



STUDENTS' PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF COMPUTER EDUCATION ON BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS' ACQUISITION OF CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE SKILLS FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

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Abstract

The study determined students' perceived influence of computer education on business education students' acquisition of creative and innovative skills for entrepreneurial success. Survey design was adopted for the study. Two research questions guided the study while two null hypotheses were tested. The population of the study consisted 205 undergraduate business education students at various levels of study in Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike; Ebonyi State. 49 of the total population were male while 156 were female. Also, 43 out of the entire population were new students while 162 were old students. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument contained 19 items and had a 5-point response options. Cronbach alpha coefficient measure of internal consistency was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The results of the reliability test for the two sections of the instrument were 0.87 and 0.82 respectively. Data collected for the study were analysed using descriptive statistics and percentages. Z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study revealed that computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative and innovative skills for entrepreneurial success. It was therefore concluded that more computer courses should be included in the business education curriculum to enable the students get exposed to adequate learning experiences in computer science and its technologies. Based on the findings, it was recommended that National Universities Commission and other stakeholders in Business education should include some computer courses in the business education curriculum.

Keywords: *Computer Education, Business Education, Creative skills and Innovative skills*

Introduction

Computer education is the art of teaching students to acquire proficient knowledge and skills in the use of computer and its technologies in their daily activities. There is increasing demand for computer education among individuals and students due to constant technological changes and digitalization of every aspect of human endeavor in the society. There is virtually no human activity, profession and engagements where computers are not used. This dominant use of computer in every sector of the economy has given rise to what is today called 'digital economy' and globalization. Emeasoba, Akudolu and Agbo (2022) affirmed this by stating that every facet of human endeavour be it in the areas of healthcare delivery, business practices, social interaction, politics, information system, knowledge dissemination, education and others is now revolutionalized with digital technology. This therefore makes computer education a necessary part of general education or knowledge that every student needs in order to fit in properly in the current information and communication technology-driven society.

It is in recognition of the importance of computer literacy that various higher institutions of learning in Nigeria incorporated introduction to computer science as part of compulsory general study courses for students irrespective of their course of study. Anireh and Amadi (2020) agreed that the world through internet technology has become a global village where businesses and other activities are done through internet. The authors further opined that developing the capacity to do business utilizing online and offline facilities in the business environment requires possession of appropriate skill set by entrepreneur who must understand the dynamics of business and the technology that drives the 21st century businesses. Recognizing the imperative of computer education for business education students, Ogar, Akpan and Anagbogu (2015) maintained that the objectives of business education cannot be achieved if ICT skills are not integrated into its curriculum.



Use of computer technology in the business economy has altered the dynamics of business environment, customers' preferences, methods of production, marketing strategies and processes. Conducting businesses using computer technology helps to reach out to billions of customers and prospective customers at a minimal cost unlike the traditional method of marketing. Suppliers and customers interact using online medium to advertise goods, place orders or shop for goods without any hindrance in terms of differences in their locations. This is what globalization is all about. Ogar, Akpan and Anagbogu (2015) added that the use of computer enables business practitioners to conduct their business affairs online and be in tune with current global business practices propelled by digitization. Anireh and Amadi (2020) stated that online business model is fast becoming a trend and that any business organization that fails to key into this new business model does so at their own great risk. In the public sector, computers are used in offices for typing letters, memos and circulars as against the use of typewriters as was obtainable before the advent of computer. Sometimes information in public offices are distributed through email and social media platforms in these offices. Virtual meetings are conducted among employees, business associates, suppliers and customers alike using computer technology platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Skype, Slack, GoToMeeting, Cisco WebEx, Jitsi Meet, Toasty, lifesize, Jami, etc. Business researches aimed at improving quality and market share are effectively done using online means and some computer application software are used for data collection and analysis. Furthermore, employers often require applicants to apply and submit their documents online while interview and test may also be computer-based. Thus, for business education students to adapt to the present day digital world of business, economy and modern office work environment, they require a certain level of computer knowledge and skill.

