



DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES REQUIRED FROM BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS TO WORK IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Enang, Christiana Etong, PhD

*Learning and Development Department
Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation
Federal Secretariat, Phase II, Abuja – Nigeria
christianaenang@yahoo.co.uk
christianaenang@gmail.com*

Abstract

Business education is a programme of study that prepares students to acquire practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of the economy and social life. In the modern digital world, the more competencies of digital entrepreneurship business education students possesses, the more likely they are to cope with the business challenges in the digital era. Therefore, the lack of certain digital entrepreneurial competencies reduces their effectiveness in business activities and global competitiveness. Hence, this paper focused on digital entrepreneurial skills and competencies required from business education students to work in the digital era. The paper examined different digital entrepreneurial competences, how it should be taught and assessed for business education students to be competent enough to work in the digital era. The paper concluded that business education students should therefore be taught the digital entrepreneurial skills and competencies to remain relevant after Graduation in 21st century digital era. It was recommended among others that Government should provide the necessary resources and enabling environment for the inculcation of digital entrepreneurial competencies at all levels of educational institutions in Nigeria. In addition, there is need to integrate digital entrepreneurial competencies in the curriculum of business education programme in order for business education graduates to possess the digital entrepreneurial skills to be self-reliance and create job for the national development.

Keywords: Digital entrepreneurial skills, competencies, business education, digital era

Introduction

Globally, entrepreneurship is seen as one of the important factors for economic recovery, growth, job creation, inclusion, poverty reduction, innovation and competitiveness. Consequently, many countries have made it a priority to incorporate entrepreneurship into different policy fields, especially in education. In Nigeria, many actions have been implemented to incorporate entrepreneurship as a competence in basic education, secondary education, technical education, vocational training centres and higher education curricula. Despite the incorporation of entrepreneurship as a competence across educational settings, what constitute entrepreneurship as a competence is still unclear. In the digital era, a nation's digital economic development is characterized by increased entrepreneurial activity, quantity and quality of digital competencies, which relates to higher education and training.

