

BUSINESS EDUCATORS FAMILIARITY WITH THE UTILIZATION OF HI-TECH TOOLS IN THE PREPARATION OF GRADUATES FOR MODERN BUSINESS / MARKETING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Technological innovations currently existing in businesses/marketing across the globe provides a limitless market space on how to transact business anywhere, any day, and any hour of the day. This creates challenges for business educators that produce business education students for entrepreneurial ventures. Based on these business/marketing challenges, this study assessed business educators' familiarity with and utilization of hi-tech tools in modern business/marketing in preparing graduates for the business world. The subjects for the study were 81 business educators from South-South, South-West and South-East geo political zones of Nigeria selected using purposive sampling technique.

The research questionnaire was used for data collection. The analysis of data collected was done using mean, standard deviation and the T-test at 0.05 level of significance. The results indicated that business educators to a large extent are not familiar with most hi-tech innovations existing in business across the world. Recommendations were made and conclusion drawn.

Keywords: Business, Marketing, Technology, Innovation.

INTRODUCTION:

Recent advancements in scientific discoveries have made the world a global village, changing tremendously the business world around us as a result of new technologies. The rapid technological changes are profoundly altering the business dynamics, redefining the shape of private firms, forcing not only companies that employ business education graduates to review and restructure how they communicate with their customers but also signal to the institutions that produce these students to review and restructure how to prepare the students by exposing them to high technological tools. High technological (hi-tech) tools in the context of this work are the hi-tech or ICT tools such as web 2.0, yahoo, Chart room, search engine, Google, video tapes and so on used to prepare business education students for the business world of tomorrow and the tools are different from normal business equipment like the staple machine.

It is therefore important for business educators to educate, train and empower the students with knowledge and skills they need in marketing their businesses after graduation especially now that emphasis is shifting from production based challenges to marketing based problems. Toomey (2001) stated that integrating ICT in schools is intended to improve students' learning, to offer flexible learning opportunities and improve the efficiency of their business practices. The concern of business educators now should be on how to manage the transition between today's new technologies in marketing product realities and preparing business education graduates with skills needed for them to flourish in an environment dominated by constant technological changes for tomorrow's future, bearing in mind the thrust of business education.

Business education as a discipline has many options such as accounting, secretarial technology, commerce and cooperative economics, as well as marketing/distributive education. It trains her students in business skills and knowledge necessary for office career, occupations and in management of personal business ventures using the services and ethics of business to modify attitudes and behaviours so as to achieve the objectives envisaged as office workers, entrepreneurs, producers of goods and services or users of work information. Ekpenyong and Ojo (2008) identified the goals of business education to include: adopting the various business concepts, acquiring skills and competencies required for the performance of basic jobs such as handling minor administrative decisions, financial records and transactions, including playing productive roles in a free enterprise economy. Emphasizing on the objective of business education, Njoku (2006) opined that one of the goals of business education is to empower graduates with desired skills, knowledge and value to perform specific functions so as to become self-reliant. These objectives and those of the Federal Government in its National Policy on Education (NPE) seem not to be yielding maximum expectations in terms of performance. This is in line with the research findings of Okwuanaso (2004) who indicated that the expectations for which the National Policy on Education introduced business education in Nigerian school system have not been fully met. The poor performance according to Okwuanaso was attributed to changes in technology.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Marketing in the Hi-Technology World:

The world of business of today is constantly shifting away from the business approaches we use to know. This change resulting from new technologies called "Superhighways", "Information and communication technology" or "hi-tech" has caused market aspect of our business operations to have a new outlook in terms of its delivery of goods and services with a shift from product-based challenges to e-marketing-based challenges.

E-marketing according to Hadjiphanis and Christon (2006) is the buying and selling of products, services and related information via computer network, thus, supporting business transactions over a digital infrastructure. Kotler and Keller (2006) described it as all companies efforts to inform buyers, communicate, promote and sell its products and services over the internet. E-marketing gives consumers a wide opportunity to search for new products, ask questions, evaluate and order products and services through the internet.

