

APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING PRACTICAL DIGITAL SKILL ACQUISITION AMONG BUSINESS EDUCATION GRADUATES TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF 21ST CENTURY IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

This study examined approaches for improving practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 113 Business educators in three Colleges of Education in Delta State. There was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire validated by two experts. Spearman's rank order correlation was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78. The 113 copies of the instrument were administered while 110 copies were retrieved. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that institutional management and blended learning approaches improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates. The study recommended among other things that management of educational institutions and the Government should make available the needed instructional digital technologies and infrastructures that will compliment instructional approaches, methods and skills for the teaching of Business Education courses.

Keywords: Business Education, Practical Digital Skill Acquisition, Blended Learning.

Introduction

Business education as a dynamic field of study is geared towards preparing youths and adults for and about business. It is a preparation for a business career when instruction is designed to prepare youths and adults for actual practice in the world of business (Obiete, Nwazor & Vin-Mbah, 2019). In addition, Atakpa (2021), remarked that business education is an embodiment of vocational knowledge and skills needed for employment and advancement in a broad range of business careers. In this 21st century, education about business should involve the practical preparation of youths and adults for intelligent and effective production and consumption of economic goods and services offered to society in a free enterprise economy. 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 to meet the challenges of 21 century (Onojetah, 2021).

In this era of practical digitalization, business education students are expected to acquire practical digital skills and competencies so they will be able to fit into the ever-changing and dynamic digital world. Emesini (2019), viewed practical digital skills as a set of knowledge, competencies, and attitudes that allow an individual to achieve different life goals through digital technologies. Practical digital skill is the ability, confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cyber security), and problem solving. This definition emphasizes practical and wholesome engagement with digital technologies which can be achieved through seamless synarchy between informal and formal education.

Heinz (2021), on his part perceived acquisition of practical digital skill as the confident, critical and creative use of practical digital technologies to achieve goals related to work, employability, learning, leisure, inclusion and/or participation in society. Skill acquisition is a gradual developmental process that requires the individual's cognitive processes to work with his/her physical abilities to learn how to perform business tasks that were previously unfamiliar with. In contemporary times, questions about the effectiveness of teacher approaches on student learning and acquisition of skills have consistently generated considerable interest and attention especially in the particular field of educational research (Ganyaupfu, 2019).

The burden now falls on the shoulders of business educators as facilitators of learning in classrooms to deploy innovative and effective approaches to improve business education graduates' acquisition of practical digital skills (Ajisafe, Bolarinwa & Edeh, 2021). In this 21st century, it is proven that classroom teaching and learning is barely enough to impact the needed and necessary skills to meet the ever-increasing challenges of 21st century. To improve practical acquisition of digital skills, there is need for more effective approaches and methods of teaching digital literacy skills by providing learners with access to digital technologies in the classroom as well as outside the classroom when it is appropriate and useful (Okoye, 2019).

At a particular time, some types of environments have been deemed more appropriate than the other (Richa, 2020). Both formal and informal learning environment emanate from the particular environment created by the teacher and these are highly influenced by the best instructional approaches used to achieve the teaching and learning objectives. Take for a granted, lecture method creates a highly structured learning environment where students are expected to listen, observe and take note (teacher-centered). On the other hand, if the teacher divides the students into cooperative learning group (project method or cooperative group), an environment is created where students are actively engaged and are in charge of their own learning interactions (students-centered). To achieve better or best objectives of teaching and learning, all depends on the kind of teaching and learning environment created by the teacher through instructional approaches in accordance with the expected learning objectives.

Teaching approaches are all those methods available to a teacher during the teaching process for communicating ideas, knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc., to the students so that at the end of instruction, the students can behave in the manner stated in the objective for the lesson. There are several teaching approaches in use in classrooms the world over. Some of them in use are based on philosophical principles; others are based on psychological

principles derived from experiments (Awotua-Efebo in Ohaka, 2017). Be that as it may, while some of these teaching approaches may still be popular and consistent with contemporary society, others have become unpopular, inconsistent, and crude.