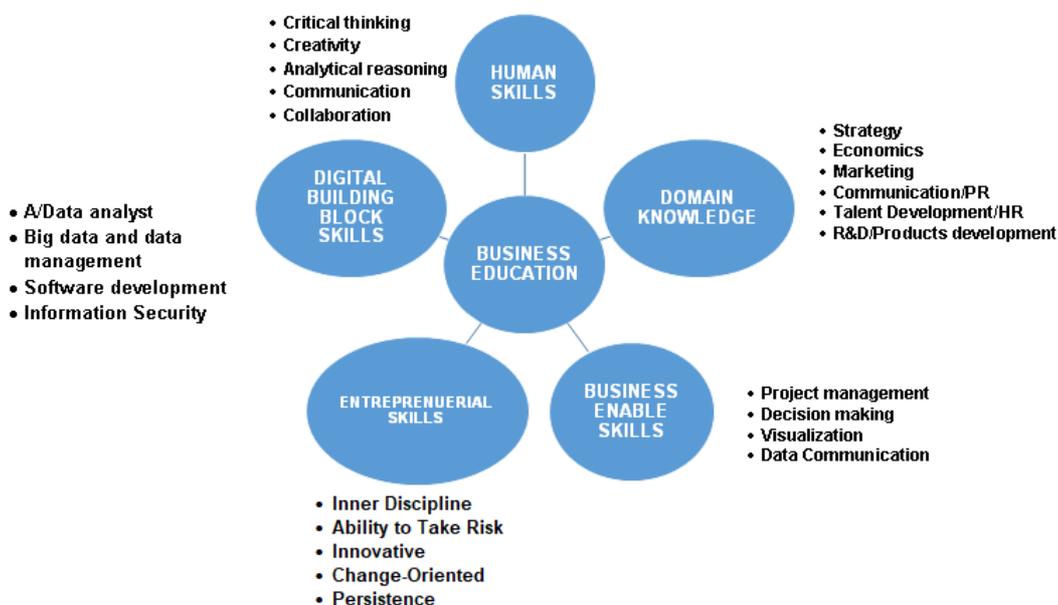


In view of digital entrepreneurial competencies in national development, higher education's key task is to develop digital entrepreneurship competencies among students. Kurmanov, Aliyeva, Kabdullina, and Mutaliyeva (2020) stated that any field of education regardless of direction and practical significance is basically the formation of a system of professional competencies. In the modern digital world, the more competencies of digital entrepreneurship a person possesses, the more likely it is for the person to cope with the business challenges that the person faces. Therefore, the lack of certain digital entrepreneurial competencies reduces a person's effectiveness in business activities and global competitiveness. Hence, this paper focused on digital entrepreneurial skills and competencies required from business education students to work in the digital era. The paper examined different digital entrepreneurial competences, how it should be taught and assessed for business education students to be competent enough to work in the digital era.

Business education is that aspect of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) according to FGN, (2013) involving, in addition to general education, 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. Business education is also an educational programme offered in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Enang (2021) opined that business education programme inculcates into the students the understanding, values, knowledge, and skills required for the world of work. The need to prepare business education students with the right competencies and skills to fit into the world of work in the 21st century and beyond requires the acquisition of digital entrepreneurial skills and competencies.

Entrepreneurship according to Ojeifo (2013) contributes toward creating new jobs, wealth creation, poverty reduction and income generating for both government and individuals. The role of entrepreneurship in economic development necessitated the need for entrepreneurship in business education. Entrepreneurial skills are defined as the set of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that enable entrepreneurs to be successful in developing profitable projects, markets, products, or services, based on the demand of a target population, economy and society (Jardim, 2021). Most countries around the world encourage entrepreneurship among students and graduates of higher education institutions and Nigeria is not an exception.

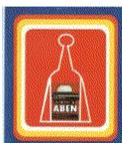
In the academic and policy debate and in practice, the most common themes discussed in relation to entrepreneurship are: creativity, teamwork, problem-solving, resource management, risk-taking, opportunity identification, self-efficacy, self-confidence, communication, leadership, decision making, innovation, responsibility, collaboration, ideas generation, independent work or autonomy, negotiation and networking among others.



Source: Enang (2022)

The above figure depicts the digital entrepreneurship skills for business education programme. Human Skills are the skills that are required for idea development and innovation and also serve as the foundation for other key skills and abilities across the digital economy. Domain knowledge are specific to core business education skills, knowledge and attitudes that are combined with human skills, business enablers skills and digital building block skills to become the digital entrepreneurs to function in the digital era. Business Enabler Skills are skills required across job families that enable individuals to bridge the capabilities of digital technologies with broader business goals. These skills are critical to unlocking and communicating the value of digital technologies and applying them to address stakeholder needs. Entrepreneurial Skills involves recognizing economic opportunities and acting effectively on them. There are the skills that make individuals capable of identifying and exploring new business opportunities and bringing new products and services to the existing market. Digital Building Block Skills leverage digital tools to add value and align with functional domains that are critical to the digital economy. Increasingly, these skills spread across job families and beyond purely technical fields. Digital Building Block Skills are transferrable. They promote career progression, entrepreneurship and also open the pathways to a broad array of career opportunities.

In the digital era, the ability of a business education graduate to use a mix of the above skills set cannot be over emphasised. O'Hara (2011) identified some skills which are prominently in entrepreneurship. The ability to identify and exploit a business opportunity; the human creative effort of developing a business or building something of value; willingness to undertake risk; competence to organise the necessary resources to respond to the opportunity. Kelley et al (2010) however, advocated that within any society it is important to support all people with 'entrepreneurial skills.



They argued that any educational training should enable people not just to develop skills to start a business but also to be capable of behaving entrepreneurially in whatever role they take in life. This approach is quite broad but it captures the critical philosophy of modern entrepreneurship education and training programmes required of any country. This will enable a country to generate an increasing pool of people who are willing to behave entrepreneurially. Consequently, business education programme should inculcate and develops these skills and values, particularly with relevance to growth-orientated business activities that are required in the digital era.