Marketing is known to have helped organizations to achieve their objectives, improve their performance and even modify behaviour (Nwaizugbo, 2010). Parley (2000) in Nwaizugbo (2010) stressed that effective use of marketing strategy was found as a common factor among 21st century successful organizations. Social marketing has the goal of modifying the behaviour of a targeted relevant group in a social system with a view to directing them toward achieving an expected standard of behaviour or performance. It encourages organisations to imbibe the marketing culture which directs attention to consumers or beneficiaries of services rather than just on the organisation. Stressing on the importance of marketing culture, Nwizugbo (2010) opined that marketing culture involves the use of marketing concepts which includes:

- Knowing the target market and determining the needs of the customers.
- Packaging organisations offer to meet the needs of the targeted customers satisfactorily.
- Delivering these offers efficiently and profitably in such a way that the welfare of both the organisation and customer is enhanced.

Business education programmes of tertiary institutions therefore should strive to educate and train properly its graduates in line with the business skills and needs of the work place and business environment of the modern time. Possession of requisite high technological skills will make them to flourish after graduation, fit in properly in the world of work, and service in this competitive business arena where business challenges of production give way to marketing challenges.

Business operators, entrepreneurs, industrialists and organizations today use high technological innovations existing in the market place to interact and transact businesses with their customers. Such hi-tech or information and communication technology tools include: catalogue marketing, telephone, mobile phone, interactive TV, direct mailing, e-mail, e-marketing, podcasts; vodcasts and so on. The above hi-tech innovations in the new business world prove the need for business educators to acquaint business education graduates with requisite skills in analyzing business environment through knowledge empowerment of the relevant competitive, economic, social, political, technological and environmental factors in the external business environment of our time and business / market of tomorrow. Students also need to be empowered to communicate with the market / customers to allay customers' fears concerning the new technologies.

Hi-Tech / ICT & Business Education Programme:

Most developing countries of the world such as Nigeria are moving towards a direction where only those individuals with self-sustaining, saleable and hi- tech skills can really serve. The decade of the 1980s witnessed an explosion in technology and usage that deeply changed the society by revolutionizing the business and educational processes. The buzz-word today is all about e-business, e-commerce, e-transaction, e-mail, e-marketing, e-learning and most other businesses done digitally. The constant technological changes have created a global economy driven by information and knowledge and whatever career people engage in is business of some sort. Today's teaching / learning tools have expanded well beyond the use of chalk, voice and pen. The internet interactivity is especially suited to higher education (Katz, 2000). In line with this, Agbamu (2004) opined that business educators might find it difficult to deliver the appropriate education and training to their students due to new innovations. Thus, the need to shift from traditional instructional materials in teaching the students the right types of knowledge, skills, needs, to attitudes and values to enable them move on the fast lane of ICT. Students of tertiary institutions need knowledge and understanding of digital technology, need to develop an awareness of how organizations communicate and operate to retain their competitive edge. The way companies apply technology in the creation of products and services and utilize technology to deliver the content should be made known to the students. In line with this, Sison and Fontrodona (2006) stressed that many products and services have now been digitalized such as admission, registration forms, tickets, audio visual materials, stock market, banking services, insurance, books and so on. For the students to achieve these, they need to have access to ICT facilities. Business education programme should prepare students with skills that will enable them to flourish in an environment dominated by ICT which is ever-changing and impacts on every aspect of the students' lives. As today's technology is redefining the shape of private enterprises, can the same be said of higher education? Are colleges and universities that train these students taking full advantage of the new technology boom to teach and enhance the quality of education for our students? Answers to these questions are yet to be established.

For business educators to apply on-line delivery of instruction, they must first be familiar with current hi-tech tools / ICT innovations in the business / market world, utilize effectively the hi-tech tools in teaching and learning processes. Hi tech /ICT utilization in this work simply mean business educators using the high-tech tools like interactive TV, web 2.0, Video tapes, search engine, virtual class room, computers, yahoo chat room, interactive white boards, Smartboard, Cleverboard, Robot teachers, Google, e-mail and so on in the teaching learning environment. All these technological tools serve as assets to the teacher. In line with business educators familiarity with and utilization of hi-tech / ICT tools in teaching and learning situations, Olaofe (2005) held the view that the challenges for the lecturers in tertiary institutions is no longer in areas of course content coverage, rather emphasis is now on their up-to-date knowledge and skills especially in ICT and their ability to employ the ICT facilities in teaching and learning situations. Okoro and Okoro (2009) stated that business education that is not based on ICT will be classified as outdated and not in tune with the present realities as education become globalized and nations agree to standardize business rules, regulations and practices. The application of ICT strategies, tools, and facilities will develop creative thinking ability in students.

