



## DIGITAL SKILLS STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING BUSINESS EDUCATION IN THE NEW NORMAL BY EDUCATORS IN UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*This study examined the digital strategies for teaching Business Education in the new normal by educators in Universities in South East Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study is 70 business educators in the Universities under study. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. A 4-point scale questionnaire designed by the researchers containing 20 items was used. Reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha statistics test. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research question, though the standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity of the responses. The t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study showed that digital skills strategies enhance teaching of Business Education to a high extent. Based on the findings, the study concludes that digital skills strategies which compasses online and ICT skills strategies for teaching of Business Education are very crucial and relevant for teaching especially in the new normal era. These skills strategies as x-rayed enhances teaching and learning of Business Education and as well enable the teachers hone their existing skills to function effectively in the digital world. Based on the findings, recommendations were proffered which include among others that Business Educators should avail themselves to online skills strategy; information and communication technology skills strategies for teaching Business Education in universities.*

**Keywords:** New normal, digital skills, online skills, ICT skills strategies



## **Introduction**

A new normal simply means a situation where everything that concerns us changes from what they were due to crisis of any kind. The crisis could be disease, insecurity, pandemic that could cause a drastic change or shift in the way and manner we live and exist in our environment. In line with this, a new normal is a state to which an economy, society, education, health and all that concerns human existence settles following a crisis, when this differs from the situation that prevailed prior to the start of the crisis. We all witnessed and still witnessing the –covid-19 pandemic as it relates to the new normal how it has completely invested and transformed unbeatable pivots of human life such as professional identity, children’s education management, economic subsistence, work and family organization, imposing a radical revision of the traditional way, practices, strategies and skills used to manage them (Roziyah, Zeinab & Seyedali, 2021). This buttressed the fact that business educators need to adjust in their professional roles to flow along in the new normal. We need to ask ourselves, what will “the new normal mean for us? Has it changed anything in our professional roles, has it changed the way and strategies we adopt in carrying out our teaching activities? Has it made us to acquire new skills to function effectively in teaching our students digitally? Has it made us to move along with other of our counterparts across the globe digitally in attending conferences and academic collaborations of all kinds? The earlier we recognize and come to terms what new normal mean to us the better, so that we can move along with others and compete favourably with our colleagues across the globe digitally. This entails being digitally competent and ability to carry on teaching activities digitally to reach and prepare our students both physically and virtually. Creating an efficient and effective digital classroom requires online teachers’, business educators inclusive to develop exceptional communication skills. Twenty-first century teachers need all the skills required to develop lessons plans for traditional classroom instruction, and they must be able to apply them to digital teaching environments. Education delivery is evolving. As the evolution progresses, the overriding challenge for educators and administrators will be funding ways to embrace new technology and teaching environments in a responsible, practical and educationally sound manner.

Digital skills are defined as a range of abilities to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information and carryout teaching activities digitally. This implies that digital skills are any skills related to being digitally literate. They enable people to create and share digital content, communicate and collaborate, solve problems for effective and creative self-fulfillment in life, teaching and learning, work and social activities at large (UNESCO, 2018). Digital skills are important because they underpin so much of how modern work is conducted especially in teaching and learning in the new normal. For many modern professions, digital skills are simply essential skills, more importantly in the new era. In the modern workplace, it is increasingly impossible to point out which digital skills you may or may not need. There is no hard and fast rule about which jobs you will need to excel for and which jobs you will not. This goes to buttress that digital skills or literacy is a language, the more digital skills you have, the better you can speak digital language (skills you need.com/digital skills). Digital skills are set of skills that allow a person to the strategic use of information through information technology. It is abilities required to use digital technologies. It is the abilities of operating digital media, handle the structures of new media, search, select, process, and evaluate information in digital media and use digital media as a means to reach a particular goal and specifically in teaching and learning of Business Education. Digital skills strategies are very important because they underpin so much of how modern work is conducted especially in teaching and learning and in this new normal era. Digital skills strategy involves online skills strategy, information and communication technology skills strategy and many others.



