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Challenges and Prospects of Electronic Records Competencies in Tertiary Institutions for Job Performance in Contemporary Offices in Abia State

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Abstract
The study investigated challenges and prospects of electronic records competencies in tertiary institutions for job performance in contemporary offices in Abia State. The design of the study was a survey research design. The sample of the study was 68, comprising 680 final year Business Education students. This represents 10% of the population. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher titled: Electronic Record Keeping Competencies of Office Technology and Job Performance Questionnaire (ERCOTJPQ) and was validated by three experts in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Overall reliability of coefficient of 0.83 was obtained and considered adequate for the study. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the t-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed that respondents agreed to a high extent that computer-assisted retrieval competencies in tertiary institutions influence job performance in contemporary offices, and there is no significant difference between the mean responses of office communication of male and female job performance in contemporary offices. I was concluded that electronic records competencies are essential and are required in an organization/establishment. It was recommended that office management and technology students should pay more attention to the learning of computer-assisted retrieval and office communication competencies required for a contemporary office, as this would help in proper record management.

Key words: Job Performance, Electronic Records Competencies, Challenges and Prospects

Introduction

A tertiary institution is a third tier of education in Nigeria's post-secondary education, this education is offered after secondary school. In Nigeria we have university, polytechnic and colleges of education, but for the sake of this work the researchers focused on University in Abia State which offers office technology and management education. In this modern age, the continuous increase in the volume of information has transformed how public and private organizations carry out their businesses. There are challenges in the gap between the tertiary institutions and job performance. Institution tends to have so much difficulty making transition from academic life to work, even though educational institutions are supposed to provide the experiences and training that will help students make intelligent occupational choices that will advance their job performance (Ifejika, 2022). Job performance is defined as the total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioral episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period of time (Okolocha & Baba, 2019). Institutional job performance can be affected by many factors and can vary over time with changes in factors such as motivational and situational constraints. Notably, among these factors is competencies and office technology.

The upsurge of the computer system as an essential instrument for organizing and maintaining records in the modern workplace has been facilitated by technological advancements over manual approaches. These equipment modifications have inevitably led to changes in curriculum and record-keeping practices as well as changes in skill. Information and communication technology refer to these devices and tools. Computer hardware, software and other tools are used to digitally produce, gather, store, alter, and convey office information required to complete fundamental business activities and goals. The curriculum that is meant to generate office managers who can run modern offices has been restructured as a result. Any location where business, administrative, and professional operations occur is referred to as an office. According to Ekpenyong in Okeke (2018), the modern workplace uses new innovations or gadgets to alter or transform how work is done in an office. According to Ekpenyong, the reason for the fast shift in office technology that has occurred because of using computers to perform tasks that were formerly completed manually is what gives rise to the term "contemporary office." Compared to traditional offices, contemporary offices include more cutting-edge equipment that promotes productivity in the workplace. Large amounts of data can be processed quickly and affordably utilizing electronic technology, and records may be managed via electronic document exchange and electronic form completion. Office Technology is the new name for what was once known as secretarial studies (Okoro & Odesanya, 2019). In 2004, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) found it essential to make certain curriculum and course specification changes to the old secretarial studies award. The agency made the modification to reflect the technology advancements that have changed the contemporary corporate climate of the 21st century.

Office technology and management student is an office-oriented field designed to train professional secretaries/office managers to function efficiently in the world of work. Many offices have gone through several changes since establishments (Nwabuno, 2020). These include changes in equipment, task procedures and processes basically resulting from technological developments. These changes have indeed been quite dramatic in the last two decades such that within the space of a decade several computer applications and office technologies have become outdated. In view if this trend, it has become necessary for office managers to keep abreast of

new technologies in order to enhance about competence in their professional practice. Similarly, the curriculum developers and implementer are expected to be prompt in responding to these changes. To this end, Office Technology and Management student has a responsibility to train students with the skills and competencies required to make them saleable so that diplomate of the programme do not graduate into the world of work with obsolete and irrelevant skills.

According to Nwabuno (2020), the OTM education focuses on a mix of office knowledge, technological abilities, and suitable and pertinent business knowledge in order to address tertiary institutions issues. The goal is to create hybrid administrative professionals capable of meeting the demands of a fast-paced, highly automated workplace. When the introduction of a number of ICT courses into the new OTM curriculum is taken into account, this position is maintained. These are Information and Communication Technology I and II, Modern Office Technology, Desktop Publishing, Webpage Design, ICT Office Application II, Database Management System, Information Management System, Advance Desktop Publishing and Advance Web Page Design. The design of OTM is to equip students with the experience required to work in a modern office environment. Okoro (2017) stated that office automation is generating a rapid transformation in contemporary work environments since it has given rise to new ways of carrying out duties performed by humans in business organizations.

