Digital Skills and Business School Curriculum

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Abstract

Currently, most business management curriculum presupposes that students have a basic set of digital skills. Some require a slightly more advanced skill set as they have begun to integrate computer-based tools to facilitate and support students' knowledge acquisition. A few business schools offer hybrid programs where students can specialize in both business and technology; however, these specialist streams are focused on developing skills to manage technology and develop infrastructure rather than on tools to integrate the use of technology into business functions.

This paper is a large-scale review of international literature in English and French on digital skills, exploring their implications for management school curriculum development. Using textual analysis tools and well-established approaches to meta-analysis, we used a set of standardized search terms in both academic and general search engines to identify 19,528 unique academic articles and grey literature related to digital skills in both English and French. These results were then systematically reviewed and reduced, based on recency and relevancy, to 3,017 results. This set of documents were analysed and synthesized to develop a precise understanding of how digital skills are conceptualized, measured, and promoted.

Our results indicate that a hybrid set of business and technology skills is becoming increasingly sought after by organizations due to the benefits ascribed to this skill set, including increases in levels of innovation and productivity, competitive advantage, as well as, growth and profitability. Furthermore, we reviewed a number of metrics to assess digital skills in the business environment and observed that, in a knowledge-based economy, every employee must have the skills to generate, critically analyse, and disseminate knowledge. We conclude that, in order to continue to develop business-ready graduates, general business management programs must begin to integrate the development of this hybrid skill set into their current curriculum.