EMPLOYERS' ASSESSMENT OF ADEQUACYOFOFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM FOR GRADUATES EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS ACQUISITION IN NORTH-WEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study assessment of adequacy of office technology and management curriculum relative to employment requirements in North-West Nigeria was necessitated by the need to ensure that the products perform satisfactorily in employment. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Ex-post facto and survey research design were used for the study. Population of 456 principal officers of public and private establishments in North-West Nigeria was studied without sampling. Forty Nine questionnaire items relating to adequacy of contents of Information and Communication Technology and records management course units were developed and validated by panel of experts. The internal consistency reliability co-efficient of the instrument was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient and the overall reliability of the instrument was established using K.R-20 formula. The internal consistency reliability co-efficient obtained were 0.97 and 0.95respectively for the two clusters with the overall reliability co-efficient of 0.96. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data in relation to the research questions while ztest was used to test the null hypotheses. The findings revealed that Office Technology and Management curriculum was adequate for ICT and records management content for employability skills acquisition of the graduates. Furthermore, the respondents differed significantly in their mean ratings of adequacy of OTM curriculum on ICT and records management. Based on the above findings it is recommended among others that employers of labour, particularly Federal and States Department of Establishment and Training/Offices of Head of Service and Representatives of private establishments should be co-opted in the future review of OTM curriculum.

Introduction

Office Technology and Management (OTM) programme is a relatively new nomenclature for the secretarial studies programme offered in Nigerian polytechnics. The aim of the programme as stipulated by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) (2004), is to equip students with secretarial/office skills for employment in various fields of endeavour as well as to equip them with effective work competencies and socio-psychological work skills which are very essential in everyday interactions in human societies.

The programme came into being in 2004 to solve the problems of the secretarial

studies curriculum which according to Oborah (2008), failed to adequately and appropriately respond to development in the society and international organisations, especially with regards to the globalization and information and communication technology (ICT). The initial secretarial studies curriculum was considered obsolete as it trained students mostly in shorthand and typewriting skills with machines and equipment that are no longer used in modern offices. Therefore, graduates of the programme face a lot of challenges in discharging their duties as secretaries hence the need for the OTM programme.

Office Technology and Management programme emphasizes ICT competencies acquisition to equip graduates to fit properly into the offices of any computerized organization and to professionally perform such functions which includes, relating the functions of the office properly to the whole organization, attending meetings and providing information required and making accurate records of proceedings. The training prepares graduates for other functions such as filing and retrieving information, taking appropriate action independently when faced with challenging office problems and showing personal qualities and attributes that promote harmonious team work. NBTE (2004) affirmed that the training in OTM would lead to acquisition of general education as a foundation for advanced studies. Ezenwafor (2012) posited that OTM is concerned with producing graduates who can quickly access data or information and process, disseminate, store and retrieve it for future use as demanded by their employers or supervisors.

Records management is an important variable in any organization. For any organization to prosper there must be effective and efficient records management system and practice. Proper records of both human and material resources are vital and essential for the progress, prosperity and continuity of any organization. Umar (2010) maintained that if anorganization's records are not complete, objective, truthful, available and accessible, its survival and image will be at stake.

Employers of labour are the recipients of the end-products of any educational programme including OTM. They have laws and requirements guiding the hiring employees. The needs of the society also make employers of labour inquisitive on the type of graduates they employ. They need graduates who can deliver as expected and relieve the organization of stress and incompetency. Thus, the aim of employers is to achieve success through competent workers; therefore, they need well trained and articulate graduates of OTM programme. Armstrong (2006) held the view that people and their collective skills make a significant contribution to the attainment of organizational goals.

Assessment refers to the appraisal of the characteristics, significance, importance or relative value of a person, organization or thing. Ozigi (2009) maintained that programme assessment leads to identification of strengths and weaknesses in it and helps to review the programme to overcome the weaknesses. Therefore, assessment in the context of this study is a process whereby parts or outcome of OTM programme are examined to determine whether

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or not they are satisfactory particularly relative to the programme stated objectives. Hence this study on employers' assessment of adequacy of OTM curriculum for graduates' employability skills acquisition in North-West Nigeria is imperative as it will help to strengthen the programme to meet the needs of students and the society.

Statement of the Problem

The curriculum of Office Technology and Management programme is expected to equip the graduates with adequate skills, values, norms and attitude to fit properly into the office of any computerized organization and perform effectively and efficiently as professional secretaries (Njoku, 2012). The curriculum was designed to equip the graduates to perform administrative and clerical duties, coordinate office activities, participate in plan and schedule meetings, provide high level administrative support and carry out information and communication technology functions in automated offices.

