Current Issues and Challenges in the Acquisition of Office Technology and Management Education Skills in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba

By Ojianyaegbu, Idowu

Federal College of Education (Technical)

Abstract- This paper examined the current issues and challenges facing the acquisition of OTME skills in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba. Office Technology and Management is a synergy of three distinct words office, technology and management. It is a well-established fact that advances in technology has affected different professions with a view to meet global trends in higher productivity, speed networking and excellent packaging. Accomplishing the routine tasks with machines is known as automation. To this end, this paper examines inter alia the concept of office technology and management, the concept of skills, importance of acquiring OTME Skills in Nigeria skills available in OTME, and issues and challenges in the acquisition of OTME skills. This paper concludes that no meaningful OTME skill can be acquired in colleges of education without adequate provision of facilities, manpower and equipment needed in OTME departments to meet the changing needs of the society and workplace.

Keywords: current issues and challenges, acquisition, office technology and management skills.

GJHSS-G Classification: DDC Code: 651.05 LCC Code: HF5547.A2
Abstract- This paper examined the current issues and challenges facing the acquisition of OTME skills in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba. Office Technology and Management is a synergy of three distinct words office, technology and management. It is a well-established fact that advances in technology has affected different professions with a view to meet global trends in higher productivity, speed networking and excellent packaging. Accomplishing the routine tasks with machines is known as automation. To this end, this paper examines inter alia the concept of office technology and management, the concept of skills, importance of acquiring OTME Skills in Nigeria skills available in OTME, and issues and challenges in the acquisition of OTME skills. This paper concludes that no meaningful OTME skill can be acquired in colleges of education without adequate provision of facilities, manpower and equipment needed in OTME departments to meet the changing needs of the society and workplace. Based on this conclusion, the paper recommends among others, that government and stakeholders should ensure there is regular power supply in institutions of higher learning where OTME courses are being offered and also the management of Institutions should improvise for power supply to avoid interruption during teaching learning process.

Keywords: current issues and challenges, acquisition, office technology and management skills.

I. Introduction

The globalization of the world engineered by internet, and office automation has influenced the ways, means and scope of the functions of Office Technology and Management graduates. Across the world, and indeed, in Nigeria, professions of all kinds are fast adapting to challenges of changing situations. In the past, Office Technology and Management practice was only limited to very few operations like receiving people on business visit to the organizations, typing of official letters and memorandum, and other routine tasks. With the increasing volume of management operations, there is need for speed, accuracy and elegance in office management practice (Eke and Falahan in Osamade 2017).

In the recent times, The National Board for Technical Education enhanced the objectives of secretarial training. Hence, the nomenclature changed to office Technology and Management. This affected both the curriculum of Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. The Polytechnic curriculum composes of four main components for both National Diploma and Higher National Diploma hence, General Studies/ Education Foundation courses, Professional courses, SWES. The professional courses are courses which give the student the theory and practical skills he/she needs to practice as a secretary. This may account for between 60% to 70% of the contact hours of study.

To Agboola in Nwalado and Ezoem (2019) greater prominence is given to ICT courses that shorthand and keyboarding: which had credit hours drastically reduced. The purpose is to actualize the demand for supply of manpower that have appropriate office skills and competences to manage office new technologies to profit the organization given the current wave of information communication technology.

The Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) career encourages employment creation given multifaceted skills embedded in it including: reprographics, word processing, Micrographics, telecommunication, data processing and others. Merriam Webster Dictionary (2013) explains skill as ability coming from one’s knowledge practice or aptitude to do something well. Etonyeaku in Onyesom (2019) added that it involves practical knowledge in combination with cleverness, expertise, dexterity and ability to perform a function which could be acquired or learnt in school.

There are areas which require immediate attention as standing on the perception of Aina in Osamede (2021) that business education inculcating OTME is concerned with development of Individuals, personal skills and attitudes, communication and occupational skills. Technological literacy, employability skills, broad specific occupational skills and knowledge. Oladunjaye (2015) asserts that the products of a deficient curriculum cannot function effectively and efficiently in today’s consistent change in the work environment.

Computer studies were first examined at SSCE level – WAEC in 2014 and have become optional in SSCE. The basic Education at JSS level is exclusive of shorthand but optional in Secondary School. The revised edition of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) outlined that the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as

Author: School of Secondary Education (Business), Department of Office Technology and Management Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba.

e-mail: ojinyaegbuidowu2021@gmail.com
equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to
the development of the society. The objective of each
level of education is to give the individual a climbing
stone to a higher level. Where the secondary school
curriculum is inadequate, it cannot prepare students for
useful living and solid higher education. It is obvious that
there are various challenges facing acquisition of Office
Technology and Management Skills. Thus, this study
intends to examine the challenges in the acquisition of
Office Technology and Management Skills in Federal
College of Education (Technical) Asaba, Delta state.

