

# **CREATIVE AND FUNCTIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION: INTERNET AS A FACILITATOR FOR NEW DIRECTIONS FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION**

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this paper was to look at the current directions of Business Education in Nigeria and other countries of the world and see how internet has really helped in facilitating the new directions. Business education is seen as education for and about business which is very important in the lives of every individual. The use of internet in facilitating the success of the entire Business Education programme is regarded as very paramount. The internet is now a global computer network that allows millions of computers around the world to communicate through the telephone system and other communication lines. It has helped in the shaping and re-shaping of effective delivery of Business Education programmes in the developed nations of the world. It was concluded that the current direction of Business Education in the countries of the world is technology-drive facilitated by the use of the internet, which is really helping in all aspect of life.*

**Keywords:** Internet, Business Education, current, Direction

Business Education has occupied a strategic place in the history of education in Nigeria and the world at large. It is important to national development as it seeks to develop vocational knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for employment and advancement in a business career. Aina (1996) stated that Business Education is a subject which permeates the entire life of a nation. The mode, methods of teaching and the area of occupation of graduates of Business Education in the past cannot be

compared to the present. This is in relation to the fact that the directions of business education is changing fast day by the day, more especially in the developed nations of the world and more so in a sinking economy.

The reason for new directions which bring about changes in the area of Business Education is not far from the fact that "we live in a world where change is constant and learning never stops," (Oyedele, 2016). This however calls for the need to look at what changes have happened so far in Business Education especially in the developed nations of the world. This will in no small way, help other developing nations with a collapsing economy to look at these developed nations as an example and follow their step in moving ahead.

One of the areas in which change is eminent and well observed is in the introduction and use of the internet in teaching and learning. This mechanism has really affected virtually every aspect of human endeavour. With it, one can access the world in a spot and interact with as many people as he/she wants. Internet consists of thousands of connected computer network around the world that connect millions of computers and tens of millions of people. Educational materials and other important literatures can be easily read and printed with the help of the internet. According to Osho (2009), internet is a delivery mechanism through which digitalised information travels. It is important to note that sites on the world wide web (www) and e-mail are pervasive without being launched on the internet (Osho, 2009). It is the internet that makes it possible for visitors to access information on the web site through the computers network globally. It is also the internet that makes the global navigation on the internet possible.

### **The Internet**

The Internet is the newest and fastest growing part of the Age of Information Technology. The inception of the Internet actually began over 25 years ago as a United States Defence Department project (Roderick, 1998). The Internet is now a global computer network that allows millions of computers around the world to communicate through the telephone system and other communication lines (Warschauer, 2003). He also sees internet as the web and the Digital Information Superhighway. It was the invention of the World Wide Web by Tim Berners-Lee and the lifting of the ban on commercialization that sparked such incredible growth of the Internet.

Two key features of the Internet are:

1. the enormous amount of information it contains and
2. the speed at which this information can be accessed and published.

No other single entity has ever been so widely accepted at such a non-stop pace in history.

The impact of the Internet is felt everywhere in society and it has become an everyday household term. Currently millions of people in countries around the world are using the Internet.

The Internet adds a new dimension to the curriculum that provides students the opportunities to engage in more challenging and life-like activities. The potential uses of the Internet in a classroom setting are limited only by the imagination and creativity of the students and their teachers. Many say the Internet has become one of the most valuable tools for education. According to Roderick (1998), Secretary of Education Richard Riley stated, "The Internet is the blackboard of the future..." and "...the future is here and now." The Internet has four practical applications within the business curriculum. These are: as an independent subject, as a teaching assistant, as a means of transforming the process of learning, and as a research vehicle. Using the Internet requires and improves upon a number of skills including verbal, written, critical thinking, computer, and telecommunications. Additionally, the Internet makes learning active, exciting and fun. To avoid being left behind, business educators in the developed countries have taken steps and therefore, integrated the Internet into their curriculum.

