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Curriculum Transformation Needs of Business Education for the Digital Economy: Perceptions of Lecturers in South-East Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explored Business Education lecturers' perceptions of the curriculum transformation needed to prepare students for the digital economy in public universities in South-East Nigeria. A descriptive phenomenological design was adopted. From a population of 150 Business Education lecturers across nine public universities, 45 lecturers, comprising five from each university, were selected through convenience sampling based on their availability and willingness to participate. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face or online and analysed using Colaizzi's seven-step method, and the findings were validated with all 45 participants. The findings revealed that 35 participants (77.8%) considered the existing curriculum inadequate in reflecting changing digital workplace demands, although 30 (66.7%) acknowledged that it provides a useful foundation in business knowledge. Digital literacy (93.3%) and data analysis and information management (75.6%) were identified as important competencies. Participants also emphasised integrating digital applications across Business Education subjects (86.7%) and strengthening e-commerce and digital marketing (82.2%). Regarding teaching and learning, 40 participants (88.9%) supported increased hands-on learning, while 38 (84.4%) favoured practical assessment alongside written examinations. Adequate digital infrastructure (80.0%) and lecturer professional development (77.8%) were also considered important for effective curriculum transformation. Furthermore, curriculum review (86.7%) and stronger university–industry collaboration (71.1%) emerged as major priorities. The study concludes that preparing Business Education students for the digital economy requires coordinated changes in curriculum content, teaching and learning, assessment, institutional support and industry participation. The findings provide evidence that may inform curriculum review and lecturer professional development in Business Education. The Business Education curriculum should be reviewed regularly by relevant curriculum bodies and university departments, in consultation with lecturers, employers, graduates and other stakeholders, to address emerging digital workplace demands and competencies.

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Introduction

The digital economy has changed business operations, communication, marketing, financial transactions and records management. Digital technologies are reshaping occupational tasks and the competencies required in contemporary workplaces (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). In Nigeria, the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy 2020–2030 identifies digital literacy and skills, digital infrastructure, digital services and the adoption of emerging technologies as important pillars of national digital development (Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, 2020). These policy priorities have direct implications for higher education programmes that prepare students for business and office-related occupations.

Business Education prepares students for employment, entrepreneurship and business-related activities. Its curriculum therefore needs to connect foundational business knowledge with the technologies and practices used in contemporary organisations. Existing studies in South-East Nigeria have examined digitalisation and students' entrepreneurial and managerial skills (Ekoh-Nweke & Ikpeama, 2023), digital-skills strategies for teaching Business Education (Ekoh-Nweke et al., 2022), and the digital skills required by university Business Educators (Onodu & Nwokike, 2024). Other studies have considered curriculum implementation and human-resource provision (Okpala & Okeke-Ezeanyanwu, 2025), and the relationship between machine-learning integration and aspects of Business Education curriculum implementation (Onwubuya et al., 2025). These studies establish the relevance of digitalisation, but their specific focuses do not provide a comprehensive account of lecturers' priorities across curriculum content, practical learning, assessment and institutional implementation.

For this study, the term digital economy refers to economic and business activities that depend substantially on digital technologies, data, networks and digitally mediated services. Curriculum transformation refers to the planned review and adaptation of curriculum content, learning experiences and assessment so that programme outcomes remain relevant to changing occupational and societal requirements. In Nigerian universities, such transformation must be considered in relation to national policy and regulatory frameworks. The National Universities Commission's Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) provides minimum requirements and guidance for programme design while allowing institutions to introduce appropriate innovation in curriculum content and delivery (National Universities Commission, 2023). Departments therefore need to work within approved programme structures and institutional quality-assurance procedures when proposing curriculum changes.

Curriculum transformation involves more than adding a standalone computer course or listing new technologies in course outlines. It may require integrating digital applications into accounting, marketing, office management and entrepreneurship; strengthening e-commerce and digital marketing; developing data and information-management skills; and addressing responsible technology use, privacy and cybersecurity. It also involves the teaching approaches and assessments through which students practise and demonstrate these competencies. UNESCO (2023) cautions that the educational value of technology depends on how it is used and on the conditions governing access and implementation. Similarly, the NUC's CCMAS guidance makes clear that curriculum innovation should be pursued within the minimum academic requirements for the relevant programme (NUC, 2023).

Lecturers are central to this process because they interpret curriculum requirements and translate them into teaching, learning activities and assessment. Their perspectives can identify perceived gaps between existing curricular provision and the capabilities they consider necessary for students' participation in digitally mediated business environments. However, lecturers' perceptions alone cannot establish the objective adequacy of a curriculum or graduates' actual digital competence. They provide evidence about professional judgements and perceived priorities that should be considered alongside curriculum-document analysis, student evidence and employer expectations.

The problem addressed in this study is the limited integrated evidence on how Business Education lecturers in public universities in South-East Nigeria prioritise curriculum changes across content, competencies, practical learning, assessment and institutional support. Existing regional studies have examined particular dimensions of digital skills, technology integration and curriculum implementation, but they do not collectively answer which transformation needs lecturers consider most urgent and how they understand the conditions required for implementation. This study therefore explores lecturers' perceptions of the curriculum transformation needed to prepare Business Education

students for the digital economy in public universities in South-East Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to explore Business Education lecturers' perceptions of the curriculum transformation needed to prepare students for the digital economy in public universities in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, it examined perceived curriculum adequacy; digital and future-work competencies; curriculum content requiring change; teaching, learning and practical experiences; assessment approaches; institutional support and implementation challenges; and priority areas for transformation.

The study was guided by one main research question: What are Business Education lecturers' perceptions of the curriculum transformation needs for preparing students for the digital economy in public universities in South-East Nigeria? Seven related questions, corresponding to the themes of the interview guide, addressed the areas listed above.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research approach using a descriptive phenomenological design. The design was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand how Business Education lecturers perceive and experience the gap between the existing curriculum and the demands of the digital economy, and the curriculum transformation they consider necessary to prepare students for it, as described in their own words.

The population comprised 150 Business Education lecturers in nine public universities in South-East Nigeria. The institutional distribution and sample are presented in Table 1.

