



Office Technology and Management Academic Programme Implementers' Perceived Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills Needed by Graduates for Improved Performance in Business Organisations

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ABSTRACT

The study determined Office Technology and Management Academic Programme Implementers' Perceived Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Skills Needed by Graduates for Improved Performance in Business Organisations. One research questions guided the study with One null hypotheses. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and was carried out in South-South Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. The population of the study was one hundred and forty-seven OTM academic programme implementers (lecturers, Instructors and Technologists) in the polytechnics in South-South, Nigeria. The entire population was studied; therefore, there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured thirty (30) item questionnaire titled; Office Technology and Management Academic Programme Implementers' perceived ICT Skills Needed for Improved Performance Questionnaire". The instrument was validated by three experts. Cronbach Alpha approach was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and overall reliability coefficient of 0.97 was established. Data for the study were collected with the help of five research assistants together with the researcher. Out of 157 copies of questionnaire administered, 147 copies were returned and used for analysis. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses. The study found that ICT skill such as ability to create files is highly needed while others such as to create backups of important files, create password documents, copy texts in a document, print texts from word processor, open spreadsheet application software, merge cells in tables, create formulae to carry out arithmetic computation in a worksheet, save documents, create graphs using spreadsheet application, create e-mail address, operate office machines effectively, use database to maintain information, work on computer network to access information from different units of computers, and replace toners cartridge in office technologies are ICT skills were needed by OTM graduates for improved performance in business organisations. The results of hypotheses tested showed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female OTM academic programme implementers on the perceived ICT skills needed by OTM graduates for improved performance in business organizations. The educational implication of the findings of the study is that when OTM graduates are adequately trained in ICT skills so that they will be more efficient in performing office tasks. Based on the findings and implications, the study recommended, among other things, that business organisations should mobilize OTM graduates for ICT skills development programmes from time to time.

Keywords: Office Technology and Management, Academic Programme Implementers', ICT Skills Performance, Business Organisations

INTRODUCTION

Technology has had a significant impact on every aspect of human endeavour, including the OTM profession. Workplace technological development is ongoing, and it has resulted in many improvements in office procedures and facilities. Modern technology has given rise to a plethora of innovative tools and strategies for office employees to boost their productivity. Azih and Ohaegbulem (2020) noted that as business offices are gradually being computerized, preparing students with skills and competences has become inevitable to ensure that students do not graduate without work skills and competencies expected of them in the industry. Students must therefore be armed with skills and competencies in order to ensure that they graduate with job skills and competencies required by the industry.

The main barrier to higher education graduates entering the world of work is the gap between the graduate job skills acquired and the skills needed in the workplace. The workforce in the 21st century not only requires graduates with high academic qualifications but also graduates equipped with a number of skills and attributes. Employer surveys indicate that occupation-specific skills are no longer sufficient for graduates to meet the needs of labour markets (OECD, 2013). In addition to basic and specific knowledge and skills, workers are nowadays expected to have additional sets of skills. A number of skills and attributes also called employability skills, are required by students to meet the needs of various occupations after graduation. The need to prepare and make students of OTM competent, skillful and employable in the world of work which is being driven by technology necessitated the review of the content of OTM curriculum of erstwhile secretarial studies programme (Olawole and Abuya, 2018).

Office Technology and Management programme (OTM) is an academic programme designed to equip students with office skills needed for employment in various fields of endeavours. Specifically, the programme is expected to train students in special areas as well as general education such that they can fit appropriately into any computerized workplace and perform creditably (NBTE, 2008). Office Technology and Management programme was introduced after a review of the old secretarial studies curriculum in order to produce office workers who can competently fit into any work environment. The review was done with a view to producing graduates who will be efficient in management roles and have the confidence and practical skills necessary to put theory into practice. Office Technology and Management programme has been described as having apparent advantages because of the assistance received from United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) during the review in 2008 (Okoro, 2015). The essence of the review was to ensure that the study pack of OTM programme meets the skill needs of OTM graduates in the labour market. The understanding here is that the combined efforts of UNESCO and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) curriculum content was targeted at improving the work skills of OTM graduates. Similarly, the partnership between NBTE and UNESCO helped to introduce international perspectives into OTM programme to enable it benefit from some of the best practices around the world.

