

IMPLICATIONS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ON BUSINESS EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper argues that business education sidelined in the teaching and application of information technology due to the near chronic lethargy of business educators to respond to changing trends over the years. The paper holds the disintegration in different disciplines is responsible for lack of recognition of business education as a distinct profession. The paper further states that it is the responsibility of business education to provide instructions on the use and application of information technology for the processing and provision of management information in business, a function which the typewriter was successfully used for prior to its evolution into a computer. It also recommends among others that business educators should bounce back and direct the course of the new information wave.

Introduction

Information technology is a typical issue in Nigeria today. The consensus definition is that information technology embraces all modern systems for processing, information and communication in data, text, image and voice (Kobayashi 2002; Nwosu 2000). At the centre of information technology is the computer. On its part, business education can be defined from the perspective of its primary and secondary dimensions. Primarily, it is a programme of studies designed to develop appropriate skills and competencies in vocational, sub-professional and professional accounting, secretarial, stores, distributive and related manpower for the world of work.

Globalization and Information Technology (IT) are the two global phenomena that have influenced the modern business life of many nations. There is therefore, a growing commitment to the development of globalization and information technology, because of the development opportunities they provide to the socio-economic life of the nations. The current moves by the Nigerian government for regional integration, trade liberalization and policy pronouncements of information and communication technology give indications of the nation's commitments to globalization and the growth of information technology.

Consequently, the business life of the nation is experiencing a transformation in response to these developments. There is now a general quest among the business organizations to actively participate in today's global market. Herbert (2000) stated that the world market has become homogenized. This is due to the improvements in the communication and information networks brought about by the advances in information technology. With the trends since the international communications (e.g. the internet service), the domestic market has been converted into a 24-hour global market in which trading activities take place in all year round.

Unfortunately, the business education given in Nigerian today does not seem to match with the current development in information technology. The reason for this situation is usually blamed on lack of adequate and appropriate instructional materials. (Abimbale, 2000 and Nwazor, 1999). Nevertheless, concerted efforts should be made to bring the business education into limelight in terms of the present globalization and information technology. Therefore, this paper attempts to examine the importance of globalization and information technology. It also tries to analyze the importance of the business education teachers as an instrument for integrating information technology into business education.

Globalization and the Information Technology

The current trends in globalization and information show that the two concepts are intertwined. Information technology has become an important tool for achieving the desired globalization. When globalization is in vogue, the need for prompt information becomes imperative. This is why much attention is now being given the development of international telecommunication. The development of internet service is a remarkable innovation that has revolutionize the international communication networks. With the applications of internet service, such as the E-mail, web, etc it is now possible for information of any form to be transmitted, received, processed and spread with little regards to geographical barriers. Thus, the world has now become a 'global village'. This is in reference to its apparent smallness due to improved communications, and the fact that the changes in one area of the world is likely to affect the rest of the world.

According to Borize (2000) the current globalization and the development of information technology has brought about an unprecedented degree of competition among the nations and business organizations. These competitive pressures have brought a lot of changes to business and economic activities. The only option left for the nations and the business organizations are either to respond to the pressure or be overwhelmed by it. However, the benefits provided seem to be too much to ignore. Therefore, no country of the world or the business organization would want to be left out in responding to the pressure. In this context, therefore, globalization could be seen as a development, which has made the world to become more

homogenized with distinctions among markets gradually disappearing. Information technology is a concept, which describes the merger of telecommunications and computing technologies for information processing.

Importance of Globalization and Information Technology

Globalization plays important role in the socio-economic developments of any country. Specifically, it plays the following economic role, (Ekundayo, 2000):

1. It ensures inflow of foreign savings which could augment domestic savings and support long term development efforts.
2. Like banks lending, bond and equity flows do not add to the debt service obligations of a country.
3. Capital inflows increase the availability of capital, reduce its costs, and allow domestic investors to fund their investment decisions and domestic consumer to smoothen out their consumption over time.
4. It exposes domestic market operators to international practices
5. It gives domestic market operation enhanced opportunity for revenue generation through longer issues and underwriting services.

In addition, the growth of globalization is concomitant to the advancement of information technology. The positive development is one, also affect the other positively. On the other hand, the importance of the information technology in nation building has been acknowledged. To underscore this, professor F. K. Allotey, in some twenty years ago, according to the University System News (2000), states:

We paid price of not taking part in the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth century because we did not have the opportunity to see what was taking place in Europe. Now we see that information and communication technology has become an industrial tool. This time, we should not miss out this technological revolution.

This is a very relevant call to the African countries in today's information based society. Information is very vital in the contemporary world, and now a call is being made that it should be included as a factor of production. According to Long (2001) and University System News (2000) to land, capital, and labour, we must add information technology as a factor of production. Information is vital to any human organization, especially the timely and appropriate one. Application of information technology is important in providing the timely and appropriate information, (Ali, Aliyu and Haruna, 2002). The application of information has the capacity to process speedy and reliable information across the nations of the world, distance notwithstanding.

Furthermore, information technology is a critical tool for achieving a competitive edge among the nations and the business organizations. Therefore, to survive or

grow in business in the current global market, the applications of the information technology are imperative. These applications ensure adequate information flow within and without the organizations. This could be done with a minimum of cost, (Muoka, 2000).

