STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING EMPLOYABILITY SKILL ACQUISITION OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN THE E-WORLD IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract
This study determined the strategies for improving employability skills acquisition of business education students in the e-world in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. Related literature pertinent to the study were reviewed which exposed the need for the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted using a population of 119 business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. A structured questionnaire developed by the researchers was used for data collection. Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The reliability yielded coefficient values of .83 and .91 for the two clustersand an overall reliability value of 0.87. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Mean was used to answer the research questions and standard deviation was used to explain how the responses of the respondents varied. t-test statistical toolwas used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data collected. The results showed that business educators agreed on digital literacy and e-portfolio as strategies for improving employability skills acquisition of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The results also showed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the digital literacy and e-portfolio strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others, that the use of practical activities should be highly utilized by business educators in teaching so as to equip the students with employability skills for self-employment.

Keywords: Strategies, employability skills and business education.

Introduction

Education is the key to achieve professional goals. It provides knowledge to sustain one's self in this competitive environment. Today higher educational institutes are facing different challenges to equip graduates with adequate competencies and attitudes required by the corporate world. The world of employment has changed drastically. Technology is impacting practices and experiences while societies are becoming more global and multicultural. With the rise in globalization, employability is becoming one of the main goals for educational programmes and business education is not left out. Business education is an educational programme that prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business. It prepares them to handle their own business affairs, and function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy.

Business education equips its recipients to achieve total development. The goal of business education in this electronic world is to provide students with hands-on, technical training that prepares them for the rapidly evolving 21st century workforce.In this challenging environment, the role of higher education institutions is not only to produce graduates with specific areas of specialization but more importantly, to develop graduate employability skills that match the demands required by industry in electronic world. Thus, universities are under intense pressure from their stakeholders, especially industry, to equip graduates with more than just academic skills (Saad & Majid, 2014). The shifting demand for skills has necessitated the availability of highly-skilled labour.

Skills development is essential for increasing the productivity and sustainability of enterprises and improving working conditions and the employability of workers. Vocational and technical skills are essential, but employers are seeking applicants with more. According to Ekwue, Udemba and Ojuro (2019), employers want employees who can continue to learn and adapt, read, write and compute competently, listen and communicate effectively, think creatively, solve problems independently, manage themselves at work, interact with co-workers, work in teams or groups, handle basic technology, lead effectively as well as follow supervision. These core skills for employabilityare both important for employers' recruitment and to enhance individuals' ability to secure jobs, retain employment and move flexibly in the labour market as well as engage in lifelong learning.

Employability skills are the core, transferrable skills that are needed in nearly every job in this digital world. According to Toland as cited in Okolocha and Odimmega (2019), employability skills are non-discipline specific, economically valuable skills required to get initial employment, progress in a job, as well as secure another job when desired. Some of these core employability skills include conflict resolution, accepting criticisms, working with a team, workplace etiquette, proper use of workplace electronics, interviewing skills, resume writing and workplace communication (Dave, 2017). Employability skills also include creativity, ability to do self managing and being effective. Moreover, to be able to work in teams, being energetic and motivated is also a key part of the main skills needed for employability. In the context of this study, employability skills are attributes, skills and knowledge that individuals possess to ensure capability of being effective in the workplace.

Employability skills include communication skills (interpersonal, team work, numeracy, and presentation), analytical skills, e-business skills and self management skills. Employability skills enable graduates to apply academic knowledge effectively in the workplace. Hind Stuart in Niemela (2016) stated that the factors every employer is looking for in this changing and stimulating environment is the ability to make presentations and manage time in addition to interpersonal skills.

Thus, to face the 21st century challenges of increased competition in fieldwork, most employers today require employees to have soft or non-technical skills in addition to technical skills, that is, individuals who are not only smart and have academic background but also have management aptitude, which is shown in their set of employability skills, on top of their intellectual capabilities (Robins, 2015). This, therefore, heightened the expectations of employers of labour in Nigeria with a demand for work ready graduates who have intellectual capacity and are also equipped with such skills. The challenges faced by business education graduates in meeting the needs and demands of the work place in Nigeria today and the presumed inability to become self- employable casts doubt as to whether business education programmes have positive effects on the students in respect to skills, competencies and attributes. This is so because, business education is supposed to prepare individuals for smooth transition from school to work place. There is need for more emphasis to be placed on the acquisition of high level of skills by business education students in view of the recognition of the increased and rapid change in their roles. Tertiary institutions have a responsibility to provide students with opportunities for work experience so that they can gain a competitive advantage upon graduation (Niemela, 2016). The development of employability skills is a life-long learning process where every new business or social encounter (such as in the university studies) can be seen as an avenue for broadening and development of these skills.