A convenience-based sample of 45 lecturers was recruited, with five participants from each of the nine universities. Selection was based on availability and willingness to participate. This equal allocation was not proportionate to each university's population: it represented 100% of the five lecturers listed for Enugu State University of Science and Technology, approximately 18.5% of the 27 listed for the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and approximately 15.6% of the 32 listed for Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Consequently, the sample should not be treated as statistically representative of the population. The findings describe the participating lecturers' views.

Data were collected with a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide comprising 20 questions organised into seven areas: perceived curriculum adequacy; digital and future-work competencies; curriculum content requiring transformation; teaching and practical experiences; assessment; institutional support and implementation challenges; and priority recommendations.

The researcher conducted interviews with the 45 participants either face-to-face or remotely through WhatsApp or Zoom, according to participant availability and preference. Each interview lasted approximately 20–25 minutes. The interview guide was used to maintain coverage of the seven inquiry areas, and follow-up questions were used to clarify responses.

The interviews were transcribed, and the data were analysed following the seven steps of Colaizzi (1978). First, all transcripts were read repeatedly to become familiar with participants' accounts. Second, significant statements that related directly to curriculum transformation for the digital economy were extracted from each transcript. Third, meanings were formulated from these statements, staying as close as possible to participants' own words. Fourth, the formulated meanings were organised into themes and clusters of themes; similar views were grouped together, while divergent views were retained and considered in the interpretation. Fifth, the themes were integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon. Sixth, this description was reduced to a statement of its fundamental structure. Seventh, the findings were returned to participants for validation. A summary of the findings was shared with all 45 participants, and follow-up interviews were used to review the identified themes and to identify any experiences that were missing or had been misinterpreted. Most participants confirmed that the themes reflected their views. Where a few participants indicated that a statement did not represent what they meant, the findings were revised, and the revisions were documented. The clusters of themes broadly followed the seven areas of the interview guide. Counts in Table 2 represent the number of the 45 participants whose responses were interpreted as expressing each listed view; they are descriptive counts, not statistical estimates, and are reported only to show how widely a view was shared.

Credibility was supported by participant validation. All 45 participants reviewed a summary of the findings, themes were reviewed in follow-up interviews, misinterpreted or missing experiences were identified, and the findings were revised and the

changes documented. Transferability was supported by presenting participants' own words alongside the findings so that readers can judge their relevance to other settings.

Results

Theme 1: Perceived Adequacy and Limitations of the Existing Business Education Curriculum

1. How adequate do you consider the existing Business Education curriculum for preparing students for the demands of the contemporary digital economy?
2. In what ways does the existing curriculum adequately prepare students for current business and workplace environments?
3. What aspects of the existing Business Education curriculum do you consider inadequate or in need of modification?

Theme 2: Digital and Future-Work Competencies Required by Business Education Students

4. What digital competencies do you think Business Education students need to function effectively in the digital economy?
5. Beyond technical digital skills, what other competencies should Business Education students develop to prepare them for the future of work?
6. To what extent does the existing curriculum provide opportunities for students to develop these competencies?

Theme 3: Areas of Curriculum Content Requiring Transformation

7. What areas of the existing Business Education curriculum require transformation to respond to changes in the digital economy?
8. Are there new subjects, topics or knowledge areas that should be introduced or strengthened? If yes, which ones?
9. Are there existing curriculum contents that should be revised, reduced or replaced because of changes in the business and workplace environment?

Theme 4: Teaching, Learning and Practical Experiences

10. What changes are needed in the ways Business Education courses are taught and learned to prepare students for the digital economy?
11. What practical, experiential or industry-based learning experiences should be strengthened?
12. How can digital technologies be more meaningfully integrated into the teaching and learning of Business Education?

Theme 5: Assessment and Evaluation Transformation

13. Do you consider the current assessment methods adequate for determining whether Business Education students have acquired the competencies required in the digital economy? Why?
14. What changes in assessment practices would you recommend to better evaluate students' digital, practical, entrepreneurial and workplace competencies?

Theme 6: Institutional Support and Implementation Challenges

15. What institutional conditions and resources are necessary for effective transformation of the Business Education curriculum?
16. What challenges might universities and lecturers face in implementing the recommended curriculum changes?
17. What forms of professional development or support do lecturers need to effectively implement a digitally oriented Business Education curriculum?

Theme 7: Priority Curriculum Transformation Needs and Recommendations

18. If you were asked to identify three major changes that should be prioritised in transforming the Business Education curriculum for the digital economy, what would they be?
19. What should universities, curriculum planners and other relevant stakeholders do to ensure that Business Education students are adequately prepared for the digital economy?
20. Is there any other important curriculum transformation need that you think should be considered but has not been discussed in this interview?

Table 1. Distribution of the study population and sample across the nine public universities

Public university	Population	Sample	Sample as % of institution population
University of Nigeria, Nsukka	27	5	18.5%
Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani	5	5	100.0%
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	32	5	15.6%
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam	21	5	23.8%
Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike	13	5	38.5%
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	19	5	26.3%
Imo State University, Owerri	16	5	31.2%
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike	6	5	83.3%
Abia State University, Uturu	11	5	45.5%
Total	150	45	30.0%

Table 2. Major themes and dimensions of curriculum transformation needs

Major theme	Theme Dimension	Number of Participants (n)	Percentage (%)
Curriculum adequacy	Existing curriculum does not adequately reflect digital workplace demands	35	77.8
Curriculum adequacy	Existing curriculum provides a useful foundation in business knowledge	30	66.7
Required competencies	Digital literacy and application skills are essential	42	93.3
Required competencies	Data analysis and information management are important	34	75.6
Curriculum transformation	Digital applications should be integrated	39	86.7

	across Business Education subjects		
Curriculum transformation	E-commerce and digital marketing should be strengthened	37	82.2
Teaching and learning	Practical, hands-on learning should be increased	40	88.9
Teaching and learning	Industry exposure and partnerships are important	33	73.3
Assessment	Practical assessment should complement written examinations	38	84.4
Assessment	Portfolios and projects should be used	31	68.9
Institutional support	Adequate digital infrastructure is necessary	36	80.0
Institutional support	Lecturer training and professional development are required	35	77.8
Priority recommendations	Curriculum review should be prioritised	39	86.7
Priority recommendations	Stronger university–industry collaboration is needed	32	71.1

Theme 1: Perceived Adequacy and Limitations of the Existing Business Education Curriculum

Thirty-five of the 45 participants (77.8%) expressed the view that the existing Business Education curriculum does not adequately reflect the changing demands of the digital economy. Meanwhile, 30 participants (66.7%) acknowledged that the curriculum provides a useful foundation in business knowledge, including accounting, office administration, business communication and entrepreneurship. These responses illustrate two related perspectives: the existing curriculum retains educational value, but aspects of its content and delivery may require updating to reflect contemporary digital workplace practices.