OTM programme in polytechnics comprises two years National Diploma (ND) of four semesters, one-year compulsory Industrial Attachment programme and a second phase of two years Higher National Diploma (HND) of four semesters. Successful students of OTM programme are awarded Higher National Diploma in Office Technology and Management (OTM) upon graduation (NBTE, 2008). A thorough look at the current National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) course specification reveals that OTM programme in polytechnics is now Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based as technological skills are taught at all levels of the programme. The expectation is that Office Technology and Management programme as offered in Nigerian Polytechnic system is essentially expected to produce OTM graduates who adequately possess the desired office skills required for effective performance in business offices.

OTM programme covers a broad range of performance skills and knowledge needed for improved performance in modern business organisations. According to NBTE (2008), OTM programme was designed to equip students with office skills needed to fit appropriately into the office of any organisation and perform creditably the office functions which, among others, include relating the functions of the office to the whole organisation, attending meetings and providing information as may be required, making accurate records of proceedings, filing and retrieving of information, taking appropriate actions or

decisions independently when faced with chilling secretarial office problems, showing personal qualities and attributes conducive to tolerance and co-existence with the work group.

In addition, persistent yearnings from stakeholders, (employers of labour and professional bodies) on the need for a change in the nomenclature and course contents of the programme as posited by Omeje (2008) and Maurison and Isifeh-Okpokwu (2008) led the National Board for Technical Education (N.B.T.E) to change the nomenclature of secretarial studies/administration to Office Technology and Management in line with the new curriculum and course specifications to reflect modern trends in the work place.

The OTM curriculum and course specification is aimed at developing in students the skills necessary for them to actively fit into a rapidly-changing world where work activities are increasingly transformed by use of technology. It is also aimed at enriching students' learning experiences and improving all the skills which are essential for the world they live in. The major landmark in the reviewed OTM programme is the introduction of a number of new courses in the curriculum. This is to ensure that the programme will, in the long run, produce hybrid of administrative professionals who will be equipped with effective office skills needed to cope with modern business office functions upon graduation.

The OTM curriculum and course specification reveals that technology-based courses are vital because they prepare learners for entry into the present labour market; equip them with relevant skills before graduation so that the recipients will adjust effectively in their work places and inculcate in them skills to be exhibited in the work place. These skills must be taught to maximize the opportunities needed to be competent in the job. The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), communication, records management, managerial human relation skills, among others into Office Technology and Management programme is to ensure that graduates acquire modern office skills needed for improved performance in business organisations.

The course specification reveals that OTM graduates are expected to be versatile in various relevant office skills as well as the activities of all departments within a business organisation. This implies that OTM graduates who lack modern office skills needed to function effectively in a modern office may become unemployed or redundant. The course specification therefore demands greater responsibilities on the part of programme implementers in view of their vital roles in equipping students with basic office skills that will enable them fit appropriately into any business organisation.

For the purpose of this study, OTM academic programme implementers are graduate OTM lecturers, instructors and technologists who teach OTM students both theory and practical courses in federal and states polytechnics located in urban and rural areas. They are males and females with different length of work experience. OTM academic programme implementers' perceived office skills needed by graduates for improved performance in business organisations are classified in clusters of Information and Communication Technology skills, communication skills, records management skills, managerial skills and human relation skills.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills include all the activities involved from the origination and processing of data into information to its dissemination, and storage in archives or auxiliary memory. ICT skills cover the ability to use technology to perform the activities of information processing including input, process, output, and distribution. Information and Communication Technology skills further embrace students' ability to utilize office technology gadgets in the discharge of soft and hard information documents for use in management decision making (Esene and Mgbonyebi, 2015). The trend today is that most business organisations make use of all dimensions of office technology to generate, process and disseminate information as well as perform other office functions. This is because almost all business organisations exist to make profit and remain in business. Therefore, any organisation that is left behind in the use of Information and Communication Technology may likely quit the business stage without signal (Office Technology and Information System (OTIS), 2020).