Today, no matter the occupation business education students choose, the chances are that they will have the need for adequate knowledge and skill in basic technology usage to be appreciated in the work environment (Koko, 2005). Business education graduates, who secure jobs or set up businesses of their own, owe their customers quality service which could only be achieved if only they acquire the right knowledge, competencies, skills, attitude and behaviour required in the profession while in the school. The acquisition of competencies is

the major goal of introducing business education by the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1977, hence the need for graduates to be equipped with the competencies. Ukor (2009) stressed that the possession of required competencies that will enable business education graduates to function in the world of work can be frustrated if the required lecturers and facilities are not adequately provided in the universities.

However, recent research findings by Ukor (2009) have revealed that most graduates who ventured into private businesses failed mid way. The research findings by Okwuanaso (2004) also revealed that the expectations for which the National Policy on Education introduced business education in Nigeria school system have not been fully met. The poor performance could be attributed to lack of requisite skills needed in modern business operations. In line with the new demands of technology, Gates (1996) opined that the digitalization of information will be the disparity between what exists and future demands. In reaction to this, Okolocha and Ile (2007) stressed that technology has opened a new world of learning which has drastically increased output. The new technology therefore calls for the update of education programme and training of students to acquire technological competencies. The programme should therefore form part of the new training arena in Nigerian universities.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

Specifically, the study sought to;

- Find out the extent business educators are familiar with the hi-tech innovations currently existing in business across the world.
- Find out the extent business educators utilize hi-tech tools in preparing business education students for the market place of tomorrow.
- Determine business educators' opinion regarding effectiveness in the use of selected strategies in preparing business education students for the business world.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The following research questions guided the study.

- ❖ To what extent businesses educators' familiar with the hi-tech innovations currently existing in business across the world?
- ❖ To what extent do business educators utilize hi-tech tools in preparing business education students for the business world?
- ❖ In the opinions of business educators, how effective are business educators in the use of selected strategies in preparing students for the business world?

HYPOTHESES:

The following two hypotheses guided the study.

- There is no significant difference in the opinions of male and female business educators on their extent of familiarity with hi-tech tools existing in business/marketing across the world.
- There is no significant difference in the opinions of business educators in the universities and colleges of education on the utilization of hi-tech tools for preparing business education students for the world of business.

METHOD:

Descriptive survey design was used. The study comprised 81 business educators from tertiary institutions from South-South, South- West, and South-East geopolitical zones of Nigeria that participated in the World Bank Assisted Up-skilling Training of Technical Vocational Education Teachers held at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was adopted. A four point structured questionnaire validated by experts was used for data collection. Copies of the instrument were distributed by the researchers with the help of three research assistants. The consistency and reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach Alpha reliability test which yielded a reliability co-efficient of 0.81. Data collected was analyzed using mean and T-test. Results are presented in tables 1-5.

RESULTS:

Research Question 1:

To what extent are business educators familiar with the hi-tech innovations currently exist in business across the world?

Result in Table 1 shows that of the 8 hi-tech innovations listed, business educators were familiar with only two as shown by the means responses which are higher than 2.50. These are telephone marketing (Mean = 2.96) and E-marketing (mean = 2.73). The low standard deviation relative to their means (.81 & .91) also shows that most of business educators have united in their opinions. It was concluded that business educators, to a large extent, are not familiar with most hi-tech innovations currently existing in business across the world (see Table 1).

Research Question 2:

To what extent do business educators utilize hi-tech tools in preparing business education students for the business world?

Data in Table 2 shows that among the 11 hi-tech tools that could be used in preparing business education students for the business world, computers (mean = 3.02) ranked first in the list of tools used for preparing the students. This was followed by Google (mean=2.78), video tapes (mean=2.64) and electronic mail (mean = 2.56). On the other hand, web 2.0 (mean = 1.41), Hybrid education (1.42) and robot teachers (1.47), in this order, ranked least in usage. In all, business educators use very limited hi-tech tools in preparing business education students for the business world (see Table 2).

Research Question 3:

In the opinions of business educators, how effective are business educators in the use of selected strategies in preparing students for the business world?

A number of strategies have been listed as relevant in preparing business education students for the business world. Table 3 shows that out of the 16 strategies, business educators were rated as highly effective in the use of demonstration (mean=3.42), field trips (Mean = 3.41) and laboratory exposure (Mean = 3.21). They were averagely rated in the use of nine strategies such as drills and practice, simulation, workshop method, industrial cooperation, field interview, visits to employment agencies, e-learning and school affiliations. However, they were rated as not effective in the use of games/play, radio programmes, ICT power point, instructional television and interdisciplinary strategies (see Table 3).

