



## PLOTTING PATHWAYS ACROSS TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGES IN BUSINESS EDUCATION: A *DESIDERATUM* FOR EMPOWERING LEARNERS TO ENGAGE THE WORLD

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### **Abstract**

*This paper attempted to plot pathways across transformational changes in business education which if followed will certainly empower business education learners to engage the world. To set the tone of the discourse, misconceptions and challenges of ideal business education expectation framework such as issues and challenges posed by curriculum, technology, specialization, professionalization, accreditation, keyboarding, shorthand and teaching students to find work were broadly synthesized. It was clearly revealed that the nature of work has changed because businesses and organizations are transforming in dizzying speed. The changes brought to the workplace include but not limited to the way business communicates, improving business security, keeping business organized, helping in cost management, enabling remote working, etc. It was shown that the first and second Industrial Revolution brought dramatic changes but these changes cannot be compared to transformations which came with development of digital systems communication and rapid advances of computing power that have accentuated new ways of generating, processing and sharing information. Yet, these changes are nothing compared to the expected digitization impact on the capabilities of humans and machines which the Forth Industrial Revolution, described as cyber-physical systems, will unleash. The conclusion is that a new kind of training is necessary, a training in basic, intermediate and advanced digital skills needed by business education students for employability in the digital workplace of the future thereby meeting the expected market demand of over 230 million jobs in Sub-Saharan Africa alone. It was recommend among others, that business educators must seize opportunity presented by digitization to leverage on big data, connectivity, and analytics so that the future which reflects the objectives and values of business education discipline can be realized.*

**Keywords:** *Plotting Pathways, Transformational Changes, Empowering Learners, Engage the world.*

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## **Introduction**

In the past few years, themes of our conferences have been dominated by contemporary issues, trends, challenges and strategies influencing the practice of business education. In our word today, change is pervasive, constantly evolving and affecting every sphere of human endeavor. It is therefore, instructive to understand that the frequency and speed of these changes makes it imperative that as business education professionals, we must be on our toes so that business education practice remains relevant in fulfilling the objectives of human resources development capital with which it is charged. Furthermore, the dissenting voices amongst business education professionals of recent point to overwhelming dissatisfaction of the *status quo* in the implementation of business education curriculum in Nigeria tertiary education system. These negative trends are amplified by incongruent subject-mix, non-professional business educators manning or influencing business education programmes and explosion in technological transformations that have rendered certain practices in the profession irrelevant or obsolete. It is obvious therefore, that a collective action needs to be taken and urgently too, by the Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN) to reposition business education to deliver on its mandate of training citizens who are capable of engaging the world.

The world has changed, the workplace has changed, learners have changed and the way business is done has also changed. It is therefore, axiomatic that education has to change. Emile Durkheim in Agboola (2014) captured the matter succinctly when he observed that educational transformations are always the result and symptom of social transformation in terms of which they are to be explained. In order for the people to feel at any particular moment in time, the need to change its educational system, it is necessary that new ideas and needs have emerged in which the former system is no longer adequate. This is the case now more than ever as changing economic paradigms has necessitated continuous repositioning of cultural, social and educational systems as countries gravitate towards a globalized community. Nigeria cannot afford to lag behind and business education must take its fair share in constructing this future so that its teeming youth will be empowered to engage the world confidently.

## **Overview of Business Education**

It is only proper to start with the familiar posture of concept clarification not necessarily to be excessively precise or pedantic but for much more important



purpose of thinking and discovering issues from a common perspective. Business education has variously been defined by experts and we are familiar with those definitions. For the purpose of our discussion, business education would be viewed from two perspectives: vocational and applied technical education perspective and general education perspective. From vocational education objectives, business education is an organized educational programme, offering a sequence of courses directly related to equipping students with skills necessary to perform particular functions in an office or data processing occupation; it will also provide him or her with the understandings and knowledge needed for conducting personal affairs and for using the services of the business world (Calhoun & Finch, 1982). This is generally referred to as education for business. As a general education component, business education is a combination of courses offered to all individuals in the school system irrespective of their career aspirations and this is referred to as education about business or consumer education.

Business education as education for business belongs to vocational education family and derives its vocational objective from that relationship. It is therefore; because of this special relationship that business education vocational objective espouses its relevance in preparing students for initial employment to upgrading existing skill, and to retraining in new and/or related business and office occupations. Relating to the issue of vocationalization of business education is the semi-vocational objective of business education that ensures that many business skills lead to advancement in professions or occupations other than those directly related to business. This explains why a well-trained business educator can fit into and succeed in other careers.

Education about business benefits every student but more importantly it benefits business education students as it offers them comprehensive training to gain information about business; have intelligent understanding of the various areas of work; promote their discriminating use of services and resources as consumers; efficient execution of personal business affairs and developing their skills with tools to cope more effectively with college demand. It is therefore very clear that many definitions of business education by scholars derive from the objectives explained above.

The goal of business education therefore is to prepare students for specific career in office occupations, equipping them with requisite skills for job creation and entrepreneurship and exposing them to the knowledge about business together with a



good blend of computer technology (Edokpolor & Egbri, 2017). One of the most common observations related to the relevance of business education was expressed by Umoru (2015) that it is one of the vital programmes in Nigeria universities with capacity to bring about required liberation and stimulation of the citizens for national development. He further explained that business education is intended to inculcate into the student understanding, values, knowledge, business skills and technical skills required in the world of work and for teaching other students. The skills to be learned by business students are technical, manipulative and thinking habits applied to social media tools and machines, tasks, procedures and operations. Furthermore, these skills are necessary to operate new technologies that social media platform depend in the real world of work and are required globally by business, employees and individuals. Similarly, Salome (2014) agrees that business education inculcates in its recipients attitudes, knowledge, skills, values that are required in the world of work. Emphasizing the role of business education Amor and Udo in Umoru (2015) emphasize that it improves personal qualities and builds the attitude of individual that are necessary for adjustment to personal and employment situations and also provides knowledge, skills and competence for individuals to function well in office occupation and also create jobs for themselves and others.

