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EXPLORING HOW COMPUTER EDUCATION SHAPES ENTREPRENEURIAL READINESS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS ACROSS DELTA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the real-life impact of computer education on how ready students in Delta State's tertiary institutions are to dive into digital entrepreneurship. As the digital economy grows, there's a rising need for students not only to understand the concept of technology in theory but to apply it practically, especially in building and running businesses in today's society. Three research questions guided the study. The study adopted a survey design. Based on input from 400 final students across four different institutions, they were randomly selected as the population for the study. This study (i) explores their access to digital tools, (ii) the entrepreneurial skills they have developed, and (iii) the challenges they encounter in applying classroom knowledge to real-world business situations. The instrument was validated by two experts. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency distribution and mean value. The findings reveal

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that while students are interested in digital entrepreneurship and feel somewhat confident using technology, their learning is still largely classroom-bound, with little hands-on experience or mentorship. Factors like poor infrastructure and outdated curricula make it hard to bridge the gap between what is taught and what is needed outside school. The study recommends by concluding that, while there is great potential, computer education in our various institutions needs to be more practical, entrepreneurial should be backed by better resources if students are to truly succeed in Nigeria's evolving digital economy.

Keywords*:* Computer education, digital entrepreneurship, student innovation, ICT integration, tertiary education, Delta State, practical skills development

Introduction

We live in a world where digital technology affects nearly everything we do, from how we socialise to how we run businesses. In this fast-changing landscape, having computer skills is no longer optional; it's a must. It's the engine that drives innovation, helps people find work, and opens doors to entrepreneurship. As the global economy becomes more digital, students need more than just a degree; they need digital skills to survive and thrive (Afolabi & Balogun, 2021).

Olaseni (2025) highlights that education is rapidly evolving, with more people embracing learning in its full form. As a result, we're seeing a sharp rise in graduates from Nigerian universities, polytechnics, and colleges. Unfortunately, many still believe that a certificate alone guarantees a job. This misconception, combined with the country's economic struggles, contributes to a growing number of unemployed graduates. Unemployment is not just a statistic; it affects real people and communities across every state in Nigeria.

In Delta State, this challenge is especially visible. Young graduates often step out of school into a harsh job market. Despite government efforts such as the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) and YouWin! Connect, many young people still lack the practical digital skills required to start or grow a business (Okolie et al., 2022). That's why computer education must be more than just a subject; it needs to become a springboard to opportunity.

Today's entrepreneurs need hands-on experience in areas like web design, graphic creation, digital marketing, data analysis, and software development. These are exactly the kinds of skills that can help students become self-employed, build online businesses, or earn income from freelance work (Edewor, Akinsanya & Umukoro, 2020).

Our tertiary institutions have a unique role to play. They're not just places to earn certificates; they can shape students into problem-solvers and innovators. By combining computer education with entrepreneurship training, students can learn to think independently and create jobs rather than just search for them. Udoh et al. (2023) emphasised that this combination can produce self-reliant and future-focused individuals.

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In a developing state like Delta, where youth empowerment and economic growth are priorities, schools need to go beyond theory. They must offer practical, hands-on digital training that prepares students for life after graduation. But are they doing enough? Are students getting the skills they need to launch businesses?

This study seeks to find out. It examines how well computer education is equipping students for entrepreneurship in Delta State's tertiary institutions, looking at access, impact, and obstacles. Ultimately, the goal is to give educators, institutions, and policymakers insights that can help students graduate not only with knowledge but with the skills and confidence to become successful digital entrepreneurs.

Statement of the Problem

In today's tech-driven world, entrepreneurship is a key solution to youth unemployment. But many Nigerian graduates still struggle to turn business ideas into reality, not because they lack ambition, but because they lack the practical digital skills needed in today's job market. Even after several years of study, many still feel unprepared for the challenges of digital entrepreneurship (Okolie et al., 2022).

This raises an important question: Is the computer education being delivered in our tertiary institutions truly preparing students for the real world of entrepreneurship? Many believe that the current computer curriculum is too focused on theory and too detached from the actual skills needed to succeed in business.