The manner in which entrepreneurship is taught needs to be significantly altered as the traditional model of entrepreneurship is no longer applicable to the modern business environment (Gibb, 2010). Entrepreneurship skills should not be static and focused heavily on the writing of a business plan and the various functional activities of an enterprise. It should be dynamic with a range of behavioural attributes that need to be developed. According to Gibb (2010), there are a number of key characteristics that needs to be considered which include, instilling empathy with entrepreneurial values and associated 'ways of thinking, doing, feeling, seeing, communicating, organising and learning things. Development of the capacity for strategic thinking and scenario planning and the practice of making intuitive decisions based upon judgement with limited information. It also involves creating a vision of, and empathy with, the way of life of the entrepreneurial person. This implies a strong emphasis upon the employment of educational pedagogies stimulating a sense of ownership, control, independence, responsibility, autonomy of action and commitment to see things through in daily life, with uncertainty and complexity. It should include stimulating the practice of a wide range of entrepreneurial behaviours such as opportunity seeking and grasping, networking, taking initiatives, persuading others and taking intuitive decisions which demands a comprehensive range of pedagogical tools. It focuses upon the core (value in use) and affective (enjoyable and stimulating) aspects of learning and the cognitive relevance of application of practical situation which is key important and instilling motivation.

Above all, Gibb (2010) further explained that it involves maximising the opportunity for experiential learning and engagement in the 'community of practice, creating space for learning by doing and re-doing. Projects will need to be designed to stimulate entrepreneurial behaviours and assessed accordingly. Among which is creating the capacity for relationship learning, network management, building 'know-who' and managing on the basis of trust-based personal relationships. The business plan becomes an important component of relationship management leading to understanding that different stakeholders need 'plans' with different requests. There is need to develop understanding of, and building knowledge around, the processes of organisation development, from start, through survival to growth and internationalisation. This will also demand a focus upon the dynamics of change, the nature of problems and opportunities that arise and how to anticipate and deal with them. The features focus upon a holistic approach to the management of organisations and the integration of knowledge, creating the capacity to design entrepreneurial organisations of all kinds in different contexts and understand how to operate them successfully. It strongly focuses upon the processes of opportunity seeking, evaluation and opportunity grasping in different contexts of entrepreneurial ventures. Therefore, creating opportunities for business education students to explore the above characteristics of entrepreneurial competencies for their own personal and career development is the responsibility of business education programme.

The fourth industrial revolution as stated by Williams, (2021) changed the order of business models from conventional to digital business. In today's digital era, every individual must become dependent on technology for work. Prospective entrepreneur need to be updated with technology and the ability to use new tools and techniques (Chalkiadaki, 2018). They must be resilience to use knowledge, skills, and experience to overcome the effects of the adverse situations in the digital era. Ranjain (2017) stated that every entrepreneur must keep his or her business model separate from the traditional model. Current time demands for digital entrepreneurial skills on virtual workplace,



virtual market, virtual products and virtual services. It requires the use of digital media, computers, mobile phones, internet to promote products and services. The skills to use digital products and online goods like different programmes, Apps, Software, E-books, PDF are very essential in the digital era.

Potential entrepreneurs must possess the ability to use digital media and tools to transfer messages efficiently from one person to another or any person. Examples of digital communication tools are Email, Chat, Social Networking Sites, Internet and Websites. Entrepreneurial skills to use digital services are essential abilities to use the internet and mobile computer to offer services like online learning platforms, online applications, online banking, online medical facilities, among others. Entrepreneurial and digital skills play a crucial role in increasing productivity, economic prosperity, country wealth and sustainability. Fleaca and Stoycheva (2019) emphasised that the objective of digital entrepreneurial skills is to improve productivity and economic growth, adjust to increasing social inequalities and improve the living standards of individuals, create new job opportunities or generate employment for young people. Business education students must therefore be taught the digital entrepreneurial skills and competencies to remain relevant after graduated in 21st century digital era.

Implication to Business Education Programme

Business education programme should be designed to incorporate learning opportunities that impart on digital entrepreneurial skills which will equip business education graduates for self-reliance and job creation. The skills can be learned online, in class, and in hybrid learning systems. There can also be learned on-the-job through applied learning and workplace training in the form of Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIVES).