In summary therefore, it is implied that on graduation a well-trained business educator should be able to produce healthy, literate, skilled and self-reliant citizens as teachers; facilitate administrative services in the public and private sector of the economy; produce goods and services by creating and managing businesses as entrepreneurs which engage others for the survival and development of the society.

### **Clarifying Misconceptions and Challenges of an Ideal Business Education Expectation Framework**

As earlier stated, issues, trends and challenges bedeviling business education in general term have been discussed in our conferences in the past five years. Today, not much has changed because, issues as technologies, insecurity, governance, poverty, unemployment, outdated skills, curriculum, methods of teaching, teacher's competence, funding, program administration, learning environment, globalization, etc., still remain on the front burner. Be that as it may, I have chosen not to give indebt academic treatment on these issues here. First, for the already mentioned fact that enough literature has been accumulated by the Association based on the past five years discussion on the matter and secondly, because participants in this conference



will turn their search light on every aspect of these conference sub-themes, I will select few issues in my opinion that have left business education in Nigeria toiling on a lower plane of professional reality.

### **The Curriculum Challenge**

Achieving an ideal business education curriculum should not be viewed as an event but a continuous cycle that requires relevant curriculum mapping, interpretation, implementation and review. Such a curriculum should provide pre-vocational and vocational preparation, skill training and broad-based business understanding. The challenge is whether business education curriculum as provided by National Universities Commission is adequately and constantly reviewed to meet new developments in the field of business education. The curriculum for Office Technology and Management (OTM) in the polytechnics was released in 2004 and 15 years after, it has not been reviewed. Furthermore, it is understood that NUC Business education curriculum is a minimum benchmark and that universities are empowered to enrich the curriculum to meet current practice. Here is where the problem starts. Heads of business education departments in many universities seize this opportunity to bastardize the curricular by putting in courses to match their educational background and that is why we now have business education, management; business education, human resources; business education, entrepreneurship; business education, accounting; etc.

It is a common knowledge that USA is the global leader in business education. In that clime, business education is of elite quality because of organizations such as the Association of Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and National Business Education Association (NBEA). These two bodies placed business education in an enviable pedestal in the USA. It is true that business education does not contain the same curriculum and structure in one country as it does in the next. Erden and Tekarslan (2014) explain that business education programme tends to differ in the number of core courses and elective required, the integration of the industry in their academics, and any specialized areas offered in business. It is very clear that business education is best defined as a combination of courses selected from marketing, accounting, economics, business/management and administration, law and technology together with industry and teacher education integration. But in



Nigeria, business education is misinterpreted as business education (accounting), business education (marketing), business education (office technology); and ridiculously business education in any other thing else. The integration of technology into the right combination of business subjects and constant review of curriculum to ensure currency in practice are the minimum required for meaningful business education training.

It is a common knowledge that curricular used in our tertiary institutions hardly go through any form of review. As we earlier stated, while the curriculum in the polytechnics were last reviewed in 2004 that of the universities was last reviewed in 2008. This is not good. How can a curriculum used in this millennial age be not reviewed for that long? The Office Technology and Management curriculum was well conceived to produce graduate with the requisite skills in the workplace but fifteen years after, a lot of it has become outdated. Unfortunately it was designed in a way that business educators cannot separately make any substantial review. The business education curriculum in the universities are known to be the minimum requirement but it is not known whether business educators in the system review it to sufficiently cater for the currency of skills required in the workplace. Furthermore, no one can say whether those who mapped out this curriculum were business educators themselves and whether the stakeholders' inputs were sought. At any event, no curriculum should go un-reviewed after five years especially, in this age of technology transformation. The IFC (2019) rightly advised that universities need to urgently make digital education curriculum shifts with an understanding that 50% of subjects knowledge acquired during the first year of a four-year technical degree will be outdated by the time a student graduates. It is important therefore, that business educators at the university level must seize the opportunity, on yearly basis, to engage their peers to rejig the curriculum, adapting massively new technologies which are influencing how and what can be taught resulting hopefully, in limitless opportunities for business education curriculum offering so that students will be equipped to work with these emerging technologies.

The ideal business education curriculum which is aimed at realizing vocational and general education objectives must include two areas of instruction as explained in the framework below.