II. Office Technology and Management

Office Technology and Management is a
synergy of three distinct words, office, technology and
management. The word office is a description of a place
in which business, clerical, or professional activities are
conducted. Amos in Osamade (2017) noted that the
historical evolution of the office is as old as the ancient
civilization and the evolution of man because human
brain itself has been functioning not only as think-tank
but also as the reservoir of knowledge, innovation, skills
and information. The author stated that human brain has
long being recognized as a channel for processing,
storing, dissemination and retrieval of information. An
office simply means a professional place for work.
Technology enables an organization to manage its
operations efficiently and create a competitive
advantage. Technology is the application of scientific
knowledge for practical purposes. It involves the use of
machineries and devices developed from scientific
knowledge to make work easier and faster (Microsoft,
2010). The management component refers to the art of
getting things done through people.

Office Technology and Management, according
to Eneche and Audu in Obiajulu (2017), is the planning,
organizing, directing and controlling of office activities
to ensure that various resources (human and materials) are
put into optimal utilization so as to achieve the
organization. Amos in Osamade (2017) also sees office
technology and management as the branch of
management which is concerned with services of
obtaining, recording and analyzing information. Office
Technology and Management Education (OTME) is
formerly referred to as secretarial studies in Nigeria. It
evolved out of the need to meet the technological and
managerial demands of today’s workplace. The name
OTMEE was approved by National Board for Technical
Education (NBTE) in 2004: Office Technology and
Management Education (OTME) programme was
designed for two major reasons. As stated by Adelakin
in Osamade (2017) first, as a response to the yearnings
of the secretarial studies students and practitioners on
the need to change the name of the programme as
their products are only suitable for the traditional office
environment. Secondly, as a result of the change in
curriculum with more emphasis on Information and
Communication Technology (ICT), managerial and
entrepreneurial competencies so as to enrich the
knowledge of the students and equip them with
necessary skills needed in today’s modern office
environment. Udo in Osamade (2017) noted that
OTME is a comprehensive activity-based educational
programme that is concerned with the acquisition of
office technology and management skills, understandings, attitudes, work habits and
competencies that are requisite to success in secretarial
and office management occupations. The OTME
programme is a career training or education to ensure
that an individual is career ready with the right skills and
attitudes needed for transition from school to work or for
advancement in the OTME career path.

Office Technology and Management Education
Programme as outlined in National Commission for
Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2012) is designed to
equip the students with relevant knowledge, skills and
competencies needed to function as office workers,
teachers and entrepreneurs, OTME students at their
final focus on courses that will make them master their
area of specialization. OTME programmes aims at
providing the business world with highly skilled and
knowledgeable workers who will manage information
efficiently, effectively, being well equipped with a
comprehensive range of skills including managerial,
technological and communication skills (Adelaken in
Nwosu, 2010).

III. Concept of Skills

A skill is the learned capacity to carry out pre-
determined results often with the minimum outlay of
time, energy or both Osammade (2017) Skill usually
requires certain environmental stimuli and situation to
assess the level of skill being shown and used. The
word skill has been viewed by many authors. Homby
(2012) views skill as the dexterity in doing things or in
performance or in application to practical purpose, and
ingenuity, wisdom and knowledge in carrying out u
function. Tonne, Popham and Freeman in Ekwue (2013)
viewed skill as ability to use ones’ knowledge effectively
and readily in execution or performance: technical
expertness; a power of habit of doing any particular
thing competently. This definition stresses that skills are
based on using knowledge; the objectives is to bring
knowledge to the level of competency. Tonnel et al in
Obi (2011), defined skill as the ability to use one’s
knowledge effectively and readily in performing an act,
or a habit of doing a particular thing competently. In
addition to the above, Hull in Obi (2011) defined skill
as manual dexterity acquired through repetitive
performance of an operation. According to Oxford
dictionary, the term “skill” refers to the ability to do
something expertly and well. Skill is an activity that
requires controlled physical movement to be made under the guidance of the mind, which receives its stimulus through sensory input. The ability of an individual to perform specific task on its own successfully is skill. According to Obi (2011), a person is said to have acquired a skill when he can finish a given piece of work at a given time with minimum errors. To attain this level of minimum error, the individual needs to acquire basic training or knowledge relating to the assignment or task to be performed whether through formal training or a combination of both (Formal and informal training).

