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Impact of Digital Technology in Education on Students' Acquisition of Employable Skills in Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education Owerri, Imo State

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Abstract

The paper examined the impact of digital technology in education on students' acquisition of employable skills in AIFUE, Owerri, Imo State. The study design was the descriptive survey. This design was adopted because it enabled the researchers to elicit data from the respondents. The population of the study consisted 4125undergraduate students at the Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, (AIFUE), Owerri who are on full time programmesexcluding the new intakes. The sample size of the study was 250 students who were purposively selected. Researchers made instrument tagged Questionnaire on Employable Skills and Human Capital among Students (QESHCS) was used to collect data for the study. Data generated from the study were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings of the study revealed that students can acquiredigital (employable) skills in education such as digital literacy, data analysis, and cybersecurity skills. It also showed that these skills can positively impact on human capital development in such areas like; improved job opportunities, marketing, and career advancements. On the basis of the above findings, the paper concluded that digital

technologies should be continually used in education because of its obvious benefits to human capacity develop especially in today's digital driven economy and stress the need to deal with the challenges of poor funding, unequal access to education and curriculum revision for quality and inclusive education system. The study recommended that policy framework on inclusive education and funding of digital technologies should be taken into cognizance in Nigerian education, and that appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be put in place in order to ensure that learning outcomes equate expenditure on digital technologies.

Keywords: Impact, Digital Technologies, Education, Human Capital Development, and Integration.

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the 21st century digital technology in education has emerged as a pivotal force in reshaping learning environments and enhancing human capital development. As economies increasingly rely on knowledge-based industries, the importance of equipping individuals with the necessary skills and competencies cannot be overstated. Digital education, characterized by the use of digital technologies to facilitate learning, offers unprecedented access to resources and opportunities, thereby contributing significantly to the development of human capital (UNESCO, [2020](#)). Digitalization is a trend in the 21st century that is characterized by tremendous changes in the nature and structure of the teaching and learning process thus ushering the era of student engagement, personalized learning experiences and integrated technologies. Digital technologies in education enhance skill development in learners. New skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and collaborative skills could better equip students for the modern workforce and higher educational attainments. Human capital development refers to the process of improving individuals' skills, knowledge, and competencies to enhance their productivity and economic value (Becker, [1993](#)). The intersection of digital education and human capital development is particularly relevant in today's globalized world, where continuous learning and adaptability are essential for success. As noted by World Economic Forum ([2020](#)), the demand for digital skills is growing, underscoring the need for educational frameworks that not only deliver knowledge but also foster critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration.

According to Longsley (2019) human capital refers to the assembly of the intangible qualities the learner or worker brings to any organization whether formal or informal that helps in the achievement of the organization's set goals or objectives. According to him, these intangible qualities can refer to a myriad of skills, attitudes, experience, creativity and character. This means that these attributes are acquired in the process of education and they can impact positively on the overall climate and productivity of the organization. Kento (2020) also shares the above view when he opines that human capital consists of skills, health, loyalty and punctuality which workers bring to the workforce in order to enhance the overall productivity of the industry.

The integration of digital technologies in education will enable the citizens to assume their rightful position in the global competitiveness. In its wider sense, investment in human capital means expenditure on health, education, and social services in general; and in its narrower sense, it implies expenditure on education and training. This discourse takes the narrower sense

dimension of human capital because it yields itself to measurement unlike expenditure on social services. Furthermore, expenditure on human capital by accumulation of knowledge, skills and capacities of all people of the nation can fast-track the development of the nation's stock of physical capital accumulation.

Digital education refers to education that anchors on the use of digital skills and technologies. Such technologies include; the world wide web (www) and using the information and communication technology Longsfeld, (2020). Singh (2020) is of the opinion that the term digital education system, is the use of ingenious technologies in the teaching and learning process. Other names that may subsist include; technology enhanced learning (TEL) or information technology enhanced learning (e-learning). From the foregoing, it can be argued that digital education encompasses a whole network of tools and resources that are employed in the process of teaching and learning in order to facilitate the transmission of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours of the learners for their individual and societal development. These tools and resources include among others; the radio-television broadcasts, audio and video tapes, the CD ROMs, the computer networks etcetera, which according to the World Bank Group (2021) are used to engage learners in the educative process. These resources/media have enormous benefits and advantages in the teaching and learning process.