The Nigeria National Policy on Education objective as contained in NPE (2013). The policy stressed the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society. Through these courses, students will acquire the technical knowhow and skills required to succeed in their careers in Nigeria. The plan heavily emphasized the need for education and competencies to acquire paid employment in an organization or work for oneself. Due to economic and technological advancements, the skills needed by office technology and management students have significantly changed. Because of technology, manual skills are no longer suitable for the workplace. Because the new technologies demand that students be highly trained in electronic abilities, it constitutes a paradigm change from the typical workplace where physical copies and non-electronic ways of processing, storing, and disseminating information held sway (Frank & Odesanya, 2019). Graduates in office technology and management must adapt to these changes and get ready for the demands of the modern workplace since business and office activities now differ significantly from those from a generation ago. Shafe and Nayan (2020) asserted that employees need to be extremely skilled and have a wide variety of academic, technical, and general competency in order to meet the needs of the always growing technology.

Competencies as a concept has attracted several scholarly contributions. As a result, there are various definitions of competency. For Breivik (2019), competency is used to denote expertise that has been developed through training and experience, and includes trade and craft skills acquired by apprenticeship, as well as the high level of job performance found in many domains, such as professional practice, the arts, games, and athletics. In a broader view, Green (2018) considered competency as a personal quality with three key features, namely: Productive (that which is used for productive value addition); Expandable (competencies are enhanced by training and development) and social competencies (those socially determined). In addition, competencies include proficiency, ability, and skills that are sufficient for a certain job when it comes to knowledge and creativity. A person must obtain crucial training or understanding of the

work at hand, whether it is formal, informal, or a combination of the two. According to Boytziz (2020), competency is the ability to demonstrate a system and a series of activities that are functionally linked to reaching a goal. Competency may also be defined as the ability to perform anything well, which is often obtained via training or experience. According to Okoro and Ifesi (2016), competency is the capacity that results from a person's knowledge and aptitude to carry out a task effectively. Once obtained, these competencies would make OTM students eligible for employment after completing their tertiary education. The sensitive position of office managers in the contemporary office may demand that they should possess remarkable skills for them to be effective in performing their duties. One of such duties is the electronic records competencies.

Electronic records keeping competencies is the practice of managing records with the use of electronic technology. Electronic records management, according to Franks (2013), is the process of using records management principles for electronic records. Garland (2019) described it in a similar manner as the administration of electronic files, papers, or records. Modern secretaries need to learn electronic record management competencies to keep up with the changing business environment and secretarial functions as the secretary's role evolves to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century and as most traditional office procedures become technological. Electronic records competencies, commonly referred to as records information management or RIM, is a vital part of attempts to ensure corporate business compliance. Learning how to digitize records is a requirement for OTM students. According to Okoro and Ifesi (2016) a record is a document created or received in the course of business by a person or organization and kept by that person or organization.

The assets of a company are its records, which are produced, processed, transferred, used, stored, retrieved, kept, and ultimately destroyed. An electronic record, on the other hand, is any data that has been created, used, and stored in a format that a computer can only process. Electronic records include things like emails, texts, backup tapes for disaster recovery, and data on portable devices like memory sticks, BlackBerry cellphones, or PDAs. An electronic record is one that can be modified, sent, or processed by a computer (International Records Management Trust IRMT in Ezeh el at 2021). It may be retrieved using computer hardware and software and is saved on a magnetic or optical medium (such as magnetic tapes, Cassettes, CDROMs, hard drives, etc.) that is encoded in binary code. This may easily be updated, deleted, modified, and so on. Electronic records are described as computer software and hardware that require the appropriate equipment for access or viewing. A non-tangible soft record that is generated, maintained, shared, and saved utilizing an ICT system for information and communication, according to McDonald (2018), is what is meant by an electronic record.