Use of computer and its technologies are not limited to the business world and in the public office work, its grip can be conspicuously seen in the education sector too. In the education sector, Haleem, Javaid, Qadri and Suman (2022) noted that globalisation has necessitated the application of computer technologies in conducting classes, sharing resources, doing assessment and managing the day to day activities of academic institutions. Similarly, Timotheou, et al. (2023) asserted that computer technologies have brought changes to the nature and scope of education. Versatile and disruptive technological innovations, such as smart devices, the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR), blockchain, and software applications have opened up new opportunities for advancing teaching and learning. Most recently, the occurrence of Covid-19 pandemic across the globe further brought to fur the usefulness of computer and its application in the business world. During the pandemic era, only businesses and organisations that are computer and ICT-compliant were active while others became dormant and even liquidated. From the foregoing, it becomes obvious that for business students to fare well in businesses upon graduation and adapt to the computer-driven society, they must be proficiently computer literate.

The challenges of lack of computer education by practicing businessmen and budding business entrepreneurs abound. According to Sisira, et al. (2019), businesses, especially small and medium sized businesses are facing many obstacles due to the rapid globalization of business activities. The authors maintained that factors such as lack of innovative digital skills of owner managers and poor quality of product make start-up businesses unable to meet up with increasing business dynamics and rising competition in local and global market. Also during period of insecurity arising from kidnapping, terrorism, secessionists' agitations and pandemic, small and medium sized businesses that operate offline close down economic activities due to imposition of lockdown, sit-at-home or curfew. When this situation persists for a long time, businesses struggle to absorb the shock while start-ups go into extinction. Abriham Ehabu Engidaw (2022) noted that one of the biggest trends that resulted from the emergence COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lock-down is that small businesses started going online and creating different opportunities for solving many challenges associated with offline mode of operating a business. The authors further averred that for many small businesses, the internet remains a lifeline, helping them to stay afloat during pandemic and insecurity period. Thus, it becomes expedient for entrepreneurs and managers of business enterprises to put on their thinking caps and fashion out modern ways of doing businesses online in other to cope with the challenges of offline operations. The solution requires digital innovation and creativity skills on the part of business education students.

Innovation is the implementation of improved ideas, knowledge and practices. It implies novelty and brings benefits. Adebisi and Amole, (2017) defined innovation as the ability to develop new product, processes, supply sources, market and ways of organizing business activities. Innovation is a multidimensional and of various types. The types of innovation include product, process and market. It is often associated with technological feats and it plays a critical role in the world economy (Baskaran &



Mehta, 2016). Innovation is important in the business world as it helps firms to create sustainable value and become strong in the competitive environment. Abubakar and Hussaina (2020) stated that innovation is needed in reducing internal inefficiencies, improve process and to enhance decision-making process in the midst of daunting challenges bedeviling SMEs. Innovation makes it possible for businesses to improve their existing products, processes or to create new products outright. Digital innovation according to Ibanga (2021) can improve standards of living, create wealth for entrepreneurs and country's economy in general. Accordingly, digitally-innovated start-ups have the tendency to scale up to become large business firms as they are likely to fare better in the entrepreneurship ecosystem than startups in traditional or less-innovated mode of operation (Ibanga, 2021). Thus, innovation brings something new to a startup to drive change, promote new value and sustainable growth by enabling new products and markets to develop.

Computer education helps business education students to acquire knowledge and digital skill to invent innovations in their service delivery, modernize production processes, improve quality of product and above all, use online technological platforms to interact with their customers and suppliers across the globe. To this end, business education programme should be made to incorporate some more computer-related courses to help the students to leverage on their acquired computer skills to bring digital innovations in their business operations. It will also enable them to secure paid employment easily in the present day modern office environment that has been digitalized. Recognizing the role of computer education in enhancing innovative skills of students, Emesini (2015) stated that teacher education programme must be fashioned to include the contents and methods of ICT applications for effective performance and service delivery in this era of digitalization. With sufficient computer literacy, business education students will be able to design their products using innovative approach, advertise their wares online and gain competitive advantage over their competitors in the market. Besides, exposure of business education students to a broad-based computer education will go along to enhance their creativity in business.

Creativity is the ability to use imagination to develop new and original ideas or things better than what is in existence. It can also be seen as the perceived competence of an individual to generate ideas about products, services, processes, procedures, or solutions that are novel and useful (Entrialgo & Iglesias, 2020). Through creativity, individuals imagine situations in which they can develop and test new ideas, conceive new markets, products, and services, and consider alternative courses of action (Wood & McKinley, 2010). Creativity is an important quality of an entrepreneur or business managers. Being creative helps a business manager to come up with better ways of rendering services to customers, produce quality products and review production processes with a view to improving existing methods. Good product packaging, design, customization, colour combinations and display of products are consequences of creativity. Interestingly, these variables determine customer preferences, choices, attraction and demand. Therefore, a businessman who is creative is bound to attract more patronage than their counterparts who are not creative. Creativity enables an entrepreneur or business manager to increase their market share, improve turnover and profitability.