Digital Education System: Any Merits and Demerits? Enemuo & Momoh (2022) are of the view that digital technologies in education offer a wide range of opportunities to student's learning. These opportunities include; personalized learning experiences, inter-disciplinary transactional opportunities and services to all users. Personalized learning opportunities and services means that students can learn at their own rate and pace even at the comfort of their homes. This learning approach cuts across boundaries set by sex, race, location or any other real or imagined barriers to learning. Interdisciplinary opportunities will enable learners to access, collate, process, analyze, save and retrieve data as well as transmit same to desired locations. Digital transformation has made education more accessible to a broader population. An online learning platform allows students to access educational resources from anywhere breaking geographical barriers. It has also increased the flexibility of learning, enabling learners to study at their own pace and schedules, thus catering for different learning styles and life circumstances (Attan & Seaman, 2017). Also, Johnson (2021) believes that digital tools such as artificial intelligence and adaptive learning platforms enable personalized learning experiences and help students to tailor learning to their needs; a factor that could promote more effective learning outcomes and enhance student engagement. In the opinion of the writers, these devices are cost-efficient and effective in comparison with the old teaching and learning method where both researchers and learners had to procure textbooks and other learning materials for themselves. Singh (2020) believes that the use of digital technologies in education would enable students to engage in research and learning, reason critically, and could become efficient and productive with creative minds which they can transfer to their places of work.

Human capital theorists such as Gray Becker and Schultz in Okere (2022) posit that investments in education and health enhance individual's cognitive and non-cognitive abilities which could enable greater labor market productivity and contribute to economic growth. Human capital is a key factor in enabling and facilitating the adoption of technologies from the global technology perspective. Education plays a crucial role in human capital formation by equipping

the individual with skills, knowledge, and competencies needed for economic development and societal growth. Technologies in education help to improve efficiency, increase productivity and reduce costs. The positive impacts of technology on education include the following;

- Enhanced information access.
- Improved collaboration.
- Personalized learning.
- Improved learning experiences for all.
- Improved classroom engagement.

The relationship between digital technologies in education and human capital development has been researched by educationists and researchers. Empirical research by Ravizza, Hanbrick and Fenn (2017) found a strong correlation between digital literacy and employee commitment in the area of shaping human capital and driving organizational success. This study also highlights the critical role of digital literacy on enhancing teaching and learning process, promoting open access to educational resources and facilitating innovation learning platforms.

A systematic review of human capital management in education by CORE (2024), identified key trends, challenges and opportunities in digital skills development and emphasizes its importance for workforce innovation. According to NERDC (2018), effective implementation of digital technologies in education requires teachers to be well trained and up-to-date with modern teaching techniques. Unfortunately, many Nigerian teachers lack adequate training and professional development opportunities. Also, Gartner (2021), opines that educators and institutions may resist adopting new technologies due to lack of training or fear of the unknown. This resistance can hinder the effective integration of digital education practices. The World Bank (2021), notes that there is lack of policy support and adequate funding for the implementation of digital technologies. Educational policies may not always prioritize innovative teaching methods, and funding can be inconsistent. Also, the existing curriculum in Nigeria may not always align with new technologies and revisions to the curriculum can be slow and bureaucratic.

Statement of the Problem

Digitalization is a trend in the 21st century that is characterized by tremendous changes in the nature and structure of the teaching and learning process thus ushering in the era of student engagement, personalized learning experience and integrated technologies. Digital technologies in education enhance skill development in learners. New skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and collaborative skills could better equip students for the modern workforce and higher educational attainments.

