



Digital Skill Acquisition and Job Creation Among Business Education Students in Universities: A Critical Review

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Abstract

In our fast-changing online world, getting digital skills is key to doing well in nearly all work fields. This holds true for students in business courses at universities, who are getting ready to join the workforce and help make jobs. This paper looks closely at how getting digital skills and making jobs link for these students. It digs into how business education can boost digital skills and ready students for today's business challenges. The paper checks how digital skills are part of the course work, shows the worth of real learning chances, and talks about how working with businesses helps in getting digital skills and making jobs. Based on key studies and real data, the article gives tips on how business schools can get students ready for a win in the digital market and help make more jobs. In the end, the article says that if schools teach business students the digital skills they need, colleges can be key in making the economy grow, bringing new ideas, and starting new businesses.

Keywords: Digital Skills; Business Education; Job Creation; University Students.



Introduction

In Nigeria, like many places in the world, we see a big change in the skills that jobs need, mainly in business and starting your own work. The old focus on hand skills is slowly moving to a strong need for digital skills. This shift isn't just a small change; it's a deep change in how jobs work, pushed by new tech and going global. So, students learning business must change their skills to match the needs of this new job world.

A strong case for this change is the fact that digital tech is everywhere in today's work world. Ojo (2019) says that digital sites and tools are key for many jobs like marketing, sales, looking at data, and managing customers. In our linked world now, companies need digital ways to talk to their people and make their work smooth. So, knowing how to use digital tech is a must for doing well in almost all parts of the business world.

The COVID-19 outbreak has made it faster for many types of work to use new digital ways, making it key for firms to move to digital or face being left out in the old ways (Iyamu & Salau, 2020). As working from home and dealing online become more common, firms need to get their workers ready with the digital skills they need to do well in this new digital area. They must know how to use tools like Microsoft Office, software to manage projects, and digital talk places such as Zoom and Slack.

Also, the online world opens up big chances for new business ideas and fresh thinking, especially in Nigeria's growing startup scene. With plans like the Digital Nigeria programs that help business folks learn tech skills, more people who know about business are needed. They must use tech to push new ideas and make worth. Whether it's making online shopping sites, using data study for market facts, or using online ads ways, knowing how to work in the online space is key for those who want to start their own business.

But, it's key to see the big digital split that still stays in Nigeria, with gaps in getting tech and digital know-how between city and country places (Eze et al., 2020). So, fixing this digital split must be a top thing for those who make laws and teachers, making sure all kids, no matter where they come from, get the chance to learn digital skills. Plans like those backed by government cash for digital learning and team-ups between schools and business folks can be big in closing this gap and helping everyone grow together.

The Quest for Self-Reliance and Employability in Nigerian Higher Education

As said in its 2014 report, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has a clear plan for high-level school learning. The main aim is to give people the body and mind skills they need to stand on their own and get good jobs. This big goal has been a key part of Nigeria's school rules. The goal is to make grads who can help the country grow and get better.

But, even with this high goal, many grads from Nigerian universities find it hard to get jobs, causing more and more of them to be jobless. This fact makes us ask big questions about how well universities are doing their job. The problem gets worse every year as more grads enter the work market, where there are not many job spots and the pay is small. The effects of this gap between what is out there and what is needed are deep, with grads facing big problems in getting good and steady work.

One big issue is that what is taught in schools does not fit with what jobs need today. This is because schools do not focus on skills for getting jobs. Ordu (2019) found that school



programs do not give students the right tools to do well in jobs worldwide. There's too much focus on book learning and tests. This means students do not get the hands-on skills that job places want. This is a big worry since having job skills is key to getting and keeping a good job.

Not having digital skills has made things worse. It has led to more grads out of work and jobs that do not match their level of study. A study by Ekpenyong et al. (2015) called many grads "half-baked" and "useless" without more training. This shows how important it is for colleges to focus more on giving grads the digital skills that job places want. Today, job places expect grads to have many tech and practical skills. This includes being good with software, data study, and digital talk.

The gap in what schools teach and what bosses want is a big reason why many grads don't have jobs. A study by Adebakin and others in 2015 said that grads do poorly because their schooling doesn't meet boss expectations. This makes us ask if schools are really getting grads ready for work. If grads don't have the skills that bosses need, they might not get jobs or move up in their work life.

The consequences of graduate unemployment and underemployment are far-reaching, with significant implications for individuals, employers, and the broader economy. For individuals, graduate unemployment can lead to financial insecurity, reduced social mobility, and a lack of fulfillment. For employers, the issue of graduate unemployment can result in reduced productivity, increased recruitment costs, and a loss of talent. For the broader economy, the problem of graduate unemployment can have significant implications for economic growth and development.

