



INFLUENCE OF DIGITALIZATION ON SKILLS ACQUISITION OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of digitalization on skills acquisition of Business Education students in public Universities in South East Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population of the study is 230 business education students 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 questions, 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 digitalization highly influences entrepreneurial and managerial skills acquisition of Business Education students. Based on the findings, the study concludes that digitalization influences skills acquisition which compasses entrepreneurial and managerial skills of Business Education students. These are very crucial and relevant for students to acquire in this digital world. These skills as x-rayed would enable and enhance business education student to function appropriately in the society. Based on the findings, recommendations were proffered which include among others that Business education students should develop keen interest in acquiring viable skills digitally to enable them fit into the digital world we are in now.

Keywords: Digitalization, Skills Acquisition, Entrepreneurial skills, Managerial skills.

Introduction

Digitalization has been identified as the most significant technological trend that is changing both society, business and education at all levels. Nowadays, education institutions, firms, industries and even individuals are constantly under pressure to use digital technologies and to adapt their academic activities and business models to this new reality. However, although going digital evokes many benefits, it also requires investments and associated costs. Given the noticeable progress of digital technologies, the question is how digitalization is being employed by practitioners and into what



extent this progress is being followed by scholars and academics. Digitalization is radically interfering and changing the fundamental assumptions of the way of life and organization of work in a postmodern society, which is becoming more globalized and more digitalized than ever before. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important for institutions to quickly, efficiently, and appropriately plan the digital transformation to achieve flexibility and to maintain global academic competitiveness. Digitalization refers to the development and implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems and concomitant organizational change, it involves the transformation of socio-technical structures formerly mediated by non-digital artefacts into ones mediated by digitized artefacts (Marlene et al, 2020). Digitalization is simply the process of converting information into a digital format. The result is the representation of an object, image, sound, document, or signal obtained by generating a series of numbers that describe a discrete set of points or samples.

Digitalization is the use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new revenue and value-producing opportunities; it is the process of moving to a digital business. In agreement, Endouware and Yusuf (2021) posited that, it is essential for academic staff in Nigeria universities to acquire digital skills, business education students inclusive; to enable them utilize modern technologies for effective instructional delivery and acquisition of viable skills. According to Abas, Yahaha and Din (2019), digital skills are needed by every graduate to fit into the 21st century society. Digital skills include: video creation skills, audio content creation, computer skills, graphic skills, internet skills, communication skills, word processing skills and information processing skills among others. However, despite the importance of digital skills on instructional delivery especially as it concerns acquisition of viable skills by students, Ajike (2015) regretted that Nigeria is faced with lack of skills development among its skilled labourworkforce. **Digitalization** refers to enabling or improving processes by leveraging digital technologies and digitized data. Digitalization increases productivity and efficiency while reducing costs. Digitalization improves an existing business process or processes but does not change or transform them. That is to say, it takes a process from a human-driven event or series of events to software-driven (Mark, 2020).

Skill acquisition is the significant factor for building a successful career. Acquiring skills can happen in different ways – by personal experiments in a certain field, by creative search and constant practicing, by repeating some actions automatically without implying any thinking processes. Skill acquisition in Nigeria is even more important taking into account the levels of unemployment. Skill acquisition is the art of learning to do something in order to earn a living and or to survive or rather fit into the unemployed environment. Skill is the ability to acquire practical knowledge in new conditions and on the basis of the abilities and experiences a person had previously. Skill acquisition is the process of mastering skills characterized by applying them in particular situations. It is the possibility to learn. Our entire life is based on skills acquisition, which is the constant process. We are getting involved in the skill acquisition processes from the time we learn how to walk as toddlers. With time, the set of skills just get more complex (Ekoh-Nweke, 2017). A skill is an activity, which is developed by a person with time and becomes automatic in terms of performing it. A certain skill can be considered acquired when a person can perform it without thinking about the technique of performing this action or dividing a process into conventional parts. Every person will find personal reasons for skill acquisition. Nevertheless, there are obvious benefit of skill acquisition process and results. To acquire skills means to become an expert in a chosen field. To become an expert means to deliver high-quality work and become a sought-after specialist. There are important things to remember when pursuing a skill according to (Inna, 2018). They include the following; skill acquisition is not the expense; it is the investment; it helps you to adjust to the realities of the employment market; you acquire skills that meet immediate requirements; you acquire the basis for adjusting for the future needs; the possible is flexible and teaches you to be flexible, too; experts acquire knowledge, and then they acquire power; other people trust experts, and they will trust you; and experts earn more and have broader career



prospects. Skill acquisition encompasses viable skills that enables individuals fit into unemployment world and become self-reliance. These skills include among others; entrepreneurial skills, information and communications skill, managerial skills and communication skills.