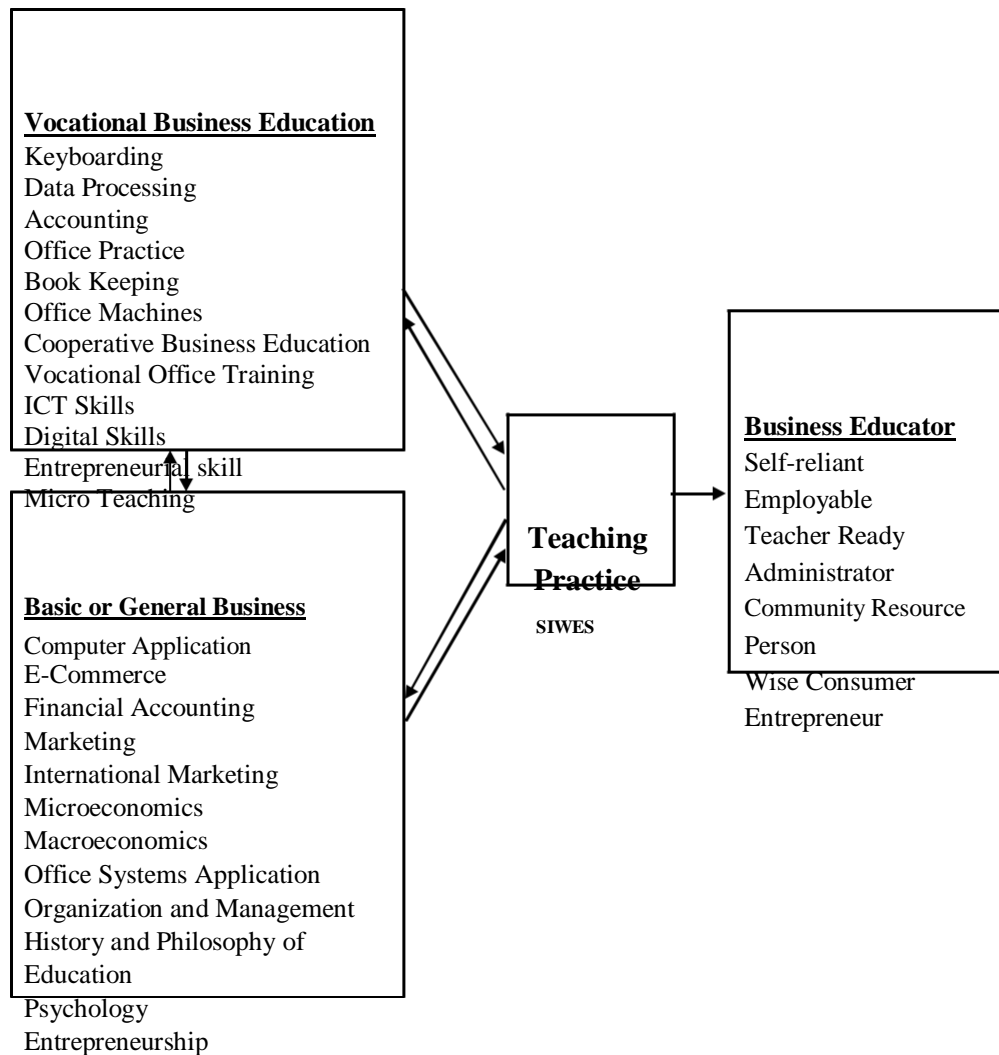


Figure 1: Ideal Business Education Framework

First, the basic or general business and varied courses as listed (and more if necessary) can be combined to achieve the required basic or general business objective. The second is the vocational business education objective where the entry-level skills in various business and office occupations are emphasized. As can be seen in the framework, these skills are also varied and a proper combination makes the difference regarding the emergence of the products that would come through business education training. There is the need to emphasize the emerging digital skills which must require incorporation into business education training so that its graduates will be prepared to compete for jobs globally.



### **The Challenge of Technology**

It is difficult to imagine an effective education system today without technology because technology has changed our world starting with personal life, social life, in school and at work. The argument is not whether technology is useful but how it can be applied optimally. For avoidance of doubt, technology comes in various forms and capabilities such as electronic textbooks, gamification, simulation technology, computerized grading, active learning classrooms, flipped classrooms, massive open online courses and collaborative distance learning environments. Technology is seen globally as entrepreneurial and job creating engines that business education can help ignite. On the other hand, technology includes products that will store, restore, operate or receive information in a digital form. The challenge however, is how business educators can fully harness the enumerable benefits of technology in education when the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructures can hardly support any kind of meaningful operation.

It is pertinent to understand that vocational office training is the exclusive preserve of business education students, especially the office technology and management component hitherto known as office education, secretarial education or secretarial science. Furthermore, it is the office skills possessed by the business educator that distinguish him from other professionals who work in the office. The office depends on ICT to drive its functions and the worker who has these ICT skills is the business educator. It is clear therefore, that other basic or general business objectives of business education are complementary to various occupational skills as no other professionals have right to claim them. This is the reason business education training must emphasize ICT skills. If the technologies that help to imbue these skills are not adequately provided, as is the case in third-world countries like ours, the business educator must break all barriers to get trained and implement Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy. Whether there is power supply or not; whether equipment needed for training are supplied by our various institutions or not; and whether other barriers militate against ICT implementation or not; business educators cannot afford to be barriers to ICT usage by reason of incompetence. If a business educator is not a competent user of ICT in all his professional duties, such a business educator is like fish out of water because water is to the fish what ICT is to the business educator.

### **Specialization versus Unification**

As a matter of fact, business education as we know it today emerged in Nigeria in the early 1960s as a solution to the quest for advanced degrees in secretarial education



then known as office education. Other traditional business courses such as administration, accounting, management, marketing, etc., have taken root and are available at master's level. The earlier progenitors of business education felt that the course was being viewed as shorthand and typewriting and decided that a tripod arrangement which fused accounting, distributive education and secretarial education was needed to inject academic content into the programme. It is unfortunate that some business educators that found shorthand examination so difficult to pass contrived options in accounting, marketing and secretarial education just to side-step shorthand.

Meanwhile, secretarial training existed only in the polytechnics until 1980 when Rivers State University of Science and technology established a degree programme in Secretarial Science. It is therefore correct to say that if many universities had established secretarial education at the degree level, business education as we know it today might not have existed except, of course, at the masters and doctoral levels, that is, if secretarial science degree have not matured to award those degrees. To buttress this stand, in the United States of America where business education emanated, specialization is alien as there is nothing like business education (accounting, marketing or office technology).