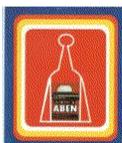
Business education students should recognize the importance of digital entrepreneurial skills to career growth and they should develop a personal plan for using a diverse set of learning opportunities to acquire and demonstrate these skills. The students should develop a mindset to become a continuous learner, seek out opportunities to acquire new skills through curricular and co-curricular activities and hands-on learning.

Business education institutions should recognize that the digital economy presents an opportunity to increase the value of higher education credentials by ensuring that all graduates possess appropriate domain, human, business, and digital skills to function in the digital era. Institutions of higher learning should recognize that these skills are essential learning outcomes for the 21st century, and of core importance to the success of students and graduates. Also, engaging faculty and administrators regarding these skill sets in the digital economy and society is very essential. Business Educators should build the teaching and learning of these skills into coursework and overarching curricular goals. They should also integrate the skills into admissions processes. Business education institutes should also work closely with business and employers to coordinate goals and expectations for classroom learning, internships, job skills development, and work-based learning. They should communicate the role of these skills and skill clusters to students, prospective students, and the general public for a better learning outcome of graduates of digital entrepreneurial skills that can function in the 21st century digital era for economic development of Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn from the study.

1. There is need to integrate digital entrepreneurial competencies in the curriculum of business education programme in order for business education graduates to possess the digital entrepreneurial skills to be self-reliance and create job for the economy.
2. Business Educators should build teaching and learning of digital entrepreneurial skills into coursework and integrate the skills into the admission process of new students.



3. There is need for professional development of business educators to enhance their capacity towards the delivery of digital entrepreneurial competencies.
4. Government should provide the necessary resources and enabling environment for the inculcation of digital entrepreneurial competencies at all levels of education institutions in Nigeria.

Conclusion

In the digital era, a nation's digital economic development is characterized by increased entrepreneurial activity, quantity and quality of digital competencies, which relates to higher education and training. In the modern digital world, the more competencies of digital entrepreneurship a person possesses, the more likely it is for the person to cope with the business challenges that the person faces. Therefore, the lack of certain digital entrepreneurial competencies reduces a person's effectiveness in business activities and global competitiveness. Hence, this paper focused on digital entrepreneurial skills and competencies required from business education students to work in the digital era. The paper examined different digital entrepreneurial competences, how it should be taught and assessed for business education students to be competent enough to work in the digital era for national development.

References

- Kurmanov, N., Aliyeva, Z., Kabdullina, G., & Mutaliyeva, L. (2020). Digital entrepreneurship competencies among students: Methodological aspects of the maturity level and development program making. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 23(2).
- World Bank Group. (2016). *World development report 2016: digital dividends*. World Bank Publications
- Gray, A. (2016). *The 10 skills you need to thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. In World Economic Forum, 19.
- Ojeifo, S. A. (2013). Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria. A Panacea for Youth Unemployment. *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol. 4 (6), 61 – 67.
- Markow, W., Hughes, D., & Bundy, A. (2018). *The new foundational skills of the digital economy: Developing the professionals of the future*. Business-Higher Education Forum, Washington, District of Columbia.
- Gibb, A.A. (2010). *Towards the Entrepreneurial University* – NCGE, Birmingham
- Kelley, D., Bosma, N., & Amorós, J. E. (2010) - *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: 2010 Global Report* - Babson College, Wellesley, M
- O'Hara, B. (2011). *Entrepreneurship in Ireland* – Gill and MacMillan, Dublin
- FGN (2013). *National policy on education*. 6th edition, Yaba, Lagos, NERDC Press.
- Enang C. E. (2021). Emerging technologies in teaching and learning of business education programmes in the new normal in tertiary institution in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*. Retrieved from www.nigjbed.com.ng
- Chalkiadaki, A. (2018). A systematic literature review of 21st century skills and competencies in primary education. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(3), 1-16.
- Williams, C. (2021). *Improving social partner involvement in tackling undeclared work: A Toolkit*. Available at SSRN 3835333
- Fleaca, E., & Stoycheva, S.A.P.B. (2019). *Reinforcing entrepreneurial and digital skills of higher education in moldova*.
- Ranjain, R.R.P. (2017). *Entrepreneurship in digital era*.