However, it is feared that the use of digital technologies in education could impair students' access to education especially those living in rural areas which could further deepen the gulf in social inequalities between the rural and the urban dwellers. Moreso, issues of funding gaps, unequal access to education and curriculum debates among others are challenges which could be faced by the integration of digital technologies in education. This study therefore, attempts to explore the impact of digital technologies in education on the acquisition of employable skills for human capital development.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to explore the various ways students acquire digital (employable) skills in education and the impact on human capital development.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Explore the various digital (employable) skills students can acquire in education
2. investigate the impact of these skills on human capital development

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant importance for several reasons:

Policy Implications: By highlighting the relationship between digital education and human capital development, the research can inform policymakers about necessary reforms and investments in educational technology to prepare a skilled workforce.

Educational Frameworks: The findings can help educators design and implement more effective digital learning programmes that align with the needs of learners and the demands of the labour market.

Economic Growth: Understanding how digital education enhances skill development can contribute to national and regional economic growth by equipping individuals with the competencies needed in a digital economy.

Equity in Education: The study may reveal disparities in access to digital education, providing insights into how to create more inclusive educational opportunities for marginalized groups.

Future Research: By establishing a foundation for further investigation, the study can pave the way for additional research on the evolving nature of education and its role in economic development.

The comprehensive examination of digital skills in education and their impact on human capital development would ultimately provide actionable insights that could benefit the various stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and learners to mention but a few.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent can digital technologies in education enhance the acquisition of employable skills among the students of Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri?
2. To what extent can the acquisition of employable skills in education among the students of Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri impact on human capital development?

Review of Literature

The review of literature was done under the following subheadings: Digital education, human capital development, digital technologies, and employable skills.

Conceptual Clarification:

Digital Education

Digital education refers to the use of digital technologies and resources to facilitate teaching and learning processes. This encompasses a wide range of tools, including online courses, e-learning platforms, mobile applications, and digital collaboration tools. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, [2020](#)), digital education

not only enhances access to information and learning materials but also promotes innovative pedagogical practices that engage learners in more interactive and personalized ways. Digital education encompasses both formal and informal learning environments, emphasizing flexibility and accessibility that traditional education methods often lack. As technology continues to evolve, digital education has expanded to include concepts like blended learning, where online and in-person instruction are integrated, and massive open online courses (MOOCs), which democratize access to high-quality education worldwide (Kaplan & Haenlein, [2016](#)). This shift toward digital modalities is essential in preparing learners for a digitally-driven economy, equipping them with the skills necessary to navigate an increasingly complex job market.

Overview of Human Capital Development

Human capital development is defined as the process of enhancing the skills, knowledge, and competencies of individuals to improve their productivity and economic value. Becker ([1993](#)) posits that investments in education and training are crucial for enhancing human capital, which in turn drives economic growth and innovation. The World Bank ([2018](#)) emphasizes that effective human capital development involves not only education but also health and social welfare, as these factors collectively contribute to an individual's ability to participate effectively in the economy. Human capital development takes on new dimensions. The rapid technological advancements necessitate continuous learning and skill upgrading, particularly in digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving (World Economic Forum, [2020](#)). Furthermore, the focus has shifted towards creating lifelong learners who can adapt to changing job requirements and industries.

Digital Technologies

Digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, gamification and adaptive learning systems can enhance educational outcomes and human capital development while digital learning platforms like prep-class, and link unavailable are providing personalized learning experiences for students. Blending strategies combine traditional learning approaches with digital education tools. According to Oni (2018), information and communication technologies are essential tools in any education system which could enhance the learning needs of individual students, support equality of educational opportunities, offer high quality learning materials and increase self-efficiency and independence of learning among students. This learning approach should replace the teacher-centered pedagogy where the teacher is perceived as the repository of knowledge. Effective instructional delivery should embrace all human interactive skills employed by the teacher to promote and facilitate learning in the classroom situation. This could improve performance on the part of the learner (Ike-Obioha & Chukwudebelu, 2019).

Employable Skills

These skills include, digital literacy in terms of proficiency in Microsoft office or google suite, data analysis skills, which enable the individual to collect, analyze and interpret data and cybercrimes security skills. Enhancing technologies in the area of having knowledge of artificial intelligence, block chain, or the internet of things (IOT) can give job seekers the needed skills to get the competitive jobs in the labour market.