From the public perception of business education, parents, school administrators, government officials, legislators and employers are yet to have a firm grip of what business education discipline offers. While some see business education as education majors who teach in schools, others see it as shorthand and typewriting. Prospective students hardly choose business education perhaps because of the same reason of not knowing what it is and majority who were drafted into the discipline as a second choice come into the programme as a last resort and soon begin to seek exit into other programmes when they come face to face with shorthand. Effort made to explain to them that shorthand is just one of the business subjects they need to learn falls on deaf ears as they seek to study business administration, accountancy, banking and finance, etc.

From the perspectives of the business educators, many quite correctly understand that business education is a relatively new concept in the committee of disciplines and entails a detailed study of core business subjects together with industry training and teacher preparation so that graduates will have dual advantage of effectively practicing business and teaching it. However, many business educators who were trained believing that business education is a form of accounting, marketing or office



technology education missed the point. Some believe that if business education is misconstrued as specializing in accounting, marketing or office technology, then business education may be viewed by many as unnecessary since bachelor degrees are being offered in marketing, accounting, etc., in universities across the country. The only option left for business education practitioners is to espouse undiluted business education as a field of specialization where core business subjects, industry training and teacher preparation are interlaced with technology to achieve unity. For the avoidance of doubt, business educators can emphasize areas of strength without necessarily specializing as we know that doctoral degree in business education has no specialization.

### **Professionalization in Business Education**

As we all are aware, the practice of business education is left to graduates of business education alone. Whereas in the United States where we borrowed business education from and, in fact in other climes, a graduate of business administration who qualifies as a teacher and has industrial training is regarded as a business educator. Pertinent questions to ask at this juncture are: Did we shut out business graduates albeit inadvertently when we kept the door open only for graduates of business education? Is there any reason why a graduate of business administration who have had industry/teaching qualification and is practicing/teaching in a university not be allowed to be a member of ABEN? Have we by our action limited the scope of our business education by precluding those who would have joined hands to make business education in Nigeria a profession equal to none?

One thing is very clear in my mind and that is that a policy decision needs to be made by ABEN regarding the type of business education to be adopted in Nigeria. In this matter, there are two options.

1. Do we hold on to undiluted business education handed over to us by our forerunners which espouses a well-integrated business courses in accounting, marketing and secretarial technology together with industry and teacher training component? Or
2. Do we borrow a leaf from the USA where anyone grounded in core business disciplines who acquired industry and teacher training can freely practice business education?

If we select the former option, then a concerted effort is required by business educators in collaboration with the ABEN to ensure that undiluted business education programme prevails in all universities in Nigeria. This implies that there



will not be options in accounting, marketing and office technology and management. This dangerous trend of options gave birth to bastardization where institutions now award business education degrees in any discipline. We need to take note that National Universities Commission (NUC) clearly outlaws options and never provided for it in the first place. If it is decided that the latter option be adopted, that is, that we should open up to other core business graduates who possess industry and teacher qualification, then a lot of public education is required for those concerned to embrace the decision. The advantage is that the population of business education practitioners will be enlarged as every business teacher both at the secondary and post-secondary levels will become qualified as a business educator.

Another challenge is lack of professional development programme where challenges of contemporary nature in the discipline could be articulated and administered to members for growth and development. Another purpose that professional development programme will serve is to ensure that only qualified business educators are admitted into the profession.

### **The Shorthand Debate**

I must confess that one of the major reasons I decided to deal with practical issues undermining business education in Nigeria was due to the heated debate ongoing then on our platform regarding the continued retention of shorthand and typewriting in business education curriculum. This is an excellent opportunity to examine the issue.

First and foremost, there is no controversy over the existence of some knowledge-based business courses, because management, accounting, marketing concepts etc., have not changed. So, basic things we know will remain and their relevance is immutable. On the issue of typewriting, it should be noted that with the phasing out of the typewriter, typewriting is now a component of keyboarding. All typewriting features are fully integrated into word processing. Therefore, keyboarding is alive and well. However, in the years gone by, typewriting was treated like an orphan and only business educators offered the course. But as soon as computer was introduced and became a component of many disciplines, everyone is jostling to teach computer without taking the keyboard aspect into consideration. The unfortunate thing is that while those who operate the computer keyboard with one finger are claiming ownership of computer-related skills teaching, business educators are shying away



from ownership of keyboarding and also insisting that the subject be made compulsory for all students in tertiary education system in Nigeria as is the case in other climes. This is a challenge that must be resolved by our Association.

On the issue of continued relevance of shorthand, the big question is, should shorthand be removed from business education curriculum? For the school of thought that believes that shorthand should remain in the business education curriculum, they have genuine reasons. Let us examine some of them:

1. Shorthand enables a business educator be a rounded professional because it makes him a better organizer and an excellent language communicator.
2. A shorthand writer covers meetings, conferences, rallies like no other professionals.
3. Shorthand remains in the curricular of secondary schools and if it is removed, where will the teachers be trained?
4. Confidential secretaries are still required in offices and organizations.
5. Shorthand is a unique subject because it distinguishes the business educators from other professionals. So, they argue that without shorthand there is no business education.
6. If shorthand is dropped, business education will be taken over by non-business educators.

For the school of thought that believes that removal of shorthand is long overdue, some of their reasons include:

1. Shorthand discourages students from taking up business education.
2. Students already admitted into business education programme abandon business education because of shorthand.
3. Very few shorthand experts are available to teach the subject and others who are in the majority discourage shorthand.
4. As a skill subject, little time given to shorthand in the universities lecture time table is not adequate for its training.
5. It was because of the fear of shorthand that options are emphasized and students take up accounting and marketing leaving office technology and management to less than a few students.
6. The students have no interest in shorthand at all.
7. National Universities Commission never recognized shorthand and has never provided for it in its bench mark.
8. Universities offering shorthand have devalued it by teaching only principles of shorthand under a nomenclature called Office skills.



