



DIGITALISATION OF SKILLS ACQUISITION ON THE EMPLOYABILITY OF BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES IN LAGOS STATE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

This study investigated the digitalisation of skills acquisition and the employability of business education graduates in Lagos state tertiary institutions. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised of 1761 Business Education graduates in four tertiary institutions within Lagos state. Two hundred and forty (240) participants were selected from 4 (four) tertiary institutions within Lagos state were sampled. The research instrument used was a four-point modified Rensis Likert Rating Scale Questionnaire type. The contents and face validity were done. A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument using split-half-half reliability test. The reliability coefficient of 0.82 was established. Three research questions were raised and answered while three hypotheses were formulated and tested. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the hypotheses formulated were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the result from the findings of this study, it was concluded that there was a significant relationship between the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education, integration of digital learning tools to business education programmes and graduate proficiency level in specific digital skills and graduate employability. It was recommended that government should improve on their provision of ICT infrastructures to all tertiary institutions in Lagos State to enable business educators to utilize them in instructional delivery and that students should be trained on the usage of digital devices and appliances as it is the new and future yardstick to thrive in the 21st-century workplace.

Keywords: Business Education, Digitalization, skill acquisition, employability of business education graduates

Introduction

The widespread use of digital technology, providing access to vast amounts of information, has necessitated the development of new skill sets worldwide. Computerization, automation, and mechanization are driving significant changes in the workplace. To stay relevant post-graduation, students must cultivate "digitalization skills." This process involves acquiring the competencies and expertise required to effectively utilize digital technology across various aspects of life and work (Radovan, 2016). It encompasses acquiring the skills, knowledge, and values necessary for ethical and effective use of digital tools, platforms, and technologies. "Digital skills" encompasses digital literacy, information management, communication and collaboration, digital creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving, coding and programming, and digital citizenship (Radovan, 2016). Digital talent involves the capability to access and



manage information using diverse digital tools or applications and to be acquainted with various networks. These skills support individuals to engage in fulfilling life experiences, learning, work, and social activities. They facilitate interaction and collaboration, content creation and sharing, and problem-solving. Information and communication technology exemplify this multifaceted concept by transcending national boundaries, creating global networks, and establishing a global village where information is accessible from any part of the world instantaneously (Olaniyi, 2015).

Olanipekun and Adeyera (2016) asserted that digitization of skills is the capacity to combine and apply digital technology in a variety of ways. To stay competitive and productive in today's digitally driven world, people must keep up with the changing digital landscape and regularly refresh their digital skill abilities. The issue of digital skills has emerged as a social dilemma as the digital transition continues. According to Lordache, Marin, and Baelden (2017), workers need the appropriate abilities to take advantage of the new opportunities in the workplace, because automation is transforming labour markets. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) noted that over the past few decades, the need for high-skilled labour has risen daily in the world of the digital market, also, the number of university graduates increases every year while Digital technologies can bridge the gap through digital technology advancement in today's technology-driven market (Thomas, 2019). These advancements have made digital skills for business education students in higher institutions a necessity. This is so because, according to studies by Helsper and Reisdorf (2016), public and commercial organisations across the globe are beginning to digitally transform their services, putting the general population at risk of being left out of the digital economy. All people who lack the requisite abilities to handle the digitization of the numerous services of life domains are at risk of becoming digitally excluded. Deursen and van Dijk (2014) and Helsper and Eynon (2013), stressed the growing significance of these skills and competencies in ensuring users' full participation in the digital workplace.

The enhancement of digital skills and competencies is a top priority for many academics, professionals, and policymakers around the world to ensure that citizens can participate fully in today's increasingly digital society. According to Kerblom (2012), the digital workplace is changing and new tools are performing traditional tasks. Students of business education who are prepared for the workplace should be able to cooperate in a variety of knowledge-sharing environments and quickly locate the data they require to solve issues using digital tools and systems. The influence of digitalization skills on graduate employability in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. Hence, the current study aims to examine the digitalization of skills acquisition on the employability of business education graduates in tertiary institutions in Lagos state

Statement of the problem

Due to the rapid improvements in technology and the rising demand for digital skills in the labour market, there is an emerging concern in Nigeria over the employability of business education graduates. The traditional educational system frequently finds it difficult to keep up with the rapidly changing demands of the industry, which causes a discrepancy between the graduates' skill sets and what companies are looking for. The lack of excellent training and development options for graduates to acquire digital skills only makes the issue worse. The development of students' 21st century digital skills and competency needed to be self-employed and digitally inclined through effective use of ICT communication, technology, and management skills will be greatly aided by the integration of digital skill acquisition into teaching and learning of business education. To generate qualified graduates who will succeed in the contemporary corporate environment, business educators must embrace significant changes brought about by digitalization in the teaching and learning process (Turner, 2015). When educating students about digitalized entrepreneurship, business educators are expected to be skilled users of information and communication technologies.

