LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION: STRATEGIES FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

With technological advancements reshaping the modern business world, entrepreneurs and business professionals now face both fresh prospects and significant hurdles. As a result, business and entrepreneurship education must evolve to meet these new demands. To prepare students for success in this dynamic environment, business and entrepreneurship education must adapt and leverage technology to enhance learning outcomes and foster innovation. This study explored effective strategies for using technology to enhance business and entrepreneurship education, with a focus on curriculum development and effective implementation. The study concluded that leveraging technology to enhance business and entrepreneurship education is crucial for preparing students for success in the digital economy. By integrating emerging technologies and digital skills into curricula, educators can create immersive, interactive, and personalized learning experiences that foster innovation and entrepreneurship. The study recommended that educators should incorporate emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, blockchain and data analytics amongst others into business and entrepreneurship curricula and ensure students have the necessary digital skills to succeed in the digital economy.

Keywords: *Leveraging, Technology, Business and entrepreneurship education, Strategies, Curriculum*

Introduction

The rapid evolution of technology has transformed the business landscape, creating new opportunities and challenges for entrepreneurs and business leaders. To prepare students for success in this dynamic environment, business and entrepreneurship education must adapt and leverage technology to enhance learning outcomes and foster innovation. This requires a strategic approach to curriculum development and implementation, one that integrates emerging technologies and innovative pedagogies to develop the skills and competencies necessary for success in the digital economy.

The effective integration of technology into business and entrepreneurship education can have a profound impact on student learning outcomes and career readiness. By leveraging technology, educators can create immersive, interactive, and personalized learning experiences that better prepare students for the demands of the digital economy. This, in turn, can lead to increased innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.

Technology Integration

Integration has to do with the incorporation or inclusion of a particular thing, while technology integration can be seen as the inclusion of technology in a particular area or phenomenon. In the context of this paper, technology integration can be seen as the process of applying products of technology in enhancing teaching and learning of entrepreneurial and Business education content which includes the application and manipulation of these products of technology. Reigehuth and Joseph in Ile, Udegbunarn, and Odimmega (2015), view technology integration as focusing on how to use technology to support the way teaching arid learning are currently being carried out in the business world.

Concept of Business Education

The National Policy on Education (2013), indicated that Technical and Vocational Education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes and understanding of any knowledge relating to occupations in the sector of economic and social life. Agwumezie (1999) cited in Ezeani (2012) sees Business Education as a programme in education that prepares students for entry into and advancement of jobs within the business. Business education can be described as an aspect of education which is purposefully planned to prepare an individual to be self-reliant.

Business Education is an important part of general education which emphasizes skill acquisition for office- use. Business Education is a programme of instruction that consists of two parts, namely; Office Education a programme of vocation for office careers, and General Business Education - a programme which provides the recipients with competencies and skills needed in managing personal business affairs and using the services of the business world (Olaoluwa, 2012). An individual who receives training in Business Education can easily develop potentials for entrepreneurship pursuits especially in this era of economic meltdown and unemployment (Ibeneme & lkegwuani, 2010). It can be deduced that Business education is education for and about business or training in business skills. Aliyu (1999) cited in Ezeani (2012) affirms that Business education is an educational programme which involves acquisition of skills, knowledge and competences which makes the recipient/beneficiary proficient. Business education which is offered at the Universities and Colleges of education is concerned mainly with the development of relevant and saleable skills and knowledge that would enable an individual to function effectively. (Onojetah, 2012). Business education provides employment for graduates. In Business Education programme, courses in Marketing, Management, Accounting and Office Technology and Management are offered by the students to gain proficiency on graduation.

Business education is the type of education that assists individual to acquire skills, which they can apply to solve problems in business and office occupation. According to Nwaigburu and Eneogwe (2019), business education has a definite role in preparing and equipping students with skills that increase their chances of finding jobs across territorial boundaries after schooling. Nwaigburu and Eneogwe further observe that business education equips students with knowledge and skills they need to create their own employment. Business education involves teaching students the fundamental theories and processes of business. Anyaeneh and Nzegwu (2017) affirm that it typically prepares students for an occupation in business or a business-related field or a teaching career in academics. Business education is offered in both secondary and tertiary educational institutions as its courses are taught in Management, Office Technology, Marketing and Accounting. Students are expected to have relevant skills; knowledge and attitude to enable them perform effectively in their private business and public offices.