HYPOTHESIS TESTING:

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant difference in the opinions of male and female business educators on their extent of familiarity with hi-tech tools existing in business/ marketing across the world.

Result in Table 4 shows t-test for mean difference between male and female business educators' familiarity with hi-tech innovations. Male and female business educators did not differ significantly on their mean ratings of six out of the eight hi-tech innovations as all their calculated t-values (.847, 1.588, 1.164, .697, -.117 and .367) were less than the table t-value (1.990). However, they differed significantly in their mean ratings with respect to two – Interactive TV and Directive Mail Marketing, since the calculated t-values (2.083 and 2.644) were greater than the table t-value (1.990). Considering that male and female business educators' mean ratings were not significantly different across 6 of the 8 hi-tech innovations, the null hypothesis was supported. Thus, it is concluded that male and female business educators' did not differ in their opinions with regards to their familiarity with hi-tech tools (see Table 4).

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant difference in the opinions of business educators in the universities and colleges of education on the utilization of hi-tech tools for preparing business education students for the business world?

The t-test for mean difference shows that there was no significant difference in the mean rating of business educators in colleges of education and universities with regard to the use of hi-tech tools in preparing business education students as greater proportion of the calculated t-values (1.553, 1.956, 1.651, -.771, .547, 1.331, 1.463 & -.817) were less than the table t-value (1.990). It is therefore concluded that business educators in the universities and colleges of education do not sufficiently use hi-tech tools for preparing their students for the business world (see Table 5).

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS:

The findings of this study clearly reflect to some extent the low level of Nigeria business educators' familiarity with currently existing hi-tech innovations in the business / marketing world. This could be attributed to the level of exposure of the individual business educators to current hi-tech/ICT applications in modern businesses. They were however, found not to be utilizing most of the hi-tech tools such as search engine, yahoo chart room,

visual classroom, web 2.0 among others as instructional delivery media. This might be attributed to lack of good access to hi-tech/ICT facilities for teaching as found by Agbamu (2004). It could also be because they lack the knowledge, skills and attitudes to utilize hi-tech tools as instructional materials. This is why Olaofe (2005) held the view that the greatest challenges for lecturers in tertiary institutions is now on their up-to-date ability to employ the ICT facilities in teaching and learning situations. However, no significant difference existed in the mean responses of business educators on the extent of their familiarity and utilization of hi-tech tools as instructional tools for preparing business education students for tomorrow's business world.

The researchers therefore conclude that business educators should try to get themselves familiarized with and utilize hi-tech tools in preparing students using effectively, appropriate instructional strategies, as these will no doubt, improve teaching and learning and equip students with necessary knowledge and skills that will help them cope with new marketing challenges in our modern innovative businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the marketing challenges confronting businesses and educational institutions that produce students for entrepreneurial ventures, it is recommended that business educators should move beyond just mere familiarization of marketing innovations and embrace the utilization of hi-tech tools and appropriate instructional strategies in the delivery of lessons. Management of tertiary institutions should provide hi-tech / ICT facilities especially starboard, projectors and internet connectivity (wireless) to enable lecturers utilize the ICT tools in instructional delivery. A stringent policy statement should be made on the use of ICT facilities in instructional delivery, giving students' group assignments that involve the use of internet and presentations using power point and projector.

The Association of Business Educators of Nigeria should also encourage lecturers to use power-point and projectors during their annual conference paper presentations. This will force them to learn how to go online and use most of the hi-tech tools especially now that hi-tech / ICT is forcing itself into our vein. This will make business educators to be relevant in this global competitive and innovative arena.

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TABLE 1. MEAN RESPONSES ON BUSINESS EDUCATORS' FAMILIARITY WITH HI-TECH INNOVATIONS.