However, utilizing ICT in business education programs has a great impact on business education graduates because ICT aids in boosting teachings, instructional delivery, research and students' learning towards the digital economy. In Lagos state, Nigeria, there are few empirical studies on the impact of digitalization on skill acquisition and graduate employability in business education. In light of this, the study examined the impact of digitalization on skill acquisition on the employability of business education graduates in tertiary institutions in Lagos State.

Research Questions

In line with the above specific objectives raised, the following research questions were postulated to guide the study.



1. How has the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education related to the employability of graduates in the modern job market?
2. To what extent do business education programs integrate digital learning tools related to graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces?
3. How does the proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates correlate with their employability?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

1. There is no significant relationship between the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education and the employability of graduates in the modern job market
2. There is no significant relationship between the integration of digital learning tools into business education programs and graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces
3. There is no significant relationship between proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates and graduate employability.

Digital skills are a collection of abilities that enable a person to use information technology wisely. They can also be described as a group of abilities, resources, and information required to use networks, digital tools, and various online applications that facilitate the management of information for particular needs in working environments, learning environments, and problem-solving scenarios. It describes a person's capacity to locate, assess, and effectively communicate knowledge through writing and other types of media on different digital platforms. It assesses a person's grammar, writing, typing, and technological production skills for text, images, audio, and designs. To find, evaluate, produce, and convey knowledge using information and communication technologies, one needs both cognitive and technical skills (Digital Literacy, 2017).

The process of gaining and developing the information, competencies, and abilities required to successfully navigate, use, and use digital technologies and tools is referred to as the acquisition of digital skills. A wide range of talents known as "digital skills" enable people to interact with digital platforms, programmes, and devices successfully and efficiently to accomplish a variety of objectives, whether they be professional, educational, or personal.

The study of technologies and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding, and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economy and social life are also included in the study of business education, which is a subset of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (FGN, 2013). In Nigeria's higher institutions, there are also educational programmes in business education available. It is a course created to instil in the students. The information, values, and skills necessary for effective performance in the workplace. According to Kiyosaki (2013), business education is the kind of training required in the twenty-first century and has a built-in mechanism for enhancing a learner's abilities in almost all fields, particularly Accounting, Investment, Marketing, insurance, office procedures, law, and information technology. Digital skills must be acquired to prepare students in business school to compete in the 21st century and beyond.

To understand how digital skills, affect employment opportunities and professional achievement, empirical research evaluating the relationship between graduate employability and digital skill acquisition has been carried out. A few examples of this research are Simeonova and Mavromaras's (2019) investigation of the connection between graduate employability and digital abilities among UK business graduates. According to the findings, graduates with higher levels of digital proficiency had higher employment chances than those with low digital skill acquisition. Another study by Risku and Huttunen (2017) looked into the effect of digital skills on university graduates' employment in Finland. According to the research, graduates with advanced digital abilities were more likely to be employable and to land jobs that matched their qualifications.

In the context of the digital economy, Ndou and Benecchi (2019) investigated the connection between digital skills and graduate employability. The results revealed that graduates from business education had better employment chances and were more likely to find employment in sectors that were undergoing digital change. In the same vein, Johnson and Smith (2018) in their study, looked at the connection between graduates' readiness for digital workplaces and the use of digital learning technologies in business education programmes. The findings suggested that business education programmes that actively incorporated digital learning tools, such as online collaboration platforms, virtual simulations, and digital case studies, contributed to graduates' competence in using digital technologies and their capacity to navigate digital work environments.



The employability of business education graduates was evaluated in the study of John (2019) about the competency levels in particular digital skills, such as data analysis, digital marketing, or programming. The results showed that higher levels of digital skill competency were linked to better career prospects and increased employability. Smith (2018), who conducted a comparative study, examined the connection between graduates of business education and employability in various circumstances. According to the findings, graduates with higher degrees of competency in key digital abilities had a higher chance of finding work, especially in positions that needed digital ability. Davis and Johnson (2017) looked into how graduates of business education fared in terms of career outcomes, including employability and job performance. The results showed that graduates with higher levels of competency in particular digital skills were more likely to find appropriate work, advance more quickly in their careers, and perform better on the job. From the various empirical studies reviewed by both local and foreign authors, there are little or no specific studies on the digitalization of skills acquisition on the employability of business education graduates in Nigeria, it is the gap in the literature that this study sought to fill.