Thus, crude teaching approaches are those anachronistic, ineffective, and inconsistent instructional patterns or methods used by teachers, trainers, or instructors to deliver ideas or instructions to their target audience. One thing is unequivocal about a crude teaching approach. A crude teaching approach sometimes may appear to be adequate and effective depending on the situation leading to its usage or the environment. It does not tend to serve the purpose in which it is meant to serve at all times. Although, crude teaching approaches may appear too simple, not all business educators either prefer to use them or even know how to use them. But despite its inadequacy in our contemporary setting, some business educators still prefer to use them (Ohaka, 2017).

Again, some of the approaches used by business educators tend to consider students empty vessels to be filled (teacher-centered or lecture method), under the firm direction of the teacher, other approaches regard students as active participants learning through inquiry and blended learning skills (students-centered), while others said learners are social organisms and learning should be through dialogue and interaction with others (social learning method). The term approach is a deliberate act of choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique blend of value. Amesi (2019), pointed out that approach is all about competitive position, about differentiating oneself in the eyes of the students, about adding value through a combination of relevant activities different from those used by others. In the view of Akpomi (2017), approach is a combination of the ends (goals) for which the teacher is striving and the goals and objectives by which it is seeking to achieve. Approach can then be seen to consist of the important actions taken by the teacher which is a necessary key to realize set goals and objectives.

Regardless of the different names and types of instructional approaches, the main objectives of all approaches or methods are to provide an “objectives based-learning” to the students. Choosing the right approach depends on the age, developmental level of the students, subject content, context, experience, available instructional resources and situation at hand, (Richa, 2020). As a teacher, it is absolutely necessary to evaluate the above criteria before adopting certain instructional approach that suits your teaching as well as the requirement of the students, including the technologies that will aid the teaching and learning process for the objectives to be achieved. Hence knowledge about instructional aides is a must for every business educator. It is against this background that this study examined approaches for improving practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State.

Statement of the Problem

It is sorrowful to see a country such as Nigeria with abundant natural resources and copious human capital, but with over 70 percent of its people living below the poverty line and surviving on less than \$1 a day (Atakpa, 2021). Poverty has ripped the process of education apart and deprived people from getting proper access to adequate education. Poverty has become the ‘boss’ with the help of corruption determining who should go to school and who should not. The impact of poverty on education is of great significance and it is tormenting to see some students struggling and battling the hardship to study without any

support from the government or their parents. And even after graduating from school without adequate practical skill acquisition, they find it very difficult to secure a paying job or start their own business to meet the challenges of 21st century. The reason for inadequate acquisition of practical skills needed to start their own business is not farfetched. This is due to the fact that teaching and learning of business education have been theoretical rather than practical. Supporting this view, Nwaiwu (2019), reveals that as a result of ineffective instructional approaches, business education students tend to perform poorly in ICT practical courses and most business education graduates are not competent in digital skills. In addition, individual support provided by lecturers to students is nearly impossible making it more challenging for Business Education students to constantly engage in effective learning. This has negatively affected entrepreneurial ventures since the graduates lack relevant skills to start and run businesses successfully. The problem of the study, therefore, is to examine approaches for improving practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine Approaches for improving practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State. The study specifically examined;

