



SYNERGY AND COLLABORATION OF INSTITUTION-INDUSTRY: A PANACEA TO DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM IN POLYTECHNICS

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Abstract

The study examined synergy and collaboration of institution-industry: a panacea to development of quality office technology and management curriculum in Polytechnics. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. A sample of 89 respondents made up of lecturers and managers of organizations was selected. Synergy and Collaboration between Institution-Industry Questionnaires (SCIQ) which was duly validated with a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.77 was used to gather data for the study. 89 copies of the questionnaire administered were retrieved and used for the study. The data collected to answer the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The study found among others that synergy and collaboration between institution-industry will contribute to shared resources for sustainability of educational programme over time as well as create a foundation for co-investing in facilities and equipment; it will provide common employability skills needed by employers to be taught to students and reinforced in the classroom; it will also enhance the quality of OTM graduates because they will be ready made branded for the world of work. Based on the findings, conclusion were made while the following were recommended among others; that institutions and local industries should collaborate to organize seminars and workshops where they will share information on the changing trends in industrial practices and how these changes can be incorporated into the curriculum of OTM, there is the need for institutions to be charged with oversight responsibilities by putting up structures, enabling environment and policies that will facilitate industrial-institutional links. This will enable OTM students as a matter of urgency to acquire skills and competences replica to what is required to function in the industry so that they can be relevant in the 21st century world of work.

Keyword: Synergy, Collaboration, institution-industry, OTM skills, Curriculum



Introduction

Office Technology and Management is a new nomenclature for Secretarial Studies. The change in the name of the programme was borne out of the review of the curriculum by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in 2004 in order to make Secretarial Studies programme to be more Information and Communication Technology compliant. The Polytechnic curriculum composes of four main components for both National Diploma and Higher National Diploma hence, General Studies/Education Foundation courses, Professional courses, SIWES. The professional courses are courses which give the student the theory and practical skills he needs to practice as a secretary. According to Ejeka and Ebenezer-Nwokeji (2016) in Agboola (2014) said greater prominence is given to ICT courses than 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 technologies to profit the organization given the current wave of information and communication technology.

Office Technology and Management was defined by Agoha (2011) as the education or training given to a person to equip him/her with secretarial skills. These skills include information processing skills such as acquisition, recording, analysing, synthesizing, organization, retrieval, display, and dissemination of information. Reprographic skill is the method of producing several copies of documents through a prepared master sheet (Oyinloye, 2012). This includes ability to operate duplicating machine, photocopy, scanning, printing and fax machine. Keyboarding skills is the acquisition of keyboard dexterity, sufficient typewriting skills, and adequate knowledge of word for accuracy to produce mailable documents. Also effective use of communication skills includes ability to interpret concepts, terms and abbreviations. Effective filing, indexing and good knowledge of records management skills is important. Computer and new technologies skill in information and communication technology includes ability to operate computer, browse the Internet, e-mail, etc. Effective use of telephone services and manners, and carry-out office functions are all important secretarial skills. The programme is to prepare individual students for gainful employment in office occupations. Whether paid employment or self employment, the emphasis is on exposure to and acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant and adequate for employment in specific office occupation. To this end, for students to acquire this pre-requisite knowledge, skills and competencies in office occupation there is the need for development of



functional curriculum which will be useful in imparting these skills and competencies to the students. This will enable the students to acquire the expected skills, exposures and competencies needed in a modern office while in school.

Curriculum is an important part of any programme because it is from this that the output is measured. In this line, Oludele and Dosunmu (2013) stated that curriculum is a network of varying activities involves translating its design into classroom activities and changing people's attitudes to accept and participate in these activities. The new ICT-driven OTM curriculum expectedly threw up new challenges. The OTM curriculum was aimed at producing graduates who would be able to effectively manage the electronic driven office, and who would be equipped with secretarial and office skills for employment in various fields of endeavour. OTM programme provides students with in-depth administrative office preparation to meet the demands and challenges in the business environment. Through the programme, students can obtain marketable skills applicable to various careers and industries as well as cognitive skills transferable to other employment situations and life experience. The design of OTM programme components appears to be responsive to a global initiative with an objective that portends new academic direction in favour of ICT. The objectives, theoretical and practical contents of the new curriculum are geared towards integrating graduates of OTM department into the evolution of technology. In essence, curriculum should enable learners to find meanings to their lives. Technological changes in the office have been tremendous that only innovation in the curriculum content of Office Technology and Management can make its recipients fit into the automation office of the 21st century world of work (Akwa & Pwol, 2009).