Skill is a learned capacity or talent to carry out predetermined work often with the minimum outlay of time, energy or both (open encyclopedia 2019). Skill usually requires certain environmental stimuli and situation to assess the level of skill being shown and used. Office Technology and Management graduates need a broad range of skills in order to contribute to a modern economy and take their place in the technological society of the century (Igbodo. Ezoem, Ikejiofor, Nwaladoand Ayemhenre, 2013). It has been observed that the workplace is changing, and so are the skills that Office Technology and Management graduates must have to be able to cope with such changes with it. In summary therefore, skill is an acquired attitude, abilities and behaviours exhibited after an exposure to theories and practices in the individual’s field of study. Importance of Acquiring OTME Skills in Nigeria

Maximum skills acquisition helps OTME students to be engaged in productive work either for themselves or for the employers of labour. According to Okorie and Ezeji in Udo (2014) the acquisition of requisite skills is a means of increasing the productive power of any nation. They also added that Nigerian society should recognize the fact that every citizen should be well equipped to contribute effectively to the welfare of the country. The acquisition of such practical skills is important because when efficient and skillful hands are employed in any fields of human endeavours, high productivity is usually achieved.

The acquisition of OTME skills is a veritable tool for national and manpower development. According to Peter (2010) office education graduates is expected to be competent in performing basic skills. He further remarked that employers and customers have not reduced their demand for graduates who are competent in the use of grammar, punctuation, spelling and proper word choice and who can express themselves well both orally and in writing. He highlighted that listening skills are also essential, the ability to follow directions and accurately collect fact and information to be stored and later retrieved are important skills that go far beyond what we normally thought as proofreading.

More so, maximum skills acquisition by OTME students and other will help to enrich the Nigerian society economically and in this way tend to facilitate economic development. Okorie and Ezeji in Udo (2014) opined that a rich nation is one that is capable of meeting the economic, social, moral and political needs of the citizenry. Nigeria as a nation will enjoy economic stability if OTME students in particular and all other VE students in general acquire maximum skills in their specialties.

Furthermore, politically, OTME skills tend to promote personal and national greatness. Okorie and Ezeji in Udo (2014) pointed out that the behaviour of an individual in a society or the behaviour of a nation in a community of nations may be influenced by the skills possessed by that individual or nation. Socially, the acquisition of relevant OTME skills helps a person to provide amusement, happiness, love, affection etc. to other individuals as well as the entire nation. It also helps to reduce criminal activities such as kidnapping, armed robbery and other social vices among youths. If OTME students will give priority to the acquisition of maximum and relevant OTME skills, it is hoped that they will help alleviate poverty, promote equity, especially in relation to gender.

a) Skills Available for OTME Students

Skills to be acquired by OTME students are as follows:

- **Information processing skill**: Information Processing is the handling of alphabetical and alphanumeric information electronically. Kentos (2011) states that the term was coined to emphasize the manipulation of certain types of data, characters combined to form words, sentences, paragraph, memos, letters and reports. The information processing system comprises equipment procedures, and people whereby thoughts, ideas and opinions are expressed and circulated in hard copy and/or soft copy form. According to Marshall in Osamade (2017), OTME graduates possesses mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility, the secretary displays initiative, exercise judgment and makes decisions in today’s office. The work of the OTME graduates has become more demanding and highly vast, in nature compared to what it used to be in the past. It is now necessary for office technology and management graduates to change from the use of archaic and slow manual office equipment and machine to highly sophisticated office equipment and machines which include information technology resources and interest development that will enhance the productivity and efficiency of OTME graduates work in the office.

- **Communication Skill**: Communication is the life wire of any organization, nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively. For any worker to succeed in his career, he/she must be effective in writing, speaking and listening (Nwalade,
Recognize that you are confronting a problem

Reduce the problem or reject it according to your discernment of the source of the problem and what is your establishment’s principle in this particular situation.

Respond to the problem positively and wisely using the accompanying pressures to motivate you to see the resolution of the problem.

OTME students who possess this skill will use it to solve personal and organizational problems any time for the upliftment of the business.

