



STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING DIGITAL LEADERSHIP AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

The study investigated the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria. one research question guided the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 109 business educators in tertiary institutions in Delta State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire which was developed by the researchers and validated by experts in the field of education. The test of reliability of the instrument yielded co-efficient value of 0.88 for internal consistency. Mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to analyze the data for the study. The findings of the study revealed that fostering partnerships with leading businesses and digital innovators; revising the business education curriculum to include dedicated courses on digital leadership; incorporating international case studies and best practices in the curriculum and Encouraging students to conduct research on emerging technologies and their implications for Nigerian businesses are some of the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria. The years of experience of business educators did not influence their opinion. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended among others that administrators of business education programmes in tertiary institutions should actively seek out partnerships with major firms and digital pioneers.

Keywords: Promoting, Digital Leadership, Business Education, Digitalized, Business Environment

Introduction

The continuous transformation driven by rapid technological breakthroughs is profoundly changing the work landscape. This seismic shift is characterised by a shift away from traditional, brick-and-mortar employment patterns and towards a growing trend of remote, technologically-driven occupations. This transformation is being driven by the widespread effect of digitalization, automation, and connectivity, ushering in an era in which geographical boundaries no longer limit the scope of employment. As a result, it is becoming increasingly important for educational institutions, particularly those delivering higher business education programmes, to take the lead in driving and responding to these developments (Ndubuisi, Ezeani, & Ile, 2021). Traditional employment positions, which are tied to specific physical locations and routines, are undergoing a seismic shift. Many traditional tasks are becoming obsolete as a result of technological advancements, which are automating procedures and encouraging the rise of new job opportunities (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2016). This new landscape is defined by the emergence of remote work, freelance platforms, digital entrepreneurship, and digitally-mediated interactions. As the global workforce becomes more interconnected through digital platforms, expertise in digital tools, remote communication, virtual collaboration, and adaptability to evolving technology has become essential.

In this dynamic context, business education programmes in tertiary institutions must assume a proactive stance in equipping their students for success. Onokpaunu (2016) defined business education as that component of general education that prepares students for employment and progress in a wide range of office vocations, accounting profession, marketing occupation, teaching profession, and entrepreneurial endeavour. According to Ezenwafor and Onokpaunu (2017), a business education curriculum is a branch of vocational education focused with exposing its recipients to the internal and external foundations and



functioning of the workplace. Business education is a work-focused, skill-based, result-oriented, and technology-based educational course. In support of the above, Oguejiofor (2020) stated that the value of any business education programme can be determined by its ability to adequately prepare and equip individuals in such a way that they can fit into specific jobs, become technologically relevant, internationally competitive, and economically prosperous, if properly packaged and adequately delivered. It is expected that the business education programme should evolve to encompass not only traditional business acumen but also a profound understanding of the digital ecosystem and its impact on the business world. Students must be equipped with a repertoire of skills that enable them to thrive in remote work environments, leverage technology for innovation, navigate digital marketplaces, and contribute to the evolving global economy. The role of business education programmes extends beyond imparting theoretical knowledge. They must cultivate a mindset of agility, creativity, and continuous learning. This involves integrating cutting-edge digital tools and concepts into the curriculum, offering specialized courses on remote work strategies, virtual team dynamics, e-commerce, digital marketing, data analytics, and emerging technologies (Abdulkadir, 2020). This could instill in the students digital leadership qualities.

Digital leadership is the ability of educational leaders to effectively navigate and harness the power of digital technology to foster innovation, change, and progress in educational environments. Digital leadership is defined by transformative leadership approaches and the use of digital technologies, according to Hamzah, Nasir, and Wahab (2021). Leaders are expected to model behaviour, and subordinates are urged to do the same. Similarly, Sheninger (2022) defined digital leadership as the art of charting a course, exerting influence, and effecting sustainable change by harnessing the wealth of information and forging meaningful connections, all with the foresight to anticipate the pivotal shifts required for future school triumph. Furthermore, digital leadership entails cultivating an innovative and collaborative culture inside educational communities. Teachers, students, and other stakeholders are inspired and empowered by digital leaders to investigate, experiment, and engage with digital tools and resources. They promote a growth mentality that values technology as a tool for improving teaching and learning (Lasak, 2015). Another critical part of digital leadership is strategic planning. Strong digital leadership skills enable educational leaders to build a clear picture of how technology may support and enhance teaching, learning, and administrative procedures.