Roderick (1998) also stated that because the Business Education curriculum is driven by standards for and about business, teaching and using the Internet fit perfectly into the many areas of the business curriculum. The following twelve curricular areas were developed by the National Standards for Business Education (NSBE) with the financial support of the National Business Education Association (NBEA): Accounting, Business Law, Career Development, Communications, Computation, Economics and Personal Finance, Entrepreneurship, International Business, Interrelationships of Business Education Standards, Information Systems, Management, and Marketing (<https://www.nbea.org/newsite/curriculum/standards/>). Each of these twelve areas already has a wealth of information on the Internet that can aide both the student and teacher of business education. Business teachers should be able to design, develop, implement, and evaluate Internet activities.

### **Concept of Business Education**

Business Education is an aspect of vocational education which has been existing for a very long time in the history of mankind. The acquisition of skill in most trades was not automatic; On the other hand, entry into each guild was highly controlled by the members from whom the knowledge of trade or craft originated and by initiated members. The only option available to anyone who wanted to learn any craft or trade was to undergo a period of apprenticeship or training. This roughly marked the beginning of vocational education which Business Education fall under. The roles performed by a business educator is so encompassing that the society cannot do without them if truly such society will achieve greatness in training and entrepreneurship of such.

Business education means so many things to so many people that its proper definition is imperative. It is not business administration nor is it typist's course. Instead, it is a course that offers knowledge and competencies required for entering into

business occupations of all sorts and prospering in them. Business Education, which encompasses several disciplines, enables people to think, speak and behave in ways that support the growth, efficiency and effectiveness of an organization or several organizations (Sulyman & Philo, 2014).

Sam & Joe (2000), sees business education as a process of instructing a person what happens during business transactions in offices, banks, markets and anywhere money changes hands.

He further categorise business education into two major components called, “education for business and education about business”

According to him, while education for business is seen as a vocational education, that is an educational training programme through which recipients could fit into or be employed in four major occupational areas, namely: book-keeping and accounting, clerical and general office jobs, stenographic and secretarial jobs and distributive and marketing jobs.

Education about business on the other hand can be seen as any programme of studies or any publication that offers information to consumers and thereby advises or educates them about the use of money in various business situations. The profession of teaching for and about business is emerging from the classroom to cyberspace, work sites, boardrooms, community centers, and legislative halls. Teaching professionals need to meet global accountability standards in an era when basic skills competence and technological literacy are desperately needed.

According to Sulyman & Philo (2014), Business Education which is described as an ‘education for business and about business’ could make a person to perform well as an entrepreneur. This is due to the fact that it equips the recipients with skills which are needed for business success. Furthermore, entrepreneurship focuses on the desire and ability of a person to search for investment opportunities within his environment and also be able to set up and run an enterprise based on the identified opportunities.

Business Education is a course that prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business and it is equally important because it prepares students to handle their own business affairs and to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. Osuala (1989) defined Business Education as an essential part of the preparation of youths for live and living. In 2004, Osuala, gave another definition as a programme of instruction which consists of two parts (1) Office education - a vocational programme of office careers through initial, refresher and upgrading education and (2) General Business Education - a programme to provide students with information and competences which are needed by all in managing personal business affairs and in using the services of the business. Still on the definition of Business Education, Njoku (1997) defined Business Education as that facet of educational training that helps the individual to acquire relevant skills needed for living. However, in 2006, Njoku gave another definition as an educational programme that equips an individual with functional and suitable skills, knowledge, attitude and value

that would enable him/her operates in the environment he/she finds himself/herself. It can be seen from the foregoing discussions that as the years go by; the definitions of Business Education continue to change. This means that Business Education is not static. Therefore any worthwhile programme has to move with time. However, business educators have always accepted that change is a fact of life. From the typewriter to the transistor, business curriculum has continually shaped itself to meet the needs of business. As a result, the success and survival of business education constantly depends on its ability to adapt and keep pace with the needs of its recipients. These changes present challenges for both the learner and instructor. Nevertheless, it is the business educator that must be willing to adapt and manage these challenges to ensure successful programs for the future. It is essential that Business Education be a useful and vital component of transformation agenda if the curriculum of business programs across the country is to continue to meet the needs of its students.

