



DIGITAL SKILLS NEEDED BY BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATE FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN EBONYI STATE

¹Oko Maryvivan Chinyere

Department of Business Education,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.
e-mail: okomaryvivian@gmail.com,
Phone: 08030512592

²Dr. Sampson Owazuaka Wagbara

Department of Business Education,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni,
Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
sampsonwagbara@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examined the digital skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship development in Ebonyi State. The study was guided by two research questions{which} guided the study. The population of the study consisted Of 150 graduates of business education from three higher institutions in Ebonyi state (Ebonyi state university Abakaliki, Ebonyi State Collage of Education Ikwo and Alex-Ekwueme Federal University, Ikwo). The entire population was used for the study, as the population Was small and manageable size. A structured questionnaire containing 12 items was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The study found amongst others that graduates of business education needed all the digital skills in accounting and communication as listed in order to excel in entrepreneurship globally. The study therefore recommended that Education and career system should be made proactive and responsive by educational stakeholders to the present needs and problems of the future, through the provision of required skill-sets for the 21st century.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship education involves learning varieties of business related competencies for business development and management. Such learning includes; improved decision-making skills, identification and utilization of business opportunities, setting up and properly running an enterprise and recently, skills to access information and use different Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools to create better working space (Duruamaku-Dim and Duruamaku-Dim 2014). Information and Communication Technology is an umbrella term that covers various technologies that provide access to information through telecommunication tools. It is similar to Information Technology (IT) but focuses primarily on communication technologies. Components of ICT includes the internet and intranet networks, wireless networks, cell phones and other communication media.



ICT as a major driver in today's global economy has become one of the most sought after skill-sets of the 21st century. Digital skills are the key to unlocking the potentials in the new market place (the internet). The global market system of today needs new sets of skills for marketing, advertising and business promotional activities necessary for setting-up, growing and effective management of businesses. Students need full range of new skills in order to meaningfully participate in the 21st century global economy (Barbara, 2017).

Students' success today is largely dependent on how effectively they are able to acquire salable skills they are exposed in their educational programme. Acquisition of adequate skills enabled them fit into the society and the world of work. In this twenty-first century, technological skills are very important for human survival and entrepreneurial development. One of the veritable skills required by students is digital skill. Digital skills are broadly defined as those needed capacity and ability to "use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information. According to Olu and Izuchukwu (2019), digital skills refers to a set of skills, tools, and knowledge necessary to use networks, digital devices and different applications on online mediums that facilitate the management of information according to specific requirements of working environment, learning environment, and problems solving situations.

The usefulness of digital literacy as an important skill-sets for entrepreneurial development lies on the perception, productive function and usage frequency. A study by Anireh, (2017) showed that e-learning courses, market research data bases and business plan software are among the tools that can be used for the development of entrepreneurial competencies. Young students of today (21st century) are considered digital natives and arrive various institutions bringing with them certain educational expectations (Ibelegbu, 2013). The concept of 21st century learning and skill development involves learning motivated by practice of teaching students the most relevant, useful, current and globally applied skills. According to the European Union (2006), learning in the 21st century prepares people for four things,- learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. Appropriate competencies are therefore required in achieving these goals.

The 21st century business education students must be taught different skills from those of 20th century. The skills to be taught in this century should reflect the specific demands placed on today's students by the complex, competitive, knowledge-based, information-age, technology-driven economy and society (Barbara, 2017). Some of the skills especially in digital technologies include in the areas of digital skills in accounting, communication, marketing and recording and filing. These skills are very important as it help to equip the students with veritable skill for entrepreneurial development and global competitiveness after graduation.

Global competitiveness refers to ability of a product or service to compete with their counterparts internationally. Global competitiveness requires excellence in production of goods and services (Ike and Madu, 2016). In the context of this paper, global competitiveness refers to the ability of a graduate to develop competent digital skills that will enable him/her to develop and manage business ideas that can meet up the international standard.

The capacity for achieving these educational skills and standards requires literacy in ICT. Information and communication technology compliance is expected to deliver three forms of literacy namely; information communication literacy- an act of using digital technology, communication tools and/or networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create information in order to function in a knowledge society; media literacy, the ability to identify different types of media and messages they are sending, and technology literacy – the ability to use, manage, understand and assess technology. Once mastered, these forms of literacy help in the mastery of other skill need (Oduma, 2012). Today these competencies (digital skills) may seem modern. They are not entirely new, but just newly important (Olu, 2015).). Acquiring skills



has become a lot easier these days as the need has been seen and hence provisions made in the education system. This becomes advantageous to ICT skill compliant students.

According to MindTools (2017) and Kutzhanova (2009) various categories of entrepreneurship skills such as personal characteristics,-attributes or personality trait of an individual, interpersonal skills – qualities and behaviours we exhibit while interacting with other people, critical and creative thinking–thinking deeply using skills, behaviours and dispositions like reason, logic, resourcefulness, imaginations, etc., and practical skill- skills performed by hand or with human intervention using equipment, tools or technology requiring guidance, force or movement, can be acquired using digital tools provided by government to be used in schools. Individual skill practices (competency level) can also be effectively measured using three competency level like involving people in doing the work, communicating effectively, and applying the relevant skill competencies. Gregor, (2015), can also be effectively measured three competency framework: involving people in doing the work; communicating effectively and applying the relevant skill competencies.