Concept of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship can be seen as the creative and innovative response in economic and social ventures. It involves starting up of business ventures through willingness and ability of an individual to explore investment opportunities and being able to run them successfully, through making them profitable. It involves combining resources to increase value and introducing change and innovation into the production process of creating wealth and employment opportunities. For an individual to be able to effectively grab and identify business opportunity, utilize resources with high level of innovation, be able to

motivate and handle both his/her direct delegated, and other actions to ensure efficient synthesis of resources, he/she is said to be an entrepreneur.

According to Eze (1995), entrepreneurship education seeks to inculcate in the graduates and indeed products of any programme how best to convert their education in whatever discipline to intellectually productive ventures other than employment. Entrepreneurship according to Okonkwo (2015), centers on developing understanding and capacity for pursuit of entrepreneurial behaviours, skills and attributes in widely different context. It is a specialized training given to students of vocational and technical education to acquire the skills, ideas and managerial abilities and capabilities for self-employment rather than being employed paid jobs. Entrepreneurship education seeks to provide students with skills, knowledge and motivation as well as to effect attitudinal changes, necessary to encourage self-reliance through involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurship equips people with the ability to seek investment opportunities. Entrepreneurship education is a form of training that seeks to provide knowledge, skills and attitude to students for entrepreneurial success in any setting.

Amesi (2014) views entrepreneurship education as the capability and willingness to develop, organize and manage a business venture along with any of its risks to make a profit. Val and Akpomi (2017) explained that entrepreneurship education concept focuses on the application of personal enterprising skills, and mindset to the context of setting up a new venture or initiative of any kind, developing and growing an existing venture and designing an entrepreneurial.

Eze and Eziolisa (2022), in their view belied that most graduates are deficient in terms of the necessary skills and competencies required for employment in contemporary business organizations, hence they are more or less unemployable. As part of her efforts to reverse this ugly trend, especially as it affects graduate unemployment, the government of Nigeria in 2006 introduced entrepreneurship as a compulsory course in tertiary institutions with the aim of preparing graduates for entrepreneurial success through private sector initiative (Agbonlahor, 2016).

The initiative was to serve as the flagship to drive economic and social reconstruction against the backdrop of youth unemployment. At this juncture, repositioning universities as centers for building self-sustaining graduates becomes necessary. Similarly, Agboola and Ademiluyi (2015) reported that the introduction of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions curriculum was followed by the directive from government through the National Council of Education (NEC), that higher education supervisory agencies should produce appropriate training documents for the effective delivery of the programme. The aim was to produce graduate entrepreneurs with the right attitudes and skills to spur them on part of creativity, innovation and enterprise. Mike (2012), in his opinion sees entrepreneurship education as the process of creating something different with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychological and social risks and receiving the resulting of monetary rewards and personal satisfaction. Similarly, Gana (2012), referred to entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunities. Gowin (2013), defined entrepreneurship as the process of identifying, developing and bringing a vision to life. The author stated further that the vision may be an innovative idea, an opportunity or simply a better way to do thing. The result of this process is the creation of a new venture, formed under conditions of risk and considerable uncertainty.

Entrepreneurship refers to the process of planning, organizing and managing of a business or self-employment venture, irrespective of whether it is a one-man operation or those that employ scores of individuals. Entrepreneurship education embraces skill building programme, creative thinking, product development and marketing negotiation, leadership (raining and wealth generation (Kuratto, 2003). In view of the importance of entrepreneurship education in skills development, graduates of the programme are expected to venture into various entrepreneurial activities upon graduation. It is against this background that entrepreneurship was integrated into the tertiary institution's curriculum in Nigeria (Ezeani, 2014). The aim of this is to ensure that the students upon graduation acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies to enable them successfully set up and manage their own businesses. This will help reduce the high rate of poverty, create employment opportunities and reduce rural-urban and migration.

Entrepreneurship education programme offers universities graduates adequate training in risk management to enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities (Ugwoke, Basake, Diara and Chukwuma, 2014). However, the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education in Nigerian Universities face challenges owing to inadequate digital technological tools (Matto & Anwabo, 2012). The World Bank (1999), Wikipedia, (2015) in Offiong, Caleb and Effiong (2017) refer to education as fundamental to the construction of knowledge economy and society in all nations. It is through education that knowledge and skills are transferred to individuals, and their competencies and abilities developed. It is worth noting that entrepreneurship education has given prominence worldwide. Through entrepreneurship education, learners are provided with knowledge, skills and innovation jettison to encourage them to develop entrepreneurial acumen in a variety of settings.

