DIGITAL SKILLS REQUIRED OF BUSINESS EDUCATORS IN IMPLEMENTING BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA FOR DIGITAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
The study sought to assess the digital skills required of Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum in tertiary institutions in south east, Nigeria for digital economic development. Two research questions were adopted for the study while two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study was 215 Business Educators from public Universities and Colleges of Education in the five South east State. Due to the manageable size of the population, the entire 215 Business Educators comprising 97 Business Educators from Universities and 118 Business Educators from Colleges of Education were respondents for the study, hence there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection for the study was a 20-item structured questionnaire by the researchers. The instrument was face-validated by three experts from Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded a coefficient of 0.88. Data for the study were collected with the help of 10 research assistants. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistic. The results of the study identified 10 digital skills required by Business Educators and 10 strategies for integration of digital skills in Business Education curriculum for digital economic development. The results of the hypotheses tested showed there was significant ($p<0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of Business Educators from universities and colleges of education on digital skills required by Business Educators; whereas on the strategies for integrating digital skills in curriculum of Business Education, there was no significant ($p<0.05$) difference. The study among others recommended improved skill training and capacity building of Business Education lecturers in digital teaching and learning skills for effective teaching and learning with digital facilities.
Keywords: Digital skills, Business Education, curriculum, Tertiary institutions, digital economic development

Introduction

The increased use of fast-changing digital skills and technologies had continued to change skills needs for contemporary workplace. Digital skills are technical skills required to use digital technologies to succeed in the digital world (Grand-Clement, 2017). According to Alessandro (2018), digital skills together with technologies have significant effect on the nature of work of current and future jobs. The use of digital skills and technologies has contributed to transforming learning and skills development into a lifelong process. According to World Bank (2020) digitally competent workforce, with basic digital skills and mass of skilled personnel and advanced specialists will help to extend the application of digital tools and processes in a wide variety of sectors, such as the informal service sector, agriculture, energy, transportation, health and education to promote digital economy. Digitalization ensures that everyone has the right skills for an increasingly digital and globalised economy which is essential to promote inclusive labour markets and to spur innovation, productivity and growth. Digital skills are needed in technical and professional areas including ICT skills for workers who drive innovation to support digital infrastructures and the functioning of the digital eco-system (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development OECD, 2016). To stay relevant on the job, modern day workers must be equipped with digital skills complemented with soft skills, such as leadership, communication and teamwork skills (Grundke, Squicciarini, James & Kalamova., 2017). It is pertinent to state that acquisition of digital skill is accelerating the pace of globalization and helping firms increase their competitiveness. Digital skills are becoming increasingly important in order to benefit from technological innovation in terms of better employment chances and higher wages for overall economic development (OECD, 2016).

To thrive in the digital economy, the acquisition of digital skills is very crucial. According to Gaziz, et al (2020) the importance of digital economy in modernizing traditional industries and services is very important and strategic. Mixed financial transactions is organized by continuous penetration of information in digital technologies and its role in the development of small and medium-sized businesses (Gaziz, et al, 2020). According to Alessandro (2018), digital transformation is affecting all sectors of the economy including industries, farms and services, banking industry and business models. The report of World Bank (2020) showed that digitally competent workforce can help strengthen the foundational pillars which include the installation of the digital infrastructure, the growth of digital entrepreneurship, the development and use of digital platforms and digital financial services. Digital skills constitute a foundational pillar of the digital economy and are needed to mobilize digital innovations to transform economies, societies and governments. Pillars of digital skills are digital infrastructure, digital platforms, digital financial services and digital entrepreneurship through education (World Bank, 2020).

