



OFFICE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SKILLS ACQUIRED BY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION (OTME) FINAL YEAR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study assessed office information management skills acquired by Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) final year undergraduate students in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State. Four specific purposes and four research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 120 OTME final year students drawn out of a population of 470 OTME final year students from three tertiary education institutions in Rivers State using purposive sampling technique. Cronbach alpha statistics was used to obtain a reliability index of 0.74 for the instrument computed with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS). Data collected for the study were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and grand mean to answer the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that OTME final year undergraduate students to a low extent acquire record management skills, communication skills and information protection skills. The findings also revealed that OTME final year undergraduate students to a high extent acquire information technology skills in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State. Based on the findings of the study and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were put forward among others: Managers of OTME in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State should monitor the implementation of OTME course contents by those who can assist the students to develop all forms of office information and management skills that would aid their productivity in the future. OTME lecturers should adopt teaching methods such as activity method and experiential learning method in order to expose their students to practical activities related to record management, communication and information protection for the purpose of skills acquisition before graduation.

Keywords: *education, office functions, information technology skill,*

Introduction

The purpose of education is to transform the recipients by equipping them with the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude required to cope with the realities of the workplace related to their field of specialization. Supporting this, Nakpodia and Ifakachukwu (2012) noted that education can be seen as the progressive means by which individuals are prepared to become positively alert to realities in their immediate environment and utilize the best approach to drive their own success upon it. Consequently, the utilization of knowledge and skills acquired by individuals through different educational programme (Office Technology and Management Education inclusive) are meant to ensure their success.

Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) as an aspect of business education programme offered at the tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria is geared towards equipping recipients with knowledge, skills and attitude for maximum success in public and private office works. According to Onyiloye and Asonibare (2019), OTME is designed to equip its recipients with modern



secretarial skills such as: reprographic skills, communication skills and record management skills. As educational programme for the preparation of secretaries and other office personnel, Ozuruoke and Abdulkarim (2016) noted that it is an integral aspect of vocational business education offered in Nigerian universities, polytechnics and colleges of education with the aim of preparing individuals to acquire requisite knowledge and skills related to office planning and maintenance, communication, reprographic and record keeping.

According to Orheruata and Adeleye (2019), OTME in Nigeria has been evolving and developing with the advancement in workplace technology which has drive the change in its nomenclature from secretarial studies/administration to Office Technology and Management (OTM) or Office Technology and Management Education (OTME). Consequently, the integration of modern technologies as part of tools for the preparation of OTME graduates affects the scope of skills acquired through OTME to include technology related skills known as Information Technology skills or Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills. It is for this reason that Bestowei (2020) noted that knowledge, skills and competencies needed by graduates of OTME today has become more dynamic because of the dynamic nature of the world of work resulting from rapid evolvement of office technological devices.

It is worth noting at this juncture, that graduates of OTME are potential office personnel who are likely to be saddled with carrying out office functions such as receiving data, filing, creating and maintaining records, receiving calls and other forms of communication capable of driving the achievement of the organization's goals (Dosunmu, Olugbenga & Adeyanju, 2017). These put them at the centre of every organization for purpose of data and information generation, processing, classification, preservation, dissemination and communication (David, 2020). Therefore, as office personnel who are to be saddled with office job responsibilities they are expected to acquire all skills acquired through OTME which include office planning and maintenance skills, reprographic skills, communication skills and record management skills and information technology skills (Ozuroke & Abdulkarim, 2016; Onyiloye & Asonibare, 2019; Bestowei, 2020).

A cursory look at the skills expected to be acquired through OTME graduates, shows that they are skills for discharging office information and management responsibilities either through manual and electronic procedures. Supporting this, ARMA International (2017) outlined office information management skills needed by office personnel to include information governance practices, risk management, communication and information technology skills. Centre for Learning and Development, Newfoundland (2019) also outlined core technical skills for effective office information management by personnel to include records management skills, information protection skills, risk management skills and information technology skills. There is no doubt that the acquisition of these skills by OTME graduating students would give them an edge over other graduates who can fit into today's modern office jobs related to information management. This is because with such skills, they as office personnel can conveniently help their employers to generate accurate, reliable and relevant information that would enable the achievement of everyday objectives (Dosunmu, Olugbenga & Adeyanju, 2017).