What appears disappointing is that most OTM graduates cannot prepare and preserve information using modern ICT gadgets. According to Asogwa (2012) many OTM graduates cannot transmit any type of communication applying the conventional secretarial principles as required of confidential secretarial duties at various levels. More so, Njoku (2012) revealed that OTM curriculum needs to be reviewed because many of the graduates are found ineffective in their places of work.

The programme has clocked over a decade in operation, and there seems to be disequilibrium between the curriculum content and employers' requirements for the graduates in different parts of the country. This is due to the fact that the world is dynamic and a lot of changes have occurred from 2004 when the curriculum was introduced to the present time relative to type of equipment, training facilities and trends in actual employment. It appears that this disequilibrium is responsible for the unsatisfactory employment rate of OTM graduates as well as the failure in meeting the needs of the graduates and the society. Hence the need for this study on assessment of OTM curriculum contents in ICT and records management coursein order to provide relevant empirical data for an objective and comprehensive review of the curriculum.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain employers' assessment of the adequacy of Office Technology and Management curriculum for graduates' employability skills acquisition in North-west Nigeria by employers. Specifically, the study ascertained employers' assessment of the adequacy of:

1. ICT skills contents of OTM curriculum relative to employment requirements in North-West Nigeria.
2. Records management skills contents of OTM curriculum relative to employment requirements in North-West Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. In the assessment of employers, how adequate are ICT skills contents of OTM curriculum relative to employment requirements in North-West Nigeria.
2. In the assessment of employers, how adequate are Records management skills contents of OTM curriculum relative to employment requirements in North-West Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Male and Female employers of labour do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the adequacy of ICT skills content of OTM curriculum relative to employment requirements in North-West Nigeria.
2. Employers of labour in public and private organizations in North-West Nigeria do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the adequacy of records management skills contents of OTM curriculum.

Method

This study adopted ex-post facto research design. This was in line with the recommendation of Cohen, Mannion and Morison (2008) that ex-post facto research method is suitable for possible and antecedents of events that have happened and cannot, therefore, be controlled, engineered or manipulated by the researcher. This study is also partly descriptive survey research design due to the fact that opinion of employers of OTM graduates in North-West Nigerian polytechnics were surveyed on the adequacy of contents of the OTM curriculum relative to employers' requirements. Cohen et al opined that survey study gathers data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared ordetermining the relationships that exist between events. These various views were attested by Nworgo (2015) that in a survey research design, data will be collected from a sample of the population and the result from the sample is generalized to the whole population. More so, Bankole and Dauda (2009) andAdeyemi and Adeyemi (2014) usedsimilar research designs in their various researches successfully. Since the opinions of the employers of labour were obtained with questionnaire items structured from the provisions of NBTE curriculum, ex-post facto and descriptive survey are suitable and appropriate.

The area of the study was North-West States of Nigeria which comprises Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa, Kebbi, and Zamfara States. Each state in the area has Federal and/or State Polytechnic offering OTM with private companies where the graduates are employed. The area is chosen for the study based on these business and employment

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outlets for OTM graduates. The population of the study comprised all 456 (374 and 82) executives in polytechnics and private establishments in North-West Nigeria who have secretaries with ND/HND OTM qualification attached to them. Specifically, these executives in the polytechnics comprise the Rectors, Registrars, Bursars, Directors and Head of Departments. All the principal officers in the various private establishments in North-West Nigeria are also part of the population. The researchers used all the population as sample for the study because the number is manageable to enhance greater reliability.

A 5-point rating scale questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Adequacy of OTM Curriculum (QAOTMC)" was used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed based on insight gained from related literature reviewed and the research questions. The structured instrument was validated by three experts.The reliability of the instrument was determined with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and reliability coefficients of 0.97and 0.95 were obtained for the two clusters.

The arithmetic mean and standard deviation were employed to analyze data in to answer the research question ad determine the closeness of the respondents' mean ratings. The decision rule was to consider any item with a mean rating equal to or greater than 3.00 as adequate and any mean rating that is less than 3.00 as inadequate. Inferential statistics of z-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A null hypothesis was rejected were the calculated z-value was equal to or greater than the critical z-value, otherwise, it was not rejected.