Furthermore, International Telecommunication Union (2020) described digital skills as electronic-driven technological skills that cover wide range of topics that may affect people and their skills communication such as the Internet of Things (IoT), smart online-based information sharing platforms, data, telecommunication regulatory issues, digital competencies and open-source learning. According to International Finance Corporation (2019), digital skills are

essential to the future workforce in Africa and across the globe thereby creating skill gaps. In the same vein, International Telecommunication Union (2020) noted that the digital skills gap existed and the rising demand for digitally skilled workers in modern day workplace is high across all levels of skills (basic, intermediate and advanced skills). Hence, functional tertiary education of a nation is one of the institutions that can fill the observed digital skills gap in training the required manpower for the society.

Tertiary institutions, according to Jaja (2013) are organized forms of education and learning activities after the completion of secondary education. In the opinion of Okeke and Osuala (2016), tertiary institutions are advanced level of education and training of people for the work force and other societal engagements. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) in the national policy on education described tertiary institutions in Nigeria education system to include Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Monotechnics. The tertiary institutions are so strategic in meeting the specialized education and training needs of the citizens for socioeconomic development of human society. For instance, Akinyemi, Ayorinde and Tolatu (2017) pointed out that the core mandate of tertiary institutions is to assist in the development of the nation's development goals. The programmes of tertiary education are organized into specific areas of disciplines where students are trained for future career development. In the context of this study, tertiary institutions are only limited to Universities and Colleges of education where Business Education programmes are offered to learners.

Business Education is an educational programme that equips individual recipient with functional and suitable skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that enables him/her to operate in the environment he/she finds himself/herself for self-reliance and national development (Ekwue, et al, 2022). Business education prepares students for specific career in office occupations; equip students with the requisite skills for job creation and entrepreneurship with a good blend of computer technology (Edokpolor & Egbri, 2017). According to Ore, et al. (2022), Business education 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. The objective of a functional Business Education programme to nation building and economic development is overwhelming. David and Abiola (2022) stated that there is no gainsaying that the objective of Business Education in the past cannot be compared to the present as the objective of the current Business Education is evolving rapidly most especially in the areas of innovation, entrepreneurship, and information technology.

Business Education programme can be made to sustainably achieve the objective of impacting innovative, entrepreneurship, and information technology skills on learners by integration of digital skills into its curriculum at the tertiary education level. Curriculum is very strategic in the achievement of the objectives of any educational programme. Curriculum, as described by Kapur (2020) is the list of contents taught to the students, it is a set of subjects and study materials and it is the syllabi or program that is followed in educational institutions. Gaikwad and Solunke (2019) stated that the main focus of curriculum is to make provision of assistance and support to the students in achieving the desired goals and objectives. The speedy

advancement in contemporary education has further mounted pressure on the need for integration of more digital technologies in the implementation of school curriculum (Adesuwa, 2015) for digital economic development.

Digital economic development covers digital infrastructure and e-commerce. The digital infrastructures are the basic physical materials and organizational arrangements that support the existence and use of computer networks, digital economy, information and communication technology (ICT) goods and services. On the other hand, e-commerce is the remote sale of goods and services over computer networks by methods specifically designed for the purpose of receiving or placing orders (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2021). In modern global economy, digital trade plays crucial roles and Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind. Herman and Oliver (2022) observed that digital trade determinants play different roles for goods and services and the internet businesses are significantly beneficial for goods and services trade. Bureau of Economic Analysis (2021) reported that the digital economy accounted for about 9.6 percent of global current-dollar gross domestic product and ranked better when compared with traditional businesses. Hence, to achieve digital economic development in Nigerian business space, the curriculum of tertiary education in Nigeria must be tailored towards acquisition of digital skills in our training institutions. It was based on this background that this study examined the digital skills required of Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum in tertiary institutions in South East, Nigeria for digital economic development.