In order to address the problem of graduate unemployment and underemployment, universities must take a more proactive approach to equipping graduates with the skills and competencies required by employers. This can involve a range of strategies, including the development of more practical and vocational courses, the incorporation of digital skills into the curriculum, and the provision of work experience and internships. By taking a more holistic approach to education, universities can better prepare graduates for the workforce and help to address the problem of graduate unemployment and underemployment.

Ultimately, the quest for self-reliance and employability in Nigerian higher education is a complex and multifaceted challenge. However, by acknowledging the need for greater emphasis on employability skills and digital literacy, universities can take a crucial step towards addressing the problem of graduate unemployment and underemployment. By working together, universities, employers, and policymakers can help to create a more employable and self-reliant workforce, which will be essential for Nigeria's economic growth and development in the years to come.

In tertiary institutions, Business Education stands out as a prominent program of study, as highlighted by Aquah (2014). Enacted in 1977 with the National Policy on Education, this curriculum aims not only to equip learners with employability skills but also to foster entrepreneurship and job creation. Despite this noble intention, graduates of this program often find themselves grappling with unemployment, a stark reality that undermines the potential of this education stream.

Universities in Nigeria continue to churn out a surplus of liberal arts and theoretical business education graduates, many of whom struggle to secure meaningful employment. The



root of this issue lies in the disconnect between the skills imparted by the program and the demands of the job market. As noted by Edet and Udida (2019), there is a significant deficit in employability skills among business education graduates, exacerbating their challenges in finding suitable employment opportunities. Critics, such as Ekpenyong and Nwabuisi (2013) and Okoro and Ihimekpen (2013), have lamented the program's slow adaptation to technological advancements and its failure to provide practical learning experiences. This deficiency not only hampers graduates' ability to compete in the job market but also undermines the programmes overarching goal of fostering entrepreneurship and job creation.

The repercussions of this mismatch between education and employment are starkly evident in Nigeria's economic landscape. The National Bureau of Statistics (2016) reports alarming figures of unemployment and underemployment, with adverse effects on the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and overall economic growth. This situation is further compounded by global trends, as highlighted by Bamber (2012) and Oliveira (2010), which underscore the urgent need for educational reform to bridge the gap between academia and the labor market. Moreover, the curriculum structure of business education in Nigeria diverges from global standards, with an overemphasis on educational components rather than business acumen. This discrepancy inhibits graduates' ability to compete in the international job market and hinders the country's economic development.

In light of these challenges, there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift in business education curriculum. Embracing a more practical, skills-oriented approach that aligns with industry demands and fosters entrepreneurial mindset is paramount. This entails revising the curriculum to incorporate hands-on learning experiences, technological proficiency, and a deeper understanding of global business dynamics. Additionally, closer collaboration between academia, industry stakeholders, and policymakers is essential to ensure that business education graduates are adequately prepared to drive innovation, create jobs, and contribute to Nigeria's economic prosperity.

Incorporating digital skills into business education courses is essential for ensuring their quality and relevance in today's digital-driven society. This integration serves two crucial purposes. Firstly, it familiarizes students with essential digital competencies, vital in contemporary workplaces where virtually all jobs rely on technology (Okolocha & Nwadiani, 2015). Secondly, it enhances the effectiveness and entrepreneurial efficiency of business education graduates, equipping them with the specific digital skills needed to thrive in dynamic professional environments.

Business education imparts fundamental skills that empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to the workforce and initiate independent ventures (Aibieyi & Egbri, 2010). Given the transformative potential of digital skills, their effective acquisition becomes imperative for business education students. These skills represent cutting-edge advancements in science and technology, capable of elevating the relevance and impact of Nigeria's educational sector (Ordu, 2019). Integrating digital skills into teaching facilitates more efficient and engaging learning experiences. Educators play a pivotal role in leveraging these tools to enhance teaching methods, provide diverse learning materials, and cultivate critical thinking among students (Pai & Tu, 2011). By actively involving students in the learning process and aligning teaching activities with learning outcomes, digital teaching fosters a culture of innovation and creativity.