Adaptability is a vital trait of digital leadership in today's ever-changing digital world. Digital flexibility is an important part of school-based digital leadership. With the rapid advancement of technology and the increasing use of digital tools in education, digital leaders must be able to adapt to these changes and successfully navigate the changing landscape. To begin, flexibility allows digital leaders to embrace and leverage developing technologies to improve teaching and learning (Petersen, 2014). Digital leaders must be up to date on new tools, platforms, and pedagogical practises, and they must be willing to try out new ways to incorporate technology into the curriculum. Adapting to the new digital resources, digital leaders may create interesting and dynamic learning environments that address evolving student demands. Sadly the business education programme in tertiary institutions seems to struggle with the utilization of digital tools in the business education programme. Abdulkadir (2020) noted that the business education programme in tertiary institutions have failed to promote digitalization in the business education programme. According to Adewole and Adegbenjo (2022) averred that business education students lack the necessary skills to function effectively in the digital environment. It is therefore imperative to determine the strategies that will help to promote digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment. Furthermore, the researchers investigated the influence of experience of business educators on their perception of the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The swiftly evolving technological landscape presents a formidable challenge to business education programmes in effectively equipping their students for the mantle of global business leadership. This challenge is starkly evident in the escalating prevalence of unemployment among graduates of business education, a phenomenon that reverberates through Nigeria as a whole and is notably pronounced within Delta State. The intricate interplay between the changing technological space and the curricular structure of business education programmes in tertiary institutions raises concerns about the sufficiency of the education imparted to students.

As technology forges ahead, the skills required for success in global business leadership undergo a profound transformation. Yet, the existing business education framework is grappling to adequately evolve and align with these swift changes. The result is a growing gap between the knowledge and skills



business education graduates possess and the dynamic demands of the modern business landscape. This disconnects between the educational curriculum and the realities of global business leadership are manifested acutely in the escalating rate of unemployment among business education graduates. As these graduates enter the job market, they often find themselves ill-equipped to navigate the technological intricacies and competitive dynamics inherent in contemporary businesses. This inadequacy subsequently obstructs their ability to secure gainful employment, engendering a crisis of underutilized potential and talent. The repercussions of this unemployment crisis cascade beyond individual lives, affecting the broader societal fabric. One such impact is a surge in criminal activities, which has cast a shadow over Nigeria, with Delta State serving as a microcosm of this disconcerting trend. Unemployment, particularly among educated individuals, has been identified as a significant driver of criminal behavior. The lack of legitimate avenues for economic advancement and personal growth can lead individuals to resort to illegal activities as an alternative means of survival. Consequently, the rising unemployment rate among business education graduates contributes to the escalating criminal activities in Nigeria, further straining social stability and security. In light of these intricate dynamics, it becomes imperative to investigate the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria.

Research Question

This research question guided the study:

1. What are the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria?

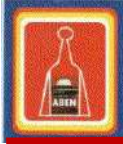
Hypotheses

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Experienced business educator (Above 10 years) and less experienced business educators (less than 10 years) on the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria.

Method

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Delta State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 109 lecturers of the Business Education Programme in five tertiary institutions in Delta State. The entire population was sampled because it was manageable. The data collection instrument used was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was titled "Questionnaire on Strategies for Promoting Digital Leadership among Business Education Students for the Demands of the Digitalized Business Environment (QSPDLBESDDBE)". The questionnaire utilized a 4-point Likert rating scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). It consisted of 13 items on strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment. The instrument underwent validation by three experts from the School of Business Education at the Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted on 20 business educators in Edo State, who were not part of the study population. The obtained data underwent reliability analysis using the Cronbach Alpha method, resulting in coefficient value of 0.88 for internal consistency. The researcher administered the instruments personally and with the help of two research assistants who were business educators in the tertiary institutions under study. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents in their offices, allowing them sufficient time to complete it. The researchers retrieved the questionnaire immediately in cases where respondents were willing to fill it on the spot. However, if a respondent was unavailable, an appointment was scheduled for the retrieval. This process lasted for two weeks. Out of the 109 questionnaires distributed, 88 were retrieved in good condition and used for data analysis. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The mean values were employed to address the research questions, while the standard deviation was used to determine the level of homogeneity among the respondents' ratings. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 or higher was



considered as agree, while any item with a mean score below 2.50 was regarded disagree. For the hypothesis, t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at .05 level of significance. If the p-value is equal to or greater than the alpha value of 0.05, it means that there is no significant difference. The hypothesis was accepted. Consequently if the p-value is less than the alpha value of 0.05, it means that there is a significant difference, therefore the hypothesis is not accepted.

Research Question One

What are the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria?