Results

Research Question One

In the assessment of employers, how adequate are ICT skills contents of OTM curriculum for graduates' employability skills acquisition in North-West Nigeria

Table 1:
Respondents' mean ratings and standard deviation on adequacy of ICT contents of OTM curriculum for graduates employability skills acquisition
N= 418

S/N	Required ICT Related Contents Ability to:	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1.	Use programme manager	4.34	0.63	Adequate
2.	Open a window	4.57	0.51	Adequate
3.	Close a window	4.55	0.53	Adequate
4.	Load application software	4.37	0.58	Adequate
5.	Import data file	4.25	0.65	Adequate
6.	Import chart	4.28	0.66	Adequate
7.	Set page orientation	4.33	0.63	Adequate
8.	Insert header and footer	4.48	0.54	Adequate
9.	Create documents	4.56	0.59	Adequate
10.	Use special symbols	4.25	0.71	Adequate
11.	Search and replace	4.19	0.80	Adequate
12.	Mail merge	3.35	1.20	Adequate
13.	Use Spread sheet	3.50	0.93	Adequate
14.	Plan a spread sheet	3.50	0.94	Adequate
15.	Place numerical table titles	3.54	0.93	Adequate
16.	Move from cell to cell	3.55	0.97	Adequate
17.	Create an arithmetic formula	3.54	0.93	Adequate
18.	Use columnsand rows	3.59	0.96	Adequate
19.	Use spread sheet to solve problem	3.55	0.93	Adequate
20.	Create quality and attractive text	3.80	0.90	Adequate
21.	Create new publication	3.96	0.85	Adequate
22.	Save master page	4.52	0.73	Adequate
23.	Composite proof	4.56	0.65	Adequate
24.	Change background colour	4.42	0.77	Adequate
25.	Edit text	4.64	0.68	Adequate
26.	Save any document	4.62	0.95	Adequate
	Cluster Mean	**4.11**		**Adequate**

As shown in Table 1, all the items on ICT skill contents had mean ratings above the cut-off mean of 3.00. This means that employers assessed the ICT sills contents of the OTM curriculum adequate for graduates employability skills acquisition in North-West Nigeria as adequate.

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Research Question Two

In the assessment of employers, how adequate are records management contents of OTM curriculum for employability skills acquisition in North-West Nigeria

Table 2:

Respondents' mean ratings and standard deviation on adequacy of records management contents of OTM curriculum for employability skills acquisition

N= 418

S/N	Records Management Skills Contents	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
	Ability to:			
27.	Apply filling rules and procedures	3.94	0.65	Adequate
28.	Properly use action sheet	3.99	0.61	Adequate
29.	Open a new file	4.13	0.67	Adequate
30.	Open a new volume	4.12	0.67	Adequate
31.	Open a temporary file	4.13	0.69	Adequate
32.	Page number document in a file	4.07	0.71	Adequate
33.	Make cross-referencing	3.05	1.11	Adequate
34.	Transfer correspondence from one file to another	3.72	0.81	Adequate
35.	Classify files	4.34	0.63	Adequate
36.	Grade files	4.57	0.51	Adequate
37.	Properly index files	4.55	0.53	Adequate
38.	Use transit index	4.37	0.58	Adequate
39.	Understand B U procedures	4.25	0.67	Adequate
40.	Use BU procedures	3.17	1.00	Adequate
41.	Transfer files to archives	1.87	1.15	Inadequate
42.	Microfilm files	1.67	1.29	Inadequate
43.	Apply information processing cycle	3.49	1.10	Adequate
44.	Save documents in CD/splash drive	3.95	1.24	Adequate
45.	Use microfilming cameras	1.55	1.14	Inadequate
46.	Prevent office documents from back doors	1.43	0.98	Inadequate
47.	Protect office documents from drumpster Driving	1.45	1.02	Inadequate
48.	Protect office documents from data dandling	1.62	1.12	Inadequate
49.	Protect office document from hacking	2.14	1.38	Inadequate
	Cluster Mean	**3.29**		**Adequate**

Data in Table 2 depict out of 23 items, 16 records management skills contents listed had mean ratings which fell above the cut-off mean while the mean ratings of seven items fell below it. The cluster mean score of 3.29 fell above the cut-off mean, showing that the respondents assessed the records management skills contents of the OTM curriculum adequate for graduates' employability.

Hypothesis 1

Male and female employers of labour do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the adequacy of ICT skills contents of OTM curriculum relative to employment requirements in North-West Nigeria

Table 3

Summary of z-test analysis of male and female employers mean ratings on the adequacy of ICT skills component of OTM curriculum

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	Level of Significance	z-Cal	z-Critical	Decision
Male	312	4.10	0.79	416	0.05	2.17	1.96	Rejected
Female	106	4.12	0.74					

Data in Table 3 depict that at 0.05 level of significance and 416 degree of freedom, the calculated z-value is 2.17 which is greater than z-critical of 1.96. This shows that employers of labour in North-West Nigeria differed significantly in their mean ratings on the adequacy of ICT skills component of OTM curriculum as a result of gender. The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 2

Employers of labour in public and private establishments do not differ significantly in the adequacy of records management skills contents of OTM curriculum relative to their type of establishments

The result of z- test analysis conducted in respect to hypothesis 2 is presented in Table 4

Table 4:

Summary of z-test analysis of respondents mean ratings on the adequacy of records management skills contents of OTM curriculum based on type o establishments

Group	N	X	SD	Df	Level of Significance	z-Cal	z-Critical	Decision
Public Establishment	340	3.13	0.85	416	0.05	2.74	1.96	Rejected
Private Establishment	78	3.04	1.16					

The data in Table 6 revealed that at 416 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, the z-cal (2.74) is greater than the z-crit (1.96). Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. It is therefore, concluded that employers of labour in North-West Nigeria do not

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differ significantly on their opinions regarding the adequacy of records management skills of OTM curriculum as a result of type of establishment.