According to Anorue, Chekwube, Uloma, Iheagivam & Azubuike (2023), digital skills could positively impact the economy in the areas of improving employment opportunities,

increasing productivity by way of enabling workers to be more efficient and effective; and by creating new job opportunities in the fields of e-business, e-commerce, and digital services. The writers have equally observed that digital skills development can empower Nigerian youths, enhance their employability and ability to create new jobs.

Research by the community college (2019) found out that students enrolled in online courses had higher retention rates than those in traditional settings. This could impact positively on standards and practices in industries, and ensure that learners who have these skills are connected to where they are currently needed.

Meyer (2014) carried out a study on the use of digital technologies in education, particularly in the context of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This study was aimed at addressing the increasing demand for access to education. The findings of the study revealed that digital technologies have become integral to online learning environments especially in open and distance learning settings. He enumerated the benefits to include among others; increased access to information, flexibility and personalized learning, enhanced engagement and improved communication and collaboration. He also, found out that there are challenges to the use of digital technologies in education among which are; digital divide and the need to provide teacher training and support on the use of digital devices in education. He therefore concluded that even though digital technologies can have positive impact on students' learning, there is need to implement the use of these technologies and deal with the challenges in education.

A summary of reviewed literature shows that digital skills in the areas of digital literacy, knowledge of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity skills and the knowledge of block chain and internet of things (IOT) among others are the skills that could be needed in the competitive job markets. It further shows that these skills have overall positive impact on the teaching and learning process, on the job market and on the development of human capital resources. The impacts on the teaching and learning process include; improved collaboration, personalized learning and improved learning experiences for all. Digital technologies have prospects for increasing productivity, job opportunities and creating new jobs and enhancing the career advancement of workers.

However, in spite of these obvious benefits, there are challenges in the area of digital divide and in terms of reconciling the ethical imperatives of data privacy and security. This could pose challenges which could limit the capability of digital tools to enhance human capital development. This creates a gap in knowledge which needs to be filled.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 4125 undergraduate students at the Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education (AIFUE), Owerri who are on full time programmes. The sample of the study was made up of 250 undergraduate students who were selected from the university using purposive sampling technique. Researchers made instrument tagged Questionnaire on Employable Skills and Human Capital among Students (QESHCS) was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire had two sections. Section A sought information on personal bio-data of the respondents while section B sought information on the employable skills students can acquire from digital technologies in education and their impacts on human capital development. The instrument was validated by

experts in research and statistics who observed some errors in the questionnaire items. These items were corrected. The data obtained were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The response option was based on: Very High Extent(VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE).

Furthermore, the benchmark of 2.5 mean score was used as level of acceptance on the rating scale measuring the items on the questionnaire. The scale consisted of 10 points from Very High Extent=4, High Extent=3, Low Extent=2 and Very Low Extent=1. It is these scales that total 10 points, while the average of the 10 points= 2.5.

Data Presentation and Analysis of Results

Research Question One: To what extent can digital technologies in education enhance the acquisition of employable skills among the students of Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri?

Table1: Analysis of mean and standard deviation on how digital technology in education can enhance the acquisition of employable skills in education

S/N	Item Statements	NO	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Total	Mean	Decision
1	Students can acquire digital literacy	250	420	275	20	15	730	2.92	HE
2	Data analysis techniques are acquired in education	250	375	286	30	16	707	2.82	HE
3	Students are able to analyze and interpret data	250	415	295	48	25	783	3.13	HE
4	Students can acquire cyber security skills	250	384	300	56	45	735	2.94	HE
5	Digital skills in education help to make students learning more accessible and inclusive	250	450	300	50	65	865	3.46	HE
	Grand mean							3.05	

The analysis of table 1 on how digital technologies in education can enhance the acquisition of employable skills among students of AIFUE, Owerri revealed that all statements that were constructed to measure the variables were accepted as shown in the grand mean of 3.05 which is above the benchmark of 2.5. This shows that respondents agreed that digital technologies in education to a very high extent contribute to the acquisition of employable skills by students of AIFUE, Owerri. This is reflected in statements (1-5) above. These findings are supported by Anorue, Chekwube, Uloma, Iheagivam & Azubuike (2023), who stated that digital technologies in education could enhance employable skills and the ability to create new jobs. Also, studies by the community college (2019) found out that digital technologies in education

can enhance student's retention rates and impact positively on standards and practices in industries.