Esene and Mgbonyebi (2015) affirmed that today's world of work which is ruled by ICT and technological devices makes work easier, faster and cheaper. Computer technology in the office enables effective performance of OTM graduates and should not to be seen as a replacement. Technological devices such as laptops, notebook computers, i-pads, portable cellular phones will shrink the physical appearance of the modern office and expand its functionality. Chigbuson, Nimfel and Nguwap (2018)

examined the skills needed by Office Technology and Management students (OTM) in Plateau State for self-sustenance and national development and found that computer and online skills are highly needed by OTM students for self-sustenance and national development. It is therefore necessary that the OTM graduate should be equipped with ICT skills in order to function effectively

Gender is viewed as an important element in this study. Offorma (2004) defined gender as a social construct that is not biologically determined but a concept equivalent to race or class. Eze (2013) also defined gender as one's subjective feeling of maleness and femaleness irrespective of one's sex. Gender is generally classified into masculine and feminine, and is connected with the attitude that describes males or females in the social and cultural content. It is possible that gender can influence respondents' ratings of perceived office skills needed by graduates for improved performance in business organisations. For example, Jackson (2018) reported that gender was a factor on the extent of acquisition of skills for employability by business students in West Australia. This becomes imperative because a good number of implementers of OTM programme in both state and federal polytechnics are females (Ochu, 2008). Agboola (2016) also observed that male students and workers experience less anxiety about Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and make more frequent use of it and that females are assumed to show lower confidence or knowledge and ability than males about using computers. With this in focus, the opinions of male and female OTM academic programme implementers were determined in this study.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, many industries and well-established business organisations are demanding skilled labour force in view of the increasing and emerging technological practices. This has created a wide gap between what is taught in schools and the expectations of employers of labour. Okoro, Ejeka and Ebenezer-Nwokeji (2020) observed that the inability of educational institutions to cope with current technological changes taking place in the world of office technology does not make for meaningful training of OTM graduates for national and international jobs. Okolocha and Odimmega (2019) also acknowledged that employers are expressing dissatisfaction with graduates' overall work-related skills and preparedness for jobs.

Similarly, education columnists Parker (2018), while lamenting on graduates' unpreparedness to compete for existing jobs, indicted schools for not teaching students the basic skills that lead to critical thinking and life skills that will help them cope with the real world of work. This, again, implies that students, perhaps may not be receiving the type of training and education that will prepare them for life in a globalized world that demands innovation, creativity and critical thinking. Specifically, this development has equally reduced the chances of OTM students being employed in emerging industries as well as hindering the acquisition of skills for future needs. In the light of this gap, it therefore becomes imperative to determine OTM academic programme implementers' perceived Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills needed by graduates for improved performance in business organisations

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine OTM academic programme implementers' perceived Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills needed by graduates for improved performance in business organisations. Specifically, the study determined OTM academic programme implementers' perceived:

1. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills needed by graduates for improved performance in business organisations

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are OTM academic programme implementers' perceived Information and Communication Technology skill needed by graduates for improved performance in business organisations?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female OTM academic programme implementers on their perceived ICT skills needed by graduates for improved performance in business organisations.

METHODS

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 147 Office Technology and Management academic programme implementers (lecturers, instructors and technologists) in both federal and state polytechnics in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The entire population was used for the study because of its manageable size. Hence, no sample was drawn. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Programme Implementers’ Perceived ICT Skills Needed for Improved Performance Questionnaire” (PIPOSNIPQ). The questionnaire consisted of part A and B. Part A contains three items of respondents’ demographic information of gender, location of school and years of work experience, while Part B is made up of five sections with 15 items in one clusters. Part B of the instrument was prepared on a four-point rating scale to include: Highly Needed (HN) four points; Needed (N) three points; Rarely Needed (RN) two points and Not Needed (NN) one point. The instrument was subjected to validation. In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, the instrument was administered on thirty (30) programme implementers in Federal Polytechnic, Afikpo, and Federal Polytechnic, Oko in South-East Zone. Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method. The entire 15 number item instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82 which showed a high internal consistency and prompted the use of the instrument for the study. The researcher, with the help of five research assistants collected data for the study. 147 copies of the instrument were administered on the respondents and all 147 copies were completed and returned and used for analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

What are OTM academic programme implementers’ perceived ICT skills needed by OTM graduates for improved performance in business organisations?