The acquisition of a life-long skills calls for effective and efficient teaching strategies and the utilization of improved and standard instructional facilities, to ensure the production of desired quality of graduates with enterprising skills. However, effective teaching and learning depends on the ability of the teacher to motivate learners to pick interest in learning through different strategic instructional strategies. Strategies are laid down framework of plans and actions of an organization geared towards achieving its set objectives in the short and long run (Nwazor & Onokpaunu, 2016). Nwazor and Onokpaunu further maintained that in the context of education, strategies entail how institutions of learning equip students with the desirable competitive advantage beyond mere classroom performances to deal with the problems of the society. The quality of the teachers and the utilization of the right strategies by the teachers play an important role in improving employability skill acquisition of the students.

The teaching of business education requires the use of instructional strategies that will encourage learning by doing thereby leading to the development of key employability skills. In a business education classroom, employability skills are best acquired when the classroom replicates key features of real work conditions and instructional activities that are similar to those performed by workers in the workplace. The teaching of employability

skills give students the capability to cope with the wide range of demands and experiences they will meet in the workplace. Business education students need employability skills in order to be effective in their chosen field of work. Therefore, the teaching method adopted by a business educator in teaching is very imperative for improving and developing the employability skills of business education students. The acquisition of employability skills in tertiary institutions throughout Nigeria is a long process. The acquisition may also take place through extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, and associations. These activities can help students develop leadership, critical thinking, and teamwork abilities.

Ekwue, Udemba and Ojuro (2019) revealed nine key strategies for which there is evidence of successful outcomes in improving students' employability skills acquisition. One is work experience and another is providing modules in entrepreneurship. Graduates also became more employable when their teachers supported them to develop graduate portfolios, profiles, records of achievement and supporting graduates to engage electronic social networks for ongoing communication and awareness of job vacancies. Another effective strategy is to establish mentorship networks between successfully employed graduates and currently enrolled students. Therefore, this study will focus on these strategies for improving employability skills acquisition of business education students for effective performance in the e-world. These strategies are e-digital literacy strategies and electronic portfolio strategies.

Today, the advancement of technology has permeated every aspect of our lives. Employers expect their workforce to have the skills needed to live, work, and thrive in a digital society (Eyre, 2012). So, when preparing students for the world of work, digital literacy is essential. Digital literacy is the set of competencies required for full participation in a knowledge society. It includes knowledge, skills and behavior involving effective use of digital devices for purpose of communication, expression, collaboration and advocacy (Lynch, 2017). Digital literacy is an important and evolving concept having influence on the status of current and future work force as the labor market is being transformed globally by implementation of digital technology. Digital literacy is directly related to the individual's employability which is represented by the combination of factors and processes which enable people to get employed and to stay in employment or to move on in the workplace (Radovan, 2016).

Digital literacy involves knowing how to use a range of technologies to find information, solve problems or complete tasks. Digital literacy is also about knowing how to act safely and respectfully online (Australian Government, 2016). Developing digital literacy means giving students the opportunity to use digital technologies when it is appropriate and useful and it means encouraging active, creative and critical uses of digital technologies which can develop digital literacy whilst at the same time helping students to further their subject knowledge. Developing digital literacy in the classroom can allow students to apply their existing knowledge with digital technology to learning in school and in the process be supported to think more critically and creatively about what it is they are doing. Digital literacy can help students understand how technology can be used appropriately in the workplace (Barret, 2017). Digital literacy is fundamental to students' long-term success

and personal economic well-being. Employers are increasingly recognizing the benefits of employing people with the knowledge and skill to harness the potential of technologies and may use this to differentiate between potential employees. Many institutions see a natural synergy in linking digital literacy initiatives with other priorities such as developing graduate attributes, employability and transferable skills. These digital literacy skills will enable students to use computer to network from various platforms which provide multiple opportunities for team work and collaboration.