N=81

Hi-tech Innovations	Mean	Std.Dev	Remarks
1. Telephone marketing	2.96	.81	F
2. E- marketing	2.73	.91	F
3. Direct Mail Marketing	2.48	1.13	SF
4. Mobile phone marketing	2.38	1.16	SF
5. catalogue marketing	2.30	1.16	SF
6. interactive TV	2.26	1.00	SF
7. Podcasts	1.37	.77	NF
8. Vodcasts	1.22	.57	NF

*F= Familiar, SF= Somehow Familiar, NF=Not familiar

TABLE 2. MEAN RESPONSES ON BUSINESS EDUCATORS UTILIZATION OF HI-TECH TOOLS IN PREPARING BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS

N=81

Hi-Tech Tools	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
9. Computers	3.02	1.0	UGE
10. Google	2.78	1.01	UGE
11. Video tapes	2.64	1.06	UGE
12. Electronic mail	2.56	.97	UGE
13. Search engine	2.28	1.13	UGE
14. Interactive whiteboard	2.23	1.14	USE
15. Yahoo chart room	2.01	1.07	USE
16. Virtual classroom	1.94	.94	NU
17. Robot teachers	1.47	.74	NU
18. Hybrid education	1.42	.76	NU
19. Web 2.0	1.41	.77	NU

*UGE= Utilized to a great extent, USE= Utilized to a small extent, NU=Never utilized.

TABLE 3. MEAN RESPONSES ON BUSINESS EDUCATORS EFFECTIVENESS IN THE USE OF STRATEGIES FOR PREPARING STUDENTS.

N=81

Strategies	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
20. Demonstration	3.42	.82	E
21. Field trips	3.41	.74	E
22. Laboratory exposure	3.21	.82	E
23. Drills and practice	2.88	.97	E
24. Simulation	2.88	.87	E
25. Workshop method	2.86	.88	E
26. Industrial cooperation	2.83	.82	E
27. Field interview	2.78	.89	E
28. Visits to employment agencies	2.75	.97	E
29. E- learning	2.69	1.00	E
30. School affiliations	2.60	.80	E
31. Games/ play	2.43	1.05	NE
32. Radio programmes	2.32	.96	NE
33. ICT power point	2.23	.90	NE

34. Instructional television	2.20	.89	NE
35. Inter disciplinary	2.14	.77	NE

*E=Effective, NE=Not effective

TABLE 4. T-TEST FOR DIFFERENCE IN MEAN RATING ON BUSINESS EDUCATORS' FAMILIARITY WITH HI-TECH TOOLS BY GENDER

	Gender	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	Decision
catalogue marketing	Male ^a	2.39	1.18	.847	1.990	79	NS
	Female ^b	2.17	1.12				
telephone marketing	male	3.09	0.72	1.588	1.990	79	NS
	female	2.80	0.90				
Podcasts	male	1.46	0.81	1.164	1.990	79	NS
	female	1.26	0.70				
Vodcasts	male	1.26	0.61	.697	1.990	79	NS
	female	1.17	0.51				
mobile phone marketing	male	2.37	1.14	-.117	1.990	79	NS
	female	2.40	1.19				
E- marketing	male	2.76	0.95	.367	1.990	79	NS
	female	2.69	0.87				
interactive TV	male	2.46	1.00	2.083	1.990	79	S
	female	2.00	0.94				
Directive Mail Marketing	male	2.76	1.08	2.644	1.990	79	S
	female	2.11	1.11				

Note: a N = 46, b=35

TABLE 5. T-TEST FOR DIFFERENCE IN MEAN RATING ON BUSINESS EDUCATORS' UTILIZATION OF HI-TECH TOOLS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION

	Institution	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	Decision
Hybrid education	University a	1.58	0.83	1.553	1.990	79	NS
	college b	1.31	0.69				
Web 2.0	University	1.61	0.86	1.956	1.990	79	NS
	college	1.27	0.68				
Robot teachers	University	1.67	0.89	2.022	1.990	79	S
	college	1.33	0.60				
Computers	University	2.76	1.12	-2.033	1.990	79	S
	college	3.21	0.87				
interactive whiteboard	University	2.48	1.18	1.651	1.990	79	NS
	college	2.06	1.10				
electronic mail	University	2.45	0.97	-.771	1.990	79	NS
	college	2.63	0.98				
yahoo chart room	University	2.09	1.01	.547	1.990	79	NS
	college	1.96	1.11				
search engine	University	2.48	1.06	1.331	1.990	79	NS
	college	2.15	1.17				
virtual classroom	University	2.12	1.05	1.463	1.990	79	NS
	college	1.81	0.84				
Google	University	2.67	0.99	-.817	1.990	79	NS
	college	2.85	1.03				
videotapes	University	2.33	1.14	-2.216	1.990	79	S
	college	2.85	0.97				

Note: ^a N=33, ^b N=48