The researcher stressed that the Computer Assisted Retrieval (CAR) is a means of accessing and retrieving micrographic images utilizing a computerized index and search engine. In the assertion of Web Finance in Motowidlo and Kell (2020) CAR is a Microfilm based document and record storage and retrieval system that uses computerized indexing, identification marking (bar coding) and reading. CAR skills among others include the ability to put documents on microfilm, enter index of key words or codes into a computer, search location of files with computer and link computer to a micro-image terminal, which is essentially a microfilm display machine. Office communication competencies include verbal and written communication, listening and nonverbal communication. They also include empathy, presentation skills,

confidence, conflict resolution, and respect. A number of skills were listed by Eze in Olatunde (2022) Olatunde (2022) who stated that creating records and spreadsheets, defining fields and cells, entering and editing data, switching between records, inserting rows and columns, and having a basic fundamental understanding of how to develop mathematical formulae are all required for database management.

Although there is literature on e-records competencies, many of those studies were conducted in fields other than tertiary institutions, including the mainstream civil service, businesses, and other organizations (Malanga & Kamanga, 2018). The limited studies that have already been conducted in this field, however, offer a bleak image of the condition of e-records management in tertiary institutions. The relationships between governance, audit, risk and record keeping are a central concern of the discipline of records management. Previous researches conducted were carried outside Africa and very few in Nigeria. Studies focusing on investigating the impact of electronic records competencies seem to have received less attention. Hence, the uniqueness of this work which aims at investigating the challenges and prospects of electronic records competencies in tertiary institutions for jobs performance in contemporary office in Abia State, Nigeria. This is the gap this study has identified to fill in the research. The challenges and prospects could be measured and determined by the adequacy of qualitative, competencies and job performance of the programme. It is on this note that this study attempts to assess the gap between the electronic records competencies in tertiary institutions for job performance in contemporary offices in Abia State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Secretaries play critical role in supporting executive officers in the office to perform their duties. In modern offices today, the role of the secretary is changing fast to reflect the need of the society. For instance, the electronic approach to job performance is fast replacing the traditional way of working. As most public tertiary institution in the Nigeria continue to embrace the electronic records management system for effectiveness of their operations, secretaries' jobs are at risk unless they upgrade their competencies to reflect what is needed in the 21st century.

Electronic technology has greatly expanded the methods of creating, editing maintaining, transmitting and retrieving information but observations have shown that most graduates in the tertiary institutions are still using the old methods like drawers and filling cabinets which lead to misfiling and loss of records. The results are costly delays, lost of business opportunities and frustrated office personnel and managers being forced to make decisions based on inadequate information. In line with this scenario, Ayodele and Adeoye (2020) opined that records must be organized and properly managed for it to be of maximum value to the organization. The foregoing seems to point to the need for effective electronic record competencies in tertiary institutions. But the extent to which students possess the relevant competencies for effective office technology is not clear and requires an empirical study such as this.

Hence, students learning office technology must acquire electronic competencies with the goal to develop, capture, keep and properly dispose of information. There seems to be a gap in the level to which these office Technology related tertiary institutions. In light of this, the researcher plan to investigate the electronic records competencies in tertiary institutions for job performance in contemporary offices in Abia State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the electronic records competencies in tertiary institutions for job performance in contemporary offices in Abia State. Specifically, this study seeks to;

1. determine the extent Computer Assisted Retrieval (CAR) competencies of OTM students in tertiary institutions on job performance in contemporary offices.
2. find out the extent office communication competencies of OTM students in tertiary institutions influence job performance in contemporary offices.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. To what extent does Computer Assisted Retrieval (CAR) competencies of OTM students in tertiary institutions enhance job performance in contemporary offices?
2. To what extent does office communication competencies of OTM students in tertiary institutions enhance job performance in contemporary offices?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female OTM students in tertiary institutions computer Assisted Retrieval (CAR) competencies in enhancing their job performances in contemporary offices.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female OTM students in tertiary institutions office communication competencies in enhancing their job performances in contemporary offices.

Conceptual Framework

Job Performance

Performance is the feeling of fulfillment, actualization, esteem, achievement and contentment towards a task executed. Job performance is defined as the total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioral episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period of time (Okolocha & Baba, 2019). Institutional job performance can be affected by many factors and can vary over time with changes in factors such as motivational and situational constraints. Performance is explained in emotional concepts such as pride, contentment, joy, happiness, inspiration or optimism. It is a product of achievement, fulfillment, goal attainment and state. Performance is a universal concept expressed in every domain where organization concepts are pursued.