Purpose of the Study

This study is all about understanding how computer education can better prepare students for life as digital entrepreneurs. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Assess how much access students have to computer education and digital tools across tertiary institutions in Delta State.
2. Understand how learning computer skills influences students' interest in becoming entrepreneurs or starting their businesses.
3. Identify the key challenges that prevent students from connecting what they learn in class to real-world entrepreneurial success.

Research Questions

1. How much exposure and experience do students in Delta State's tertiary institutions have with computer education?
2. In what ways is computer education shaping students' entrepreneurial thinking and activities?
3. What are the major obstacles that prevent students from using computer education to successfully start and manage businesses?

Literature Review

Computer Education and Digital Skills

In today's tech-driven world, computer education has evolved far beyond basic computer literacy. It now includes essential, real-world digital skills like coding, digital marketing, graphic design, data

analysis, and website development. These are no longer just "nice to have" skills; they're critical for success in today's job market and for launching or managing a business. According to Afolabi and Balogun (2021), digital skills are particularly important for entrepreneurs in developing countries, where traditional business resources may be scarce. By mastering digital tools, students can find innovative solutions to everyday problems, streamline their work, and communicate their ideas effectively, skills that are key to successful entrepreneurship.

Many tertiary institutions are beginning to recognise this shift. Increasingly, digital education is no longer confined to IT departments alone. Faculties across different disciplines are embedding digital learning into their curriculum, giving all students, regardless of their field, the opportunity to develop valuable computer skills. This trend reflects the global reality that digital literacy is now a basic requirement, not just for employment but also for entrepreneurship and independent innovation.

Entrepreneurship in Tertiary Institutions

The goal of entrepreneurship education is to inspire students to think creatively, take initiative, and see beyond the traditional route of job seeking. It encourages them to become job creators rather than job seekers. Udoh et al. (2023) highlight that when entrepreneurship training is combined with practical ICT skills, students are far more likely to turn their ideas into scalable, real-world businesses. This blend of theory and hands-on learning equips students not just with knowledge but with the ability to act on it.

Many universities and colleges now offer entrepreneurship programs through workshops, mentorship, and innovation hubs. When these programs are supported by digital training, students gain the tech confidence needed to put their entrepreneurial ideas into action. This creates an encouraging environment where they can try out their business concepts, learn from mistakes, and prepare for competition in a digital economy.

The Link Between ICT Skills and Entrepreneurship

There is growing evidence that digital skills and entrepreneurship go hand in hand. A study by Edewor, Akinsanya, and Umukoro (2020) found that students who had ICT training were more likely to take advantage of online opportunities such as freelancing, running e-commerce stores, producing content, or managing digital campaigns. In a world where more business happens online than ever before, students with ICT knowledge can spot market trends early, connect with a global audience, and use tech tools to grow their ventures.

Technology has also made starting a business more affordable and accessible. Students can now launch small businesses using online platforms, mobile apps, and digital payment tools without needing large capital investments. This is especially meaningful in countries like Nigeria, where access to traditional funding may be limited,

but young people are bursting with creativity and ambition.

Theoretical Framework: Human Capital Theory

This study draws on the Human Capital Theory proposed by Becker (1993). The theory suggests that education and skills training significantly boost a person's productivity and income potential. In this context, computer education is seen as a form of human capital, an investment that prepares students not only for employment but for entrepreneurship and innovation.

By learning practical digital skills, students increase their value in the job market while also gaining the tools and confidence to build their businesses. The theory supports the view that when institutions invest in equipping students with ICT knowledge, they are helping create a generation of creative problem-solvers and business-minded leaders who can drive economic progress.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a descriptive survey design, which is ideal for gathering real-life opinions and experiences from a wide range of students. The aim was to understand how computer education is being experienced in tertiary institutions across Delta State and how this experience is influencing students' entrepreneurial growth.