In this era, where the use of mobile and computers is extensive in schools and colleges, having electronic portfolios is important for students. Electronic portfolios are digital collection of files often used as part of a job application, professional development, planning or assessment of learning outcomes. According to Gray (2019), e-portfolios are digital presentations of a student's experiences, achievements and aspirations for a particular audience. E-Portfolios are a framework for learning, a space for students to collect evidence of, reflect on, articulate, and create new learning over time.They are widely used in higher education in order to help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills as well as to prepare them to be lifelong learners. It allows students to collect their work for future use. Students can easily curate, archive, and analyze and keep their sample work for past as well as future learning at their fingertips.

E-Portfolios support powerful teaching and learning, assessment, student development, advising and career counseling, and professional and personal identity development along the pathway to graduation (Powell, Freeman & Kahn, 2019). According to Hinton, Towell, MacFarlane, Refling and Amesburg (2017), e-portfolio is a digital collection of files often used as part of a job application, professional development, planning or assessment of learning outcomes. E-portfolios can include text, electronic files, images, multimedia, blog entries, reflective or narrative summaries, learning goals, resumes and professional development goals. It helps students learn to communicate in multiple modalities, responsibly manage their online identities, and develop as learners and emerging professionals. E-Portfolio practice can help students integrate learning across the curriculum, co-curriculum, and experiences outside school, contributing to a more meaningful and purposeful educational experience. E-Portfolios offer rich information for assessment and improvement of curricula, teaching, and learning.

Mang in Obi (2019) observed that the influencing factor to strategies for improving employability skills acquisition of business education students in the electronic world may be gender. Gender in this study means the physical attributes of a person as a male or female. Some researchers have reported gender differences while others believed that there is no significant gender difference at any level. Studies conducted in Nigeria have shown that males performed better than their female counterparts (Afolabi, Kareen, Okubanjo, Ogunbanjo & Aninnkan, 2017; Olanipekuin & Adeyera, 2016; Ezeh & Cecilia, 2015) It is possible that male and female business educators may differ in their use of instructional strategy for teaching employability skills in the area of the study.
As regards to the teaching of business education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, these variables are likely to affect the mean ratings of respondents on the strategies that

could lead to improving the employability skills acquisition of business education students. Therefore the effects of this variable on the mean ratings of the respondents will be determined. In view of this, business educators in tertiary institutions need to adopt effective instructional strategies with the ultimate aim of improving the employability skills of business education students for self employment in this digital world. It is against this backdrop that the researchers seek to determine strategies for improving the employability skills acquisition of business education students in E-world.

Statement of the Problem
Business education involves the acquisition of right habits, attitudes, skills and what it takes to survive in the face of unemployment. In spite of the fact that Business Education programme equips individual with necessary skills for self employment, Business Education graduates are yet to maximize these opportunities in creating jobs for themselves and others instead, the business graduates roam the streets in search of jobs, which are either few in supply or not available. Even the few ones who try to establish businesses, before now, the businesses have collapse as a result of poor location of business, creative thinking, communication, marketing and keeping of accounting records abilities. Despite the importance and emphasis on broader skills on employability of fresh graduates in Nigerian labour market, it is unfortunate that responses of employers of labour on the use of modern technology by recent graduates reveal that these skills are lacking. Employers view that graduates are not yet ready to enter and face the complexities and challenges of the world of work in the era of modern technology. Graduates of business education are deficient in transferable skills required of the workforce in the era of modern technology and are unable to excel in today's workplace probably due to little or absence of practical approach to the teaching and learning in tertiary institutions. This may be attributed to the teaching methods adopted by business educators in teaching that do not promote the acquisition of employability skills by business education students.

Another problem is that, in some institutions, laboratories appeared not to be well equipped with modern technological devices for practical learning. Machines and other equipment that will aid students to practice what they learned in class are not functioning well. As a result of this, students will not acquire the desired skills that will enable them function well in the field of work. Emeasoba and Igwe (2016) observed that the teaching strategies adopted by most business educators are more of theory than practice and inquiry, and therefore, no longer relevant for teaching in the present information technology era. Other factors that have impeding maximum skills acquisition in our institutions include: inadequate trained personnel to teach the skills plus too many students admitted into one class, poor maintenance culture, lack of electricity and dishonest students and leaders. Consequently, students lack the comfort and comfortable atmosphere needed for maximum skill acquisition. The researcher also observed that the curriculum structure seems not to allow enough hours for practical work, thus business education students learn more of theory than practical skill acquisition. It is generally believed that if business education students are properly taught with adequate strategies before leaving schools, they should certainly acquire the desired skills necessary for sustainable national development, hence the need for this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the digital literacy strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

