business education students to a high extent for effective performance in the world of work.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the men responses of male and female business education lecturers concerning digital foundation skills needed by business education students.

Table 4: Summary of T-Test analysis for the difference in the mean responses of male and female business education lecturers concerning digital foundation skills..

Gender	N	Mean	SI	Df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Male	74	3.47	0.56	130	0.52	0.153	NS
Female	58	3.56	0.67				

Result in Table 4 revealed no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business education lecturers concerning digital foundation skills needed by business education students for effective performance in the world of work. ($t_{130}: p > 0.05$) ($X = 3.47$, $SI = 0.5$) and ($X = 3.56$, $SI = 0.67$). Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of highly experienced and less experienced business education lecturers concerning digital communication skills needed by business education students.

Table 5: Summary of t-test analysis for the difference in the mean responses of highly experienced and less experienced business education lecturers concerning digital communication skills.

Group	N	Mean	SI	I) f	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Highly Experienced	85	3.70	0.65	130	0.68	0.324	NS
Less Experienced	47	3.67	0.63				

Results in Table 5 indicated no significant difference in the mean responses of highly experienced and less experienced business education lecturers concerning digital communication skills needed by business education students for effective performance in the world of work. ($t_{130} = P > 0.05$) ($X = 3.70$, $SD = 0.65$) and ($X = 3.67$, $SD = 0.63$). Thus the null hypothesis was upheld.

Hypothesis three: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of business education lecturers in Federal and State Colleges of Education concerning digital marketing skills needed by business education students.

Table 6: Summary of t-test analysis for the difference in the mean responses of business education lecturers in Federal and State Colleges of Education concerning digital marketing skills.

Colleges	N	Mean	SI	I) f	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Federal	55	3.64	0.62	130	0.61	0.132	NS
State	77	3.76	0.70				

Results in Table 6 showed no significant difference in the mean responses of business education lecturers in Federal and State Colleges of Education concerning digital marketing skills needed by business education students for effective performance in the world of work ($t_{130} = 0.61$) ($X = 3.64$, $SD = 0.62$) and ($X = 3.76$, $SD = 0.70$). Therefore the null hypothesis was confirmed.

Discussion of Findings

This study was conducted to examine business educators' perception of digital skills needed for effective performance in the world of work. The findings of the study based on research question one and table one revealed that business education students need digital foundation skills to a high extent. Test of hypothesis one revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business education lecturers concerning digital foundation skills needed by business education students. This

finding supported the findings of Akodolu & Onyeneka (2021) that digital foundation skills are very essential for business education graduate for job performance.

In response to research question two, findings in Table two indicated that business education students need digital communication skills to a high extent. Test of hypothesis two indicated that highly experienced and less experienced business education lecturers did not differ significantly in their perception of digital communication skills needed by business education students for effective performance in the world of work. This finding buttressed the opinion of Norris (2019) that digital communication skills help lecturers to communicate and collaborate effectively.

Findings of the study based on research question three and table three showed that business education students need digital marketing skills to a high extent. Results from hypothesis three also implies that business education lecturers in federal and state colleges did not differ significantly in their mean responses concerning digital marketing skills needed by business education students. This finding corroborated the findings of Umeano (2021) that male and female lecturers did not differ significantly in their mean rating of digital skills needed by business education graduates for employability in North- East Nigeria.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion of this study it was concluded that digital foundation, communication and marketing skills are very much needed by business education students for effective performance in the world of work. The implication is that inculcation of the essential skills in business education will enable the recipients to function effectively in the world of work. This is very essential for the continued relevance and survival of business education graduates in the digital era.

Recommendations

1. Lecturers of business education should acquaint themselves with application of digital foundation skills for effective impartation of the skills to their students.
2. Business education departments should collaborate with industrial firms for the purpose of exposing the students to modern communication gadgets thus boosting their competency level. This strategy will enhance effective inculcation of digital communication skills in business education students.
3. A course on digital marketing skills acquisition should be introduced to final year students offering business education in all tertiary institution in order for them to fit into the digital workplace environment after graduation.

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