Items 1-15 in section B of the research instrument were used to collect data to answer this research question. The results are as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean Responses on OTM Academic Programme Implementers’ Perceived ICT Skills Needed by Graduates for Improved Performance in Business Organisations

S/N	ICT Skill; Ability to	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	S.D	Remarks
1	Create computer files.	74	35	17	21	3.10	1.09	Highly Needed
2	Create backups of important files.	60	40	30	17	2.97	1.04	Needed
3	Create password documents	70	16	33	28	2.87	1.21	Needed
4	Copy texts in a document.	34	83	22	8	2.97	0.78	Needed
5	Print texts from word processor.	39	69	28	11	2.93	0.87	Needed
6	Open spreadsheet application software.	65	30	22	30	2.88	1.19	Needed
7	Merge cells in tables.	66	41	22	18	3.05	1.05	Needed
8	Create formulae to carry out arithmetic computation in a worksheet.	75	25	26	21	3.05	1.13	Needed
9	Save documents in the word processor.	25	21	23	18	2.77	0.88	Needed
10	Create graphs using spreadsheet application.	47	65	25	10	3.01	0.88	Needed
11	Create e-mail address.	73	26	29	19	3.04	1.10	Needed
12	Operate office machines effectively	53	52	33	9	3.01	0.91	Needed
13	Use database to maintain information	51	59	19	18	2.97	0.99	Needed
14	Work on computer network to access information from different units of computers	77	26	24	20	3.09	1.11	Needed
15	Replace toners cartridge in office technologies	55	37	23	32	2.78	1.17	Needed

The results in Table 1 reveal that item 1 is in the region of 3.1- 4.0, which indicates that it is highly needed. The other fourteen items; 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 fall in the region of 2.1-3.0, which shows that they are needed. It means that all the items are the perceived ICT skills needed by OTM graduates for improved performance in business organisations.

Hypothesis

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female OTM academic programme implementers’ on their perceived ICT skills needed by OTM graduates for improved performance in business organisations.

Responses collected for items 1-15 in section B of the research instrument were used to test this hypothesis. The results are as summarized in Table 2

Table 2: Summary of t-test Result on OTM Academic Programme Implementers’ Perceived ICT Skills Needed by OTM Graduates for Improved Performance in Business Organisations Based on Gender

S/N	Variable	Number of Cases	Mean (X)	S.D	D.f	t.cal	Alpha Level	P Value	Decision
1	Male	82	3.43	0.77	145	4.29	0.05	0.000	Significant
	Female	65	2.69	1.29					
2	Male	82	3.07	1.04	145	1.32	0.05	0.898	Not Significant
	Female	65	2.85	1.03					
3	Male	82	2.80	1.22	145	0.74	0.05	0.261	Not Significant
	Female	65	2.95	1.19					
4	Male	82	2.96	0.77	145	0.16	0.05	0.850	Not Significant
	Female	65	2.98	0.78					
5	Male	82	2.96	0.85	145	0.60	0.05	0.303	Not Significant
	Female	65	2.88	0.89					
6	Male	82	2.88	1.21	145	0.07	0.05	0.286	Not Significant
	Female	65	2.89	1.16					
7	Male	82	3.07	1.01	145	0.24	0.05	0.423	Not Significant
	Female	65	3.03	1.09					
8	Male	82	3.06	1.10	145	0.16	0.05	0.812	Not Significant
	Female	65	3.03	1.16					
9	Male	82	2.78	0.90	145	0.18	0.05	0.516	Not Significant
	Female	65	2.75	0.85					
10	Male	82	2.99	0.92	145	0.40	0.05	0.368	Not Significant
	Female	65	3.05	0.82					
11	Male	82	3.04	1.11	145	0.05	0.05	0.792	Not Significant
	Female	65	3.05	1.10					
12	Male	82	2.96	0.96	145	0.75	0.05	0.405	Not Significant
	Female	65	3.08	0.85					
13	Male	82	2.98	0.94	145	0.04	0.05	0.192	Not Significant
	Female	65	2.97	1.05					
14	Male	82	3.15	1.09	145	0.71	0.05	0.729	Not Significant
	Female	65	3.02	1.14					
15	Male	82	2.82	1.15	145	0.40	0.05	0.439	Not Significant
	Female	65	2.74	1.20					
Overall t.cal Value						0.67	0.05	0.484	Not Significant