2. What are the e-portfolio strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the digital literacy strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the e-portfolio learning strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Method

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), a survey research design is the one which aims at collecting data, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. This type of design is considered appropriate for this study because it involves gathering opinion and information from business educators on the strategies for improving employability skill acquisition of business education students in E-world. The study was carried out in five tertiary institutions in Anambra State, South-East geopolitical zone in Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 119 business educators from the five tertiary institutions that offer business education programme in Anambra State. The entire population was used as the sample size since the population is a of manageable size and the respondents were adequately reached. The study adopted a census sampling technique. The instrument for data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers, based on the review of related literature and in relation to the research questions that guided the study. All the items were structured on a four point rating scale response options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Three experts in the field validated the instrument.

To establish the instrument's reliability, the questionnaire was administered to 20 business educators from tertiary institutions in Delta State who were not part of the population of the study. The application of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 using Cronbach Alpha reliability yielded coefficient values of 0.83 and 0. 91 for the two clusters and an overall reliability value of 0.87. The researchers with the help of three research assistants administered the questionnaire to the respondents. They handed over the instruments to all the respondents and allowed some time for the completion and return. Out of the 119 copies of the questionnaire administered, 16 were not usable and 10 were

not returned. Thus, 93 copies of the questionnaire represented 78% return rate, were used for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed using the arithmetic mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions and determine the closeness of the respondents' means respectively. The level of acceptance or rejection of the questionnaire items was determined based on mean rating of items and the cluster mean interpreted relative to real limits of numbers. t-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. For the hypotheses, a null hypothesis was rejected where the P-value was less than the stipulated level of significance (.05). On the other hand, where the P-value was greater than or equal to the stipulated level of significance (.05), the hypothesis was accepted.

Results
Research Question 1
What are the digital literacy strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
Table 1
Mean ratings of the respondents on the digital literacy strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions.

N = 93

Digital literacy strategy	Mean	SD	Decision
1. Ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources	3.65	.48	Strongly agreed
2. Develop students abilities to read and interpret media	3.31	.46	Agreed
3. Develop students abilities to collaborate to solve problems	3.65	.48	Strongly agreed
4. Develop students abilities to use ICT to find, evaluate, create and communicate information	3.56	.50	Strongly agreed
5. Develop social and emotional intelligence skills	3.46	.50	Agreed
6. Develop students abilities to create engaging content and connect with audience	3.45	.50	Agreed
7. Provide good search engine which students can explore	3.49	.50	Agreed
8. Develop critical thinking skills	3.49	.50	Agreed
9. Improve lifelong learning	3.39	.49	Agreed
Cluster mean	**3.49**		**Agreed**

Data analysis in Table 1 show that the cluster mean of 3.49 reveals that business educators agreed that digital literacy is a strategy for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.Item by item analysis in Table 1 shows that items 1, 3 and 4 with mean scores ranging from 3.56 to 3.65 indicated that business educators strongly agreed that digital literacy is a strategy for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions. Items 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 with mean scores ranging from 3.31 to 3.49 indicates that business educators agreed

that digital literacy is a strategy for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions. Standard deviations of 0.46 to 0.50 are within the same range showing homogeneity in business educators' responses.

Research Question 2

What are the e-portfolio strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 2

Mean ratings of the respondents on the e-portfolio strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions.

N = 93

E-portfolio strategy	Mean	SD	Decision
10. Promote deep learning and knowledge transfer	3.33	.47	Agreed
11. Develop student critical thinking skills	3.41	. 49	Agreed
12. Facilitate integration of learning as students connect learning across courses and time	3.53	.50	Strongly agreed
13. Foster interpersonal, personal traits and behaviours that correlate with school and employment	3.41	.49	Agreed
14. Help students learn how to articulate their educational experiences	3.53	.50	Strongly agreed
15. Foster reflective learning	3.34	.48	Agreed
16. Encourage future planning with purpose	3.53	.50	Strongly agreed
17. Develop creative abilities in students	3.41	.49	Agreed
18. Develop students problem solving skills	3.39	.49	Agreed
19. Encourage peer-to-peer student feedback	3.41	.49	Agreed
Cluster mean	**3.43**		**Agreed**