Electronic Records Competencies

Electronic records competencies is the practice of managing records with the use of electronic technology. Electronic records management, according to Franks (2013), is the process of using records management principles for electronic records. Garland (2019) described it in a similar manner as the administration of electronic files, papers, or records. Modern secretaries

need to learn electronic record management competencies to keep up with the changing business environment and secretarial functions as the secretary's role evolves to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century and as most traditional office procedures become technological. Electronic records competencies, commonly referred to as records information management or RIM, is a vital part of attempts to ensure corporate business compliance. Learning how to digitize records is a requirement for OTM students. According to Ovbiagele and Mgbonyebi (2019) a record is a document created or received in the course of business by a person or organization and kept by that person or organization.

Computer Assisted Retrieval (CAR) is a means of accessing and retrieving micrographic images utilizing a computerized index and search engine. In the assertion of Web Finance in Motowidlo and Kell (2020) CAR is a Microfilm based document and record storage and retrieval system that uses computerized indexing, identification marking (bar coding) and reading. CAR skills among others include the ability to put documents on microfilm, enter index of key words or codes into a computer, search location of files with computer and link computer to a micro-image terminal, which is essentially a microfilm display machine.

Office communication competencies include verbal and written communication, listening, and nonverbal communication. They also include empathy, presentation skills, confidence, conflict resolution, and respect. Protection in the context of electronic records refers to the capability to safeguard digital information from unauthorized access, theft, or loss, essentially encompassing the practice of data security which involves implementing measures to secure sensitive data throughout its lifecycle using techniques like encryption, access controls, and robust security protocols (Ajike, 2019).

Methodology

The design of the study was survey research design. According to Ali in Madu (2023), survey can be described as a research design which seeks or uses the sampled data of an investigation to document, describe and explain what is in existence, or non-existence, or present status of a phenomena being investigated. The sample of the study was 68 comprising 680 final year Business Education students. This represents 10% according to Madu (2023), who considered this adequate when the population is small. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire designed by the researcher title: Electronic Record Competencies of Office Technology and Job Performance Questionnaire (ERCOTJPQ) and was validated by three experts, two from Business Education in the Department of Agricultural and Vocational Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation in Science Education Department all in College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.83 and 0.84 and overall reliability of coefficient of 0.83 was obtained considered adequate for the study. A total of 75 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents with the help of two briefed research assistants and 68 copies were retrieved filled representing 91% return rate. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The mean scale for research question one was obtained by real limit value of numbers as Very Low Extent (VLE) 1.00 – 1.49, Low Extent (LE) 1.50 – 2.49, High Extent (HE) 2.50 – 3.49 and Very High Extent (VHE) 3.50 – 4.00. The standard

deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity of the respondents' response to the items in the instrument. The decision rule in testing the hypotheses; the t-calculated values were compared with t-calculated values at 0.05% level of significance. The hypotheses of no significant difference were accepted for items whose t-calculated value are less then t-table values and rejected on otherwise

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does Computer Assisted Retrieval (CAR) competencies of OTM students in tertiary institutions enhance job performance in contemporary offices?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents' Responses on the Extent Computer Assisted Retrieval (CAR) competencies of OTM students in tertiary institutions enhance job performance in contemporary offices

N=68

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	$\bar{X}_1$	S.D 1	$\bar{X}_2$	S.D 2	$\bar{X}_g$	$S.D_g$	Rmks
	Business Education:							
1	Retrieve micrographic images	3.14	0.74	3.09	0.83	3.11	0.78	HE
2	Search for desired document	3.05	0.63	3.00	0.89	3.02	0.76	HE
3	Use computerized indexing	3.01	0.74	2.90	0.70	2.95	0.72	HE
4	Handle micro-film-based document	3.10	0.72	3.00	0.63	3.05	0.67	HE
5	Ability to identify sorted information	2.98	0.74	2.90	0.83	2.94	0.78	HE
	Cluster Mean	**3.05**	**0.72**	**2.97**	**0.77**	**3.01**	**0.75**	**HE**

The data presented on Table 1 shows that the mean responses of the respondents on items 1 to 5 ranged from 2.88 - 3.11 which fall within the real limit of 2.50 – 3.49. This implies that the respondents agreed to a high extent that computer assisted retrieval (CAR) competencies in tertiary institutions influence job performance in contemporary offices in Abia State. Also, the standard deviation of the 5 items ranged from 0.67 to 0.78 including the cluster mean and cluster standard deviation of 3.01 and 0.75 respectively indicating that the responses of the respondents were close to one another and to the mean.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female OTM students in tertiary institutions computer assisted retrieval (CAR) competencies in enhancing their job performances in contemporary offices.