Population and Sample

The study focused on students from four (4) out of the nine (9) tertiary institutions in Delta State. These included universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. Specifically, final-year students were chosen for the research, as they are closer to graduation and often thinking seriously about life after school. A total of 400 students were selected using stratified random sampling, a method that ensured different departments and academic programs were fairly represented.

Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The instrument was based on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from:

- Very High Extent (VHE)
- High Extent (HE)
- Low Extent (LE)
- Very Low Extent (VLE)

The questionnaire was designed to capture students' views on their access to computer education, their entrepreneurial intentions, and the challenges they face. To ensure the quality and accuracy of the instrument, it underwent face and content validation by experts in both ICT and entrepreneurship education.

To test for reliability, the questionnaire was analysed using Cronbach's Alpha statistics, which confirmed the internal consistency of the items. The survey was administered in person through direct delivery to ensure a high response rate and minimise missing data.

Data Analysis

The responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, an independent t-test,

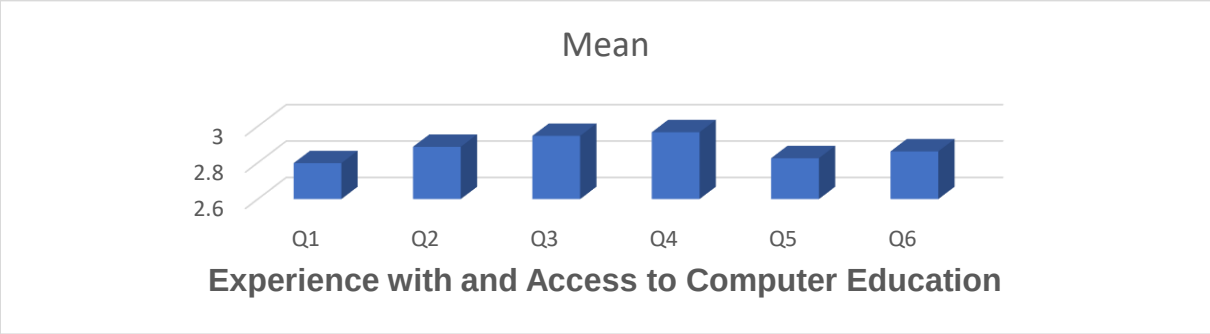
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and repeated measures analysis. These methods helped the researcher identify patterns, make comparisons, and draw meaningful conclusions from the data. The results were evaluated for a statistical mean value of 2.50, ensuring that findings were based on solid evidence and not random chance.

Results of Findings

This study gathered responses from 400 students across four tertiary institutions in Delta State. The goal was to explore their experiences with computer education, how it influences their entrepreneurial thinking, and the barriers they face in connecting both areas effectively.