Data analysis in Table 2 shows the cluster mean of 3.43 which revealed that business educators agreed that e-portfolio is a strategy for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Item by item analysis shows that items 12, 14 and 16 with the mean scores of 3.53 indicated that business educators strongly agreed that e-portfolio is a strategy for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Items 10, 11, 13, 15, 17 18 and 19 with the mean scores ranging from 3.33 to 3.41 indicates that business educators agreed that e-portfolio is a strategy for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Standard deviations of 0.47 to 0.50 showed that there is homogeneity amongst responses indicating a greater consensus of opinion.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the digital literacy strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Table 3

Summary of t-test result of business educators on the digital literacy strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions.

Digital literacy	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	P-value	Decision
Male	22	3.51	0.06			
				91	.266	Not significant
Female	71	3.49	0.07			

Data in Table 3 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business educators on the digital literacy strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. This is shown by the p-value of .266, which is greater than the significant level of .05. This shows that there is no significance difference in the mean responses of business educators. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups is accepted.

Hypothesis 2
There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the e-portfolio strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.
Table 4
Summary of t-test result of business educators on the e-portfolio strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions.

E-portfolio	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	P-value	Decision
Male	22	3.44	0.08			
				91	.095	Not significant
Female	71	3.42	0.06			

Data in Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business educators on the e-portfolio strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. This is shown by the p-value of .095, which is greater than the significant level of .05. This shows that there is no significance difference in the mean responses of business educators. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups is accepted.

Discussions
The results of the study revealed that business educators agreed that digital literacy is a strategy for improving employability skills of business education students in the e-world in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The finding is similar with the findings of Okolocha and Odimmega (2019) who asserted that digital literacy develop students' employability skills in financial accounting. Developing digital literacy means giving

students the opportunity to use digital technologies when it is appropriate and useful and it means encouraging active, creative and critical uses of digital technologies which can develop digital literacy whilst at the same time helping students to further their subject knowledge. Also, Ediagbonya and Oyadongha (2013) stated that business education graduates employability skills is probably inadequate owing to our level of technological awareness and advancement. It also revealed that the thinking skills of business education graduates are not as high as that of personal quality skill. It was also emphasized that the low aggregate mean score of secretarial and accounting skills is an indication that business education graduates are not well equipped with their 'core skills' and this can affect them.

Developing digital literacy in the classroom can allow students to apply their existing knowledge with digital technology to learning in school and in the process be supported to think more critically and creatively about what it is they are doing. Digital literacy can help students understand how technology can be used appropriately in the workplace. Furthermore, test of the first hypothesis indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the digital literacy strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This agrees with the findings of Okolocha and Odimmega (2019) which indicated that there was no significant difference among business educators in terms of their mean ratings on the extent digital literacy develops students' employability skills.

Results of the study indicated that business educators agreed that e-portfolio is a strategy for improving employability skills of business education students in the e-world in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. This finding corroborates that of Ciesielkiewicz (2019) who stated that e-portfolio is a dynamic tool that can be used for learning, evaluation/assessment and employability/career development. As a learning tool, it helps students to think critically and being active, independent and self-regulated learners. The e-Portfolio helps instructors monitor students' work and generate dynamic communication in the classroom. It facilitates and encourages students to present their work and thus share their progress with their instructor and peers. Test of the second hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female business educators on the e-portfolio strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.Therefore the null hypothesis of no significant difference was not rejected.

Conclusion
From the findings of the study, it was concluded that e-portfolio and digital literacy strategies are strategies for improving employability skills of business education students in the e-world in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Effectiveness of business education programme is largely related to the teacher's skills and his (or her) knowledge of using different teaching strategies. Business educators should therefore make effective use of

these strategies for proper business education delivery with the ultimate aim of improving the employability skill acquisition of business education students in the e-world.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The use of practical activities should be highly utilized by business educators in teaching so as to equip the students with employability skills for self employment.
2. Teacher development activities which ranged from retraining in industries to clinical supervision of teachers by experts and professionals should be organized. This will update and upgrade business educators' and students' instructional procedures.

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