Online skills strategy is simply technical skills needed in carrying out teaching and other life activities with technology or rather digitally to achieve predetermined goals. Online skills strategy involves basic technical skills which include the ability to create new documents, use a word processing program, navigate the internet, and download software. Business educators need basic technical skills to succeed in their instructional delivery. They must have the skills to teach students online by using various online tools for teaching. According to Liz (2016) online skills strategy enhances teachers' communication and subject expertise skills and as well enable them in constantly honing their existing skills, and developing new ones on demand. Today, online teaching skills strategy can occur asynchronously or synchronously and may be either fully online, blended with face-to-face or combine elements of campus-based and hybrid forms of instruction. Teachers new to this mode may experience frustration, anxiety and confusion as they embark on a new normal learning journey as e-teachers. This entails going beyond content delivery, teachers must become a "guide on the side" who scaffolds and coaches, and often this demands a change in teachers' skills and pedagogies, with a consequent rethinking or transformation of professional identity and role. This indicates that there are several features of the online environment that require teachers to adopt new practices, to step back from their directive roles and instead become facilitators of learning (Catherine & Maria, 2017). In line with this, Scott (2016) emphasized that it is important that teachers adapt or develop their skills to online learning environment, to make their materials effective and engaging for learners. Scott further highlighted the following strategies to include; engage with your learners online; create a supportive learning environment; use a mix of learning tools for better engagement; provide ongoing feedback; and make e-learning content mobile.

Guach et al. (2010) agreed that virtual teaching spaces require constructivist pedagogy, the development of distinct facilitation skills and new communicative practices. An online teaching and learning environment requires clear concise instruction. Business educators experienced in face-to-face classroom instruction methods may need to develop stronger written communication skills. Skills for using graphics, videos and digital audio files for communication with students are essential. Conversations with students and parents today rely more heavily on texting, email and voice-messaging. Not necessary meeting in person for parent-teacher conferences and student tutoring activities. Online skills strategy implies that teachers have to develop skills and knowledge specific to web-based educational systems. Teachers should be able to demonstrate proficiency in the following areas among others, full knowledge of accessibility requirements for technology in the classroom and online instructions, ability to evaluate internet resources, understanding aspects of copyright privileges and violations, modeling and monitoring proper etiquette and generally accepted online use policies, designing and implementing appropriate lesson plans for online students, and ability to troubleshoot minor technical issues and refer to technical support personnel when necessary. Teachers must be able to evaluate information and update course materials as necessary to ensure students have timely, relevant information. Online teachers must be able to evaluate student performance accurately. Skills in identifying learning difficulties and other factors that affect academic performance are necessary in digital education environment. An effective and efficient online educator must have sufficient skills to develop engaging course curriculum that motivates and encourages students to participate fully (Resilient Educator, 2021).

Similarly, NIK (2021) lamented that many schools have been forced to move to teaching online with little or no preparation for students and teachers and have been in many cases, left to cope with developing online teaching skills with little or no training. NIK further emphasized that in order to make transition from the physical classroom to the virtual teaching environment, teachers need to master the following areas of skills and knowledge; technological, environmental, behavioural, pedagogical and motivational. These changes represent challenges



that may burden instructional staff in high education who have to keep pace with the innovative paradigms of high education, new approaches to research and accreditation, and new methods of teaching and learning (Siemens & Matheos in Albrahim, 2020). Albrahim further categorized the online skills as follows: Pedagogical skills, content skills, design skills, technological skills, management and institutional skills, and social and communication skills. Albrahim suggested that online educators can use these set of skills to self-evaluate their abilities to teach online and identify their training needs. This includes being aware of who the students are, what they need to learn, how to teach them, as well as the skills that they as instructors, business educators inclusive, need to master in order to effectively execute their role (Palloff & Prath, 2013; Scobey, 2012). Applying online skills strategies in teaching Business Education may not be too easy and even comfortable considering our peculiar public university environment where internet connectivity and accessibility is difficult if not impossible. But that notwithstanding business educators and every instructor must thrive to acquire and be ready to apply online skills strategies in teaching activities. These skills, strategies, tasks and competencies can help in designing and creating professional development opportunities for online educators.