However, despite the undeniable importance of digital skills in enhancing job creation, recent graduates often lack proficiency in modern technologies, as noted by Williams (2013)



and Tymon (2011). This gap underscores the need for collaborative efforts between universities, local businesses, and the wider community to provide students with hands-on training opportunities in specific digital skills relevant for job creation. For instance, graduates need proficiency in data analysis tools such as Microsoft Excel or Python programming for roles in business intelligence and analytics. They also require digital marketing skills, including Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and social media marketing, for positions in digital marketing agencies or e-commerce ventures. Moreover, familiarity with project management software like Asana or Trello is essential for roles in project management and coordination.

Ordu (2020) advocates for partnerships with small business enterprises to offer on-the-job training, enabling students to acquire practical skills relevant to small business operations, such as proficiency in accounting software like QuickBooks or Sage. Additionally, exposure to website development platforms like WordPress or Shopify can equip students with the skills needed to start their online businesses or offer web development services to small businesses in their communities.

The problem of digital skills acquisition among business education undergraduates poses significant challenges to promoting job creation and economic growth. Despite the increasing demand for digital skills in the modern workforce, many graduates lack proficiency in these crucial competencies. This deficiency hampers their ability to secure employment opportunities and contribute effectively to the economy. One critical issue is the gap between the skills taught in traditional business education programs and those demanded by today's digital-centric workplaces. While business education curriculum may cover theoretical concepts, it often falls short in providing hands-on training in specific digital skills required for job roles in areas such as data analysis, digital marketing, and project management. As a result, graduates may find themselves ill-prepared to meet the expectations of employers who prioritize candidates with practical digital competencies.

Moreover, the rapid pace of technological advancement exacerbates this problem. New tools, platforms, and techniques emerge regularly, rendering outdated or insufficient the digital skills acquired during formal education. Without continuous learning and upskilling, graduates risk falling behind in the competitive job market, further widening the gap between their skillset and industry demands. Additionally, limited access to resources and opportunities for practical training in digital skills poses a barrier to acquisition. Not all educational institutions have the infrastructure or partnerships necessary to provide students with hands-on experience in utilizing digital tools and technologies. Furthermore, factors such as inadequate funding, outdated curriculum, and a lack of qualified instructors may hinder the effectiveness of digital skills training initiatives within educational institutions.

The problem of digital skills acquisition among business education undergraduates constitutes a critical area for research due to its profound implications for workforce development and economic prosperity. Understanding the root causes of this issue, such as curriculum deficiencies, resource constraints, and industry expectations, can inform policy interventions and educational reforms aimed at bridging the digital skills gap.

Digital Skills Acquisition

The concept of digital skill acquisition refers to the process of gaining proficiency in using digital technologies effectively. In today's digital age, where technology plays a significant role in almost every aspect of our lives, acquiring digital skills has become essential for both personal and professional development. Digital skill acquisition is crucial in today's



digital age, encompassing a wide range of abilities essential for personal and professional development. According to Livingstone and Helsper (2007), these skills can be broadly categorized into various types or dimensions;

1. **Basic Digital Skills:** Fundamental competencies in this skill set include email usage, web browsing techniques and elementary computer operations. These basic digital skills allow individuals to move through the digital world while serving as the foundational basis for developing more complex digital abilities.
2. **Thriving in the modern digital world** requires you to develop a variety of skills that help you succeed in this swift and tech-oriented environment. Information literacy represents an important ability for locating digital data which then requires assessment and practical application. It requires the ability to navigate through extensive online resources while evaluating source credibility to utilize information for making informed decisions.
3. In the digital era effective communication and teamwork capabilities remain fundamental. The expansion of remote work and worldwide digital connections requires clear communication and effective collaboration with individuals from different cultures and time zones as never before. Digital tools such as email, social media and video conferencing help people connect with others establish relationships and complete tasks.
4. Digital content creation stands as a highly sought-after essential skill. People use graphic design combined with video editing and software development to produce digital content that engages and impresses audiences effectively. Digital content creators who produce social media posts and develop online courses experience robust demand throughout multiple industry sectors.
5. Programming knowledge along with coding abilities maintain significant worth specifically within software development and data science. The becoming reality of technology in every life aspect demands basic coding and programming competencies to develop practical solutions that solve daily challenges.
6. Digital citizenship teaches people about the legal guidelines and moral rules and practical obligations regarding technology use. Being a digital citizen requires the knowledge of online safety measures while protecting other users' privacy along with using technology for social good purposes. Your preparedness to excel in the digital world for bringing positive social change will grow through learning these essential skills.

Digital skill acquisition is applicable across various domains, including education, employment, entrepreneurship, and everyday life. In education, digital skills are essential for both students and educators to effectively navigate and leverage digital learning environments. In the workplace, digital skills are increasingly in demand, with many jobs requiring proficiency in digital tools and technologies. For entrepreneurs, digital skills are essential for starting and growing a business in today's digital economy. Finally, digital skills are also important for everyday life, enabling individuals to stay connected, informed, and engaged in an increasingly digital world.