Evidently, the general goal of OTME programme in all tertiary education institutions centres on equipping recipients with the relevant office technology and management knowledge and skills to fit into the contemporary office jobs or teach related curriculum at the secondary school level of Nigerian education system (Ozuroke & Abdulkarim, 2016). It is worth noting that **there are many** tertiary education institutions in Nigeria and Rivers State specifically offering Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) as an aspect of Business Education at the Undergraduate level. These institutions yearly produced large number of graduates of this programme. Consequently, it is expected that the graduates would have acquired all the necessary skills OTME programme is meant to avail them in order to fit into today's modern office jobs and promote effective office information management. Hence, the need to assess the office information and management skills acquired by the graduates of the various institutions offering OTME cannot be overemphasised.

Some of the available researches related to OTME students office information and management skills are either narrowed down to one specific skill or assess skills needed by the students only. Adeshina, Udoh, Ndomi and Aliyu (2013) conducted study on the relationship between the information technology skills acquired by secretarial teachers in Nigeria colleges of education and their utilization of internet for effective teaching and reported that secretarial teachers in the Nigeria colleges of education lacked some vital Information technology skills. Okoli and Onuigbo (2014) conducted study on impact of records keeping on office managers' efficiency in Nigerian universities and reported insufficient records management skills as one of the constraint affecting office



personnel's efficiency in Nigerian universities. Okolocha and Baba (2017) conducted study on assessment of skills possessed by secretaries for effective electronic records management in polytechnics in north-central and reported that secretaries moderately possess electronic records management skills that have to do with records creation and retention but lowly possess electronic records management skills relating to records disposal. Titus and Yakubu (2018) conducted a research on office technology and accounting skills possessed by business education students in colleges of education for management of small scale businesses in Adamawa State and reported the students moderately possessed ability to communicate politely and effectively through established channels communication within the business electronically, and ability to demonstrate good public relations with customers. Titus and Yakubu also reported that students slightly possessed the ability to use different Microsoft suit packages like Ms word, Ms office, Ms excel, Ms access. Duktur (2019) conducted a study on competencies in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) among final year undergraduate business education students in tertiary institutions in north-eastern Nigeria and reported that most final year undergraduate business education students were competent in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Guo, Yuan, Archer and Connelly (2011) conducted study on understanding non-malicious security violations in the workplace: a composite behavior model reported that most office personnel (secretaries inclusive) using ITs to drive information management lack information protection knowledge and skills because they don't consider information security as part of their job. Hence, there is need to equip Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) students with information management skill before graduation. The existing literature showed there are many researches on OTME students office information and management skills but none of the research work has focused on assessing the extent of office information management skills acquired by OMTE final year undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State to the best of the researcher's knowledge. Therefore, it is this gap in existing literature that drives the present study.

Statement of the Problem

In Rivers State, Rivers State University (RSU), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUOE) and Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku offer OTME with the objective of equipping recipients with numerous office technology and management skills such as office information management skills. However, it is sad to discover that most of the graduates of this programme produced annually in Rivers State ends up not making advancement in this career line and majority are unemployed. Abdulkarim and Osiah (2014) noted that most of the graduates of business education programme (OTME inclusive) ended up being unemployed because they lack the requisite skills for employment in their area. Otum (2018) also noted the existence of poor office and management skills amongst OTME graduates as the cause of their unemployment. Could this be the situation with graduates of OTME from tertiary education institutions in Rivers State is at today? Consequently, to answer this question, the researcher deems it fit to assess office information management skills acquired by final year OTME undergraduate students in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State.

Research Question

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent do OTME final year undergraduate students acquire record management skills?
2. To what extent do OTME final year undergraduate students acquire communication skills?
3. To what extent do OTME final year undergraduate students acquire information technology skills?
4. To what extent do OTME final year undergraduate students acquire information protection skills?



Method

This study adopts descriptive survey research. This design was deemed appropriate for this study because Ezekiel, Oguzor, Onyeukwu, Onwuchekwa and China (2017) opined that descriptive survey research is the most appropriate when it comes to assessing opinion of respondents on the characteristics of phenomena in order to draw certain conclusions. The population of the study the study comprises of 470 final year undergraduate Business education students of 2019/2020 academic session which are up to 135, 183 and 152 students from Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku respectively. The sample size is made up of 120 final year undergraduates Business education students who have been exposed to series of office technology and management related courses, that is, 40 students from each of the institution offering OTME. The sample was selected using purposive sampling technique based on the criteria that (i). the respondent is a final year Business Education students who have taken OTME courses and (ii) the respondent is a student of any of the three institutions to be used for the study.