Information and communication technology (ICT) skill is one of the digital skills strategies that educators use in teaching and learning of Business Education in our universities. Information and communication technology (ICT) is an integral concept that signifies or represents three crucial elements for man's survival. These elements are information, communication and technology which man uses for their daily life activities; where these elements are found wanting, it becomes difficult if not impossible for man to function appropriately in any area of their life. This connotes that business educators must equip themselves with ICT skills strategies to enable them function effectively in instructional delivery digitally especially in this new normal period (Ekoh-Nweke & Ezeabii, 2020). ICT is simply set of technology that is applied in various aspects to enhancing teaching and learning processes and even in other human activities by individuals who have the skills. Similarly, Orike, Iyalla and Okereke (2017) asserted that ICT is the range of technology that is applied in the course of collecting, editing, storing, retrieval and transfer of information in several forms. Debon and Zite (2016) opined that ICT is the electronic devices and applications used in the classroom to support effective teaching and learning processes, Business Education inclusive. In line with this, Ikpeama (2019) emphasized that competencies requirements of Business Education lecturers in ICT is the capability of the lecturer to use ICT devices in performing or carrying out academic activities or tasks, aimed at enhancing learning. Ikpeama further lamented that the importance of information and communication technology ICT in teacher education is not in doubt, but the enabling skills, knowledge, tools and infrastructure for its application are not yet adequately put in place. Ovute and Ovute (2015) maintained that ICT skills help lecturers to apply technology wisely, logically and effectively and as well understand the principles underlying the technological tools and materials. ICT skills strategy is required by all business educators in today's world. It has the potential ICT skills for business educators to transform teaching and learning processes in the new normal. It was observed that presently, students are more sophisticated in their use of technology than we teachers; an inherent discrepancy between student knowledge and usage of ICTs with the abilities of teacher to use ICTs.

This buttressed the fact that teacher inexperience and skill deficiencies may often be a fundamental factor which hinders and prevents the effectiveness of ICT use in education. In the new normal, it is accepted that the use of ICTs should aim at completely transforming teacher practices in and of itself and as well enabling and supporting the move from traditional "teacher centric" teaching styles to more learner-centric method, in other words, making each one of the students active and fully engaged. ICT skills strategy is meant to enable business educators with the specific ICT tools, such as smart boards, web conferencing and webinars among others thus,



creating a learner-centric' classroom. ICT skills strategies for teaching in general and Business Education in particular has undoubted potential, to be influential in changing teaching methodologies. There are many ICT skills strategies that are expected to be used by business educators for teaching in the new normal. They include; word processing skills, spreadsheet skills, database management skills, electronic presentation skills, internet navigation skills, email management skills, networking skills, touch typing skills and many more (Adam, 2017). Similarly, Bryan (2019) stated that if you ask any teacher about ICT skills strategies, they will tell you that it is essential to keep up on skills in order to be at the top of their profession. Bryan further, outlined the following ICT skills for teachers to stay ahead of the curve; create, edit and manage digital audio; social book marking to organize and share web content; produce, edit and share video; create a virtual space for your classroom; check for plagiarism; capture screenshots for visual explanations; edit digital images online, photo caricature and cartoons, info graphics and posters to simplify topics and many more. These buttressed the fact that variety of ICT skills strategies for teaching abound. No wonder Kadel in Enu et al. (2018) noted that regardless of the quantity and quality of technology available in classroom, the key to how ICTs are used is the teacher; therefore, teachers must have the competence and right attitude towards technology in the new normal.

Digital skills strategies are an essential skills strategy that enables educators to utilize various technological devices in discharging their professional duties. Most education institutions, industries, organizations have digitalized their operations and processes. As a result, today's university graduates required specialized skills to help them stand out significantly from the crowd. For this to happen it is expected that business educators should prepare these students in this aspects. While some universities have modified or expanded their curriculum to this growing demand for digital know-how, many educators are struggling to provide the essential skills students need. This happens because teachers or educators are not trained to use new technologies adequately that resulted to non-acquisition of digital skills strategy to carry out teaching and learning of Business Education with confidence and as well not being able to prepare their students with desirable digital skills, hence the study to determine digital skills strategies for teaching and learning of Business Education in the new normal by educators in universities in the south east Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine digital skills strategies for teaching Business Education in the new normal by Educators in Universities in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent;

1. online skills strategy enhances teaching of Business Education in the new normal by Educators in universities.
2. information and communication technology skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal by Educators in Universities.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does online skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal by educators in universities?
2. To what extent does information and communication technology skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal by educators in universities?



## Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the extent online skills strategy enhances teaching of Business Education in the new normal in universities.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the extent ICT skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal in universities.

## Method

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The area of the study was South East, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of 75 Business Educators in Universities in South East Nigeria offering Business Education. The entire population was sampled since the population is manageable. The researchers developed instrument titled "Digital strategies for teaching Business Education in the new normal questionnaire (DSTBENNQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire has two sections; A and B. Section A was on respondent's personal data. Section B has two clusters containing 20 items which sought information on each of the two research questions. The items were structured on a 4-point rating scale response style of very high extent, high extent, low extent, and very low extent weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was face validated by three validates. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha and it yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.88 and 0.86 for clusters one and two respectively and the overall coefficient of the entire instrument was 0.87. The researchers with the help of three briefed research assistants collected data for the study. Seventy-five copies of the questionnaire were administered, 70 collected and used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions. Items that scored 2.50 or above were accepted while those that scored below 2.50 were rejected. T-test was used in testing the two null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis was accepted where significant p-value was greater than alpha value of 0.05 level of significance otherwise the null hypothesis was rejected.

## Result

### Research Question 1

To what extent does online skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal by educators in universities?

**Table 1: Mean ratings of educators on the extent online skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal in universities**

S/N	Online Skills Strategy	X	SD	Re
1.	Technological skills	3.48	1.03	HE
2.	Environmental skills	2.95	0.79	HE
3.	Pedagogical skills	2.78	0.87	HE
4.	Motivational skills	3.43	0.80	HE
5.	Content skills	2.65	1.21	HE
6.	Design skills	3.09	1.05	HE
7.	Management and institutional skills	3.10	0.90	HE



8. Ability to evaluate internet resources	2.69	0.75	HE
9. Social and Communication skills	2.85	0.94	HE
10. Create virtual space skills	3.38	0.85	HE
11. Edith digital images online skills	3.32	0.65	HE
12. Written and oral communication skills	3.45	0.88	HE
13. Graphics videos and digital audio files skills	2.87	1.27	HE
14. Web-based educational system skills	3.55	0.89	HE
15. Designing and implementing lesson plans			
Online skills	3.17	1.00	HE
<b>Cluster</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>0.92</b>	HE

Table 1 show that the respondents agreed on the item numbers 1 to 15 as high extent hence, their mean scores ranged from 2.65 to 3.55 respectively. This indicates that online skills strategies enhance teaching of business education in the new normal by educators in universities and the cluster mean of 3.12 concords to that. Also, the table shows the standard deviation ranging from 0.65 to 1.27 signifying the closeness of their opinion to their mean response and the cluster standard deviation of 0.92 supports this assertion.

### Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educator on the extent online skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal in universities.

**Table 2: t-test analysis of mean ratings of male and female business educators on the extent**

**Online skills strategy enhances teaching of Business Education in the new normal in universities**

Status	N	$\bar{x}$	Sd	Df	t-cal	P-value	Remark
Male	20	2.69	0.82	68	0.83	1.96	NS
Female	50	3.41	0.81				

Result in Table 2 shows that there was no significant difference on the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the extent online skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal by Business educators. The calculated t-value of 0.83 was less than the p-value of 1.96 at 68 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

### Research Question 2

To what extent does ICT skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal by educators in universities?