Entrepreneurial skills are those skills that are normally associated with being an entrepreneur, although anyone can develop them. Being an entrepreneur usually means starting and building your own successful business, but people with entrepreneurial skills can thrive within larger organizations, too. Entrepreneurial skills simply encompass a broad range of various skill sets like technical skills, leadership, communication, digital, problem-solving, creative thinking and business management skills. Because entrepreneurial skills can be applied to many different job roles and industries, developing your entrepreneurial skills can mean developing several types of skill sets. For instance, to be a successful business owner, you may need to develop your business management skills. To build and maintain successful project teams you might need to improve your leadership and communication skills (Ekoh-Nweke & Victor-Igwe, 2020). Inna (2018) asserted that entrepreneurial skills can encompass a large range of both soft and hard skills. Because of the many business roles entrepreneurs may take on, they may also develop a variety of different skill sets to accommodate the growth of their businesses and brands and as well operate their businesses effectively. Inna further declared that developing the following skill sets can also help individual in developing entrepreneurial skills. The following set of skill according to Inna are; business management skills; teamwork and leadership skills; communication and listening; customer service skills; financial skills; analytical and problem-solving skills; critical thinking skills; strategic thinking and planning skills; technical skills; time management and organizational skills; marketing and networking skills.

According to Ekoh-Nweke and Izuagba (2018), entrepreneurial skills are understood as the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable someone to be successful in developing original and valuable projects, products, or services, based on the needs of a company—target population and, as a result, the fulfillment of functional, social, or emotional objectives. A “skill” is defined as the ability to operationalize, in a concrete situation, a set of knowledge, attitudes, and competence to be successful. This concept highlights that a skilled person in a given area has an analytical, creative, and practical savoir-faire, more than simply an uprooted knowledge of performance circumstances. Furthermore, it shows a specific competence when successfully operationalizing its knowledge in specific situations (Jacinto, 2021). According to Simeon-Fayonu in Ekoh-Nweke and Ezeabii (2020), entrepreneurship training is a programme that promotes entrepreneurship awareness and skills for career purposes and provides skill training for business creation and development. They further emphasized that introducing entrepreneurship training into the undergraduate curriculum especially for business education students from the point of entry will positively affect their mindset towards the recognition and acceptance of self-employment as a viable career option.

Management is a very exciting and dynamic field which has a special appeal to people who love to get things done and at the appropriate time. There is no human endeavor that does not require proper management for its proper functioning. Every organization whether profit and nonprofit making require good management to function effectively and achieve their objectives. Management is not a simple task. It needs knowledge and experience. Because of that, there is the existence of hierarchy and organizational structure. This allows each employee with adequate knowledge, experience, and skills to move from the bottom to the middle and top levels of the managerial pyramid. According to Victor-Igwe (2015), management is the process of combining and utilizing, or of allocating an organization's inputs by planning, organizing, directing and controlling for the purpose of accomplishing the organizational goals. Management skills can be defined as certain attributes or abilities that an executive should possess in order to fulfill specific tasks in an organization. They include the capacity to perform executive duties in an organization while avoiding crisis situations and promptly solving problems when they occur. Management skills can be developed



through learning and practical experience as a manager. The skills help the manager to relate with their fellow co-workers and know how to deal well with their subordinates, which allows for the easy flow of activities in the organization. Good management skills are vital for any organization to succeed and achieve its goals and objectives. A manager who fosters good management skills is able to propel the company's mission and vision or business goals forward with fewer hurdles and objections from internal and external sources. Management and leadership skills are often used interchangeably as they both involve planning, decision-making, problem-solving, communication, delegation, and time management (Agbo, Isiaku&Anikene , 2015).

Good managers are almost always good leaders as well. In addition to leading, a critical role of a manager is to also ensure that all parts of the organization are functioning cohesively. Without such integration, several issues can arise and failure is bound to happen. Management skills are crucial for various positions and at different levels of a company, from top leadership to intermediate supervisors to first-level managers. Simply, managerial skills are the knowledge and ability of the individuals in a managerial position to fulfil some specific management activities or tasks. This knowledge and ability can be learned and practiced. However, they also can be acquired through practical implementation of required activities and tasks. Therefore, you can develop each skill through learning and practical experience as a manager. When we talk about managerial skills, we talk about the skills of a manager to maintain high efficiency in the way how his or her employees complete their everyday working tasks. Because of that, managers will need skills that will help them to manage people and technology to ensure an effective and efficient realization of their working duties (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022). Managerial skills can be defined as certain abilities that a manager/executive should possess in order to fulfill specific tasks in an organization (Gauraw, 2021). According to Katz in Gauraw (2021), if managers have the necessary management skills, then they will probably perform well and be relatively successful. On the other hand, if managers do not have the necessary management skills, they will probably perform poorly and be relatively unsuccessful in their careers. **Managerial skills** are essential skills for any person whose mission is to manage a team. These skills are varied and determine the manager's ability to lead his employees, to manage the **human dimension**, to mobilize the **technical skills** of each person and to put them to good use for the company, or to make the right decisions.