Statement of the Problem

In the current phase of technological changes in the business world, students should be properly equipped with the necessary ICT (digital) skills to enable them to be successful future entrepreneurs. These new skills are in the areas of computer and internet connectivity, teleconferencing, multimedia technology, webCT, formatting tools, webbased initiatives etc. Unfortunately, these skills are lacking among most of the graduates today. This could be the reason for high rate of unemployment and unemployable graduates roaming the streets in search job. To buttress this further, Okolocha (2016) noted that businesses established by Business education graduation goes into extinction within 5 years of establishment as a result of good digital skills needed to run that business.

Furthermore, Business Education as an aspect of entrepreneurial education focuses on three major areas that require digital skills. These include; accounting, recording keeping and filing as well as communication skills. It is however worrisome that these skills are found lacking among business education graduates in Ebonyi State. This paper therefore assesses the digital skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the digital accounting/recordkeeping skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State?
2. What are the digital communication skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State?

Methodology

A survey research design was adopted for the study as the study sought the opinions of the respondents on the digital skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship using questionnaire. The study was conducted in three tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State offering business education. The institutions include: Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Ebonyi State Collaged of Education Ikwo and Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ikwo

The population of this study comprised 150 business education graduates residing within Ebonyi State. Since the 150 business education graduates were manageable, there was no



sampling therefore, the entire population was used for the study. The instrument used to collect data was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The instrument has 15 items each in two clusters generated from the research questions designed to elicit responses on the subject matter.

The instrument was administered to the business education graduates in their business areas. One hundred and fifty copies of the instrument was administered but at the point of collection, (136) were retrieved and used for the study. The research questions were analyzed descriptively using mean and standard deviation based on a 4-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was subjected to face validation to determine its adequacy and appropriateness for the study. This was done by presenting it to three experts, one from Measurement and Evaluation and the other two from Business Education all in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Based on their comments and suggestions, the instrument was modified to suit the study. A mean score below 2.5 was interpreted as rejected and above 2.5 as accepted for the research questions.

Table 1: Respondents' mean ratings of digital accounting/recordkeeping skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State?

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Electronic file creation skills	4.0	0.60	Needed
	Skills in the use of accounting excel software	4.0	0.94	Needed
2	Skills in the use of accounting SPSS software	3.1	1.21	needed
3	Digital record keeping skills	3.9	1.26	Needed
4	Digital record retrieval skills	4.0	0.94	Needed
5	Digital filing skills	4.1	0.84	Needed
6	Audio recording and management skills	3.5	1.15	Needed
7	Skills in the recoding of virtual meeting	3.2	1.27	needed
	Grand mean	3.8		

Table 1 shows the mean score of digital accounting/recordkeeping skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State. The table indicated that all the items were accepted by the respondents as digital accounting/recordkeeping skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State.

Table 2: Respondents' mean ratings of digital communication skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State.

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
8	social media management skills	3.4	0.48	Needed
9	E-mail management skills	3.3	0.68	Needed
10	Teleconferencing application skill	3.3	0.59	Needed
11	Web conferencing application	3.1	0.83	Needed
12	Facsimile (Fax) skill	3.3	0.53	Needed
13	Telex machine operation	3.1	0.84	Needed



14	Office intercom operation skill	3.5	1.15	Needed
15	Skills in the utilization of virtual events and webinars	3.2	1.27	Needed
16	Desktop conferencing application	4.3	0.84	Needed
	Grand mean	3.8		

Table 2 shows the mean score of digital communication skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State. The table indicated that all the items were accepted as the needed by the respondents digital communication skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from table 1 revealed the digital accounting/recordkeeping skills needed by business education graduate for global competitiveness in entrepreneurship in Ebonyi State. Result from the table showed that business education graduate need skills in Electronic file creation skills, Skills in the use of accounting excel software, Skills in the use of accounting SPSS software, Digital record keeping skills, digital record retrieval skills, digital filing skills, audio recording and management skills and skills in the recoding of virtual meeting. These findings were in line with Okoye (2017) who noted that use of accounting software like Microsoft excel, SPSS, E-view are very important in the modern accounting world.

The findings of the study further revealed that for effective entrepreneurship practice, business education graduates should be properly equipped with the following ICT communication skills: such as e-mail management, teleconferencing, web conferencing, facsimile, telex machine, office intercom, video conferencing and desktop conferencing. Emejulu (2014) contended that global business environment has been taken over by the internet. Through the combination of e-mail, video conferencing, telephone and web conferencing, there is maximum potentials to communicate with world wide audience. The need to accurately exchange information in a fast moving world using a variety of ICT communication skills cannot be over-emphasized. The use of ICT communication skills in entrepreneurship education will adequately equip students with the necessary ICT skills needed to be able to attract much development in their future business venture.

Conclusion

Business education graduates stands the chance of competing globally in entrepreneurial activities if they acquire the digital skills needed in the changing world of work in the 21 century business world. Nigeria today is undergoing large changes in technology, lifestyle and ecosystems built around digital transformation and global economic system hence, the need to train graduates who can fit into the same changes. It is worthy to note that the natures educational system needs changes to prepare her graduates to meet the challenges of the century as education happens to be the bedrock of every society.

Recommendations

Sequel to the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Education and career system should be made proactive and responsive by the government and educational stakeholders to the present needs and problems of the future, through the provision of required skill-sets for the 21 century.
2. Business education students needs varieties of skills and knowledge in the globalized and economically transformed digital system.



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