However, the present OTM curriculum is inadequate to enable students fit into the automation office of the 21st century because some OTM graduates perform below expectations in the office. This result from the fact that there was a mismatch between institution-industry skills needed to perform in a modern office. That is what the students were taught in school was different from the skills required in the industry. This was based on inadequate curriculum and lack of synergy between institution-industry to fashion out comprehensive curriculum that will reflect adequate up-to-date technology knowledge as demanded in the industries to be taught in Polytechnics. Oladunjoye (2015) asserted that the products of a deficient curriculum cannot function effectively and efficiently in today's consistent



technological changes in the work environment. The success of Office Technology and Management programme can only be measured and determined by the effectiveness, competence and job performance of the graduates of the programme. To a great extent the employers of labour are still complaining about the skills of graduates and that is one of the reasons a lot of OTM graduates are unemployed. Many of them cannot defend, practicalise and perform as expected what they claimed they were trained for or skill acquired while in school when they get to industry. To buttress this fact, Audu, Abdulkadir and Abdul (2013) stated in a recent survey research carried out that over 40 million graduates are unemployable into the industries because of lack of technical vocational and skills required for jobs available. Indeed there are vacancies for jobs in Nigeria but right now, there are little or no manpower with appropriate skills to fill the vacancies for the available jobs (Alfred, 2010). This is an indication that the training provided did not match the jobs available. Based on this, there is a dire need for synergy and collaboration between institution and industry to develop an acceptable curriculum that will enhance the quality of OTM graduates and fit to a modern office.

Synergy is defined as the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects. It is the process describes people that work together and accomplish more than they could alone. When people of different disciplines work together towards a common goal, they achieve excellence and make a difference. It is the concept that combined value and performance of two companies which will be greater than the sum of the separate individual parts. Ejeka and Ebenezer-Nwokeji (2017) noted that institution-industry partnership involves a bilateral agreement, formal or informal to foster collaboration in education. This relationship is cooperative in view of the fact that each partner has something both to benefit and to contribute. The object of interest is to ensure maximum contributions to growth and progress on every side. The Wikipedia Dictionary (2015) defines collaboration as working together with others to achieve a common goal. This implied that both institution and industry need each other for the successful development of functional OTM curriculum that will make the recipient fit into the technological office environment. Owing to this fact, it became necessary for the adequate synergy and collaboration between institution and industry to seat on a round table to forestall this problem.



Statement of the Problem

Graduates of OTM today are no longer meeting the industry expectations in terms of their skills and competences. They are entering a world of work that is changing in all spheres technologically with little or no required skills and competences to perform in the 21st century business environment. According to Masaruf (2015) in Yang, (2008) noted that employers of labour today demand more skills than they did in the past. This implied that employers of labour are eager to employ workers who have received adequate training and are competent to execute their work with little or no supervision. This was corroborated by Oranu (2010) who observed that there are many factors that have contributed to the ever rising demand for skills in the labour market which include technological and organizational change, trade, deregulation of key industries and the decline of unions. As a result of the above factors OTM graduates have not been able to satisfy their employers in terms of required skills.

Onojetal (2014) reported that the mandate of business education curriculum (including OTM) is the production of graduates for self-employment, office employment and careers in other occupations. Such graduates are needed in the industry, but that they lack skills and competencies when employed by local and multinational companies is a serious problem. Ohiwerei, Azih, and Okoli (2013) stated that there are numerous problems militating against the maximum application of computer/ICT skill by secretaries in their respective organisations which also affects their operational performance. This was as a result of inadequate skills and competences acquired from school. Some of these problems as identified by Muhammad (2016) in Alasa and Kelechukwe (1998) includes lack of fund, electricity, inadequate computer and ICT facilities, poor level of computer literacy, poor and inadequate telecommunication facilities, poor practical application of the equipment to the performance of secretarial functions, lack of Internet facilities etc.