9. Some universities do not have shorthand in their business education curriculum at all. After all, nobody is insisting on it, not even the NUC. The ABEN who fought for its retention thus far can only bark but cannot bite.
10. What is worth doing is worth doing well and since shorthand is no longer done well, it should be dropped.
11. Moreover, ICT gadgets can be used to record conversation and transcribed when needed. In fact automated voice recognizing typewriter and PC speech recognition software are already in the market.

I believed that enough reasons have been adduced for and against the retention of shorthand. While it pains me as one of the few experts in shorthand to espouse its extinction, I am convinced that retaining shorthand in our curriculum will only damage further the business education profession. This is because over 90% of business education graduates who are supposed to know shorthand knows nothing about it and pretense is dangerous. A related problem is the limited interest the students and the lecturers have in shorthand. It is a fact that business education inculcates in the recipients skills, values, competences and attitudes required in the world of work and since the workplace is changing, digital skills need to take the centre stage and business education should drive that change. It is very instructive to note that Office Administrator position also called Office Assistant, Personal Assistant, Administrative Assistant, Office Manager or Secretary is alive and well. However, you need to know that shorthand skill is no longer mentioned as skill desired for office administration. The office skills desired today are: communication, filing/paper management, bookkeeping, typing (which should be at 50 wpm, slightly higher than the global standard of 39 wpm), equipment handling, customer service, research, analytics, project management, technology savvy and self-motivation skills.

### **The Interlopers**

My observation down the years clearly revealed a dangerous pattern where people take three different degrees and claim to be business educators simply because one of those degrees is in business education. The variants of these kinds of combined degrees are so many that one can hardly number them. For instance, if one takes a first degree in educational management, a second degree in economics and a third in business education, how can such a person claim to be a business educator? This scenario pervades our educational landscape and when such people are given the opportunity to plan business education curriculum, they normally put together what suits them. They must plan a curriculum to make themselves relevant by putting in all



kinds of courses they were trained in. When these teachers become professors, they are untouchable and tend to complicate matters for business education professionals. Those who are interested in business education should be encouraged to take their degrees in business education to avoid jack of all trade and master of none syndrome.

### **Challenge of Institutional Administration**

Cursory look at universities running business education in Nigeria reveals a hodgepodge arrangement in the name of business education. Unfortunately, universities seem to understand what business education ought to be but prefer to run it anyhow just to bolster their revenue profile. Whereas, in universities where qualified and very senior business educators are heading business education programme, the proper thing is done, other universities where business educators are not in the helms of affairs, anybody is hoisted to implement anything in the name of business education. That is the reason universities award B.Sc. (Ed.) degrees (business education) human resources, entrepreneurship, management, etc.

Student population explosion is another issue related to institutional administration, as it is a common place now for such managers to fill the classrooms with too many students for the sake of revenue without commensurate facilities including qualified personnel to teach. The result is that students are graduated from the programme that knows next to nothing in business education.

### **Accreditation Challenge**

Accreditation by the National Universities Commission (NUC) which is meant to ensure standard has become an albatross to a healthy business education offering in Nigerian universities. Sometime, the ad-hoc team deployed to oversee an accreditation process is compromised as non-business educators are employed by the NUC and in some instances head of the team. The danger here is that non-business educators find it difficult to examine business education programme when they obviously lack the knowledge to understand what the programme is all about. This situation makes it possible for the institution to present a business education camouflage and get away with it. Furthermore, when half-baked business educators are put in the team to accredit business education programme, they see it as opportunity to force the issue by approving whatever combination of courses presented either in ignorance or to reflect their training background. After all, the principle of self-preservation will always come into play in any human situation. Another issue related to accreditation is window-dressing as institutions do everything possible to gather facilities and equipment from which ever source in



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### **The Challenge of Teaching Students to Find Work**

Before the industrial revolution, people earned their living as contractors, trade people, crafts people and small business owners. Then came industrialization and the concept of working for someone else became the vogue. It was a crazy idea then and viewed as unnatural, unpleasant and an inhuman way to work but ironically that abhorrent, and even a disdainful way of making a living have now become an addiction and a *modus vivendi*. However, it seems the world of work has gone a full circle and like it or not, employment seekers face the reality of today's workplace which is temporary as there is no guarantee that full employment is in the offing. It should be recognized that the path to a traditional job today is often through temporary or contract work. Albeit, there is work available, but a lot of it is not in form of a traditional job but in form of contract and temporary employment with little or no benefits not to talk of pension.

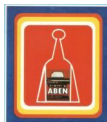
The fundamental challenges for business educators that have been turning out graduates who invariably found a job, is to turn out employees who are entrepreneurs with enterprising approach to finding work. It is time business educators realized



that a business education degree alone cannot give business education graduates job. In order to produce graduates with entrepreneurial mentality to market themselves and meet the needs of the employers, business education students must acquire self-marketing skills needed in the sectors that they want to work. Teaching these skills is a huge challenge and that is why McGowan (2019) insists that the biggest weakness in the post-secondary education sector in all countries is the lack of experience in today's work-place by those who are responsible for education policy, funding, administration and delivery. Going forward, he suggests that we must find ways to educate those already in the education system about the challenges of earning a living in today's workplace and hire people at all levels that have this type of experience. Only then can we realistically align the educational system with the needs of today's graduates. This is important because the Fourth Industrial Revolution will affect other disciplines. For instance, it is reported that IBM Watson Software gives better legal advice than lawyers and it is feared that in the USA come ten years' time, young lawyers will have no job. There is also Software that is said to perform cancer diagnosis four times more accurate than any human and doctors are jittery. With the arrival of Artificial Intelligence, it is predicted that we will have no need for referees in a football match. What this implies is that as business educators, it will be foolhardy to expect our job to be the same forever and that we will be isolated from the impending digital tsunami. Jobs will be lost and jobs will be created albeit in different forms. The only solution is to be prepared for these new jobs. Fortunately, business educators have digital skills already albeit in limited form. All that is required is up-scaling to intermediate and if possible advanced digital skills. We shall get to that letter.