Methodology

This study adopts descriptive research of correlation type. This method selects and studies samples to describe as well as discover the relationships between the variables. The population comprise of all 1761 Business Education graduates in four tertiary institutions within Lagos state. A sample size of 240 participants (60 Business education graduates from each institution) is drawn using the stratified random sampling techniques. The instruments used for data collection was the questionnaire titled: Digitalization of Skills Acquisition on the Employability Questionnaire (DSAEQ) with 15 items built on the four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), which has been developed by the researchers. The instrument was validated by experts in Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education. The reliability of this instrument is determined using split half and a reliability index of 0.82 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics tools were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question 1:

How has the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education related to the employability of graduates in the modern job market?

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Table 1: Digitalization of Skills Acquisition and Graduate Employability

S/N.	Items	X	SD	Remark
1.	Business education graduates with digitalization skills have a competitive edge in the job market	2.67	1.01	Agreed
2.	Digitalization skills open doors to a wide range of job and career paths	2.87	0.94	Agreed
3.	Digitalization skills empower business education graduates to explore entrepreneurial ventures	2.74	0.84	Agreed
4.	Digitalization skills enable graduates to work efficiently and productively in the workplace	2.86	0.91	Agreed
5.	Business education graduates with digitalization skills are better positioned to meet	3.02	0.71	Agreed
Grand Mean		2.83	0.88	

Using the mean value of 2.50 as a benchmark for a favourable response. Table 1 shows that participants agreed with all questions raised on how the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education relates



to the employability of graduates in the modern job market. Also, with the grand mean score of 2.83 above the benchmark of 2.50 set, it can be concluded that the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education will greatly enhance the employability of graduates in the modern job market.

Research Question 2: To what extent do business education programs integrate digital learning tools to relate to graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces?

Table 2: Integration of Digital Learning and Graduates' Readiness for Digitalized Workplaces

S/N.	Items	X	SD	Remark
1.	The integration of digital learning tools in my education has improved my technical skills relevant to the job market.	2.88	0.82	Agreed
2.	The use of digital learning tools has not enhanced my ability to collaborate and work in teams effectively.	2.48	1.24	Disagreed
3.	Digital learning tools have helped me develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary for employment.	2.94	0.72	Agreed
4.	The integration of digital learning tools has provided me with practical and hands-on experiences that are applicable in real-world work settings.	2.51	1.01	Agreed
5.	The level of utilisation of digital learning tools for teaching business education in my school is low	2.72	0.89	Agreed
Grand Mean		2.71	0.94	

Using the mean value of 2.50 as a benchmark for favourable response. Table 2 indicates that participants agreed with four questions and disagreed with only one question raised on the extent to of business education programmes integrate digital learning tools related to graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces. Also, with the grand mean score of 2.71 above the benchmark of 2.50 set, it can be inferred that the integration of digital learning tools into business education programmes relates to graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces to a great extent.

Research Question 3: How does the proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates correlate with their employability?

Table 3: Business Education Graduates and their Employability

S/N.	Items	X	SD	Remark
1.	Graduates with lower proficiency in digital skills have a competitive advantage in the job market.	2.43	0.96	Disagreed
2.	The level of my digital skills proficiency will not positively influence my chances of securing employment.	2.34	1.14	Disagreed
3.	Digital skills proficiency is considered a desirable trait by employers in my field of study.	2.98	0.82	Agreed
4.	Higher proficiency in digital skills increases my adaptability to technological advancements in the workplace.	2.78	0.94	Agreed
5.	Employers value graduates who possess a high level of digital skills proficiency	3.12	0.68	Agreed
Grand Mean		2.73	0.91	

Using the mean value of 2.50 as a benchmark for favourable response. Table 3 indicates that participants agreed with three questions raised and disagreed with two questions raised on how the proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates correlates with their employability. Also, with the grand mean score of 2.73 above the benchmark of 2.50 set, it can be concluded that high proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates related to their employability

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education and the employability of graduates in the modern job market



Table 4: A “r”-statistical table showing a relationship between digitalization of skills acquisition in business education and employability

Variable	Mean	SD	df	r-cal.	r-crit.	Decision
Digitalisation of Skill Acquisition	14.02	4.15				
Graduate Employability	16.09	3.17	238	0.32	0.138	Significant

P <0.05; df = 238; Crit. –r =0.138

Information on Table 4 reveals that the calculated ‘r’ value (r-cal. = 0.32) is greater than the ‘r’ critical (crit. ‘r’ = 0.138) given 238 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, hence, the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant relationship between digitalization of skills acquisition in business education and employability of graduates in the modern job market is rejected. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education and the employability of graduates in the modern job market