Digital skill acquisition is a crucial aspect of personal and professional development in today's digital age. It encompasses a wide range of skills, including basic digital skills, information literacy, communication and collaboration skills, digital content creation, coding

and programming skills, and digital citizenship. Acquiring these skills is essential for success in education, employment, entrepreneurship, and everyday life.

Job Creation

The concept of job creation refers to the process of generating new employment opportunities within an economy (Davis & Haltiwanger, 1992). Job creation is essential for reducing unemployment, stimulating economic growth, and improving living standards. It can occur through various means, including the expansion of existing businesses, the establishment of new businesses, and the implementation of government policies aimed at promoting employment.

There are several ways in which job creation can occur:

1. Business Development and Entrepreneurship generate employment through innovation which creates new enterprises while expanding current markets (Bassanini & Duval, 2006). Business leaders create jobs by identifying market opportunities and developing services which leads to subsequent recruitment of workers needed for business operations.
2. Job generation depends directly on investment levels and economic development rates. Entering new markets and projects leads businesses to require additional staff for operational support. Government financial support for infrastructure projects including roads, bridges and public transportation systems helps construction workers and related professionals secure jobs.
3. The government backs job creation through their development of targeted employment generation policies and programs. Businesses receive tax benefits from government institutions when they create new jobs and government funds professional training programs along with targeted support for industries that generate new employment opportunities.
4. Education and Training: Education and training programs play a crucial role in preparing individuals for the workforce and increasing their employability. By providing people with the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in the labor market, education and training programs can help facilitate job creation.
5. Support for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs): Jobs creation forces are found in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) since these businesses generate a substantial portion of new employment absorptions in numerous economies. Support programs from governmental institutions present access to financial resources together with business development services and training opportunities for SMEs which stimulates employment creation. Economic development and poverty decrease together with social stability when new employment opportunities become available. The establishment of new job positions produces positive effects on both personal households and national economic progress and prosperity.

In summary, job creation is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various strategies and approaches aimed at generating new employment opportunities within an economy. Whether through entrepreneurship, investment, government policies, education, or support for SMEs, job creation plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth and improving living standards for individuals and communities.

Digital Skills Acquisition and Job creation

The relationship between digital skills acquisition and job creation is profound and multifaceted. In today's digital age, the acquisition of digital skills has become increasingly important for individuals seeking employment and for businesses looking to remain competitive in the global market (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). Digital skills refer to the ability to effectively use digital technologies such as computers, the internet, and various software applications. These skills are essential for a wide range of occupations and industries, from traditional office jobs to more specialized roles in fields such as software development, data analysis, and digital marketing.

Digital skills acquisition can lead to job creation in several ways:

1. People increase their chances of workforce entrance as well as workplace success when they develop solid digital capabilities. The requirement for candidate digital fluency with word processing email and web browsing functionality now appears in most job descriptions (Hargittai 2010). People who develop these digital proficiencies boost their workplace suitability and gain the capacity to work in multiple prospective positions.
2. Digital technology development produced new business sectors while introducing unique job positions which need specialized digital competencies. The rising business requirements for software developers alongside data analysts and digital marketers generate new job positions and opportunities through which skilled professionals can succeed (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). People who obtain these particular abilities will become suitable candidates for future career success in these developing industries.
3. Digital skills form the basis for both entrepreneurial business creation and innovative practices. Various startups along with small enterprises use digital technologies for innovation-driven product development while capturing customer markets and operational process optimization (OECD, 2018). Aspiring entrepreneurs gain the capabilities to start new businesses which in turn generate opportunities for employment by others.
4. Remote work practitioner numbers have expanded rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic recently because telecommuting skills became critical (Barrero, Bloom, & Davis, 2021). People with robust digital competencies maintain better capabilities to function from home and to combine work efforts by utilizing digital communication platforms with their coworkers. Flexibility resulting from the pandemic emerges as a tool to produce fresh employment opportunities which help drive economic growth across towns and rural destinations.

The acquisition of digital skills is closely linked to job creation and economic growth. By acquiring digital skills, individuals can improve their employability, access new job opportunities, and contribute to the success of businesses and industries that rely on digital technologies. Moreover, digital skills are essential for entrepreneurship, innovation, and the emergence of new industries and job roles. As the digital economy continues to expand, the demand for individuals with strong digital skills is only expected to grow, making digital skills acquisition an essential component of workforce development and economic prosperity.