1. how institutional management approach could improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State.
2. how blended learning approach could improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. how could institutional management approach improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State?
2. how could blended learning approach improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are stated for this study.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business educators on how institutional management approach improves practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State based on gender.
2. There is no significant relationship in the mean ratings of business educators on how blended learning approach improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State based on gender.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design which examined approaches for improving practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State. The population of the study comprised one

hundred and thirteen business educators in three (3) Colleges of Education in Delta State. Since the population was sizeable, there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured on a four-point rating scale. The questionnaire was based on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). To ascertain the face validity of the instrument, the draft of the instrument was given to two experts who are lecturers in the department of Educational Foundation, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State. Spearman rank order was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78. Out of 113 copies of the instrument administered 110 copies were duly filled and returned. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For the research questions, the decision was based on the criterion mean of 2.50, thus, any item with mean score 2.50 or above were accepted while any item having a mean score less than 2.50 was rejected. For the hypotheses, if the calculated value of t (t-cal) is greater than the table value of t (t-crit), the hypothesis will be rejected; whereas, if the calculated value of t (t-cal) is less than the table or critical value of t (t-crit), the hypothesis will be accepted.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: How could institutional management approach improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State?

Table 1:

Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Responses on How Institutional Management Approach Improves Practical Digital Skill Acquisition Among Business Education Graduates to Meet the Challenges of 21st Century in Delta State. (n = 110)

S/N	STATEMENT	$\bar{x}$	SD	REMARK
1.	Provision of the needed technological and digital office equipment will most likely improve practical digital skill acquisition among students.	2.94	0.94	Agree
2.	Ensuring that business education teaching staff are trained in handling modern digital equipment will most likely improve practical digital skill acquisition among students.	3.00	1.04	Agree
3.	Maintaining special synergy between institutional and work place human and material resources will most likely improve practical digital skill acquisition among students.	3.45	1.0	Agree
4.	Provision of the needed digital learning environment for the students will most likely improve practical digital skill acquisition among students.	3.44	1.0	Agree
5.	Providing the teachers with the comfort needed in personally assisting the students will most likely improve practical digital skill acquisition among students	3.32	0.9	Agree
Grand Mean (SD)		3.23	0.98	Agree

Source: Field survey data, 2023.

Analyses on Table 1 revealed that the mean scores range from 2.94 – 3.45. This indicates that the respondents agreed to the statements in items 1-5. Data in Table 1 further shows the grand mean for the entire item which is 3.23, and falls within the response option of agree. This indicates that institutional management approach improves practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State. The standard deviation score of 0.98 indicates that the respondents were homogenous in their response.

Research Question 2:How could blended learning approach improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State?

Table 2:

Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of Responses on how Blended Learning Approach Improve Practical Digital Skill Acquisition Among Business Education Graduates to Meet the Challenges of 21stCentury in Delta State.(n = 110)

S/N	STATEMENT	$\bar{x}$	SD	REMARK
6.	Blended learning approach allows students to ask questions and give feedback without disclosing their real identity during online classes.	3.23	0.6	Agree
7.	Blended learning approach provide students with increased opportunities for practice and improvement, which is crucial for developing mastery of any subject.	3.53	0.7	Agree
8.	Blended learning approach promotes more interactive teaching and learning experiences with technological applications like Zoom, Youtube etc. and this tend to improve acquisition of practical digital skills among students.	3.90	0.5	Agree
9.	Activity-focused face-to-face sessions blended with online resources will most likely improve acquisition of practical digital skills among students.	3.99	0.1	Agree
10.	Blended learning approach gives room for a disciplined approach to problem solving as well as improves on students' confidence during difficulties.	3.76	0.6	Agree
Grand Mean		3.68	0.50	Agree

Source: Researcher's field survey data, 2023.

Analyses on Table 2 revealed that the mean scores range from 3.23 – 3.99. This indicates that the respondents agreed to the statements in items 6-10. Data in Table 2 further shows the grand mean for the entire item is 3.68, which falls within the response option of agree. This reveals that blended learning approaches improves practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State. The standard deviation score of 0.50 indicates that the respondents were homogenous in their response.

Hypotheses

Ho₁:There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business educators on how institutional management approach improves practical digital skill acquisition among

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business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State based on gender.

Table 3:

Analysis of t-test on the Mean and Standard Deviation Responses of Male and Female Business Educators on how Institutional Management Approach Improves Practical Digital Skill Acquisition Among Business Education Graduates to Meet the Challenges of 21st Century in Delta State.