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between the integration of digital learning tools into business education programs and graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces

Table 5: A “r”-statistical table showing a relationship between the integration of digital learning tools into business education programs and graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces

Variable	Mean	SD	df	r-cal.	r-crit.	Decision
Integration of Digital Learning Tools	14.02	4.15				
Graduate Employability	16.11	2.18	238	0.57	0.138	Significant

P <0.05; df = 238; Crit. –r =0.138

Information on Table 5 reveals that the calculated ‘r’ value (r-cal. = 0.57) is greater than the ‘r’ critical (crit. ‘r’ = 0.138) given 238 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, hence, the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant relationship between integration of digital learning tools to business education programs and graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces is rejected. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between the integration of digital learning tools into business education programs and graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates and graduate employability

Table 6: A “r”-statistical table showing a relationship between proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates and graduate employability

Variable	Mean	SD	df	r-cal.	r-crit.	Decision
Proficiency in Digital Skills	12.48	3.78				
Graduate Employability	16.09	3.17	238	0.44	0.138	Significant

P <0.05; df = 238; Crit –r =0.138

Information on Table 6 reveals that the calculated ‘r’ value (r-cal. = 0.44) is greater than the ‘r’ critical (crit ‘r’ = 0.138) given 238 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, hence, the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant relationship between proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates and graduate employability is rejected. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates and graduate employability



hypothesis which says that there is no significant relationship between proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates and graduate employability is rejected. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates and graduate employability

Discussion of Findings

The result obtained from the tested hypotheses shows that there is a significant positive relationship between the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education and the employability of graduates in the modern job market. This implies that the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education has a significant impact on the employability of graduates. Digitalization of skills acquisition in business education improves the employability of graduates by equipping them with relevant, in-demand skills, fostering adaptability and agility, enhancing communication and collaboration abilities, and promoting entrepreneurship and innovation. This is in agreement with Risku and Huttunen (2017) who examined the impact of digital skills on the employability of university graduates in Finland and the findings indicated that graduates with advanced digital skills had higher employability rates and were more likely to find employment that matched their qualifications

The result of tested hypothesis two shows that there is a significant relationship between the integration of digital learning tools into business education programs and graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces. This implies that the integration of digital learning tools into business education programs plays a crucial role in preparing graduates for digitalized workplaces. The integration of digital learning tools exposes students to various software, applications, and online platforms that are prevalent in digital workplaces. This agrees with Smith and Johnson's (2018) study on the relationship between the utilization of digital learning tools in business education programs and graduates' preparedness for digitalized workplaces. The results suggested that business education programs that actively incorporated digital learning tools, such as virtual simulations, online collaboration platforms, and digital case studies, contributed to graduates' competence in using digital technologies and their ability to navigate digital work environments.

The result of the third hypothesis shows that there is a significant relationship between proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates and graduate employability. This implies that the proficiency level in specific digital skills among business education graduates has a direct impact on their employability. Many job roles now require specific digital skills, such as data analysis, digital marketing, coding, project management software, and proficiency in using various productivity tools. Graduates who possess a high level of proficiency in these skills are better equipped to meet the specific job requirements of employers. This agreed with Davis and Johnson (2017) who investigated the impact of digital skill proficiency on career outcomes, including employability and job performance, among business education graduates. The findings revealed that graduates who demonstrated higher levels of proficiency in specific digital skills were more likely to secure relevant employment, experience faster career progression, and achieve higher levels of job performance.

Conclusion

This study investigated the digitalization of skills acquisition on the employability of business education graduates in Lagos state tertiary institutions. The study has empirically shown that the acquisition of digital skills by Business education graduates is a sine qua non for preparing graduates' readiness for digitalized workplaces. The study vividly showed that the level of integration of digital learning tools by institutions and the level of graduate proficiency in digital skills will give Business education graduates a competitive advantage in the job market. Based on the result from the findings of this study, it was concluded that there was a significant relationship between the digitalization of skills acquisition in business education, integration of digital learning tools to business education programmes and graduate proficiency level in specific digital skills and graduate employability.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. The government should improve on their provision of ICT infrastructures to all tertiary institutions in Lagos State to enable business educators to utilize them in instructional delivery.
2. Business educators should be encouraged to utilize available digital facilities to equip their students with employability skills



3. Students should be trained on the usage of digital devices and appliances as it is the new and future yardstick to thrive in the 21st-century workplace
4. The use of practical activities should be highly utilized by business educators in teaching to equip the students with employability skills for self-employment.

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