One lecturer said: “The curriculum provides students with a reasonable foundation in accounting, office administration, business communication and entrepreneurship. However, the extent to which it prepares them for the digital economy is questionable because many of the topics are still taught using traditional approaches. This response suggests that the curriculum retains value in developing foundational business knowledge but may not sufficiently connect that knowledge with contemporary digital workplace practices. The concern, therefore, is not necessarily the absence of relevant business subjects but the extent to which students are given opportunities to apply what they learn using current technologies.”

Another lecturer stated: “We still teach some office procedures as though students will work mainly with paper documents. In reality, many organisations now

use digital records, cloud-based applications and automated systems. Students need more opportunities to learn these technologies. The response highlights a perceived mismatch between some traditional curriculum content and current workplace practices. It suggests assessing curriculum adequacy not only by the topics covered but also by their relevance to modern business operations and the technologies used to perform business tasks."

Another lecturer explained: "The curriculum is not completely outdated. It gives students the theoretical foundation they need, but the practical component needs strengthening. A student may understand the principles of office management without knowing how to use modern digital tools to perform office tasks. This perspective qualifies the criticism of the existing curriculum. Rather than suggesting that the entire curriculum should be discarded, the lecturer recommends strengthening the relationship between theoretical knowledge and practical digital competence. The response reinforces the view that curriculum transformation should build on existing strengths while addressing identified limitations."

Another lecturer remarked: "The problem is that technology changes faster than curriculum review. By the time some changes are introduced into the programme, new applications and ways of doing business may already have emerged. This response highlights the challenge of keeping curriculum content current. It suggests that periodic curriculum reviews and more flexible mechanisms for updating learning activities may be necessary to keep Business Education relevant to changing business practices."

Theme 2: Digital and Future-Work Competencies Required by Business Education Students

Forty-two of the 45 participants (93.3%) identified digital literacy and the ability to use relevant digital applications as essential competencies for Business Education graduates. In addition, 34 participants (75.6%) emphasised data analysis and information management. The responses also highlighted communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability, entrepreneurship and responsible technology use as relevant to preparing students for changing workplace expectations.

One lecturer stated: "Digital literacy is now essential for every Business Education graduate. Students should be able to use spreadsheets, word-processing applications, presentation tools, online collaboration platforms and relevant business software confidently. This response identifies digital literacy as a foundational employability competency. It implies that students should demonstrate the ability to use digital tools to complete authentic business tasks rather than merely understand their functions in theory. Competence in these applications could support students across several areas of Business Education."

Another lecturer said: Students need data-related skills. They should know how to organise information, analyse figures, prepare reports and interpret business data before making decisions. These skills are relevant to accounting, marketing, administration and entrepreneurship. The response suggests that data literacy is relevant across several areas of Business Education. It highlights the importance of interpreting information and using it to support decisions rather than concentrating solely on operating software. This perspective positions data analysis and information management as practical capabilities that complement general digital literacy.

Another lecturer observed: "Technology alone is not enough. Employers also need people who can communicate professionally online, work with others, solve problems and adjust when new systems are introduced. This response broadens the discussion beyond technical competence. It indicates that communication, collaboration, problem-solving and adaptability complement digital proficiency in preparing graduates for changing workplace environments. The response therefore presents future-work readiness as involving both technical and transferable competencies."

Another lecturer mentioned: "Entrepreneurial students should be able to market products online, manage digital payments, communicate with customers through digital channels and use technology to identify business opportunities. The response connects digital competence with self-employment and enterprise development. It suggests that curriculum transformation should prepare students not only for paid employment but also for creating and managing technology-enabled businesses. The skills identified could help students apply entrepreneurial knowledge in contemporary commercial settings."

One lecturer stated: "Students should learn how to use artificial intelligence responsibly, verify information generated by digital tools and protect confidential business information. They also need to understand cybersecurity and data privacy. This response highlights responsible technology use as part of future-work readiness. It suggests that digital competence should include critical judgement, information

verification, privacy awareness and ethical decision-making. This emphasis indicates that students need to understand not only how to use digital tools but also the responsibilities and risks associated with their use."

Theme 3: Areas of Business Education Curriculum Requiring Transformation

Thirty-nine of the 45 participants (86.7%) recommended integrating digital applications across Business Education subjects rather than limiting technology instruction to separate computer-related courses. Similarly, 37 participants (82.2%) identified e-commerce and digital marketing as areas requiring greater attention. Other responses highlighted the need to move beyond elementary computer skills, strengthen practical entrepreneurship content, and introduce relevant learning about artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data privacy and the ethical use of digital technologies.

One lecturer stated: "Computer applications should not be treated as an isolated subject. Digital tools should also be integrated into accounting, marketing, office management and entrepreneurship so that students can understand how technology is used in different business situations. This response suggests integrating digital learning across the curriculum rather than confining it to a single computer-related course. Such integration could help students connect technological knowledge with their professional specialisations and understand how digital applications support different business functions."

Another lecturer observed: "There is a need to introduce more content on e-commerce, digital marketing, online business management and electronic financial transactions. These areas are important because business activities increasingly take place through digital platforms. The response identifies specific curriculum areas that participants believe should be strengthened. It indicates that students may benefit from learning about digital business models and the technologies used to conduct commercial activities. The emphasis on e-commerce and digital marketing also connects curriculum transformation with entrepreneurship and changing patterns of business communication and transactions."