Statement of the Problem

Digital skills contain the basic knowledge of how to deal with the hard and software digital tools to achieve work related goals. There is increasingly wide gap in the skills required for jobs in contemporary global market and the current skills taught to learners in Nigerian training institutions. Teaching and learning in Nigerian schools are still largely analogue and the modern ICT-based skills that are needed in 21st century workplace are lacking. School curriculums in developing countries are not equipped with the required digital skills that can prepare graduates for self and paid jobs in the digital-dominated global market. The curriculum of Business Education in Nigeria is not an exemption as the teaching of evolving digital skills is not well integrated and captured. It is noted that the current weak school curriculum in developing counties has worsened level of unemployment among their teaming youth and consequently lower economic development. To address this challenge, this study was carried out to investigate the digital skills required of Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum in tertiary institutions in south east, Nigeria for digital economic development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to ascertain digital skills required by Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum in southeast Nigerian tertiary institutions for digital economic development. Specifically, the study determined:
1.   The digital skills required of Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum for digital economic development.

2.   The strategies for integration of digital skills in Business Education curriculum for digital economic development.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered by the study:

1.   What are the digital skills required of Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum for digital economic development?
2.   What are the strategies for integration of digital skills in Business Education curriculum for digital economic development?

Hypotheses

$H0_1$: Business Educators in Universities and Colleges of Education do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on digital skills required of Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum for digital economic development.

$H0_2$: Business Educators in Universities and Colleges of Education do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on strategies for integration of digital skills in Business Education curriculum for digital economic development.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for the study. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study was carried out in southeast Nigeria which comprises five states namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The population of the study was 215 Business Educators from public Universities and Colleges of Education in the five Southeast State. Due to the manageable size of the population, there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was a 20-item structured questionnaire by the researchers. The response options for research question one was structured on a 4-point rating scale of Highly Required (4), Moderately Required (3), Less Required (2) and Not Required (1) while response options for research question two was structured on a 4-response options of: Strongly Agreed (SA); Agreed (A); Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively in each case. The instrument was face-validated by three experts Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha which yielded a coefficient of 0.88. Data for the study were collected with the help of research assistants. Through effective monitoring of the research assistants, the entire 215 copies of the questionnaire administered to the lecturers were completely filled and returned representing 100% rate of return. The data collected were analyzed using mean for answering the research questions, standard deviation for determining the closeness or homogeneity of the responses of the respondents while t-test statistics was used for testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision was based on the cluster mean score in relation to the boundary mean score of 2.50. A cluster with mean score equal to or above 2.50 was "Required" or "Agreed" while those less than 2.50 were interpreted as "Not Required" or "Disagreed" as the case may be. The null hypothesis was not rejected where the calculated value is less than the significant level of 0.05 and rejected if the calculated value is equal to or greater than the significant level of 0.05.

Results

Research Question One: What are the digital skills required of Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum for digital economic development?

The data for answering research question one is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Digital Skills Required of Business Educators in Implementing Business Education Curriculum for Digital Economic Development.   (n = 215)

SN	Digital skills required of Business Educators in implementation of Business Education curriculum	Mean	SD	Rmks
1	Ability to use learning Apps to teaching Business Education concepts to students.	3.61	0.75	**Required**
2	Developing simple software for teaching and learning of Business Education	3.50	0.68	**Required**
3	Deliver Business Education instruction using slide and projector to teach students.	3.53	0.54	**Required**
4	Effective use of Zoom or virtual techniques for teaching and learning of Business Education.	3.78	0.53	**Required**
5	Ability to use varieties of digital-based instructional strategies to teach students.	3.55	0.65	**Required**
6	Post lecture note and materials on the internet for students to access and read for lecture.	3.44	0.58	**Required**
7	Engaging Business Education students in problem solving and critical thinking instruction using internet.	3.55	0.71	**Required**
8	Ability to organise computer assisted instruction (CAI) for Business Education students' learning.	3.46	0.59	**Required**
9	Ensure proper use of digital technologies during Business Education instruction in the classroom and laboratory.	3.71	0.48	**Required**
10	Ability to effectively utilized web and internet-based teaching platforms in instructional delivery.	3.52	0.55	**Required**
	Cluster Mean	**3.57**	**0.61**	**Required**

**Note*: X = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; n = Number of Respondents.*

The data presented in Table 1 above showed that the mean ratings of the respondents on 10 items ranged between 3.44 to 3.78 which are all greater than the cut-off point value of 2.50 on 4-point rating scale. This indicated that the 10 identified digital skill items are required of Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum for digital economic development. The overall mean cluster of 3.57 showed that the digital skill items are highly rated by the respondents while the standard deviation values ranging from 0.48 to 0.75 indicates that the responses of the respondents are close to one another and the mean.