### **Transformational Changes that can Empower Business Education Students**

The world has witnessed three industrial revolutions each impacting on human kind in immeasurable ways. The First Industrial Revolution used fossil fuels to mechanize production. The second used electricity, both wired and wireless communications as new forms of power generation. The third came with development of digital systems, communication and rapid advances of computing power that have accentuated new ways of generating, processing and sharing information. The decade 2010-2020 has become synonymous with the transformation decade. By transformation, we mean the state of being transformed, the act of process of transforming, change in form, appearance, nature or character. The Third Industrial Revolution is the Shift Age



which brought unprecedented technological transformations that have changed our life forever and is responsible for the globalized community the world has become. The Shift Age has come with digital revolution which is reorganizing the way we live, the way we work and the nature of the world of work. Almost everything is in a state of shift. The way we communicate has changed and will continue to change, in form, appearance and character. The shape of work has changed and with it the economy and workplace. Technology, education, health and every other thing is changing. We can no longer live the way we were living before. Life itself will have to be redesigned and together with the way we learn and work.

These changes are affecting our lives in ways that point to the beginning of the Fourth Industrial Revolution which is better described as the advent of cyber-physical systems where digitization is expected to impact on the capabilities of humans and machines beyond expectation. Though these capabilities are relying on the technologies and infrastructure of the Third Industrial Revolution, the Fourth Industrial Revolution represents innovation based on combination of technologies to create new ways in which technology become embedded in our lives. Billions of people are now connected with mobile devices which have unprecedented processing power, connectivity, access to knowledge, storage, retrieval and sharing. Technological breakthroughs are expected in Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, autonomous vehicles, Internet of Things (IoT), quantum computing, etc. While the scientists are doing their things, business educators must grab a big chunk of the opportunities presented by digitization leveraging on the convergence on big data, connectivity and analytics in order to create the future that reflects our common objectives and values. This is why plotting pathways to enable business education students have a foothold on the future becomes imperative.

In the advanced knowledge economy in which the world is fast and firmly immersing, convergent digital technologies will be the driving force as the human nature becomes inextricably tied to the social recognition of new media ecologies. While the challenge of unemployment is real and threatens the survival of nations, business educators should ensure that business education graduates are not trained for jobs that no longer exist. Already 20% to 30% of youth experience unemployment in some Mediterranean economies and according to Peter (2019) there is genuine concern of what it will be like for such group to experience unemployment as a permanent condition. As 2019 draws to a close, more than 212 million people are already out of work, up from 201 million according to



International Labour Organization (2015). Nigeria's share of unemployment is a lot worse as 120 million people are said to be living in poverty and over 80 million of that proportion is said to be unemployed or under employed. This picture points to one direction - that employment as a means of absorbing the teeming unemployed is attenuating. The reality is that students should now be prepared for work and not for job.

Before we get to the kind of job which the future holds, it is necessary that we understand that businesses and organizations are transforming in a dizzying speed making the nature of work as we know it to change forever. Not long ago, businesses had to deal with piles of paper work, holding meetings in defined venues, travel expenses sky-rocketed and communication across all levels of management were difficult indeed. Major operational and communication issues have been unbounded by technology. There is the need to understand how technology has reshaped the workplace so that business educators can see the need to change the way they teach business. According to Prasad (2018), some of the changes brought to the workplace by technology are:

1. **Changing the Way Business Communicates:** The arrival of smart phones, sound networking site, chart apps, has brought communication to a new level. Communication has become fast, instantaneous, more deliberate, collaborative, and unified. With technology you do not need to be present in your work place every time.
2. **Keeping it Fully Organized:** Systems like Project Management Software helps in building, delegating, reviewing and assessing a task. It helps to fix responsibility, accountability efficiency and time delivery of task assigned to people. The modern work place has now made innovative products and software to increase the work flow and boost efficiency.
3. **Making Operations More Productive:** Business nowadays rely on business productivity software which enable managers to more easily track progress during every phase of goal completion and offer immediate reinforcement or coaching. This keeps performance and deadlines on track.
4. **Helping in Cost Management:** Improving profitability is the ultimate goal of any company. Due to innovations, technological software such as SaaS can be installed to eliminate manual handling of a task by automating wherever possible and focusing on integration of different tasks.



5. **Keeping Business Secure:** Technology plays a vital role in keeping business workplace secure by providing end-to-end hardware and software based data encryption so that only authorized personnel are able to retrieve and read it. Fingerprint and facial recognition features give an added level of security to the system at the work place.
6. **Giving Customizing Options:** Technology has made it possible to customize any software according to the variable business needs. Facility management software can be used by organizations to manage their day-to-day operations.
7. **Increasing Collaboration:** Technology has completely changed the way companies collaborate by easily connecting with people anywhere at any time. This increased collaboration has brought a high level of flexibility in communication that allows employers, coworkers and managers to connect with each other easily.
8. **Reducing the Risk of Security Breaches:** Stealing critical and important information was easy in the past, but now with the use of technology, the threat of data theft and leak have been reduced. It is now easy to check on the employees' online communication to ensure they don't get involved in fraudulent practices which are against the intent of the company.
9. **Improving Efficiency of Employees:** Time management has now become easier with the help of modern technological tools. These tools have helped in optimizing the daily working routine and enabling the employees to focus on the most important tasks.
10. **Enabling Remote Working:** New technology has enabled remote working, teleconferencing and co-working space which has completely reshaped the workplace. Mobile and Cloud technology has allowed instant and remote access which enables internet-based models. This has resulted in interconnected workplaces not tied to one location, but many. They are hinged together by virtual conferencing, complete connection and portability. Cloud technologies and improved IM systems have helped the employees to work from anywhere with the click of a mouse. Video Conferencing has made it possible to coordinate with the best employees no matter where they are.