This is an unfortunate situation that must be checkmated if Secretarial profession must remain relevant in the social economic development of Nigeria. The wind of change in industrial production is in the direction of technological development. In this line, Audu, Abdukadir and Abdul (2013) stated that, the existing skills gap between the graduates of OTM and the industry has become a major concern of business organisations and educators in Nigeria. Employers of labor have continued



to express their concern and worry over the quality of the current graduates of OTM programme in their short of relevant skills required for employment (Idris & Rajuddin, 2012). Most employers of labor in Nigeria complained of inadequate skills of OTM graduates for most cutting edge technology, low practical knowledge and lack of confidence in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

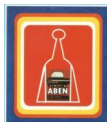
Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. What is the benefits of synergy and collaboration of institution- industry in development of OTM curriculum in Polytechnics?
2. What is the challenges of synergy and collaboration of institution-industry in development of OTM curriculum in Polytechnic?

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised of OTM lecturers in government Polytechnics and managers at director level in selected private and public organisation in Kwara State. All 18 lecturers of OTM in Polytechnics in Kwara State were used sample and 71 managers selected purposefully from both private and public organisation in Ilorin were used. The purpose was that the researcher considered organizations that large enough to employ up to five secretaries. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged Synergy and Collaboration between Institution-Industry Questionnaire (SCIQ). The questionnaire is made up 35 items. The items were placed on 4 point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagreed (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. The instrument was face validated by three experts at Kwara State Polytechnic. The Cronbach Alpha reliability test was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.77. The researcher personally administered 89 copies of the questionnaires to the lecturers in the Polytechnics and managers of organisation. The 89 copies of the questionnaires administered were all collected. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected for the study. The mean rating of 2.50 was used for decision regarding the research questions. This was calculated based on the 4 point rating interval used in the study. Items with mean values of 2.50 and above were considered as agreed while items with mean values below 2.50 were considered as disagreed.



Results

Research Question One

What is the benefits of synergy and collaboration of institution- industry in development of OTM curriculum in Polytechnics?

Table 1: Mean Rating and Standard deviation benefits of synergy and collaboration of institution- industry in development of OTM curriculum in Polytechnic.

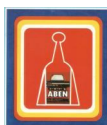
S/N	Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	The synergy and collaboration have potential to truly transform the curriculum of OTM and instructional practices	3.21	0.76	Agree
2.	The synergy and collaboration is based on a solid foundation of mutual understanding between institution-industry.	2.97	1.21	Agree
3.	Synergy and collaboration among Institution-industry in OTM curriculum development will enhance strong executive leadership from the participants	3.00	1.02	Agree
4.	The collaboration can cause meaningful changes to traditional Curriculum and instructional transformation	3.12	0.89	Agree
5.	Collaboration will bring about contextualized, modularized, competency-based curriculum; workplace-based learning; and learn-by-doing models.	3.67	0.61	Agree
6.	Synergy and collaboration can create sustained academic and career navigation supports for students.	3.45	0.79	Agree
7.	Synergy and collaboration will provide professional development that will equip the stakeholders' with skills needed to design new curricula, teach integrated occupational and academic course work, and better track student progress and employer needs.	3.71	0.57	Agree
8.	Synergy and collaboration can contribute to shared resources for sustainability of educational programme over time as well as create a foundation for co-investing in facilities and equipment.	3.09	0.82	Agree
9.	Synergy and collaboration in OTM curriculum development will continuously develop the academic model, define and refine the competencies and skills students must master to succeed in the 21 st century economy.	3.51	0.66	Agree
10.	The collaboration will enable industry to provide learning experiences to students through internships.	3.77	0.55	Agree
11.	Synergy and collaboration can build the future workforce as approach closer to bringing all the essential ingredients together for student and industry success	3.89	0.45	Agree