Statement of the Problems

Digitalization is one of the most important technological trends that permeate all human endeavor. The rate digitalization changed our ways of doing things both at home, school and place of work is very overwhelming. Digitalization has been so useful both in school and businesses. It helps to improve efficiency of its process, consistency, and quality. It improves and facilitate a better information exchange. It helps students in recording lectures, connecting learning, self-directed study and so many others. The importance of digitalization in human activities and as regards to its influence in skills acquisition cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, there is dearth of this wonderful technological trend in our public universities, thereby depriving the student acquisition of viable skills that will enable them fit into the unemployment environment we are in. This ugly situation prompted the researchers in determining the influence of digitalization in public universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. How does digitalization influence entrepreneurial skills acquisition of business education students in public Universities?



2. How does digitalization influence managerial skills acquisition of business education students in public Universities?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

- Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education students in federal and state-owned universities on the influence of entrepreneurial skills acquisition in public Universities.
- Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education students in federal and state-owned universities on the influence of managerial skills acquisition in public 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 250 Business Education students in Universities in South East Nigeria. The entire population was sampled since the population is manageable. The researchers developed instrument titled "Influence of digitalization on skills acquisition of Business Education students" (IDOSABE) 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 highly influenced, Influenced, fairly influenced not influenced, 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. Two hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were administered, 230 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

How does digitalization influence entrepreneurial skills acquisition of business education students in public Universities?

Table 1: Mean ratings of business education students in federal and state-owned universities

S/N	Entrepreneurial Skills	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	Business management skills	3.48	1.03	HI
2.	Teamwork and leadership skills	2.95	0.79	HI
3.	Communication and listening	2.88	0.87	HI
4.	Customer service skills	3.43	0.80	HI
5.	Financial skills	2.75	1.27	HI
6.	Analytical and problem-solving skills	3.09	1.05	HI
7.	Critical thinking skills	3.10	0.95	HI



8.	Strategic thinking and planning skills	2.79	0.75	HI
9.	Technical, marketing and networking skills	2.85	0.94	HI
10.	Time management and organizational skills	3.38	0.87	HI

Cluster	3.07	0.93	HI
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Table 1 shows that the respondents agreed on the item numbers 1 to 10 as highly influenced hence, their mean scores ranged from 2.75 to 3.48 respectively. This indicates that digitalization influences entrepreneurial skills acquisition of business education students in universities and the cluster mean of 3.07 concurs to that. Also, the table shows the standard deviation ranging from 0.79 to 1.27 signifying the closeness of their opinion to their mean response and the cluster standard deviation of 0.93 supports this assertion.

Research Question 2

How does digitalization influence managerial skills acquisition of business education students in public Universities?

Table 2: Mean ratings of business education students in federal and state-owned universities

S/N	Managerial Skills		\bar{X}	SD	Remark
11.	Conceptual skills	3.28	0.75	HI	
12.	Human and interpersonal skills	3.50	0.95	HI	
13.	Leadership and Teamwork skills	3.60	0.83	HI	
14.	Technical skills	3.88	0.55	HI	
15.	Communication and negotiation skills		3.72	1.25	HI
16.	Problem-solving skills	3.29	0.47	HI	
17.	Decision-making skills	3.65	1.27	HI	
18.	Planning and organizing skills		3.73	0.54	HI
19.	Delegation and time management skills		3.84	0.67	HI
20.	ICT and Digital skills	3.70	0.85	HI	
Cluster		3.62	0.81	HI	

Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed on the item numbers 11-20 as highly influenced hence, their corresponding means ranged from 3.28 to 3.88. This implies that digitalization influences managerial skills acquisition of business education students in universities and the cluster mean of 3.62 supports that. Also, the Table shows the standard deviation ranging from 0.47 to 1.25 indicating the closeness of their opinions. The cluster standard deviation of 0.81 also supports the assertion.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education students in federal and state-owned universities on the influence of digitalization on entrepreneurial skills acquisition in public Universities.



Table 3: t-test analysis of mean ratings of business education students in federal and state-owned universities

Status	N	\bar{x}	Sd	Df	t-cal	P-value	Remark
Federal	150	3.20	2.69	0.82	0.83	1.96	NS
State	80	3.41	0.81	228			

Result in Table 3 shows that there was no significant difference on the mean ratings of business education students in federal and state-owned universities on the influence of digitalization on entrepreneurial skills acquisition in public Universities. The calculated t-value of 0.83 was less than the p-value of 1.96 at 228 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education students in federal and state-owned universities on the influence managerial skills acquisition in public Universities.