Respondents	n	$\bar{x}$	S^2	df	t.cal	t.crit	α	Remark
Male	25	3.36	0.69	108	-0101	1.982	.05	Retain Ho
Female	85	3.38	0.81					

Source: Researcher's field survey data, 2023

From the t-test table, since t-cal (-0101) < t-crit (1.982), retain Ho. The null hypothesis is hereby retained that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business educators on how institutional management approach improves practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State based on gender.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship in the mean ratings of business educators on how blended learning approach improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State based on gender.

Table 4:

Analysis of t-test on the Mean and Standard Deviation Responses of Business Educators on how Blended Learning Approach Improve Practical Digital Skill Acquisition Among Business Education Graduates to meet the Challenges of 21st Century in Delta State Based on Gender.

Respondents	n	$\bar{x}$	S^2	df	t.cal	t.crit	α	Remark
Male	79	3.40	0.49	108	-1.261	1.982	.05	Retain Ho
Female	31	3.54	0.50					

Source: Researcher's field survey data, 2023

From the t-test table, since t-cal (-1.261) < t-crit (1.982), retain Ho. The null hypothesis is hereby retained that there is no significant relationship in the mean ratings of business educators on how blended learning approach improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State based on gender.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that institutional management approach improves practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century. Data from the instrument of data collection shows that provision of the needed technological and digital office equipment; ensuring that business education teaching staff are trained in handling modern digital equipment; maintaining special synergy between institutional and work place human and material resources; provision of the needed digital

learning environment for the students; as providing the teachers with the comfort needed in personally assisting the students will most likely improve practical digital skill acquisition among students. This finding is in consonance with Akpan (2014), that the provision and use of relevant instructional equipment and materials could help to facilitate the acquisition of desired work skills by learners especially business education students.

The final finding of the study revealed that blended learning approach improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State. This is true because business educators opined that activity-focused face-to-face sessions blended with online resources will most likely improve acquisition of practical digital skills among students. Blended learning approach provide students with increased opportunities for practice and improvement, which is crucial for developing mastery of any subject. It promotes more interactive teaching and learning experiences with technological applications like Zoom, Youtube etc.; allows students to ask questions and give feedback without disclosing their real identity during online classes; and also blended learning approach gives room for a disciplined approach to problem solving as well as improves on students' confidence during difficulties. On whether there is any significant difference in the mean ratings of business educators on the extent to which blended learning approaches improve acquisition of practical digital skills among business education graduates based on gender, the null hypothesis was retained which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of business educators on the extent to which interdependence approaches improve acquisition of practical digital skills among business education graduates based on gender. This finding is in agreement with Hannon and Macken (2019), that the benefits of blended learning include: making computers including local and global networks of information available for learners; developing teachers' roles as leaders and mentors to their students in terms of their expertise in computers and networks of local and international information, in addition to being producers rather than importers of knowledge; enabling learning groups to use multimedia, e-mail, virtual libraries, and all internet data collaborative software; having the ability to combine different possibilities for different schools and universities in productive ways; and overcoming the problem of lasting change in the content of educational materials.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to examine approaches for improving practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State. From the findings of the study, it could be concluded that institutional management approach and blended learning approach improve practical digital skill acquisition among business education graduates to meet the challenges of 21st century in Delta State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made from the findings of the study.

- Management of educational institutions and the Government as well should make available the needed instructional digital technologies and infrastructures that will compliment instructional approaches, methods and skills for the teaching of Business Education courses.

- Business educators in Colleges of Education should be given the lucrative opportunity to be armed with more effective contemporary teaching approaches such as blended learning through regular conferences, workshops, seminars, lectures and symposium as this will enable them to be more knowledgeable and at home with those approaches that are potent enough to improve business education students acquisition of practical digital skills.

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