One lecturer explained: "Keyboarding and basic computer operations are still relevant, but the curriculum should move beyond elementary skills. Students need to work with business databases, spreadsheets, digital records and tools for analysing information. This response does not recommend eliminating foundational computer skills. Instead, it proposes progression from basic digital literacy to more advanced applications that support business decision-making and administrative efficiency. The implication is that curriculum transformation should deepen students' competence rather than simply replace existing foundational content."

One lecturer remarked: "Entrepreneurship should be more practical. Students should learn how to develop online business plans, promote products digitally, study market information and manage customers through electronic platforms. The response suggests that entrepreneurship content requires a stronger practical and digital orientation. It also indicates that students should be able to apply entrepreneurial concepts to real or simulated business situations. This would allow them to connect business ideas with the digital tools used for marketing, customer management and enterprise development."

Another lecturer stated: "There should be content on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data privacy and the ethical use of digital technologies. Students need to understand both the opportunities and the risks associated with these tools. This response highlights emerging areas of knowledge relevant to contemporary business operations. It suggests that curriculum transformation should address not only technological capabilities but also the responsible and secure use of technology. The emphasis on both opportunities and risks points to the importance of combining practical skills with appropriate judgement."

Theme 4: Transformation of Teaching, Learning and Practical Experiences

Forty of the 45 participants (88.9%) emphasised the need to increase hands-on learning and practical activities. In addition, 33 participants (73.3%) highlighted the importance of industry exposure and partnerships with business organisations. The responses also identified simulated business environments, practical projects, and guided use of online learning platforms as ways to connect classroom instruction with the application of digital skills.

One lecturer explained: "Lectures are important for explaining concepts, but students cannot acquire digital competence by listening alone. They need to use the applications themselves and practise the tasks they may be expected to perform in the workplace. The

response suggests complementing traditional lectures with practical learning. It highlights the importance of active student participation in developing technology-related competencies. Students need opportunities to practise using digital tools so that they can demonstrate what they know through actual performance."

One lecturer stated: "We can use simulated business environments where students prepare financial records, manage electronic documents, create digital marketing campaigns and solve administrative problems using appropriate software. This response recommends simulation as a teaching strategy. Simulated activities could let students practise business tasks in a controlled learning environment before taking on similar responsibilities in real workplaces. Such activities could also help lecturers assess whether students can apply theoretical knowledge to practical business situations."

Another lecturer mentioned: "Students should be given projects that require them to solve real business problems. For example, they could develop an online marketing strategy for a small business or prepare a digital record-management system for an organisation. The response highlights project-based learning as a way of connecting academic content with practical business challenges. It also suggests that students can demonstrate their competence through tangible outputs. By working on relevant tasks, students may have opportunities to integrate digital skills with communication, problem-solving and business knowledge."

One lecturer said: "Industrial training and partnerships with businesses should be strengthened. Students need exposure to the technologies and work procedures used by organisations, because what they encounter in the university may not always reflect what happens in the workplace. This response emphasises the value of industry exposure. It suggests that collaboration between universities and employers could help lecturers keep learning activities relevant and give students experience of workplace expectations. Such collaboration could also help identify changing business practices that should inform curriculum development."

Another lecturer explained: "Online learning platforms can support collaboration and independent learning, but lecturers must guide students on how to use them productively. Giving students access to technology without clear learning objectives may not produce the expected results. This perspective introduces an important qualification: technology alone does not guarantee effective learning. The educational value of digital tools depends partly on how lecturers integrate them into purposeful learning activities. Access to technology therefore needs to be accompanied by appropriate teaching strategies, guidance and clearly defined learning outcomes."

Theme 5: Assessment and Evaluation Transformation

Thirty-eight of the 45 participants (84.4%) supported complementing written examinations with practical assessments. Furthermore, 31 participants (68.9%) identified portfolios and project-based assessment as useful approaches. Other responses emphasised performance-based assignments, collaborative projects and the need to assess students' reasoning and responsible use of artificial intelligence.

One lecturer stated: "Written examinations are useful for assessing students' understanding of concepts, but they do not always show whether a student can perform a practical business task using digital technology. The response questions the sufficiency of written examinations as the principal means of assessing competence. It suggests that assessment should distinguish between knowing about a skill and being able to apply it. This perspective supports the use of practical tasks to provide evidence of students' ability to use digital tools in relevant business contexts."

Another lecturer explained: "Students should be assessed through practical assignments such as preparing spreadsheets, designing presentations, creating digital business documents and analysing business information using appropriate applications. This response recommends performance-based assessment. It indicates that students should demonstrate competence through tasks that resemble activities they may undertake in the workplace. Such assessment could provide lecturers with direct evidence of students' ability to apply digital knowledge and skills."

One lecturer observed: Group projects can help lecturers assess collaboration, communication and problem-solving. However, each student's contribution must be identified so that the assessment reflects individual learning as well as group performance. The response highlights the potential of collaborative assessment while recognising the need for fairness. It suggests that assessment design should capture both collective outcomes and individual contributions. This is important where group tasks are

used to assess competencies that involve working with others.

One lecturer remarked: "Students could develop portfolios containing their digital projects, business reports, marketing materials and other practical work completed during the semester. These portfolios would provide evidence of what they can actually do. This response proposes portfolio assessment as a means of documenting learning over time. It suggests that portfolios can provide a broader picture of students' practical capabilities than a single examination. A collection of completed tasks could also help demonstrate students' progress in applying digital competencies across different aspects of Business Education."

Another lecturer said: Where students use artificial intelligence, assessment should require them to explain their decisions, verify the information they use and demonstrate their own understanding. The objective should be to assess learning rather than merely the production of an answer. This response raises the importance of assessment integrity and critical thinking in technology-supported learning. It suggests that students should be evaluated on their reasoning, judgement and ability to use digital tools responsibly. The response also highlights the need for assessment practices to adapt to the availability of emerging technologies without losing sight of the learning outcomes being assessed.

Theme 6: Institutional Support and Implementation Challenges

Thirty-six of the 45 participants (80.0%) identified adequate digital infrastructure as necessary for effective curriculum transformation. In addition, 35 participants (77.8%) emphasised lecturer training and professional development. Other responses highlighted funding, possible resistance to changes in established teaching practices, and the need for institutional policies to guide digital learning and curriculum implementation.