The result of the t-test presented in Table 2 indicates that the p-value of 0.157 is greater than 0.05. From Table 2, the p-values of items 2 to 15 are greater than 0.05, which implies that the null hypothesis for these items is retained. However, the p-value for item 1 is less than 0.05, this implies that the null hypothesis for these items are rejected. From Table 2, the p-value of 0.157 implies that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female OTM academic programme implementers on the perceived ICT skills needed by OTM graduates for improved performance in business organizations.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from the first research question in table 1 revealed that ICT skill such as ability to create files is highly needed while others such as to create backups of important files, create password documents, copy texts in a document, print texts from word processor, open spreadsheet application software, merge cells in tables, create formulae to carry out arithmetic computation in a worksheet, save documents, create graphs using spreadsheet application, create e-mail address, operate office machines effectively, use database to maintain information, work on computer network to access information from different units of computers, and replace toners cartridge in office technologies are simply needed.

The researcher feels that the result is so because since the invention of modern office technology and the new trends in management, as well as high rate of competition in the business world, the roles of the Office Technology and Management graduate have tremendously gone beyond mere keyboarding and taking of shorthand dictations. They are now required to use computer and other electronic gadgets to carry out their duties for enhanced effectiveness and efficiency. The need to improve on ICT skills will obviously boost today's Office Technology and Management graduate's functionality in the workplace. Office Technology and Management graduates should be acquainted with all the office skills needed and be able to apply such skills in the discharge of office functions. Again, the present digital work place demands practical knowledge of modern office machines which are more complex and sophisticated but facilitate office functions. Since manual equipment for processing information and communication is being replaced with sophisticated electronic equipment that enhance the speed and accuracy of processing and transferring information around the globe; it is therefore required that OTM graduate should possess relevant office skills needed to function effectively in the modern office and in every facet of human endeavor no matter the field, be it education, medicine, communication and so on.

The findings from this research question is in line with the submissions of Esene and Mgbonyebi (2015) who affirmed that today's world of work which is ruled by ICT and technological devices makes work easier, faster and cheaper. Computer technology in the office enables effective performance of OTM graduates and should not to be seen as a replacement. Technological devices such as laptops, notebook computers, i-pads, portable cellular phones will shrink the physical appearance of the modern office and expand its functionality. The finding is also in line with the work of Chigbuson, Nimfel and Nguwap (2018) who examined the skills needed by Office Technology and Management students (OTM) in Plateau State for self-sustenance and national development and found that computer and online skills are highly needed by OTM students for self-sustenance and national development. It is therefore necessary that the OTM graduate should be equipped with ICT skills in order to function effectively.

The result of the t-test analysis of the first hypothesis 1 in Table 6 showed that there is **no** significant difference in the mean responses of male and female programme implementers on the perceived Information and Communication Technology skills needed by Office Technology and Management graduates for improved performance in business organisations. This result means that gender was not a factor to consider in the case of ICT skills for improved performance of OTM graduates in business organisations. This finding agrees with the work of Oluwalola (2020) who empirically investigated skills acquired by Office Technology and Management (OTM) students for self-reliance and national development in Kwara State tertiary institutions. The finding showed that there was no statistically significant difference between male and female responses on ICT skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that programme implementers' perceived ICT, skills are needed by Office Technology and Management graduates for improved performance in business organisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made:

1. OTM academic programme implementers should impart relevant Information and Communication Technology skills in students in order to adequately prepare them for the ever-changing world of work.

2. Polytechnic management should distribute resources to the advantage of OTM programme.
3. Business organisations should, as a matter of responsibility, mobilize OTM graduates for Information and Communication Technology skills update programmes from time to time.

Educational Implications of the Study

The results of the study have some implications. The results showed that ICT skills are needed by OTM graduates for improved performance. One of the implications of the study to OTM academic programme implementers is that they are challenged to adequately impart Information and Communication Technology skills in students before graduation in order to ensure effective performance in business organisations.

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