Figure 1: Experience with and Access to Computer Education

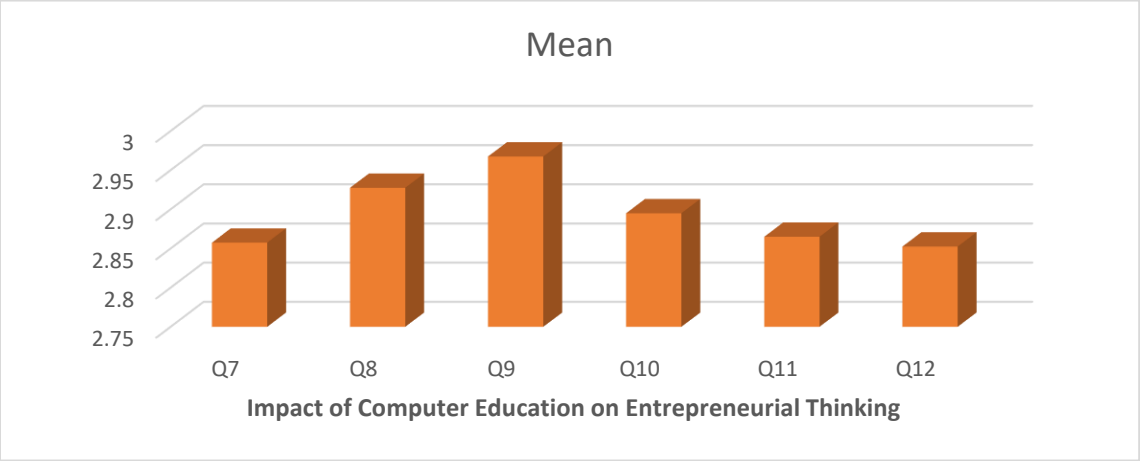


S/N	Question	Mean (X)	Remark
1	Does your school provide regular access to computers for academic use?	2.80	Access is slightly below average
2	Have you taken any computer-related courses in school?	2.89	Close to a high level of exposure
3	Have you received hands-on training in digital skills like programming, graphic design, or digital marketing?	2.95	Reasonably good access to practical skills
4	Do you feel confident using a computer for school and personal tasks?	2.97	Highest score, showing strong confidence
5	Are the skills from your computer classes useful in real life?	2.83	Moderate usefulness reported
6	Does your school offer extra digital skill programs beyond regular classes?	2.86	Fair, but room for improvement

Most students reported a moderately positive experience with computer education. Confidence in using computers was particularly high (mean = 2.97), suggesting students feel digitally competent. However, access to consistent infrastructure, like devices and extracurricular learning opportunities, scored slightly lower. This points to the need for more investment in tools, programs, and resources that can boost practical exposure.

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Figure 2: Impact of Computer Education on Entrepreneurial Thinking

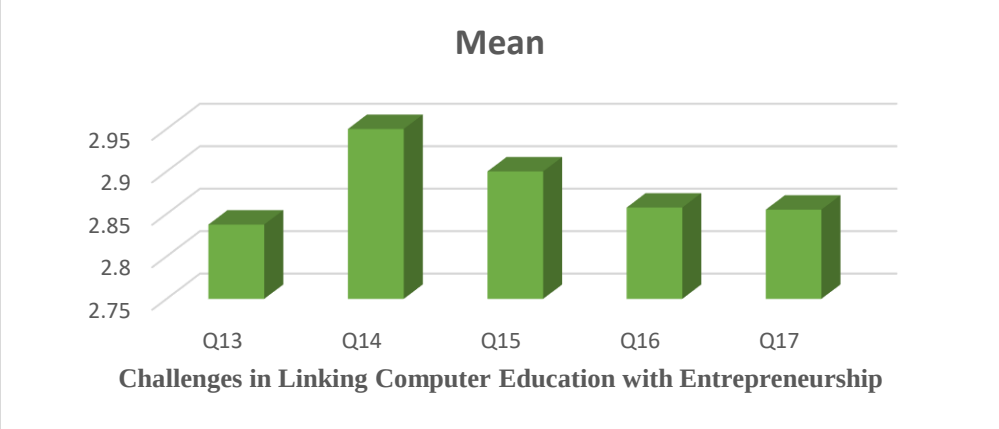


S/N	Question	Mean (X)	Remark
7	Has learning computer skills made you more interested in starting a business?	2.86	Fairly strong interest in entrepreneurship
8	Do you believe technology can help you grow a successful business?	2.93	High confidence in tech-enabled business potential
9	Have you used digital skills (like social media/content creation) to earn money?	2.97	The top score shows students are already earning digitally
10	Has computer education boosted your confidence in solving business problems?	2.90	Positive impact on creativity and problem-solving
11	Do you see yourself as a future digital entrepreneur?	2.87	Many are optimistic about this possibility
12	Have you started or are you planning a digital business?	2.85	Students are showing entrepreneurial intent

The responses show a clear link between digital skills and entrepreneurial thinking. The strongest response came from students who said they had already earned income using their digital skills (mean = 2.97). Confidence in using technology for business and interest in entrepreneurship were also notably high. However, while interest is strong, actual startup activity is still moderate, suggesting students may need more support to move from ideas to action.