One lecturer mentioned: "One major challenge is the availability of computers, reliable internet access and appropriate software. Students cannot develop practical digital skills if they do not have regular access to the tools they are expected to use. The response identifies technological infrastructure as a fundamental requirement for curriculum transformation. It suggests that curriculum changes may have limited impact where students lack access to the necessary learning resources. The availability of computers, internet services and relevant software is therefore presented as an important condition for practical digital learning."

Another lecturer explained: "Lecturers also need continuous professional development. Some of the technologies now being used in business organisations were not part of our original training, so we need opportunities to learn and update our skills. This response highlights the importance of lecturer capacity. It suggests that curriculum transformation should be accompanied by training that enables lecturers to use relevant technologies and incorporate them into their teaching. The emphasis on continuous professional development also indicates that preparation should extend beyond a single training activity as technologies and business practices continue to change."

Another lecturer stated: "Funding is another challenge. Universities need resources to maintain computer laboratories, update software, provide internet services and organise training programmes. These activities cannot be sustained without adequate financial support. The response draws attention to the financial implications of curriculum reform. It suggests that transformation requires not only the initial purchase of equipment but also continuing investment in maintenance, software and staff development. This indicates that institutional planning needs to consider the sustainability of digital learning resources as well as their initial provision."

Another lecturer remarked: "Some lecturers may be reluctant to change established teaching methods, particularly when they have used them for many years. Institutions need to provide encouragement, training and support rather than simply introduce new requirements. This response identifies resistance to change as a possible implementation barrier. It indicates that institutional leadership should support lecturers through the transition instead of assuming that new curriculum requirements will automatically change classroom practice. Training, encouragement and appropriate institutional support may help lecturers understand and adopt new approaches."

Another lecturer stated: "Universities should establish clear policies on digital learning, technology use, data protection and curriculum review. Without institutional direction, different departments may adopt different approaches, and implementation may become inconsistent. The response highlights the importance of institutional policies and coordination. It suggests that curriculum transformation requires an organised approach that connects departmental practices with broader university priorities. Clear

policies could help guide technology use, curriculum review and the protection of information while providing a shared direction for implementation."

Theme 7: Priority Curriculum Transformation Needs and Recommendations

Thirty-nine of the 45 participants (86.7%) identified curriculum review as a priority for aligning Business Education with contemporary workplace demands. Additionally, 32 participants (71.1%) emphasised stronger university–industry collaboration. Other recommendations concerned practical digital competence, lecturer training, assessment reform and a gradual but consistent approach to implementation.

One lecturer stated: "My first priority would be to review the curriculum and identify the areas where students are not acquiring the digital competencies employers expect. The review should involve lecturers, employers, graduates and curriculum specialists. This response recommends a collaborative curriculum review process. It suggests that curriculum decisions should be informed by the experiences and expectations of the people involved in education and employment. Involving different stakeholders could help identify areas where existing curriculum content and learning experiences need to be strengthened."

Another lecturer explained: "I would prioritise practical digital competence. Every student should graduate able to use relevant business applications, prepare digital reports, communicate professionally online, and complete practical business tasks. The response places practical digital skills at the centre of curriculum transformation. It suggests that the programme should establish clear expectations for the competencies all Business Education graduates should demonstrate. This recommendation connects curriculum content with practical outcomes that students should be able to achieve by graduation."

One lecturer said: "Lecturer training should take place alongside curriculum reform. If the curriculum changes but lecturers are not prepared to teach the new content, the intended improvements may not be achieved. This response emphasises the relationship between curriculum design and teaching capacity. It suggests that professional development should be planned as an integral part of implementation rather than treated as a separate activity. Curriculum changes may be difficult to translate into classroom practice unless lecturers are prepared to teach the revised content and support students' learning."

One lecturer remarked: "Universities should strengthen their relationships with businesses so that students can participate in internships, practical projects and workplace learning. This would help us identify the skills students need and give them opportunities to practise those skills. The response prioritises industry collaboration and experiential learning. It indicates that partnerships with employers could support both curriculum relevance and students' transition from university to employment. Such relationships could also provide opportunities for students to encounter business technologies and work procedures beyond the university setting."

One lecturer specified: "I would also recommend reviewing assessment methods. Students should not graduate based only on their ability to reproduce information in examinations. They should demonstrate that they can apply knowledge, solve problems and use digital tools responsibly. This response reinforces the need for assessment reform. It suggests that the intended outcomes of curriculum transformation should be reflected in how students' learning is evaluated. Assessment practices would therefore need to recognise the practical application of knowledge and the responsible use of digital technologies."

Another lecturer explained: "Transformation should be gradual but consistent. Universities can begin with the most urgent digital skills, provide the necessary resources, train lecturers and evaluate the outcomes before expanding the changes. This response proposes a phased approach to implementation. It recognises that institutions may face resource constraints and suggests that prioritisation, monitoring and evaluation can help make curriculum reform more manageable. The recommendation also emphasises the importance of assessing progress as changes are introduced."

Fundamental Structure of the Phenomenon

Reducing the exhaustive description to its essential structure, lecturers' experience of curriculum transformation for the digital economy can be summarised as follows. Lecturers experience the existing Business Education curriculum as a sound foundation in business knowledge that has not kept pace with digital workplace demands. For them, closing this gap goes beyond adding technology topics: it requires developing digital and related workplace competencies, integrating digital applications across subjects, giving students practical and industry-linked learning experiences, and assessing what students can do as well as what they know. They see these changes as dependent on

institutional conditions, namely adequate digital infrastructure, lecturer training, funding and clear policy, and as best introduced through a gradual but consistent curriculum review developed together with industry. The essence of the experience is therefore a curriculum that is valued but incomplete, and a conviction that its transformation depends on aligned change in content, teaching, assessment and institutional support.