12.	Synergy and collaboration can provide employability skills needed by employers to be taught to students and reinforced in the classroom	3.01	1.01	Agree
13.	Synergy and collaboration will make students acquire ability to connect multiple locations (audio, video and computer), extends educational opportunities to distant locations, provide flexible format for meetings and accommodates a variety of classes	3.4	0.78	Agree
14.	Synergy and collaboration can improve academic and practical skills of students performance	3.76	0.56	Agree
15.	Synergy and collaboration can lead to new discovery ways of doing things-creatively among institution-industry	3.42	0.8	Agree
16.	Synergy and collaboration will enhance relationships, rapport and bond between students, lecturers, staff support, industry and increased efficiency among Institution-industry	3.34	0.92	Agree
17.	Synergy and collaboration will build appreciation of self-worth, boldness and confidentiality of the students	3.38	0.97	Agree
16.	Synergy and collaboration will make students to acquire new skills, knowledge, ideas, courage, exposures and competences in a wide range of techniques	3.28	0.89	Agree
17.	Synergy and collaboration can help OTM students to solve different kinds of familiar and non-familiar problems in both conventional and innovative ways.	3.61	0.62	Agree
18.	Synergy and collaboration can help students acquire the skill to demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work and understand the real world of work limits to adopting new ideas	3.11	0.9	Agree
19.	Synergy and collaboration can help students acquire the skill to assume shared responsibility for collaborative work among institution-industry	2.78	1.3	Agree
20.	Synergy and collaboration can transform theoretical to practical knowledge, competences, experiences, skills and confidence required of OTM students as needed in the 21 st century world of work	3.79	0.52	Agree
Aggregate mean and standard deviation		3.71	0.88	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 1 revealed that the respondents were unanimous in their responses to all the constructs in the Table, as they all agreed to all the constructs. This agreement was very evident as all the mean scores are well above the fixed decision value of 2.50. The standard deviation ranged from 0.45 to 1.3 which indicated low variability in the respondents' responses. This was also signified by the aggregate mean and standard deviation of 3.71 and 0.88 respectively. The implication is that synergy and



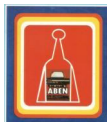
collaboration between industry-institution benefits in development of OTM curriculum in Polytechnics did not differ. This is because they perceived the collaboration to have positive benefits on the acquisition of 21st century skills and competences of OTM students as required by industry.

Research Question Two

What is the challenges of synergy and collaboration of institution-industry in development of OTM curriculum in Polytechnic?

Table 2: Mean Rating and Standard deviation challenges of synergy and collaboration of institution-industry in development of OTM curriculum in Polytechnic

S/N	Item Statement	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	Challenges of arbitrary implementation of OTM programme and Teacher overwork can affect institution-industry collaboration	3.01	1.01	Agree
2.	Synergy and collaboration may be faced with problem of inadequate supply of ICT equipment and facilities	4.29	0.81	Agree
3.	Poorly equipped libraries, laboratories and inadequate lecture rooms	4.23	0.88	Agree
4.	Poor societal attitude and perception is a challenge confronted synergy and collaboration among institution-industry	4.04	1.08	Agree
5.	Synergy and collaboration confront with challenge of dearth of qualified teachers/personnel to integrate technological practical skills into learning areas	4.11	0.96	Agree
6.	Challenge of inadequate technology skill, unstable and unskilled teaching staff	4.04	1.08	Agree
7.	Poor state of the economy especially the recession period can be a challenge to institution-industry collaboration	4.29	0.90	Agree
8.	Corruption and lack of cooperation can be a challenge to institution-industry synergy and collaboration	4.08	1.14	Agree
9.	Scarcity and prohibitive cost of books, office machines and equipment is a challenge to synergy and collaboration	4.03	1.01	Agree
10.	Unfavourable government policy may affect institution-industry synergy and collaboration	4.26	0.88	Agree
11.	Incessant strike actions, Epileptic power supply, cult practices may affect institution-industry collaboration	4.29	0.90	Agree
12.	Poor supervision, poor career counseling will affect the collaboration	3.88	0.45	Agree