With regards to the varied definitions above, it is known fact that one thing that is constant is change therefore business education has to change as time and situation change. This is the more reason the developed countries of the world is looking at it in a new way and taking new directions on the teaching, learning and carrier development in Business Education, especially with the help of the internet. The above however entails that the use of social media, facebook, twitter and other networks that are used in teaching and learning today would not have been possible.

### **How Internet has helped the Development of Business education**

One of the basic requirements for education in the 21st century is to prepare learners for participation in a networked, knowledge-based economy in which knowledge will be the most critical resource for social and economic development." (Harasim, 1997)

The internet is a valuable tool that is tremendously useful to teachers. Through the use of the internet, teachers can allow their students access to new information, points of view and experiences that they would otherwise not have been able to encounter. There are several tools that prove particularly useful in the teaching and learning of Business Education in the developed countries. Some of the ways the internet has helped teachers in the development of business education are:

#### **- Webquests**

Teachers can improve students' ability to locate information independently by sending them on a digital treasure hunt through cyberspace. Webquests promote independent learning and help students develop problem-solving skills. In a Webquest, students are given a question to seek an answer for, or a list of terms to define. Students use the internet to locate the information necessary to complete the quest. Teachers can also create the Webquest to incorporate into their lessons by making a list of terms germane to the area of study. It is also an excellent tool for beginning a unit.

- ***Lesson planning***

With the help of the internet, teachers have instant access to tested lesson plans that have worked for others in the past. This however saves them time and increases their effectiveness as they do not have to engage in the typical trial and error method of lesson development. Now, if a teacher wants to teach a particular skill, he/she can visit one of the many site dedicated to teachers, including the ever popular Education World or Scholastic.com.

- ***Streaming Videos***

With the help of the internet, the era of VHS is over. Even the DVD, which once seemed so cutting-edge, is now passed. Today, teachers need nothing but internet access and LCD projector. The internet is full of useful sites that feature videos designed for use in the classroom. Discovery Education's Streaming, which replaced the popular United Streaming, is a safe bet for any educator. At these sites, teachers can search for topics relevant to their lesson.

- ***Test Preparation***

In this age of high stakes testing, an increased emphasis is being put on students passing the state tests. There are a number of websites aimed at helping students improve their scores on standardised tests that offer subscription services to schools. Study Island, one of the most popular test preparation sites currently on the market, which provides services to schools across the globe.

**Principles that Shape Business Education on the Internet**

The design parameters for an effective web-based information system that supports business education on the internet can be drawn from three simple principles (Ross, 2012). The principles have been summarised as a checklist and could be used for reflection or review.

**1. Delivers Effective Teaching and Learners**

- Actively constructs knowledge.
- Interactive activities.
- Scaffolding to support construction of knowledge.
- Develops a range on cognitive abilities.
- Are stages in the learning process explicit?
- Provides mechanism for publishing self and peer reflections.
- Provides a simple communication tool for teachers and learners

## **2. Supportive Learning Environment**

- Does the web-based information system provide a structure upon which a "learning community" can be built?
- Does the environment support a range of learning activities?
- Is there evidence of structure environment and is it easy to use?

## **3. The Social Context**

- Can student create informal relationships with peers?
- Can students work collaboratively on projects?
- Do students receive regular and detailed feedback?
- Does the web-based information system provide links or Portals for students to support curricular activities?

## **Challenges of Using Internet in Teaching and Learning of Business Education Programmes**

As good as internet is in the teaching and learning of Business Education in the nations of the world which has helped in the new direction for Business Education in particular, a number of problems are standing as major challenges to using internet in business education programmes.

### **1. The training needs and cost are high.**

The cost of programs to acquire and maintain technology is high. Equally steep is the cost to train teachers to use computers and the Internet in the classroom. In using software in the adult classroom Susan Gaer reported that, Robert Bickerton (Director of Adult Education for the state of Massachusetts), has said that "for every dollar spent on computers and software, another dollar should be spent on staff development".