Entrepreneurship from a general point of view can be described as response to the diverse opportunities and potentials that exist within an individual and the environment for profit making. Entrepreneurship education sets to provide students with the knowledge, skills and motivation to encourage entrepreneurial success in a variety of settings. Variations of entrepreneurship education are offered at all levels of schooling from primary or secondary schools through graduate university programs. Wikipedia.

Entrepreneurship education, according to the authors, refers to the process of teaching and learning the skills, knowledge, and mindset necessary to start and run a successful business. It encompasses a wide range of topics, including: Business planning, developing business ideas, creating business plans, and pitching ideas to investors. Financial management, Marketing and sales, Leadership and management, Innovation and creativity etc.

According to Paul (2005), entrepreneurial education is structured to achieve the following objectives:

- To reduce high rate of poverty
- Reduction of urban-rural migration
- To create employment generation
- To offer functional education for the youth that will enable them to be self-employed
- To inculcate the spirit of perseverance in the youth and adults which will enable them to persist in any business in any business venture they may embark on.

This Paper aims to explore strategies for leveraging technology to enhance business and entrepreneurship education, with a focus on curriculum development and implementation. By examining the opportunities and challenges associated with technology integration, educators and policymakers can develop more effective programs that prepare students for success in the digital economy.

The rapid evolution of technology has created a significant gap between the skills and competencies required by the modern business landscape and those provided by traditional business and entrepreneurship education. This gap is characterized by: Many business and entrepreneurship programs failing to adequately incorporate emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and data analytics, into their curricula, insufficient digital skills, including data analysis, digital marketing, coding and limited industry relevance. Business and entrepreneurship education often fails to provide students with practical, real-world experience and exposure to industry-relevant technologies and trends. Educators may lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively integrate these technologies into their teaching practices.

Relevance of Technology in Business and Entrepreneurship Education

The relevance of technology in Business education can't be overemphasized as it encompasses every sphere of human endeavour. Okoye, (2005) in Offiong, Caleb and Effiong (2017) expressed that the improvement of the educational system over the years has been the concern of educators and researchers, in both entrepreneurial and business education. This drive is not unconnected with the indisputable fact that National Development is hinged on the successful development, use and execution of research findings in the application of technology tools in teaching and learning. Technology is defined as the integration and utilization of the innovation of computer technology for the purpose of organizing, encoding, packaging and dissemination of information and skill acquisition to target destination or consumers without the constraint of time and space. This is to say that Technology-based instructional system operates a continuous lifelong

training process. This no doubt, implies more freedom for teachers and more opportunity to use initiatives for the learners.

The time gained by teachers will necessarily be employed for better scientific planning of instructional content and delivery strategies. In order to be innovative, Business education programme must invest in the human resources and distribution mechanisms required to compete in a world characterized by hyper-corn petition, technological transformation, and inventiveness (Smil, 2017). Ohaka (2015) maintained that the opportunities provided by the integration of ICT in the Business education programme is that it helps to develop Business education with national and global contents, develop a system of collecting and disseminating information in Business education, and encourage the core principles of lifelong learning in skill acquisition and character moldings in business education through knowledge and career global interconnectivity. The multiplier benefit of a networked instructional system ensures a future of entrepreneurial educational excellence, expansion and efficiency at reduced cost. ICT removes age, distance and limits constraints in any entrepreneurial educational learning and ensures immediate provision of knowledge in relevant areas with the ease and speed that could never be gotten in a 'traditional learning system (Offiong, Caleb and Effiong, 2017), apparently, technology integration is pivotal and instrumental for delivery of entrepreneurship and business education programme.

Strategies for Integrating Technology to Enhance Business and Entrepreneurship Education: To effectively leverage technology in business and entrepreneurship education, curriculum development and effective implementation should focus on integrating digital tools for practical experience, fostering collaboration and promoting continuous learning. Strategies include: utilizing online platforms for real-world simulations, incorporating data analytics tools for market research, and leveraging virtual mentorship programs to connect students with industry professionals.