Discussion of Findings

Perceived Adequacy and Limitations of the Existing Business Education Curriculum

The findings revealed that although the existing Business Education curriculum provides a useful foundation in business knowledge, it may not adequately reflect the changing demands of the digital economy. Most participants expressed concern about the curriculum's relevance to contemporary workplace practices, while others acknowledged the continuing importance of its foundational content. This finding suggests that the central issue is not necessarily the complete inadequacy of the existing curriculum, but the need to strengthen its responsiveness to changes in business operations and technology. This finding aligns with Inikpi (2024), who identified the need to review Business Education curricula to ensure they remain relevant to students' needs and industry expectations. Inikpi emphasised the importance of balancing theoretical foundations with practical skills, vocational training and digital literacy. The present study extends this position by drawing on lecturers' accounts of the perceived gap between the knowledge currently provided and the practical digital competencies students may need in contemporary workplaces. The responses concerning paper-based office procedures, digital records, cloud-based applications and automated systems illustrate the importance of connecting curriculum content with actual business practices.

The finding also has implications for how curriculum review is approached. The participants did not suggest that foundational areas such as accounting, office administration, business communication and entrepreneurship should be discarded. Rather, their responses indicate that these areas should be taught in ways that reflect contemporary business environments. This distinction matters because curriculum transformation should preserve relevant knowledge while strengthening its practical application. The findings therefore support a developmental approach to curriculum reform in which existing strengths are maintained and areas that require updating are addressed.

Digital and Future-Work Competencies Required by Business Education Students

The findings showed that participants regarded digital literacy and the ability to use relevant digital applications as essential competencies for Business Education graduates. They also emphasised data analysis, information management, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, adaptability and the responsible use of emerging technologies. These findings suggest that preparation for the digital economy involves more than teaching students basic computer operations. It requires the development of competencies that enable them to use technology to complete business tasks, interpret information and respond to changing workplace expectations. This finding is consistent with Ekoh-Nweke and Ikpeama (2023), whose study of Business Education students in public universities in South-East Nigeria found that digitalisation influenced the acquisition of entrepreneurial and managerial skills. Their findings support the importance of digitalisation in developing competencies relevant to Business Education students. The present study complements their work by drawing attention to the specific competencies that lecturers consider important, including the use of business applications, data analysis, online communication and digital entrepreneurship.

Similarly, Onodu and Nwokike (2024) identified basic computer and digital communication skills as important for effective teaching in the digital age and recommended continuing training for business educators and students. While their study focused on digital skills required by university business educators, the present findings broaden the discussion to the competencies students should acquire and demonstrate before graduation. This distinction highlights the relationship between lecturers' capacity to support digital learning and students' opportunities to develop relevant competencies. The participants' emphasis on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data privacy and information verification also points to the importance of responsible digital participation. These responses suggest that students need to understand not only how digital tools operate but also how to evaluate information and use technology appropriately. In this respect, the findings indicate that digital competence should combine technical ability with critical judgement and responsible decision-making. Business Education curriculum transformation should therefore consider both the practical use of digital tools and the

broader competencies required to apply them effectively.

Areas of Business Education Curriculum Requiring Transformation

The findings revealed that participants favoured integrating digital applications across Business Education subjects rather than restricting technology instruction to separate computer-related courses. They also identified e-commerce and digital marketing as areas requiring greater attention. Other areas mentioned included digital business management, electronic financial transactions, business databases, data analysis, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and data privacy. These findings suggest that curriculum transformation should involve both integrating technology into existing subjects and strengthening content that reflects contemporary business practices. The findings agree with Inikpi (2024), who identified curriculum relevance, practical skills, digital literacy, faculty development and industry input as important considerations in Business Education curriculum development. The present study reinforces the need for curriculum content to respond to changing business demands. However, the lecturers' responses also provide a more specific indication of the areas they believe require attention, particularly the integration of digital applications across accounting, marketing, office management and entrepreneurship.

The findings are also consistent with Ekoh-Nweke et al. (2022), whose study examined digital skills strategies for teaching Business Education in universities in South-East Nigeria and highlighted the relevance of online and information and communication technology strategies. Although their study focused on teaching strategies, it supports the broader importance of digital approaches within Business Education. The present findings suggest that such approaches should be reflected not only in how subjects are taught but also in what students learn across the programme. Furthermore, Onwubuya et al. (2025) reported a positive relationship between the integration of machine learning and the development of practical and entrepreneurship-related content in Business Education programmes in South-East Nigeria. This provides a relevant point of comparison with the present study's findings on the need to incorporate emerging technologies into curriculum content. Nevertheless, the lecturers' responses suggest that technology integration should be purposeful rather than simply adding new technological topics. Digital applications need to be connected to the business tasks and subject areas in which students are expected to use them. The findings therefore indicate that curriculum transformation should go beyond adding isolated technology courses. A more integrated approach would allow students to develop digital competence while learning accounting, marketing, office management and entrepreneurship. This would help establish a closer relationship between technological knowledge and its application within the different areas of Business Education.

Transformation of Teaching, Learning and Practical Experiences

The findings showed that participants strongly emphasised hands-on learning and practical activities. They identified simulated business environments, project-based learning, guided use of online learning platforms and industry exposure as ways of strengthening students' practical experiences. These findings suggest that lecturers consider opportunities to apply knowledge essential to developing the digital competencies required in contemporary business settings. This finding is consistent with Ekoh-Nweke and Ikpeama (2023), who found that digitalisation influences entrepreneurial and managerial skills acquisition among Business Education students. Their findings provide support for the importance of digital learning in developing practical competencies. The present study adds to this perspective by identifying teaching and learning approaches through which lecturers believe such competencies can be developed, including practical assignments, simulated business tasks and projects based on business problems.

The findings also correspond with Ekoh-Nweke et al. (2022), who highlighted digital skills strategies as important for teaching Business Education. The lecturers in the present study similarly indicated that technology should be incorporated into meaningful learning activities rather than introduced without clear instructional purposes. Their responses suggest that access to technology alone may not be sufficient if students are not given opportunities to practise relevant tasks and receive appropriate guidance. An important aspect of the findings is the emphasis on university–industry relationships. Participants expressed concern that university learning experiences may not always reflect the technologies and procedures used in business organisations. Their support for industrial training, workplace projects and collaboration with businesses suggests that industry engagement could help strengthen the relationship between curriculum content and workplace expectations. Such collaboration may also give lecturers opportunities to identify emerging skills and

update learning activities accordingly. The findings therefore point to the need for teaching approaches that combine conceptual understanding with practical application. Lectures may continue to provide the theoretical foundation, but students also need opportunities to practise digital tasks, solve business problems and gain exposure to workplace practices. This combination is particularly relevant to a programme intended to prepare students for employment and entrepreneurship in a changing digital economy.