Business education programs in universities play a crucial role in preparing students for the challenges of the modern business world. In today's digital economy, the acquisition of digital skills is essential for success in almost every industry. Therefore, business education



programs must adapt to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary digital skills to thrive in the workplace and contribute to job creation.

1. Business education programs achieve higher digital skill acquisition when they add courses about digital literacy and technology-related content into their educational programs. The curricula include various subjects such as computer applications together with data analysis and digital marketing alongside e-commerce and information technology management (OECD, 2018). Training students through digital platform and tool use allows them to master practical workplace skills necessary for digital workplace success.
2. Business education programs require experience-based learning as it allows students to apply digital skills in real-world business settings. Students ought to participate in internship opportunities alongside co-op programs and consulting assignments at local businesses near their location. Students learn practical skills during workplace experiences which enable them to establish professional relationships that lead to job opportunities after they graduate (Barrero, Bloom, & Davis, 2021).
3. Business education programs need to establish digital resource and technology infrastructure access for students to advance their digital competencies. Educational institutions must grant students full access to computer facilities together with application programs and online study tools as well as digital research centers. Digital resource provision in business education programs leads to complete development of digital skills for all students (Hargittai, 2010).
4. Business education programs must establish partnerships with industry organizations to ensure their curriculum stays current with digital economy demands. Industry organizations engage by providing workplace skill requirements and arranging educational events such as lectures and workshops for university students. Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) describe how partnerships between educational institutions and businesses lead to student internships and job placements that drive new job creation.
5. Business education programs need to boost their entrepreneurship and innovation instruction because this teaching method develops students' abilities and entrepreneurial spirit for starting their businesses. Educational programs need to create courses on entrepreneurship that cover innovation management and business model development while also supplying resources and service support for aspiring entrepreneurs (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

In the realm of organizational behaviour and education, the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory has been a cornerstone for understanding the complex dynamics of knowledge dissemination. First introduced by Everett Rogers in 1962, this theory posits that the spread of new ideas, innovations, and technologies is a social process that involves the exchange of information among individuals within a community, organization, or institution. This exchange occurs through interpersonal networks, where individuals seek out and share information about new ideas with their peers, shaping the meaning and understanding of these innovations over time. The DOI theory provides a comprehensive framework for examining the spread of ideas, including digital resources in business education instruction. By considering four key components - the innovation itself, communication channels, time involved in adoption, and the social system being introduced - researchers can gain insight into the factors that influence



the adoption and diffusion of digital resources. For instance, the adoption of digital resources in business education instruction is often driven by the need for enhanced student engagement and access to diverse learning materials.

As universities strive to enhance student learning outcomes, the diffusion of digital resources is playing an increasingly important role. The DOI theory offers a unique lens through which to analyse the appeal and rapid spread of digital technology-based innovations. By understanding the social dynamics of digital resource adoption, educators can better design and implement learning initiatives that maximize the potential of digital technologies to support student learning. Furthermore, the DOI theory highlights the importance of communication channels in shaping the spread of digital resources. Effective communication channels, such as social media and online forums, can facilitate the exchange of information and promote the adoption of digital resources. Conversely, barriers to communication, such as limited access to technology or inadequate training, can hinder the diffusion of digital resources.

Ultimately, the DOI theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex social dynamics that underpin the spread of digital resources in business education instruction. By examining the interplay between factors such as innovation, communication, time, and social system, researchers and educators can gain a deeper understanding of the factors that influence digital resource adoption and develop strategies to optimize the potential of digital technologies for student learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, business education programmes in universities play a crucial role in enhancing digital skills acquisition for job creation. By integrating digital skills into the curriculum, offering experiential learning opportunities, providing access to digital resources and technology, establishing partnerships with industry, and emphasizing entrepreneurship and innovation, business education programs can ensure that students are well-prepared to succeed in the digital economy and contribute to job creation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. Business education programmes should integrate digital literacy and technology-related courses into their curriculum. These courses should cover a wide range of topics, including computer applications, data analysis, digital marketing, e-commerce, and information technology management.
2. Business education students should be made to forge partnerships with local businesses and industry professionals to offer internships, workshops, and mentorship programs, enabling students to gain firsthand exposure to industry practices and trends.
3. Government and policy makers should regularly review and update the business education curriculum to ensure alignment with evolving industry demands and technological advancements, integrating emerging topics and skill sets related to data analytics, digital marketing, and digital project management.



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