Creativity can be developed through computer education. Computer provides digital technologies that have potentials for enhancing creativity. Computer technologies provide tools, platform and resources that provoke critical thinking, imaginations and solutions to some of the challenges that bedevil business management. Corroborating, Anisija, Andrina and Michael (2017) maintained that computer education supports the development of creative skills and problem solving. Kushiator, Rahman, and Antwi (2020) averred that new digital learning technologies are integrating global content and intensifying learning scopes within and outside existing classroom models. Thus, creativity is explored as a dynamic and fundamental intellectual thinking of modern times. The authors further stated that the implication is that the ability to appropriately use computer technologies and integrate them into one's business has become crucial. In view of the above, it is highly important to integrate computer courses into the business education curriculum at all levels of tertiary education. This will help to imbue students with computer knowledge and skills that will enhance their creative and innovative skills for optimum performance in the present digital world of business. Although extant studies (Emesini, 2015; Anisija, Andrina & Michael, 2017) exist on ICT skills required for a successful business, importance of ICT in teacher education, etc.; there is need to ascertain how computer education influences the acquisition of creative and innovative skills among business education students. This is the gap in literature that this study intends to fill.

Statement of the Problem

The overall objective of business education programme in tertiary institutions of learning is to train competent graduates who shall become self-reliant and employers of labour in the society upon graduation. Others include training competent graduates with 21st century skills to take up employment as teachers and office workers in order to earn a living and contribute to the development of the economy. In contrast,



business education graduates now face serious unemployment due to lack of skills and competencies needed by employers in the present digital economy and ICT-driven society. Other business education graduates who are in small and medium sized businesses often experience business failure due to problems associated with creativity, innovation, computer illiteracy, not being able to meet customers' preferences and low patronage. Some graduates now engage in social vices due to sheer frustrations associated with idleness and business failure. The economy is not reaping maximum positive contributions of business education graduates in terms of enhancing gross domestic product, employment generation and in bringing the much-needed revolution in the business world. Thus, it becomes expedient to study the influence of computer education on business education students' acquisition of creative and innovative skills for entrepreneurial success to serve a basis for reviewing business education curriculum.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does computer education influence business education students' acquisition of creative skills for entrepreneurial success?
2. How does computer education influence business education students' acquisition of innovative skills for entrepreneurial success?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of old and new students on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative skills for entrepreneurial success.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of innovative skills for entrepreneurial success.

Method

Survey design was adopted for the study. The design was considered appropriate since it was meant to collect data without manipulation, from a representative sample and generalize the findings on the entire population. A structured questionnaire containing 19 items was developed by the researchers and used for data collection. The questionnaire used 5-point response options of Strongly Agree (5points), Agree (4points), Undecided (3points), Disagree (2points) and Strongly Disagree (1point). Validity of the instrument was established using two experts in Business education and one expert in Educational measurement and evaluation. The corrections and suggestions of the experts were effected before the final production and use of the instrument. To establish the reliability of the instrument for data collection, the instrument was administered to 70 Business education students at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki and scores were obtained. Cronbach alpha's method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and it yielded alpha values of 0.87 and 0.82, respectively; for the two sections of the instrument. The population of the study consisted 205 undergraduate business education students at various levels of study in Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike; Ebonyi State. 49 of the total population were male while 156 were female. Also, 43 out of the entire population were new students while 162 were old students. Data collected for the study were analysed using descriptive statistics and percentages. z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was to accept the null hypothesis if the z-calculated value was less than the z-critical value; otherwise, it would be rejected. Weighted average score was used as a criterion for decision-making regarding the research questions. Items with mean scores that are greater or equal to the weighted average score were regarded as influence of computer education on business education students' acquisition of creative and innovative skills. On the other hand, items with mean scores that are below the weighted average score were not regarded as influence of computer education on business education students' acquisition of creative and innovative skills.

Results

Research Question 1

How does computer education influence business education students' acquisition of creative skills for entrepreneurial success?



Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the responses on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative skills for entrepreneurial success

S/N	Items	Mean	%	SD	Remark
1.	I can create blogs for marketing products and services using my computer knowledge	3.21	71	1.97	Agree
2.	I use my computer knowledge to create digital video and audio tools in promoting my business	3.40	83	1.88	Agree
3.	I using my computer knowledge to design and redesign product features	2.78	46	1.98	Disagree
4.	My computer knowledge helps me to fashion out digital means of interacting with suppliers and customers across the globe	3.31	73	1.90	Agree
5.	I leverage on computer knowledge to utilise online business opportunity	3.32	73	1.78	Agree
6.	I use my computer knowledge to create novel ways of displaying data and information about my business	3.25	69	1.95	Agree
7.	Computer knowledge helps me to save time in obtaining business information and data from the right source	3.27	72	1.88	Agree
8.	I use my computer knowledge to generate new ideas and visions	2.89	48	1.53	Disagree
9.	My computer knowledge helps me to make presentations during trade fair, business seminar and symposium in a more interesting and effective way	3.44	85	1.76	Agree
Weighted Average		3.21			Agree

Data in Table 1 above show that respondents agreed that all the items except two (2) are how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative skills for entrepreneurial success. All the items except item numbers 3 and 8, have mean scores that are greater or equal to the weighted average score of 3.21 which was used as a basis for agreeing or disagreeing on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative skills. Furthermore, more than 50% of the respondents agreed that all the items except item numbers 3 and 8 are how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative skills. Items numbers 3 and 8 have percentage scores of 46 and 48 respectively. The percentages for these two items are below 50%. Hence, the researcher considered them as weak influence of how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative skills. Also, from Table 1 above, it can be observed that the standard deviation scores are similar with no significant difference among them. It implies that the respondents are of similar opinion on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative skills for entrepreneurial success.

Table 2: z-test of difference between the mean ratings of old and new students on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative skills for entrepreneurial success

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Remarks
Old Std.	162	21.63	10.11	203	1.57	1.96	NS
New Std.	43	19.21	9.56				

Data in Table 2 show that the z-calculated value is 1.57 while z-critical value is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore null hypothesis is accepted since the z-calculated value is less than the z-critical value. This implies that both old and new students are of similar opinion on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative skills for entrepreneurial success.

Research Question 2

How does computer education influence business education students' acquisition of innovative skills for entrepreneurial success?



Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the responses on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of innovative skills for entrepreneurial success

S/N	Items	Mean	%	SD	Remark
10.	I conduct my business affairs online using my computer knowledge	3.43	84	1.72	Agree
11.	I use my computer knowledge to apply new ICT technologies and resources in my business	3.35	78	1.67	Agree
12.	I use my computer knowledge to introduce new methods of operation	3.41	80	1.71	Agree
13.	Computer knowledge helps me to adopt digital financial accounting system for my business	3.46	85	1.73	Agree
14.	I use my computer knowledge to introduce new products to market	3.34	78	1.68	Agree
15.	Computer knowledge helps in online-shopping and order tracking	3.37	79	1.68	Agree
16.	I use my computer knowledge to make document automation in supply chain and logistics	2.55	47	1.11	Disagree
17.	I do business research using digital means	3.61	88	1.75	Agree
18.	I do inventory management using computer application software	3.52	86	1.72	Agree
19.	Computer education helps me to computerize and manage my payroll system	3.39	79	1.70	Agree
Weighted Average		3.34			Agree

Data in Table 3 above show that respondents agreed that all the items except one (1) are how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of innovative skills for entrepreneurial success. All the items except item number 16, have mean scores that are greater or equal to the weighted average score of 3.34 which was used as a basis for agreeing or disagreeing on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of innovative skills for entrepreneurial success. Furthermore, more than 50% of the respondents agreed that all the items except item number 16 are how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of innovative skills. Item number 16 has a percentage score of 47. This percentage falls below 50%. Hence, the researcher considered the item as a weak influence of how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of innovative skills. Also, from Table 2 above, it can be observed that the standard deviation scores are similar with no significant difference among them. This implies that the respondents are of similar opinion on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of innovative skills for entrepreneurial success.