Hypothesis One

Business Educators in Universities and Colleges of Education do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on digital skills needed by Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum for digital economic development.

Data for testing hypothesis one is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Result of t-test Statistics in Mean Ratings of Business Education Lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on Digital Skills Required of Business Educators in Implementing Business Education Curriculum

Variables	N	X̄	SD	DF	Std. Error	t-cal	t-tab	Level of sig.	Rmks
Uni. Lecturers	97	3.70	0.48						
COE Lecturers	118	3.45	0.56	213	0.061	2.38	1.96	0.05	S*

Note: S* = Significant at 0.05.

The data presented on the t-test statistics in Table 2 showed the t-calculated (t-cal) value of 2.38 was greater than the t-table (t-tab) value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 213 degree of freedom. This indicates that there was significant ($p<0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of Business Education lecturers from universities and colleges of education on digital skills required of Business Educators in implementing Business Education curriculum for digital economic development. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant ($p<0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of University and Colleges of Education lecturers of Business Education is rejected on hypothesis one.

Research Question Two: What are the strategies for integration of digital skills in Business Education curriculum for digital economic development?

The data for answering research question two are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Strategies for Integration of Digital Skills in Business Education Curriculum for Digital Economic Development.   (n = 215)

SN	Strategies for Sustainable Integration of Digital Skills in Business Education Curriculum include:	Mean	SD	Rmks
1	Skill training and capacity building of Business education lecturers in digital teaching and learning skills.	3.58	0.72	**Agreed**
2	Recruiting teaching staff that are very proficient in the use of ICTs for teaching and learning	3.70	0.51	**Agreed**
3	Improved provision of intervention funding for Business education programme.	3.69	0.50	**Agreed**
4	Provision of adequate digital instructional technologies and facilities in Business education classrooms.	3.56	0.48	**Agreed**
5	Integrating digital skill contents into the programme of Business education.	3.66	0.52	**Agreed**
6	Effective monitoring and inspection to ensure that digital technologies are used for Business education instructions	3.61	0.47	**Agreed**

7	Improved supply of electricity for effective use of digital instructional technologies for Business education instructions.	3.66	0.55	**Agreed**
8	Public Private Partnership in provision of digital instructional facilities for Business education instruction in schools	3.69	0.60	**Agreed**
9	Regular organization of workshops and conference on digital skill needs in 21st century classrooms	3.57	0.78	**Agreed**
10	Establishment of digital skill laboratories in all Business Education departments in Nigerian schools and colleges.	3.72	0.62	**Agreed**
	Cluster Mean	**3.64**	**0.58**	**Agreed**

**Note*: X = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; n = Number of Respondents.*

From the data presented in Table 3 above, it was revealed that the mean ratings of the respondents on 10 items ranged from 3.56 to 3.72 which are all greater than the cut-off point value of 2.50 on 4-point rating scale. This indicated that the 10 identified items are strategies for sustainable integration of digital skills in Business Education curriculum for digital economic development. The overall mean cluster of 3.64 implies that the strategies are highly rated by the respondents while the standard deviation values ranging from 0.47 to 0.78 suggests that the responses of the respondents are close to one another and the mean.

Hypothesis Two

Business Educators in Universities and Colleges of Education do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on strategies for integration of digital skills in Business Education curriculum for digital economic development.