Now that it is clear that businesses are quickly changing, the nature of work is changing with it. What this means is that the traditional job as we know it is likely to

change and must give way to a new concept called work. The rest of the world is aware of these changes. The changes bring opportunities and according to Kigotho (2019) this is mainly on the area of digital skill demand. Digital revolution is blowing across the globe currently and the world of work is in need of digital skills to survive while employees must focus on acquiring digital skills.

Digital skills refer to skills related to the use of technology. It is a digital literacy which is defined by Cornell University Digital Literacy Resource (2019) as the ability to find, evaluate, utilize, share, and create content using information technologies and the internet. According to the World Bank (2018) digital skills are separated into three: basic, intermediate, and advanced. UNESCO (2017) uses a digital skills framework that divides them into basic, generic and higher levels. It explains that basic digital skills are entry-level functional skills required to make rudimentary use of digital devices and applications. Intermediate digital skills are the skills that enable an individual to make substantive and beneficial use of online applications and services. Similarly, advanced digital skills are the group of skills that form the bases of specialist (information and communication technology) occupations and professions. This is very clear in figure 2 below:

<b>Basic Digital Skills</b>	<b>Intermediate Digital Skills</b>	<b>Advanced Digital Skills</b>
<p>Ability to access and use digital technologies to perform basic tasks.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional use of digital devices</li> <li>• Online Communication via emails</li> <li>• Funding, managing and storing digital information and content</li> </ul>	<p>Ability to use technology to perform work-related tasks.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using professional software for presentations, analytics, accounting, project management.</li> <li>• Digital marketing, social media analytics</li> <li>• Web design, graphic design</li> </ul>	<p>Ability to perform special tasks in professions in the information and communication technology industry. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer language programming</li> <li>• Cloud computing, network management</li> <li>• Artificial intelligence</li> <li>• Data Science, big data analytics</li> <li>• Cyber security</li> </ul>

Figure 2: Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Digital Skills. Adopted from IFC Report, 2018

International Finance Corporation (IFC) (2019) predicted that over 230 million jobs in Sub-Saharan Africa will need digital skills by 2030. To buttress the point that digital skills is the transformation of this century, the World Bank Group Office, Accra Ghana (2019) reported that a global digital revolution is underway and is not



likely to bypass Africa and affirmed that in Ghana over nine million jobs will need digital skills by 2030 effectively translating to about 20 million training openings.

In the same vein, World Bank (2019) also sheds light on the crucial need for digital skills as a driver of economic growth and competitiveness. It highlights the mandate of the African higher education system as a primary agent of transforming lives by expanding employment prospects in sub-Saharan African. However, the report faulted the current training in the computer literacy and application of technology in most universities and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in sub-Saharan Africa. It is believed that the current effort in computer application instruction only equips our students with basic skills, whereas intermediate and advanced skills in digital marketing are required to meet the challenges of the future. Since business educators were the most positioned to utilize new technologies, a concerted effort is needed to focus on digital skills training for employability and meeting the market demand. The question is can the current training models meet the digital market demand? The method of training used currently has failed due to rapid technological changes that are profoundly disrupting labour market. According to IFC (2019,) stakeholders are urged to consider teaching digital skills not only as business opportunity, but a chance to reconceive the future of work across the continent. Towards this goal, the IFC suggest that African higher technical education should engage faculty with practical experience to teach successful digital courses as digital skills are inherently practical, and staff that can teach by example and understand business application for these skills ensure their relevance to market needs.

Faculties in third-world universities seem to be battling to maintain the traditional delivery experience but the blossoming EdTech sector has started a transformation journey that is now overwhelming higher education with innovative educational tools that can spice up the learner experience inside the classroom. Hommel and Zuchowicz (2019) put forward an alternative viewpoint that subordinates the adoption of EdTech to the emerging needs of modern day students on digital nature. According to them, nothing has disrupted higher education more profoundly than the changing attitude and lifestyles of students. As digital learners, they no longer seem to fit into an educational system designed prior to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.



They warned that universities need to accept the harsh reality that their clients require new learning models that go beyond the use of state-of-the-art technologies as alternative vessels for delivering the same type of learning experience as before. Herein lies a clear pathway for business educators to thread because the disruption of the main traits of learners who can no longer be motivated or engage while using old fashioned and outdated pedagogy, need a new direction. The new direction as emphasized by Hommels and Zuchowicz (2019) is that students are increasingly seeking educational experience where pedagogy and learning design correspond to the world they live in, in this context, technology is a means to an end.

The paradigm shift is that the world should be the classroom of the future and technology is driving this transformation. Business educators must create pathways for the integration of students into leaning communities with life in a global context. When viewing learning through the lens of communal constructivism, Zuchowicz and Hommels (2019) insist that the diversity of student and their contexts become core ingredients of the learning experience by enriching collaboration and social knowledge production. Technology is important in driving this force and the reality is that technology is pervasive and for the students to survive in tertiary education and the business world, they must know and use technology.