Attitudinal skill: This involves the totality of ones’ personality. The totality of personality on the job would involve a complex orchestration of knowledge, psychomotor skills and attitudes towards job, employer, employees and peers (Nwalado 2016). This skill would enable OTME students to surmount problems accruing from the fact that the world exposes people to come in contact with others whose believes, language, values, methods, cultural history, methods etc. are quite different from their own. This skill is dynamic; it influences the total personality of individuals. Such as honesty, accepting responsibility, exhibiting moral integrity, showing critical and responsible attitude, adapting to situations, emotional control, recognition of appropriate authorities, care and love for others, secretiveness (confidentiality), and finishing assignment on time and so on.

Entrepreneurial skill: Entrepreneurial skills are competencies on resourceful skills capable of steering an individual to be self-reliant, independent and productive in meeting life’s challenges (Kalikwu 2019). According to Izungha in Kalikwu (2019) entrepreneurial skills are survival skills which an individual needs to function effectively and face challenges of life, OTME students are equipped with relevant entrepreneurial skills that will enable them start up or establish their own small scale enterprises or business.

b) Issues and Challenges in the Acquisition of Office Technology and Management skills

The following are current issues and challenges in the acquisition of Office Technology and Management skills in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba:

Unstable power supply: Irregular supply of electricity to operate computer devices such as laptops, desktops, photocopying machine, printers, scanners, laminating machines etc. appears to be one of the greatest problems mitigating against the acquisition of OTME skills Virtually, all the computer devices depend on electronic power to function. Electricity instability has been a major setback for the acquisition of OTME skills.

Inadequate funding: Njoku (2015) observed that the absence of proper funding does not only hamper implementation of OTME programme but also affects the quality of students produced, the operational mode of the institutions, attitude of teachers and infrastructural development of the
Current Concentrate and acquire maximum level of skills

them lose personal interest and willingness to

and competencies inherent in OTME courses make

students towards the acquisition of the skills

Poor Attitudes of OTME Students: Lack of OTME teachers with the right

knowledge of computer usage is one big barrier

militating against the effective acquisition of OTME

skills (Nwakwudo and Ikenokwalu, 2019). Another

issue is the computer literacy skills of both the

teacher and the learner (Harper, Hedburg, Bernnet

and Lockyer in Nwalado and Ikenokwalu, 2019).

Teachers need the skills for preparing course

materials and learners equally need it for the

comprehensive learning process. Unfortunately,

most OTME teachers in Nigerian colleges of

education lack the confidence to make effective use

of computer facilities in and outside the lecture

room.

Unwillingness of OTME students to change their thinking and behavior positively: It is common place that one hundred (100) percent of OTME students' success in life or in their studies is dependent on positive attitudes to whatever they are taught (Udo, 2014). He also asserts that, the willingness of OTME students to change positively their attitudes and behaviours could help them to acquire maximum effective and relevant skills expected of them. In fact a majority of business students in our schools and colleges are often unwilling to change their negative attitudes. In fact a majority of business students in our schools and colleges are often unwilling to change their attitudes and behaviours.

The Office Technology and Management programme is a career training or education to ensure that an individual is career ready with the right skills and attitudes needed for transition from school to work or for advancement in the OTME career path. Office
Technology and management inadvertently is a major skilled area which is highly inclined to assist in achieving the demands of modern workplace and creating self-employment. Unfortunately, there are numerous issues and challenges facing the acquisition of OTME skills in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. From the above analysis, it is obvious that no meaningful OTME skills can be acquired in colleges of education without adequate provision of facilities, manpower and equipment needed in OTME departments to meet the changing needs of the society and workplace.

V. Recommendations

The following recommendations become imperative if OTME skills must be acquired:

1. Government and stakeholders should ensure there is regular power supply in institutions of higher learning where OTME courses are being offered and also the management of institutions can improvise for power supply to avoid interruption during teaching learning Process.

2. Funding should be adequate and regular. Government and stakeholders in education should make adequate provision for the educational institutions NCCE and TETFUND should constantly disburse funds needed for appropriate implementation OTME programme in Colleges of Education to enable them meet the current state of art in education.

3. The school management should provide alternate source of internet connection should the school’s server be lone to enable smooth teaching and learning.

4. Government should provide adequate facilities and equipment needed for the acquisition of OTME skills.

5. Lecturers and students who make use of these equipment and facilities used for skill acquisition should ensure that these facilities are properly cared for after usage and there should be constant maintenance and response whenever there is breakdown in the usage of any of these facilities or equipment.

6. OTME teachers should be adequately motivated to enable them put in their best in discharging their duties and responsibilities.

7. There should be constant training and retraining of lecturers on new technologies introduced into the OTME programme.

8. There should be massive awareness campaign on the benefits of studying OTME so that the negative attitude of students towards skill acquisition will be reduced or eliminated.

References