Teachers want to learn about new technologies and how to integrate them into instruction and that takes resources, time, and money. The suggestion that using computers and the Internet may eliminate the need for a trained teacher does not appear to be true. Computers can facilitate independent learning, but teachers, assistants, and volunteers are needed to clarify, to assist, and to work on the technical problems that will occur.

### **2. The new digital divide**

In education, the digital divide is most commonly defined as the gap between those students who have, do not have, and know how to use the internet and the information technologies that are currently transforming education (Bernard, 2011). According to Warschauer (2003), the "*digital divide is marked not only by physical access to computers and connectivity but also by access to the additional resources that allow people to use technology well*". Due to the affordability of many information technologies today, the current meaning of digital divide is changing from having

access, to knowing how to use the technologies (Bernard, 2011). In this way, the digital divide still acts as a challenge for education and more specifically e-learning environments. In education the digital divide has, most recently, become more about closing the gap between using the resources appropriately to obtain quality educational outcomes than not having access to the technology (Warschauer, 2003; Bernard, 2011). The quality of learning outcomes, and more importantly, the successful use of the expected technology resources, all hinge on the amount of experience and comfort level each learner has with these specific resource technologies (Warschauer, 2003).

### **3. Student motivation**

Although student motivation can only truly happen intrinsically, creating the right online environment where students want to learn and feel successful is the primary responsibility of the instructor or course designer. According to Martin (2009), in today's online environments, there is a lack of teacher presence, face-to-face (f2f) interaction, and tech support. The most well planned and explicitly laid out online instructional environment is not enough to sustain learner interest or support intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, learners new to an online learning environment typically lack the level of metacognition awareness, time management skills, and self-directed learning needed to be successful (Martin, 2009).

### **4. Course design**

Insufficient time spent on course development and design can be a huge contributing factor to poorly developed online learning experiences and a major challenge for e-learning instructors. According to Archambault (2010), the amount of time needed to design and implement a well design lesson, online, is an important consideration. Archambault indicated that instructors reported an increase in the amount of time they spent creating e-learning courses because of new content, new technologies and new ways of engaging online learners.

### **5. Human factor**

This is another factor that stands as a great challenge to the use of internet in teaching and learning (Business Education inclusive). It is no more news that people try as much as possible to restrict changes, therefore any change brought about in the process of making a better choice for the development of the programme entirely is highly restricted and are not welcomed even though, such may benefit them in the long run.

### **Conclusion**

The entire world is moving from manually operated services to ICTs enhanced services which are being facilitated by the use of internet. Business Education programmes is also changing from what it used to be i.e. from the initial manually-enhanced programme to entirely technology-enhanced programme. This is the new

direction for Business Education programme in the countries of the world. The initial use of manual typewriters to learn the keyboarding has changed. Also, teaching of Business Education is no more seen as an adult or university programme alone but a programme and training that need to be inculcated in the children as well right from primary education.

Internet has helped a lot in connecting millions of people together within a short time. It has enhanced the use of various approaches in the business education programme, such as the social media, new technologies and many others. This is no doubt the new way of teaching and learning of any course, especially, Business Education.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Provision of adequate support for educational institutions and programmes. This will go a long way in reducing the cost of equipments incurred if not totally eradicating the cost.
2. Improved training and technological know-how. Well trained personnel are likely to perform better in the delivery than the one who is not properly trained. Therefore, proper training of business educators should be facilitated to help adequate delivery of instruction.
3. Change is eminent. The world is changing, which makes it mandatory for us also to change to everything around us. This includes the way we think, learn, study and react to matters. Our attitude to the use of technology must change to a better one that will enhance the use.
4. Use an internet programme at a time. As good as internet knowledge and facility is, a lot of problems can arise when too many programmes are being use in the teaching and learning at a particular time. The need to use one internet programme per time becomes very essential.

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