Research Question Two: To what extent can the acquisition of employable skills in education among the students of Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri impact on human capital development?

Table 2: Analysis of mean and standard deviation on the impact of the acquisition of employable skills by students of Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri on human capital development.

S/N	Statement	NO	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Total	Mean	Decision
6	Employable skills in education can lead to improved job opportunities	250	387	265	34	40	726	2.904	HE
7	It can enhance career prospects and advancements	250	435	302	75	54	866	3.46	HE
8	Employable skills can enable students to develop digital marketing opportunities	250	386	401	85	47	919	3.67	HE
9	Employable skills can lead to networking opportunities	250	312	415	345	38	1110	3.509	HE
10	Employable skills can lead to increased productivity levels	250	326	305	28	17	676	2.70	HE
Grand mean								3.25	

The analysis of table 2 on how employable skills can contribute to human capital development revealed that all statements that were constructed to measure the variables were accepted as shown in the grand mean of 3.25 which is to a Very High Extent (VHE) shows that the respondents agreed that employable skills can positively impact on human capital development. this is reflected in statements (6-10).It implies that to a very high extent, digital technologies in education can contribute to human capital development.

Discussion of Findings

From the findings of the study in research question one, students can acquire digital (employable) skills in education. These skills include; digital literacy, data analysis, data interpretation, cyber security and inclusive learning. This is supported by Kapp (2012) who discovered that students' engagement and retention of digital skills resulted from exposure to

digital technology in education. Also, European commission (2020), reported that exposure to digital technologies in education could enable the students to adapt to changing job markets and technology. Wladis et al (2015) was of the view that digital education could contribute to flexible learning opportunities while Gonzalez (2020) supported the view that digital education could lead to the acquisition of foundational and specialized skills and experiential learning.

From the findings of the study in research question two which sought to find out the extent to which employable skills in education can impact on human capital development. The study found out that employable skills in education can impact on human capital development. The impact could include; enhancing job opportunity, career advancement, digital marketing opportunity, and increased productivity levels. These findings were supported by World Economic Forum, (2020) which reported that skills training in areas like data analysis, and digital marketing are crucial for future job readiness. Also, a report by Ed Tech. Magazine (2019), highlighted the importance of networking skills in enhancing career prospects. These findings have implications for the Nigeria education system in the following ways:

Implications of the Study for Nigerian Education System

The implications of achieving digital technologies in education for human capital development are multifaceted. Integration of digital technologies in education require massive government intervention in the funding of education, training of personnel and in the revision of curriculum materials in a way that it can cater for the diverse needs and interests of the 21st century teaching and learning. Very importantly is the need to achieve accessibility and inclusivity in education to promote collaborative learning, learner engagement and motivation for making learning more enjoyable. This will call for government intervention in the areas of teachers' professional training and investment in the provision of digital technologies for quality and equitable education system.

Conclusion

From the analysis of the results of the study, discussions and findings, the paper discovered that digital technologies in education could contribute to the acquisition of employable skills and technologies which are needed dearly in the modern job markets. The researchers also discovered that the acquisition of digital skills could enhance human capital development. On the basis of the findings from research question one, and research question two, the study concluded that digital technologies should be used in education because of its benefits on human capital development and that the challenges of poor funding, unequal access to education and curriculum revision should be undertaken to ensure quality and inclusive education.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions, findings and conclusion of the study, the following are recommended

1. School programmes should use digital technologies to enhance job opportunities of students;
2. Lecturers should use digital technologies in their teaching;
3. There should be emphasis on the training and retention of staff on the use of digital technologies in education;

4. There is need for policy and funding support that prioritize the integration of digital technologies in education;
5. There should be strong engagement with stakeholders, educators, students, parents and community members for supportive and sustaining digital technologies in education; and
6. Established mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the use of digital technologies, data on student outcomes, teacher feedback and implementation challenges that inform continuous improvement.

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