Assessment and Evaluation Transformation

The findings revealed that participants supported complementing written examinations with practical assessment, portfolios and project-based tasks. They emphasised the need to assess whether students can perform business tasks using digital applications, analyse information, communicate effectively and solve problems. The findings suggest that assessment practices should reflect the competencies the curriculum is intended to develop rather than rely exclusively on students' ability to reproduce information in examinations. This finding is consistent with the broader concern identified by Inikpi (2024) regarding the need to balance theoretical knowledge with practical and vocational skills in Business Education. If students are expected to demonstrate practical digital competence, assessment methods need to provide opportunities for them to show how they apply their knowledge. The present study adds lecturers' perspectives on possible ways of achieving this, including digital assignments, business projects and portfolios that document students' work over time.

The participants' emphasis on practical assessment also complements the findings of Ekoh-Nweke and Ikpeama (2023), which highlighted the relationship between digitalisation and entrepreneurial and managerial skills acquisition. The development of these skills requires attention to what students can do with their knowledge, not only what they can recall. Practical assessment may therefore help lecturers examine students' ability to apply digital tools to relevant business activities. Another important finding concerns the use of artificial intelligence in learning and assessment. Participants emphasised the need for students to explain their decisions, verify information and demonstrate their own understanding when using AI tools. This suggests that assessment practices may need to account for the availability of emerging technologies while maintaining a clear focus on students' reasoning and learning. The implication is not that written examinations should be abandoned, but that they should be complemented by assessment approaches capable of capturing the practical and analytical competencies required in the digital economy. The findings consequently support a broader assessment approach in Business Education. Written examinations may remain useful for assessing conceptual understanding, while practical assignments, projects and portfolios can provide additional evidence of students' ability to apply knowledge. Combining these approaches could offer a more comprehensive picture of students' readiness to undertake digital business tasks.

Institutional Support and Implementation Challenges

The findings revealed that participants considered digital infrastructure and lecturer professional development important conditions for effective curriculum transformation. They also identified funding, possible resistance to changes in established teaching practices and the absence of clear institutional policies as challenges that could affect implementation. These findings suggest that curriculum reform cannot be achieved through changes in subject content alone; it also requires the institutional capacity and resources needed to support teaching and learning. The finding agrees with Ekoh-Nweke et al. (2022), whose study highlighted the relevance of digital skills strategies for teaching Business Education. The present study extends this discussion by identifying the conditions participants believe are necessary for implementing those strategies effectively. Reliable internet access, appropriate software, functional computer facilities and opportunities for lecturer training were identified as important requirements for strengthening practical digital learning. Similarly, Onodu and Nwokike (2024) recommended increased funding and continuous training for business educators and students in digital skills. This is consistent with the present study's finding that lecturers require opportunities to update their skills and become familiar with technologies relevant to contemporary business operations. The similarity between the findings indicates that digital competence is not solely a student-related concern; lecturers also require the preparation and support necessary to teach digital content effectively.

The participants' concerns about funding and infrastructure also align with Ezeabii and Ngene (2025), who identified funding and infrastructure provision among the strategies relevant to the application of artificial intelligence in Business Education programmes in South-East Nigerian public universities. The present study reinforces the

importance of institutional investment while drawing attention to additional considerations, including software maintenance, institutional policies, data protection and support for lecturers adapting to new teaching approaches. An important implication of these findings is that curriculum reform needs realistic implementation arrangements. Introducing new content without ensuring that lecturers have the necessary skills or that students can access relevant technology may limit the practical value of the changes. Likewise, providing equipment without clear learning objectives and institutional direction may not produce consistent improvements. The findings therefore suggest that infrastructure, professional development, funding and institutional policy should be considered together when planning curriculum transformation.

Priority Curriculum Transformation Needs and Recommendations

The findings showed that participants prioritised curriculum review and stronger university–industry collaboration. They also emphasised practical digital competence, lecturer training, assessment reform and a gradual but consistent approach to implementation. These recommendations bring together the concerns expressed across the other themes and suggest that lecturers view curriculum transformation as a coordinated process involving content, teaching, assessment and institutional support. The priority given to curriculum review agrees with Inikpi (2024), who highlighted the need to maintain the relevance and currency of Business Education curriculum content through review and attention to industry needs. The present study reinforces this position by showing that lecturers consider curriculum review necessary for identifying gaps between existing learning experiences and the digital competencies expected of graduates. The findings further suggest that such review should involve relevant stakeholders, including lecturers, employers, graduates and curriculum specialists. The emphasis on university–industry collaboration also reflects the concern that curriculum content and university learning experiences should remain connected to contemporary workplace practices. This finding is consistent with the wider importance placed on industry input in Business Education curriculum development by Inikpi (2024). The present study adds that participants see industry collaboration not only as a way to inform curriculum decisions but also as a means of providing students with practical experiences through internships, workplace projects and other forms of engagement.

The recommendation to strengthen lecturer training alongside curriculum reform is also consistent with Onodu and Nwokike (2024), who highlighted the importance of continuous and periodic training in digital skills. This relationship is important because changes in curriculum content may not produce the intended outcomes unless lecturers are prepared to implement them. The participants' emphasis on practical digital competence and assessment reform further suggests that curriculum changes should be accompanied by clear expectations regarding what students should be able to demonstrate by graduation. The recommendation for gradual but consistent implementation introduces an important practical consideration. Curriculum transformation may require resources, staff development and changes in established teaching practices. A phased approach could allow institutions to prioritise urgent needs, support lecturers, provide relevant learning resources and assess progress as changes are introduced. This is an interpretation of the participants' recommendations rather than a tested outcome of the present study, but it indicates a practical direction for institutions considering curriculum reform.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, participants were selected based on availability and willingness to participate, so the sample may not represent all Business Education lecturers in the nine universities, and five lecturers were drawn from each university regardless of departmental size. Second, the study reports only lecturers' perceptions. It did not include students, graduates, employers, or an analysis of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) and course outlines, so statements about the adequacy of the curriculum reflect perceptions rather than an independent evaluation. Third, the study covered public universities in South-East Nigeria, and the findings should not be generalised to private universities or other regions. Fourth, the interviews lasted about 20–25 minutes and were conducted face-to-face or through WhatsApp or Zoom, which may have affected the depth and consistency of the responses. Finally, the counts and percentages reported describe how many participants raised each issue; they are descriptive summaries of qualitative data and are not statistical estimates for the wider population.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research could include students, graduates, employers and curriculum regulators to