If we are still wondering why technology is important Wantulok (2015) lists some of the reasons to include that students and teachers demand it; students are digital natives; they can learn on their own; with technology, there are no limitations, and technology has the ability to enhance relationship between teacher and student. It must be understood that technology goes beyond learning computing skills, it is now part of every aspect of our lives and students who understand it are the ones likely to succeed in business world.

Another transformation dimension worthy of note and requiring adjustment by business educators is the reality that the nature of work is changing and that today's job are increasingly likely to be held by workers who use their heads than their hands. Soft skills, or power skills which include communication, collaboration, critical thinking and ability to make quick decisions are now the most required skills by employers. A report published by Deloitte Insight (2019) found that the future of work is human, more meaningful and female. According to the report, woman



currently dominate the fastest growing jobs-the non-routine jobs of the head while men dominate the jobs most susceptible to automating- manual occupation involving repetitive tasks. To meet the need of the future the report concluded that all employees will need to build skills and capacities that have traditionally been more the domain of women. In addition, the trend globally is that workers are working flexibly and some businessmen are offering staff the option of working from home because physical proximity to other people is becoming important.

Teaching has transformed and is still transforming daily across universities. Digital devices are responsible for some radical changes. Digital devices have changed everything because they promote personalization, offer direct access to everything, support the mashing of media, and are interactive and mobile. In this regard, Heick (2019) explains that if literacy is understanding how to read and write, then anything read or written/created digitally is first and foremost about reading and writing, but with unique nuance in socializing ideas, multimodalities, complex methods of tagging and curating, endless acronyms and initialisms, fluid transfer from one form (a tweet) to another (a YouTube video) to another (a YouTube video tweeted) to another (a shorter gif version of that video then pinned on pinterest) to another (ultimately arriving as a meme that is then shared on Facebook)

In all these, deft hands of business educators are required to make the adjustments. Teachers are now involved, more especially in developed countries to both learn, plan, publish, share and collaborate endlessly with colleagues in other countries and also support their students ensuring that the students do the same with their peers. Unfortunately, in developing countries, like Nigeria, it is not very clear whether it is understood that education is now emphasizing hybrid skills and this in itself is a problem.

Education has changed and professional teachers must not only be aware of it but get ready to change. But one needs to know how education has changed. The art of handwriting is dying, along with it is the traditional library research skills. I am sure you remember a course called the use of Library. Today we have a millennial generation-iPad and mobile phone bearers who no longer know a world where alternative exist to internet when completing an assignment or picking a book in the library but who are more aware of the frequently used mantra, 'Google-it'. Across universities in Nigeria, the Library are empty as students hardly visit those magnificent buildings.



The least expected of business education teachers is to ensure that technology is utilized to improve teaching and learning so that the students can be successful as technology has rooted its way into the day to day existence of everyone. With technology, education does not have to stop at the finish of the school day, they can access the lecturers, resources and assignments through the web whenever and wherever so long as there is internet connection and bandwidth has improved in Nigeria to make internet connectivity easier. Technology-based projects can inspire students to think and collaborate as opposed to memorizing, whether they are using Web for research or to correspond with other students or experts who are not physically present. These projects, likewise help them learn technology skills they will need to succeed in the modern workplace (Khan, 2019). Internet of Things (IoT), the interconnection via the internet of computing devices which are embedded in everyday objects, enabling them to send and receive data is a powerful digital transformation in education. The business educator should no longer be a teacher at the chalkboard, books, and homework at night and the 'Sage on stage' in classrooms, but an enhancer of knowledge, a mentor and an adviser.

### **Conclusion**

The only thing constant in our world today is change. From the Information Age to the current Shift Age, new technologies, especially digitalization, has taken over. The proliferation of open education resources such as mobile devices, learning platforms, and hyper-personalization of learning points to a new model for the future of education. This can only lead to student-centered learning experiences that are customized, amplified, authentic relevant and resilient. The reality facing business educators is the digital native learners that have disrupted the traditional learning process as we know it while the teachers are grappling with adaptation of technology, seeking for the right kind of pedagogy, curriculum mix, and provision of requisite resources to do the job. It is unfortunate that challenges of inadequate technology provision and accessibility, outdated curriculum, teacher competencies, etc. remain unsolved. But we can no longer bemoan these challenges if we must avoid being co-authors of our own misfortune. It is time to think out of the box by adopting proactive, even radical approaches not only to ensure that our graduates are adequately prepared to compete favorably in the global workplace but also to guard against our profession being taken away from us. How can we do this? Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) should be enforced as this will increase greater student



engagement, participation in personalized learning, access to uber-trendy pedagogical apps and abundant free-flow of information. Business educators should encourage student-driven learning by becoming facilitators not protagonists of their students' education as this will ensure acquisition of the aforementioned skill-based wisdom as low-hanging fruits which they can harvest to become inquisitive problem-solvers and innovators.

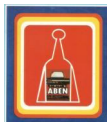
### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made:

1. Business educators must seize the opportunity presented by digitization to leverage on big data, connectivity, and analytics so that the future which reflects the objectives and values of business education discipline can be realized.
2. Emphasis must be laid on incorporation of digital skills training so that business education graduates will be equipped to compete for jobs globally.
3. The ideal business education curriculum must encompass basic general business, vocational business education, teaching practice and Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme.
4. Professionalization in business education should be encouraged where options are eliminated and first, second and third degrees in business education espoused.
5. Shorthand should be dropped from business education curriculum and keyboarding emphasized, made compulsory for all graduates and domiciled in the Business Education Department.
6. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) should be enforced since it is clear that universities cannot provide computers for all students. This will increase students' engagement and participation in personalized learning.

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