13. Challenge of poor and outdated institution's training facilities and inadequate practical training to meet the modern trends in the industries	3.68	1.03	Agree
14. Challenges of traditional teaching methods used have not succeeded in impacting positively on practical skills acquisition of graduates of OTM institutions.	3.34	1.05	Agree
15. Synergy and collaboration face with OTM curricula that fall short to tackle the practical problems in industry	3.89	0.45	Agree
Aggregate mean and standard deviation	3.96	0.91	Agree

Source: *Field Survey, 2019*

From Table 2, it was revealed that all the respondents agreed in their responses to all the constructs in the Table. This agreement was very evident as all the mean scores are well above the fixed decision value of 2.50. The standard deviation ranged from 0.45 to 1.14 which indicated low variability in the respondents' responses. This was also signified by the aggregate mean and standard deviation of 3.96 and 0.91 respectively. This implied that despite the numerous benefits of synergy and collaboration between institution-industry, there are still challenges that will hinder the achievement of the partnership.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the synergy and collaboration between institution-industry: a panacea to development of quality office technology and management curriculum. The study found that synergy and collaboration between institution-industry will be of many benefits to all stakeholders. Such benefits has the potential to truly transform the curriculum of OTM and instructional practice, it will bring about contextualized, modularized, competency-based curriculum; workplace-based learning; and learn-by-doing model, it will provide professional development that will equip the stakeholders' with skills needed to design new curricula, teach integrated occupational and academic course work, and better track student progress and employer needs. It will promote mutual understanding between institutionindustry and contribute to shared resources for sustainability of educational programme over time as well as create a foundation for co-investing in facilities and equipment. Moreso, the study found that the synergy and collaboration will provide common employability skills needed by employers to be taught to students and reinforced in the classroom. This finding supports the earlier finding of Zulita (2019) who stated that by infusing industry-based skills into education, it



would ensure students gain the practical know-how to match theories, and graduate with a holistic view of the specialisations and stand out among their peers when entering the workplace.

Most industries complaint results from inadequate skill requirement for most cutting edge technology, low practical skill and confidence. Most graduates are exposed to several re-training programmes since most of the graduates are regarded as unemployable going by the quality of instruction acquired from their various institutions. The study also found that synergy and collaboration between institution-industry would face challenges among which include; inadequate supply of ICT equipment and facilities, poor and outdated institution's training facilities and inadequate practical training to meet the modern trends in the industries, dearth of qualified teachers/personnel to integrate technological practical skills into learning areas, and the existing institution's curricula fall short to tackle the practical problems in the industry. Also corruption, lack of cooperation, incessant strike actions, epileptic power supply, cult practices, poor supervision, poor career counseling and unfavourable government policy were challenges to synergy and collaboration between institution-industry partnership. This means that despite the numerous benefits of synergy and collaboration between institution-industry, there are still challenges that will hinder the achievement of goal of the partnership.

In an attempt to address these challenges and establish the link between institutions and the industries Reddan and Harrison (2010) argued that institutions need to restructure their programmes to be responsive to the needs of the job market, especially the industry. Also Zulita (2019) noted that there is need to review performances, practical content, approaches and challenges that can be shared with industry partners so that further planning can be mapped out for a better future and to produce industry-ready graduates.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study which revealed that synergy and collaboration between institution-industry have a lot of benefits which include; provide students with skills in using shared windows (like electronic black-board) to show all participants such as text graphics, still images and hand drawn figures and synergy and collaboration between Institution-industry partnership will enhance lecturers, students, staff support and increased efficiency. Since this is the case, it means that



the polytechnics will be repositioned as this will bring a new direction of doing things. Although, the synergy and collaboration is perceived to face challenges but the benefits to be achieved outweighed the challenges.

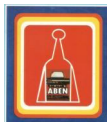
Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Institutions and local industries should collaborate to organize seminars and workshops where they will share information on the changing trends in industrial practices and how these changes can be incorporated into the curriculum of the schools.
2. There is the need for polytechnics management to take up the initiative of this synergy and collaboration between institution-industry in order to reap the great benefits of this partnership.
3. There is the need for all stakeholders to work together to overcome the challenges of synergy and collaboration between institution-industry as revealed in the study.

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