Table 4: t-test analysis of mean ratings of business education students in federal and state-owned universities on influence of digitalization on managerial skills acquisition in public Universities.

Status	N	\bar{x}	Sd	Df	t-cal	P-value	Remark
Federal	150	3.66	0.50	0.87	1.96		Not significant
State	80	3.69	0.62	288			

Result of Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education students in federal and state-owned universities on the influence of digitalization on managerial skills acquisition in public Universities. The calculated t-value of 0.87 was less than the p-value of 1.96 at 288 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The result in Table 1 shows that all the items as regards to influence of digitalization on entrepreneurial skills acquisition are highly influenced. The findings were in agreement with Inna (2018) who declared that developing the following skill sets can also help individual in developing entrepreneurial skills. The following set of skill according to Inna are; business management skills; teamwork and leadership skills; communication and listening; customer service skills; financial skills; analytical and problem-solving skills; critical thinking skills; strategic thinking and planning skills; technical skills; time management and organizational skills; marketing and networking skills. Supporting this, Ekoh-Nweke and Izuagba (2018) asserted that entrepreneurial skills are understood as the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable someone to be successful in developing original and valuable projects, products, or services, based on the needs of a company—target population and, as a result, the fulfillment of functional, social, or emotional objectives.

Result in Table 2 shows that all items as regards to influence of digitalization on managerial skills acquisition are highly influenced. The findings are in agreement with Gauraw (2021) who stated that managerial skills are certain abilities that a manager/executive should possess in order to fulfill



specific tasks in an organization. In support, Agbo, Isiaku and Anikene (2015) which stated that management and leadership skills are often used interchangeably as they both involve planning, decision-making, problem-solving, communication, delegation, and time management. Similarly, Victor-Igwe (2015) who maintained that management is the process of combining and utilizing, or of allocating an organization's inputs by planning, organizing, directing and controlling for the purpose of accomplishing the organizational goals. These buttressed that for students to acquire these skills, digitalization is of paramount importance in preparing them for the task ahead.

The result from the corresponding hypothesis in Table 3 implies that business education students in federal and state universities do not differ significantly in entrepreneurial skills acquisition as influenced by digitalization. This is in line with Simeon-Fayonu in Ekoh-Nweke and Ezeabii (2020) which emphasized that entrepreneurship training is a programme that promote entrepreneurship awareness and skills for career purposes and provide skill training for business creation and development. They further emphasized that introducing entrepreneurship training into the undergraduate curriculum especially for business education students from the point of entry will positively affect their mindset towards the recognition and acceptance of self-employment as a viable career option. The result from hypothesis in Table 4 implies that business education students in federal and state universities do not differ significantly in managerial skills acquisition as influenced by digitalization. This is in line with Katz in Gauraw (2021) who emphasized that if managers have the necessary management skills then they will probably perform well and be relatively successful. On the other hand, if managers do not have the necessary management skills, they will probably perform poorly and be relatively unsuccessful in their careers. **Managerial skills** are essential skills for any person whose mission is to manage a team. These skills are varied and determine the manager's ability to lead his employees, to manage the **human dimension**, to mobilize the **technical skills** of each person and to put them to good use for the company, or to make the right decisions. These findings buttressed that skills acquisition is a must acquire by all and sundry. This implies that for one to function appropriately in the society, acquisition of viable skills is of paramount importance.

Conclusion

Digitalization has come to stay and there is nothing anyone can do to stop it from taking over every aspect of human endeavor. The earlier the management of public universities and government begin to internalize it the better for them. There are no human activities within and across the globe that is barely performed or carried out undigitized. For business education students to acquire viable or rather employable skills that will enable them to be self-reliance, preparing and equipping them with those skills in schools has to be digitally executed. That is where digitalization in every aspect of knowledge impartation and skills acquisition in schools plays out. This implies that digitalization plays a very important role in skills acquisition, hence the influence on the acquisition of entrepreneurial and managerial skills which are among the viable skills business education students are expected to acquire.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were proffered;

1. University management should ensure that every aspect of instructional delivery as it concerns managerial skills acquisition should be performed digitally.
2. Business education students should develop keen interest in acquiring viable managerial and entrepreneurship skills digitally to enable them fit into the digital world we are in now.



3. Government should make adequate provision of digital facilities to enhance teaching and learning of digitalization skills on entrepreneurship to students, to equip her students with viable and employable skills that will enable them function appropriately in the society.

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