Discussion

The result of the analysis presented showed that employers rated ICT contents of OTM curriculum as adequate. Data inTable revealed that OTM curriculum was adequate in word processing aspects. This may be connected with the routine duties performed by secretaries in most offices. Thus, employers of labour rely greatly on OTM graduates in this respect. The findings were in agreement with Ernest's (2010) assertion that OTM is concerned with the production of graduates who can quickly access data or information, process, disseminate, store and retrieve same for future use as demanded by their employers. Furthermore, Ndinechi and Ementa (2013) upheld that a word processing skill is an important skill needed by business education students for office use as well as for personal life. More so, the findings confirm the views of Nwanewezi (2013) that OTM graduates must have adequate ICT knowledge for them to perform effectively in modern offices. The findings also agree with the views of Okoye and Agholor (2014) that ICT based course units in OTM curriculum was meant to make the OTM graduates relevant in the present day office environment.The findings were in agreement with Esene (2014) finding that OTM curriculum fulfills the requirements of ICT which makes the OTM graduates cope up with the challenges of the work place.The test of hypothesis indicated that employers of labour in north-west Nigeria differed significantly in their opinions as a result of gender. This indicates that gender has a great influence on the responses.

The results of the analysis on the adequacy of required records management contents of OTM curriculum indicated that the employers in public and private establishments considered it adequate. This finding confirms Aminu's (2009) views that secretaries were responsible for establishing and maintaining organisations records and documents including minutes of meetings, reports and other vital documents. More so, the findings agree with the assertion of Ezenwafor (2012) that secretaries are at the centre of information processing in any organisation. Ezenwafor (2012) maintained that the provision of comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date information to facilitate quality management decision was an important duty of the secretary. This could be attained through effective records management skills. Similarly, Mohammed (2013) held the view that secretaries by their nature of training are the storehouse of information. Information creation, recording, maintaining and retrieving forms an integral part of their duties. The findings however disagreed with the views of Maikudi (2014) that supervisors were dissatisfied with records keeping skills of OTM graduates in Federal Polytechnic KauraNamoda.

The study indicated that the curriculum was inadequate on how to transfer files to archives, ability to microfilm files, use microfilming camera, present office documents from backdoors, dumpster driving, data dandling and hawking. In this technological environment,

these form a great setback for secretaries and OTM curriculum. Shuaibu (2013) revealed that, at this time of technological development, secretaries must be conversant with diverse ways of protecting documents from hackers. The hackers, presently, are a great threat to the security of office documents and the entire organization. The test of the second hypothesis indicated that there was no significant difference in the opinion of employersas a result of type of establishment on the adequacy of records management skills contents of OTM curriculum. This indicates that both employers in public and private establishments maintained that the contents of records management course unit of OTM curriculum was adequate.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it could clearly be seen that OTM curriculum is adequate regarding ICT skills contents. This is a welcome development due to the fact that the OTM graduates would not be found wanting in any organization they find themselves. The curriculum however is also adequate in required records management skills. This aspect is important as far as the duties of secretaries are concerned. Records form an integral part of an organization'sassets and therefore, their safety is very important.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The OTM students should be properly drilled by lecturers on spreadsheet, aspect of OTM curriculum. Furthermore, modern records keeping and its security must be taught to the students. This would make them relevant in the present Nigerian offices where cybercrime becomes a great problem to documents.
2. Employers of labour, particularly Federal and States Departments of Establishment and Training/Offices of Heads of Service and representatives of private establishment should be oriented by OTM Heads of Departments on the OTM curriculum. In future OTM curriculum review, members of these establishments should be incorporated in the membership of the committee by the NBTE.
3. Departments of OTM of Nigerian polytechnics should, as a matter of necessity, form departmental course leadersfor overseeing that lecturers taking various courses strictly follow what the curriculum provided. Heads of OTM Departments should be organising in-house workshop for the lecturers.
4. The National Board for Technical Education should form a sensitization committee for orienting employers of labour on the contents of OTM curriculum so as to review the scheme of service as necessary.

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