Table 2: t-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of Students and computer Assisted Retrieval (CAR) competencies in tertiary institutions influence job performance in contemporary offices in Abia State

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	Df	t-calculated	t-tabulated	Decision
Male	3.05	0.72	57				

				67	0.31	1.99	**Not Significant**
Female	2.97	0.77	11				

The data in Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value is 0.31 while the t- tabulated value is 1.99 at 0.05 level of significant and at 67 degree of freedom. Since the calculated value is less than the t-tabulated value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, computer Assisted Retrieval (CAR) competencies in tertiary institutions did not significantly influence mean rating of male and female job performance in contemporary offices.

Research Question 2: To what extent does office communication competencies of OTM students in tertiary institutions enhance job performance in contemporary offices?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Respondents' Responses on the office communication Competencies in Tertiary Institutions Influence Job Performance in Contemporary Offices in Abia State N=68

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	$\bar{X}_1$	S.D 1	$\bar{X}_2$	S.D 2	$\bar{X}_g$	$S.D_g$	Rmks
1	Create and maintain data	3.38	0.81	3.36	0.80	3.37	0.80	Agreed
2	Sort records in ascending or descending order	3.07	0.56	3.00	0.89	3.03	0.72	Agreed
3	Generate formulated text with title and subtitle	3.14	0.71	3.09	0.83	3.11	0.77	Agreed
4	Interpret programme instruction	3.03	0.68	3.00	0.63	3.01	0.65	Agreed
5	Execute programme instruction	3.19	0.61	3.18	0.87	3.18	0.74	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.16**	**0.67**	**3.13**	**0.79**	**3.15**	**0.73**	**Agreed**

The data presented on Table 3 shows that the mean responses of the respondents on the 5 items range from 3.01 - 3.37 which are all above 2.50 acceptable benchmark for the study. This implies that the respondents agreed that the 5 items of office communication of tertiary institutions influence job performance in contemporary offices in Abia State. Also, the standard deviation values of the 5 items ranged from 0.77 to 0.94 which indicates that the responses of the respondents were close to one another and to the mean.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female OTM students in tertiary institutions office communication competencies in enhancing their job performances in contemporary offices.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of the office communication Competencies in Tertiary Institutions Influence Job Performance in Contemporary Offices in Abia State

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	N	Df	t-calculated	t-tabulated	Decision
Male	3.16	0.67	57				

				67	0.11	1.99	**Not Significant**
Female	3.13	0.79	11				

The data in Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value is 0.11 while the t- tabulated value is 1.99 at 0.05 level of significant and at 67 degree of freedom. Since the calculated value is less than the t-tabulated value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female OTM students in tertiary institutions office communication competencies in enhancing their job performances in contemporary offices.

Discussion of Results

The findings of the study were discussed in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

From the findings of the study on research question one, it was revealed that respondents agreed to a high extent that computer assisted retrieval (CAR) competencies in tertiary institutions influence job performance in contemporary offices in Abia State. Also, the corresponding hypothesis tested revealed computer assisted retrieval (CAR) competencies in tertiary institutions will not significantly influence mean rating of male and female job performance in contemporary offices. However, the findings agreed with the study of Okoro and Ndinche (2013), stating that graduates with computer assisted retrieval (CAR) competencies are required in order for office correspondences and thus be able to keep, retrieve them when necessary. In the same vein Ajike (2015), pointed some computer assisted retrieval (CAR) competencies generally required proper maintenance of records in contemporary office.

The findings of the study on research question two agreed to a high extent that office communication competencies in tertiary institutions influence job performance in contemporary offices in Abia State. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of office communication on of male and female job performance in contemporary offices in Abia State. Consequently, this finding This corroborate with the finding of Nwabuno (2020) the OTM education focuses on a mix of office knowledge, technological abilities, and suitable and pertinent business knowledge in order to address tertiary institutions issues. The goal is to create hybrid administrative professionals capable of meeting the demands of a fast-paced, highly automated workplace.

Conclusion

Electronic records competencies are essential and are required of office Technology because no organization/establishment can survive without records which have to be created and captured, retained for the period of schedule and disposed as at when due. OTM students required to be acquainted with computer assisted retrieval (CAR) and office communication competencies to meet up with the demands of the contemporary office.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Office management and technology students should pay more attention to the learning of office communication competencies for contemporary office as this would help in proper record management.
2. Stakeholders, like lecturers and instructors, should be willing to impact the necessary skills required for proper record management in their students, especially office communication competencies. This would go a long way in preparing them for the contemporary office.

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