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Figure 3: Challenges in Linking Computer Education with Entrepreneurship



S/N	Question	Mean (X)	Remark
13	Do you lack access to digital tools like computers, the internet, or software?	2.83	Access is still a challenge for many
14	Are your computer classes mostly theoretical rather than practical?	2.95	Highest-rated challenge: too much theory
15	Do you feel unprepared to use your skills for entrepreneurship?	2.90	Many feel unready for real-world business
16	Are computer and entrepreneurship courses taught separately without connection?	2.86	Courses are often disjointed
17	Do you lack mentorship or support to start a digital business?	2.86	Students want more guidance and mentorship

Students highlighted several barriers, especially the overemphasis on theory in their computer education. Access to resources and practical preparation for digital entrepreneurship were also major concerns. Additionally, students felt that computer education and entrepreneurship were taught in isolation, which made it harder to see how digital skills could drive business. The lack of mentorship was another common issue, showing the need for more structured support systems.

Discussion of Findings

The findings paint a hopeful yet incomplete picture. Students are gaining valuable computer skills, and many are even using them to earn income or explore business ideas. However, their ability to fully transition into digital entrepreneurs is still being held back.

Theory vs. Practice: Students repeatedly pointed out that their courses lean too heavily on theory. This weakens their ability to apply skills in practical business settings. Prior research by Obara & Abubakar (2020) supports this concern, emphasising the need

for hands-on digital education to boost creativity and innovation.

Positive Attitude, Limited Support: Encouragingly, students feel confident using digital tools and see entrepreneurship as a real path forward, especially in areas like content creation and online business. This aligns with Adebayo & Oladele (2021), who noted that many young Nigerians view digital skills as a path to financial independence. But enthusiasm alone isn't enough. Students also need mentorship, funding, and real-world application opportunities to thrive.

Infrastructure Gaps: Limited access to devices, internet, and essential software still hinders learning. Olayemi & Aremu (2020) found that infrastructure is critical in driving successful digital learning and entrepreneurship, a point echoed in this study.

Disconnected Curriculum: Students also reported that entrepreneurship and computer studies are taught separately, making it hard to connect the dots. Nwankwo et al. (2021) recommend integrating entrepreneurship into digital learning through projects, simulations, and startup experiences—approaches that seem urgently needed here.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how computer education influences students' preparedness for digital entrepreneurship in tertiary institutions across Delta State. The findings are clear: while students are gaining digital literacy and showing enthusiasm for entrepreneurial ventures, the journey is far from complete.

Students are confident in their abilities and already applying their skills in small ways, such as managing social media or earning online. But the support structure around their infrastructure, mentorship, and practical training isn't strong enough to fully enable them. As others like Ajayi (2022) and Olanrewaju & Okorie (2021) have also found, the potential is there, but action is needed.

To truly empower the next generation of digital entrepreneurs, institutions must move beyond theory. They must invest in hands-on learning, updated curriculum, and real-world support systems. With the right mix of training, tools, and mentorship, today's students can become tomorrow's tech-driven innovators.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following practical steps are recommended:

1. **Focus on Hands-On Learning:** Schools should reduce the theory-heavy nature of computer education. Students need to engage directly with tools like website builders, coding platforms, video editing software, and social media campaigns.
2. **Combine Computer and Entrepreneurship Education:** Courses should be designed to show students how digital tools can support business ventures, for example, creating a blog for marketing or designing an e-commerce site during class.

3. **Upgrade Infrastructure:** Ensure students have access to modern computers, stable internet, and up-to-date software. Without the right tools, even the best training will fall short.
4. **Mentorship and Entrepreneur Support Programs:** Partner with tech professionals, local entrepreneurs, or NGOs to guide students through their business journey. Incubation centres or entrepreneurship clubs can provide this structure.
5. **Organising Innovation Bootcamps and Workshops:** Beyond regular classes, institutions should host events like hackathons, business idea competitions, or digital skill fairs. These inspire creativity and give students a platform to test their ideas.
6. **Regularly Update the Curriculum:** The tech world moves fast. Schools should continuously revise their computer education content to reflect current trends, ensuring students graduate with relevant and marketable skills.

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