Beside the applications of information technology to business an economic activities, it also plays important role in the classroom instructions. Information technology is both useful as a tool for teaching by the business education teacher and for imparting saleable skills to the students. Nwosu (2004) asserts that the computer has become a vehicle for instruction through the innovations of Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) and Data Managed Instruction (DMI) systems is W therefore the responsibility of the business education teachers to fully harness the potentials in information technology as the medium for the instructions.

The Business Education Teachers' Responsibilities in Information Integration

It has been noted (FRN, 2000) that no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers. The quality of the education to be given is therefore, related to the quality of the teachers. This is true of business education. According to Nola, Harden and Malsbary (2003) in Oladebo (2004) no curriculum however well written they may be, no equipment. However costly it may be, will Compensate for a poor business teacher. On the other hand, a good business teacher will more than offset deficiencies in curriculum, in textbooks and in equipment his assertion attests to the important role the business education teacher plays in with a professionally the development of a viable business education programme. With a professionally and motivated business education teachers, many deficiencies in the curriculum and the instructional facilities could be offset.

To play the required role, the business teacher should be well prepared and informed. According to Roberts (2001) the business education teachers should possess the knowledge, skills and attributes desired of all educated persons, the technical competencies required on one or more areas of business education, and knowledge of the principles and methods of teaching, and some practical experience in one of the business occupations. Likewise, Osuala (2000) identifies six major components that make up business teacher education programme. These include general education, general business, secretarial, marketing and distributive, professional education and accounting as well as teaching practice and industrial work experience components. It is expected that the professional business education teacher should be able to teach all the business subjects at the lower level of education. Specialization could however, be at the higher level of studies, for example education, at the postgraduate level.

Today, the business education teacher be well prepared in information technology, in addition to other required courses. This preparation should base on practical experiences rather than the theoretical aspects alone. This enables the teacher to effectively demonstrate information technologies to the students. Harrison (2000) writes that the business education teachers are required to be well informed about the technologies used in the offices and be proficient in demonstrating them to the students. Having be well prepared and informed about the current information technology, the business education teacher has the following responsibilities:

1. Develop an information technology laboratory in the business education department. This laboratory should be equipped adequately with the appropriate information technology equipment. The procurement of such equipment should be on the recommendations of the business education teacher after a thorough survey study to identify the current trends and need of the business organization.
2. Develop a resource library in the department where current information about information technology could be stocked. This could be done through established links with other viable libraries in the country.
3. Adopt appropriate and affordable information technology training methods. There are three basic training techniques that could be adopted for information technology training. These include the following as suggested by Roberts (2002) and Harrison (2000):
 - i. **Battery Plan Method:** With this method, the classroom must be equipped with enough items of equipment of the same type for every student to one at the same time. For example, every student in a computer studies class should be supplied with the same type of computer system. The approach could be affordable for small size.
 - ii. **Rotation Method:** In this method, different types of information technology equipment are used by students in rotation and by using a job card. The students are given a selection of jobs to be completed on the machine during a given period. The students is required to carry out the task to the satisfaction of the teacher who signs the appropriate items on the job card when satisfied with the students' performance. This approach enables the teachers to keep the entire class busy on a variety of equipment.
 - iii. **Training Office (Integrated Office) Method:** This approach is based on the simulation of the office. Hence, it is closely related to the concept of the model office used in trainings business students in the polytechnics. It involves an arrangement of a separate room apart from the classroom. To stimulate the arrangement of the office and the assignment of students to positions in the office. Appropriate equipment and furniture must be provided to give students the experience of working in an office atmosphere.

In addition to these methods, the teacher should engage the person students in excursion to the industries where they will be acquainted with the technologies in the offices. This would afford them the opportunity to appreciate the reality of the business environments.

4. **Sponsor Information Technology Seminars for the Students:** The business education teacher should source for resource persons in information technology Nigerian to deliver lectures and also to demonstrate latest equipment.
5. **Willingness to Adapt to Change and to be Innovative.** The business education. A basis teacher should show willingness to follow changes that occurs in the business environment and adapt them to the classroom instructions.
6. **Participate Actively in Curriculum Reviews.** This could be done through research work to determine the current need of the business workers and to appropriate recommendation for curriculum reviews.
7. Demonstrate interest and commitments top professional development by belonging to professional associations and be active in the class activities.

Conclusions

The role of a professionally minded and committed business teacher is indispensable in integrating information technology into business education. With the adoption of the appropriate instructional methods, personal commitment and the right attitudes toward information technology, the business education teacher could effectively integrate information technology training into business education. It is only when this is done that business education could be relevant in the present information based business environment.

Recommendations

For better instructional and administrative management of Business Education in this modern IT-driven era, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The business teacher preparation/should be organized for the practical training in information technology.
2. Regular in-service training programmes should be organized for the business education teachers. This should include training in the latest equipment in the office.
3. The business education teachers should participate in conference and seminars organized by relevant professional bodies.
4. Regular industrial visits by the business teachers should be a matter of deliberate policy.
5. Business education curriculum should be made flexible to accommodate changes that occur regularly.

6. The business education teachers should actively be involved in voluntary personal studies for self-improvement.

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