Results

Table 1: Respondents' Mean Ratings on the Strategies for Promoting Digital Leadership among Business Education Students for the Demands of the Digitalized Business Environment (N=88)

S/No.	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Revise the business education curriculum to include dedicated courses on digital leadership.	3.41	.80	Agree
2.	Foster partnerships with leading businesses and digital innovators.	3.48	.81	Agree
3.	Provide mentorship, seed funding, and resources to help students transform their innovative ideas into viable digital businesses, promoting a culture of innovation and leadership.	3.14	.99	Agree
4.	Invest in training programmes for faculty members to enhance their digital skills and keep them abreast of technological advancements.	3.35	.84	Agree
5.	Create digital business simulation platforms that replicate the challenges of the modern business landscape	3.14	.1.00	Agree
6.	Establish student-led clubs focused on digital leadership and innovation.	3.29	.83	Agree
7.	Organize regular workshops conducted by digital business leaders and tech experts.	3.18	.79	Agree
8.	Incorporate international case studies and best practices in the curriculum.	3.38	.85	Agree
9.	Pair students with digital business mentors who guide them in developing digital leadership skills, providing insights, advice, and practical guidance on navigating the digital business landscape.	3.44	.84	Agree
10.	Encourage students to conduct research on emerging technologies and their implications for Nigerian businesses.	3.25	.91	Agree
11.	Instill a culture of continuous learning by promoting the use of online courses, webinars, and podcasts on digital leadership and technology trends	3.28	.96	Agree
12.	Organize competitions that challenge students to formulate and present innovative digital strategies for real-world business challenges	3.15	.90	Agree
13.	Collaborate with educational policymakers and industry stakeholders to advocate for the integration of digital leadership skills into national education standards	3.17	.87	Agree
Cluster Mean		3.28		Agree

In Table one reveal that the respondents rated all items, 1-13 as agreed with mean ratings ranging between 3.14 to 3.48 as the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students



for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria. The standard deviations ranging between .79 and 1.00 showed that the respondents' opinions are close. The cluster mean score of 3.28 showed that fostering partnerships with leading businesses and digital innovators; revising the business education curriculum to include dedicated courses on digital leadership; incorporating international case studies and best practices in the curriculum and encouraging students to conduct research on emerging technologies and their implications for Nigerian businesses are some of the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of experienced business educator (Above 10 years) and less experienced business educators (less than 10 years) on the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria.

Table 2

Summary of t-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Experienced Business Educator (Above 10 Years) and Less Experienced Business Educators (Less than 10 Years) on the Strategies for Promoting Digital Leadership among Business Education Students for the Demands of the Digitalized Business Environment

Variable	N	X	SD	df	α	p-value	Decision
Experienced Bus. Edu.	53	3.20	.93				
L. Exp. Business Edu.	35	3.36	.88	86	.05	.42	Not Significant

Data in Table 2 showed that the p-value of .42 is greater than .05 alpha level of significance. This means that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean ratings of experienced business educator (Above 10 years) and less experienced business educators (less than 10 years) on the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria. The hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that that fostering partnerships with leading businesses and digital innovators; Revising the business education curriculum to include dedicated courses on digital leadership; Incorporating international case studies and best practices in the curriculum and Encouraging students to conduct research on emerging technologies and their implications for Nigerian businesses are some of the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Adewole and Adegbenjo (2022) who reported that one of the prominent strategies of promoting digitalization of the business education programme is the significance of forging partnerships with leading businesses and digital innovators. Sheninger (2022) averred that collaborations of this nature offer invaluable opportunities for students to immerse themselves in real-world business contexts, gaining firsthand exposure to digital strategies and innovations. Ndubuisi et al. (2021) stated that engaging with industry professionals, students can gain insights into the practical application of digital leadership skills, witness the challenges and opportunities presented by technological advancements, and cultivate a deeper understanding of the intricacies of the digitalized business environment. This strategy not only enhances students' knowledge but also bridges the gap between academic learning and industry expectations.

Furthermore, findings of the study revealed no statistically significant difference in the mean ratings of experienced business educator (Above 10 years) and less experienced business educators (less than 10 years) on the strategies for promoting digital leadership among business education students for the demands of the digitalized business environment in Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Abdulkadir (2020) who stated that revamping of the business education curriculum to include dedicated courses on digital leadership. This position underscores the importance of equipping students with specialized knowledge and skills tailored to the digital age. Integrating courses focused on digital strategy, technology trends, and their implications for business, institutions can empower students with a comprehensive



understanding of how digitalization intersects with various aspects of business operations (Lasak, 2015). This approach ensures that graduates possess the competencies required to harness technology for strategic decision-making, innovation, and effective communication within a digital business landscape.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concludes that the strategies explored by the study, may bridge the gap between education and industry, producing graduates who are not just knowledgeable about digital leadership but also prepared to drive innovation, transformation, and success in a digitalized business environment. It is therefore imperative that measures are put in place to facilitate the promotion of digital leadership among business education students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Administrators of business education programmes in tertiary institutions should actively seek out partnerships with major firms and digital pioneers. Initiating mentorship programmes, internships, and collaborative projects will provide students with hands-on experience with real-world digital challenges and solutions. Students can cultivate a comprehensive understanding of digital leadership dynamics by mixing academia and industry. Furthermore, curriculum planners of business education programmes in tertiary institutions should create a teaching strategy that emphasises experiential learning. Through hands-on projects, case competitions, and simulations, encourage students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world circumstances. This immersive approach would helps students internalise digital leadership concepts while also improving their problem-solving abilities in a digital context.

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