　　Data for testing hypothesis two are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Result of t-test Statistics in Mean Ratings of Business Education Lecturers in Universities and Colleges of Education on Strategies for Integration of Digital Skills in Business Education Curriculum.

Variables	N	X̄	SD	DF	Std. Error	t-cal	t-tab	Level of sig.	Rmks
Uni. Lecturers	97	3.66	0.53						
COE Lecturers	118	3.62	0.59	213	0.023	0.47	1.96	0.05	**NS**

Note: NS = Not Significant at 0.05.

The data presented on the t-test statistics in Table 4 revealed the t-calculated (t-cal) value of 0.47 was less than the t-table (t-tab) value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 213 degree of freedom. This implies that there was no significant ($p<0.05$) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of Business Education lecturers from universities and colleges of education on

strategies for sustainable integration of digital skills in Business Education curriculum for digital economic development. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant (p<0.05) difference in the mean ratings of the responses of University and Colleges of Education lecturers of Business Education was not rejected on hypothesis two.

Discussion of Findings

This study identified digital skills required of Business Educators to include: ability to use learning Apps to teaching Business Education concepts to students, developing simple software for teaching and learning of Business Education, deliver Business Education instruction using slide and projector to teach students, effective use of Zoom or virtual techniques for teaching and learning of Business Education, ability to use varieties of digital-based instructional strategies to teach students and skills for organising computer assisted instruction (CAI) for Business Education students' learning among others. The findings of this study agreed with that of Collet-Klingenberg (2018) who reported that the skills for effective use computer-aided instruction and software for instructional implementation are required by teachers for instructional purposes. Barroso (2019) reported that technology-based instructional implementation involves the ongoing use of educational digital instructional resources, software and programmes that facilitate personalized online instruction for students. The findings of the study also corroborated that of Koller, Harvey and Magnotta (2020) that technology-based instructional skills are required by educators as it offers accessibility, training that is self-paced and matched to the learners' needs and effective learning delivery.

The study also identified strategies for integration of digital skills in Business Education curriculum for digital economic development to include: skill training and capacity building of Business Education lecturers in digital teaching and learning skills, improved provision of intervention funding for Business Education programme, recruiting teaching staff that are very proficient in the use of ICTs for teaching and learning, provision of adequate digital instructional technologies and facilities in Business Education classrooms, integrating digital skill contents into the programme of Business Education and improved supply of electricity for effective use of digital instructional technologies for Business Education instructions among others. The finding of this study agreed with that of Tarus, Gichoya and Muumbo (2015) who found that the expansion of ICT e-learning infrastructure to facilitate the access to e-learning by students, provision of stable power supply, government and institutional funding for ICTs and training of teaching staff and other stakeholders, prioritization of ICT and modern facilities as some of the measures for integrating the use of modern technologies in teaching and learning. The report of UNESCO (2023) identified strategic measures for successful integration of ICT and digital learning facilities into the learning environment as improved capacity and abilities of teachers to structure learning in new ways, improved funding of education and adequate provision of digital resources, cooperative interaction and collaborative teaching and learning with digital facilities.

Conclusion

Digital skills and its acquisition are crucial for effective functioning in today's workplace and global market. Teaching and learning across the globe had gone digital and therefore, Nigerian education system cannot afford to lag behind. From these findings, the study concluded that integration of the required digital skill training into the curriculum and programmes of Business Education will result in production of graduates that will stimulate the desired digital economic development of the country.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be improved skill training and capacity building of Business Education lecturers by education administrators at all levels in digital teaching and learning skills for effective teaching and learning with digital facilities.
2. There should be improved provision of intervention funding by the government and other stakeholders such as NGOs in education, foreign educations partners for adequate provision of the required digital facilities for teaching and learning of Business Education.
3. There should be steady and improved supply of electricity by the school administrators and government for effective use of digital instructional technologies for uninterrupted digital-based teaching and learning in Business Education.

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