compare their views with those of lecturers, and could analyse the CCMAS and course outlines to identify specific gaps between curriculum content and digital workplace requirements. Studies could use purposive sampling, longer interviews or focus groups, and extend coverage to private universities and other geopolitical zones. Quantitative or mixed-methods studies could test how widely the priorities identified here are shared across institutions, and intervention studies could evaluate the effect of the recommended changes on students' digital competence.

Conclusion

The study explored lecturers' perceptions of the curriculum transformation needs of Business Education students in preparing for the digital economy in universities in South-East Nigeria. The findings indicate that lecturers perceive the existing Business Education curriculum as providing a useful foundation in business knowledge and skills but not adequately reflecting the changing demands of the digital workplace. The findings further show that lecturers regard digital literacy, data analysis, information management, e-commerce, digital marketing and the responsible use of emerging technologies as important competencies that Business Education students need to develop.

The findings also suggest that curriculum transformation should go beyond introducing additional technology-related topics. Digital applications need to be integrated across Business Education subjects, while teaching and learning should provide more opportunities for practical activities, workplace-related projects and industry exposure. Similarly, assessment practices need to place greater emphasis on students' ability to apply knowledge and demonstrate practical competence, alongside their understanding of theoretical concepts.

The study further indicates that the successful implementation of curriculum transformation depends on adequate digital infrastructure, continuous professional development for lecturers, appropriate institutional policies and stronger collaboration between universities and industry. These findings suggest that curriculum reform may have limited impact if changes in curriculum content are not accompanied by the resources, teaching capacity and practical learning opportunities required to implement them.

The study concludes that, in the view of the lecturers, preparing Business Education students for the digital economy requires a coordinated approach involving curriculum review, digital competency development, practical teaching and assessment, lecturer development, institutional support and industry participation. The findings provide a basis for universities, curriculum developers, lecturers and relevant education authorities to identify and address areas in which Business Education programmes need to respond more effectively to contemporary workplace demands.

Recommendations

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

1. The Business Education curriculum should be reviewed regularly to reflect changing digital workplace demands. Relevant curriculum development bodies and university Business Education departments should institute periodic reviews involving lecturers, employers, graduates, curriculum specialists and other stakeholders. These reviews should identify gaps in existing course content, examine emerging workplace competencies and determine the areas requiring improvement. A regular review mechanism would also enable curriculum developers to respond more promptly to technological changes.
2. Digital competencies should be integrated across Business Education subjects rather than restricted to computer-related courses. Curriculum developers and lecturers should identify the digital applications relevant to individual subjects and incorporate them into course content, learning activities and practical assignments. For instance, students could use spreadsheets and digital reporting tools in accounting-related courses, digital marketing platforms in marketing and entrepreneurship courses, and electronic records and collaborative applications in office management. Integrating technology in this manner would help students connect digital knowledge with the practical requirements of their areas of specialisation.
3. Business Education programmes should place greater emphasis on practical, hands-on learning. University departments should organise regular practical sessions, simulations, case studies and projects based on realistic business situations. Lecturers should assign activities that require students to prepare digital business documents, analyse information, develop online

marketing plans, manage electronic records and solve business-related problems using appropriate applications. Where access to commercial software or equipment is limited, departments should explore suitable accessible alternatives and organise shared practical sessions to ensure that students have opportunities to develop the required competencies.

4. Assessment practices should be broadened to measure students' practical digital competencies alongside theoretical knowledge. Lecturers should incorporate practical assignments, project work, presentations, demonstrations and student portfolios into their assessment plans while retaining written examinations where appropriate. Clear assessment criteria should specify the competencies students are expected to demonstrate and provide a fair way to evaluate individual contributions to group projects. In assessing work involving artificial intelligence or other digital tools, lecturers should require students to explain their decisions, verify information and demonstrate their understanding of the work submitted.
5. Universities should strengthen professional development opportunities for Business Education lecturers. University administrations and departmental heads should organise regular workshops, seminars, practical training sessions and peer-learning activities focused on contemporary business technologies and their instructional applications. Training programmes should address not only how to operate digital tools but also how to integrate them into course delivery, practical activities and assessment. Departments should further encourage lecturers to participate in relevant professional development programmes and share effective teaching practices with colleagues.
6. University management should provide and maintain adequate digital infrastructure for Business Education programmes. University authorities should conduct periodic assessments of departmental technology needs and use the findings to guide budgetary decisions, equipment procurement and maintenance planning. Investment should prioritise functional computers, reliable internet access, relevant software and suitable facilities for practical instruction. In addition, institutions should make provision for the maintenance and replacement of equipment to ensure that students and lecturers have consistent access to the resources required for teaching and learning.
7. Universities should establish stronger and more structured partnerships with business organisations. Business Education departments should develop formal working relationships with relevant firms, small businesses, professional bodies and other employers. These partnerships should provide opportunities for guest lectures, workplace visits, internships, industry-informed projects and practical exposure to contemporary business procedures. Employers should also be invited to contribute to curriculum reviews by identifying the digital competencies expected of graduates. Such collaboration would help universities align learning experiences with workplace realities.
8. University management and Business Education departments should adopt a coordinated and phased approach to curriculum transformation. Each department should begin by identifying the most urgent curriculum gaps and preparing an implementation plan specifying priority, responsibilities, resource requirements and timelines. Initial efforts should focus on essential digital competencies and practical learning activities, with further changes introduced progressively as resources and institutional capacity permit. Departments should monitor progress through periodic reviews and feedback from lecturers and students, using the findings to refine implementation strategies and address emerging challenges.

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