**Table 3: Mean ratings of educator on the extent ICT skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal in universities.**

S/NO	ICT SKILLS STRATEGIES	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remark
16.	Word processing skills	0.38	0.78	VHE
17.	Spreadsheet skills	3.70	0.96	VHE
18.	Database management skills	3.60	0.86	VHE
19.	Electronic presentation skills	3.90	0.54	VHE
20.	Internet navigation skills	3.78	1.03	VHE
21.	Email management skills	3.82	0.48	VHE
22.	Networking skills	3.80	1.06	VHE
23.	Touch typing skills	3.75	0.40	VHE
24.	Create, edit and manage digital audio skills	3.85	0.80	VHE
25.	Social bookmarking skills	3.73	0.85	VHE
26.	File management and window explore skills	3.85	1.00	VHE
27.	Photo caricature and cartoons	3.55	0.90	VHE
28.	Info graphics and posters	3.58	0.81	VHE
29.	Produce, edit and share videos	3.70	0.65	VHE
30.	Check for plagiarism	3.80	1.10	VHE
<b>Cluster mean</b>		<b>3.75</b>	<b>0.86</b>	VHE

Table 3 shows that the respondents agreed on the item numbers 16-30 as very high extent hence, their corresponding means ranged from 3.55 to 3.90. This implies that ICT skills strategies enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal by Business Educators in universities and the cluster mean of 3.75 supports that. Also, the table shows the standard deviation ranging from 0.50 to 1.10 indicating the closeness of their opinions. The cluster standard deviation of 0.86 also supports the assertion.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educator on the extent ICT skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal in universities.

**Table 4: t-test analysis of mean ratings of male and female business educator on the extent ICT skills strategy enhances teaching of Business Education in the new normal in universities.**

Status	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	Df	t-cal	P-value	Remark
Male	20	3.66	0.50	68	0.87	1.96	Not significant
Female	50	3.69	0.62				

Result of Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the extent ICT skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal by business educators. The calculated t-value of 0.87



was less than the p-value of 1.96 at 68 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The result in Table 1 showed that all the items as regards to online skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal by business educators. They were aware of how important the skill is for teaching especially in the new normal era. This was in agreement with Liz (2016) which stated that online skills strategy enhances teachers' communication and subject expertise skills and as well enable them in constantly honing their existing skills; and developing new ones on demand. In line with this, Guash et. al. (2010) agreed that virtual teaching spaces require constructivist pedagogy, the development of distinct facilitation skills and new communicative practices. The result from the corresponding hypothesis implies that both male and female business educators are aware that online skills strategies are crucial for teaching in this era. This was in line with NIK (2021) which stated that in order to make transition from physical classroom to the virtual teaching environment; teachers need to master the following area of skills and knowledge; technological, environmental, behavioural, Pedagogical and motivational skills.

The findings in relation to research question two in Table 2 showed that all the items on ICT skills strategy enhance teaching of Business Education in the new normal by business educators. This skill is very relevant for teaching especially in Business Education and in the new normal. This is in consonant with Deabon and Zite (2016) which stated that ICT is the electronic devices and applications used in the classroom to support effective teaching and learning processes. The result from the corresponding hypothesis implies that both male and female business educators are aware of the relevant of ICT skills strategy for teaching of Business Education in the new normal. The result is in consonant with Ovute and Ovute (2015) which maintained that ICT skills strategy help lecturers to apply technology wisely, logically and effectively and as well understand the principles underlying the technological tools and materials. Similarly, Bryan (2019) stated that if you ask any teacher about ICT skills strategies, they will tell you that it is essential to keep up on skills in order to be at the top of their profession.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the study concludes that digital skills strategies which compasses online and ICT skills strategies for teaching of Business Education are very crucial and relevant for teaching especially in the new normal era. These skills strategies as x-rayed enhances teaching and learning of Business Education and as well enable the teachers' horn their existing skills to function effectively in the digital world.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

1. Business educators should develop interest in carrying out their teaching activities digitally to enable them horn their existing skills and compete globally with their counterparts; and be ready to marry various digital skills strategies for teaching Business Education in the new normal to make teaching and learning meaningful and as well prepare their students with relevant digital skills.
2. University management should make provision for conducive digital environment to enable effective teaching and learning of Business Education digitally; and as a matter of urgency conduct digital training on both online and ICT skills strategies for their lecturers; to enable them carry on their teaching activities effectively.



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