Table 4: z-test of difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of innovative skills for entrepreneurial success

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Remarks
Male	49	12.94	11.54	203	1.78	1.96	NS
Female	156	15.01	12.22				

Data in Table 4 show that the z-calculated value is 1.78 while z-critical value is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted since the z-calculated value is less than the z-critical value. This implies that both male and female students are of similar opinion on how computer education influences business education students' acquisition of innovative skills.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study revealed that computer education influences business education students' acquisition of creative skills for entrepreneurial success by helping the students to acquire skills to create blogs for marketing their products and services, create digital video and use audio tools to promote their businesses and fashion out digital means of interacting with suppliers and customers across the globe.



Others include helping business education students to create novel ways of displaying data and information about their businesses digitally, leveraging on their computer knowledge to utilize online business opportunity, save time in obtaining business information and data from the right source and to also use their computer knowledge to make presentations during trade fair, business seminar and symposium in a more interesting and effective way. Computer knowledge and skills are essential in the present world where the use of digital technologies is ubiquitous. Forward-looking businesses have for long sifted from their traditional methods of operation to the use of digital means. Thus it is imperative that business education students be equipped with more computer knowledge and skills otherwise called digital skills; to enable them operate competitively in the digital global business world. The finding is in agreement with Baba and Ali (2023) whose study revealed that information and communication technology (ICT) skill, innovative skills and e-commerce skills are required by business education students for a successful business operation upon graduation. This implies that for business education graduates to successfully operate businesses, these skills should be possessed by them. Furthermore, Ogar, Akpan and Anagbogu (2015) opined that the objectives of business education programme cannot be achieved if ICT (computer) skills are not made an integral part of Business Education programme. Corroborating, Zeynalova (2021) showed that creativity can be developed through education and that ICT as well as digital technologies have a great potential for enhancing creativity.

Findings from this study further revealed that computer education influences business education students' acquisition of innovative skills for entrepreneurial success by helping them to conduct their business affairs online, apply new ICT technologies and resources in their business and to introduce new methods of operation. Others include adopting digital financial accounting system for their business, to introduce new products to the market, for online shopping and order tracking, to do business research using digital means, do inventory management using computer application software and to computerize and manage payroll system of the business enterprise. Constant product, service and process innovations are necessary to keep businesses afloat in the contemporary digital economy of today. As such, business education students who shall in the near future become managers and owners of businesses; need to be exposed to learning experiences that offer them the opportunity to acquire digital or computer skills and knowledge to excel in business occupations. In this era of digitalization, students while in school should be trained to brace up to digital competence in order to fit into the global economy. In agreement, Emesini (2015) found that students through computer education can acquire creative, innovative, commercial and cognitive skills which will lead to self-employment, proper utilization of human and material resources and the development of the nation's economy. Supporting this finding, Sorescu and Schreier (2021) maintained that the advent of digital economy has not only underscored the importance and advent of new types of innovation in business, but has also led to major shifts in how consumers can be engaged by innovation and new technologies. Innovation does not only manifest in what consumers purchase and use, but also in how firms create, deliver and appropriate value in novel ways. For business education students to acquire these innovative skills and meet changing demands of their customers, they need exposure to adequate computer education and its related technologies so as to be able to apply them in their business activities.

Conclusion

The study determined students' perceived influence of computer education on business education students' acquisition of creative and innovative skills for entrepreneurial success. Findings from the study showed that exposure of business education students to computer education influence their acquisition of creative and innovative skills. Based on the findings, it is concluded that in this era of digital economy, more computer courses should be included in the curriculum of business education programme so as to give the students the opportunity to be exposed in learning experiences involving the use of computer and its technologies. This will help them to be able to use the acquired digital skills and knowledge to inject creativity and innovation in their business activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. National Universities Commission and other stakeholders in Business education should include some computer courses in the business education curriculum during programme review. Especially, at this period of introduction of Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standard (CCMAS). Universities should leverage on the opportunity for 30% make-up in the curriculum to add computer-related courses such as Microsoft word processing, CorelDraw, internet and networking, spreadsheet processing and Desktop Publishing, in the new business education curriculum to be floated.



2. Heads of Departments of Business education in various Universities and Colleges of Education should conduct seminars and workshops on computer and IC skills for Business education lecturers to help them shore up their computer knowledge and skills in order to be able to impart same on the students.
3. Management authorities of Universities and Colleges of Education should ensure that Business education Department is provided with a functional computer laboratory and equipped with necessary ICT facilities for staff and students' use.

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