To improve the delivery of Business and entrepreneurial education in our various institutions, there is an urgent need to integrate technology in the dissemination of instructions using the following strategies;

Provision of Adequate Electricity Supply and the use of Alternative Source of Power Supply): Electricity is one of the essential ingredients of technological tools which can be a setback for the integration of technology into business and entrepreneurship education courses. By implication, most of these technological tools need adequate power supply and as a result, there is need to provide electricity or explore other options which include the use of solar power for constant use of these gadgets as it provides a more reliable source of power supply, compared to the traditional means of electricity supply. This will go a long way in ensuring effective and efficient delivery of instruction via technological tools.

Reduction in Cost of ICT Facilities by Suppliers: The expensive nature of technological tools is of great concern which can be minimized through collaborative efforts and partnership with the suppliers' fur possible discounts and allowances. Good partnership with the suppliers can be a good way to cut cost which can in turn bring about an increase and expansion of the technological tools for effective integration into the teaching and learning of business and entrepreneurship education courses.

Good Management Policies: To protect and safeguard the abuse of usage of these technological tools, the management should design workable framework and policies which will protect the software and hardware of the facilities. Guidelines and proper procedures should be spelt out to avoid unnecessary violation of the policies. This will protect the tools from both internal and external attack and breach of security.

Provision of Business and Entrepreneurship Education Technology: This is also referred to as business and startup training technology center which can be considered as a commercial center, a graphics center, a music studio, an internet center, a computer training center, a computer technician unit, a designer shop, web design, computer services, internet recruitment agency, internet advertising, internet travel, videography, decoration, photography, cinema, and agriculture (poultry and aquaculture). The business center provides communication services to customers. The services provided by the business center are evolving to include more valuable services required by the service unit. Graphics center is another area where entrepreneurs and business owners use technology tools such as computers, scanners, internet and other accessories to design graphics. Internet hubs are another area where IT tools can be used. These centers provide internet service to residents and users at minimal cost. The services provided help improve people's living standards and also create jobs for hundreds of people directly or indirectly by entrepreneurs.

Skills development is expected outcome of education and training efforts and a catalyst for growth. As an entrepreneur, growing your business and creating a legacy is paramount. ICT infrastructure provides a platform upon which e-commerce is built, internet skills offer the technical know-how needed to develop entrepreneurial applications (Migisha, 2011).

Intentional and Effective Training/Workshop for Business and Entrepreneurial Education Lecturers/Facilitators: It is pertinent to stress that, the integration of technology into business and entrepreneurship education will be meaningless and useless without an intentional and adequate training of the lecturers/facilitators of these courses. There is an urgent need for the tutors and facilitators of these courses to have up-to-date knowledge of the technological advancement in order to be able to deliver lessons/subject matters to their various students effectively and efficiently. This was corroborated by the study of Nwolake and Chukwiima(2019) that lack of technological skills on the part of business educators constrains integration of new technologies in teaching business education courses. Evidently, the output (graduates) from our various institutions and their functionality are greatly measured by the competency of their instructors and facilitators, hence trailing and retraining of business and entrepreneurship education staff as this remains the only way for the objective of this programme to be achieved (hereby ensuring our graduates compete actively and thrive in the global world of work. It has been affirmed by Nwosu and Mbeazue in Timya et al (2019) that most of the teachers were not effectively taught with the latest technologies, therefore they have to be retrained in the proper use of latest technologies in instructional delivery.

Conclusion

Integrating technology into Business and Entrepreneurship education should be given priority attention considering the fact that it is an important aspect of education aimed at producing labour force for the economic development and advancement of the nation and for the practices and operations of the recipients of the programmes. To keep abreast global practices and trend technology must be fully and adequately incorporated and integrated into the teaching and learning of the courses in our various higher institutions of learning. This will not only make graduates and workforce to be competent, relevant and up-to-date in their chosen careers/fields, but will also enable them to compete favourably and actively with their counterparts across the globe. It is in view of the above that policy makers and stakeholders should as a matter of urgency put necessary resources and apparatus as well as techniques that would yield proper integration of technology into Business and Entrepreneurship education curriculum to achieve the objective of the programmes and produce functional graduates or labour force.

Recommendations

Entrepreneurship education programs should incorporate digital technology to remain relevant and effective.

1. Educators should foster innovation in entrepreneurship education, providing students with practical experience and exposure to industry-relevant tools and platforms.
2. Educators should be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively integrate digital technology and innovation into entrepreneurship education.

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