A researcher’s designed structured questionnaire titled “Assessment of Office Information Management Skills Acquired by Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) Undergraduate Students in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State (AOIMSAOTMEUSTIRS)”. The instrument contains 20 items, 5 items to each question. The responses option is structured based on four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE) - 4, High Extent (HE) - 3, Low Extent (LE) - 2 and Very Low Extent (VLE) - 1. To test for reliability, Cronbach Alpha statistics was computed using the responses from 10 Business education (OTME) students from Niger Delta University (NDU), Bayelsa State who were not part of the study. The computation gave a reliability index of 0.74. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and cluster mean to answer the research questions. For decision making, the following were used as guide:

- (a) Mean of 3.5 above will be regarded as Very High Extent, 2.5 to 2.99 will be regarded as High Extent, 1.5 to 2.49 will be regarded as Low Extent and below 1.5 will be regarded as Very Low Extent.

Results

Research Questions 1: To what extent do OTME final year undergraduate students acquire record management skills?

Table 1: Summary of Mean Value on the Extent OTME Final Year Undergraduate Students Acquired Record Management Skills. n = 120

s/n	Items	X	SD	Decision
1	ability to input text to create records of information on electronic devices	3.16	0.63	HE
2	ability to validate records of information	2.41	0.46	LE
3	ability to file information manually and electronically	2.54	0.71	HE
4	ability to classify records using appropriate classifications	1.99	0.77	LE
5	ability to convert recorded data into information for management use	1.87	0.60	LE
	Grand mean	2.39	0.63	LE

Source: 2020 field Survey

Table 1 shows the respondents are of the opinion that to a high extent they acquire the ability to input text to create records of information on electronic devices and the ability to file information manually and electronically with mean scores of 3.16, 2.54 and standard deviation of 0.63 and 0.71 respectively. The respondents are also of the opinion that to a low extent they acquire the ability to validate records of information, ability to classify records using appropriate classifications and the ability to convert recorded data into information for users with mean scores of 2.41, 1.99, 1.87 and standard deviation of 0.46, 0.77, and 0.60 respectively. However, when the grand mean of 2.39 and standard deviation of 0.63 are considered, it can be concluded that to a low extent OTME final year



undergraduate students in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State acquire record management skills.

Research Questions 2: To what extent do OTME final year undergraduate students acquire communication skills?

Table 2: Summary of Mean Value on the Extent OTME Final Year Undergraduate Students Acquired Communication Skills. n = 120

s/n	Items	X	SD	Decision
6	ability to prepare formal correspondence manually and electronically to communicate relevant information	3.49	0.70	HE
7	ability to present information manually and electronically to group of audience	3.46	0.69	HE
8	ability to manipulate video conferencing device to participate in meetings	1.89	0.56	LE
9	ability to use share information on local area network to communicate relevant information amongst users	1.33	0.77	VLE
10	ability to write report to communicate outcome of concluded exercise	1.89	0.53	LE
	Grand mean	2.41	0.65	LE

Source: 2020 field survey

Table 2 shows the respondents are of the opinion that to a high extent they acquire the ability to prepare formal correspondence manually and electronically to communicate relevant information and ability to present information manually and electronic to group of audience with mean scores of 3.49, 3.46 and standard deviation of 0.70 and 0.69 respectively. The respondents are also of the opinion that to a low extent they acquire the ability to manipulate video conferencing device to participate in meetings and to write report to communicate outcome of concluded exercise with mean scores of 1.89 and standard deviation of 0.56 and 0.53 respectively. The respondents also are of the opinion that to a very low extent they acquire the ability to share information on local area network to communicate relevant information amongst users with mean score of 1.33 and standard deviation of 0.77. Nevertheless, when the grand mean of 2.41 and standard deviation of 0.65 are considered, it can be concluded that to a low extent OTME final year undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State acquire communication skills.

Research Questions 3: To what extent do OTME final year undergraduate students acquire information technology skills?

Table 3: Summary of Mean Value on the Extent OTME Final Year Undergraduate Students Acquired Information Technology Skills. n = 120

s/n	Items	X	SD	Decision
11	ability to operate Microsoft suits to process information	3.46	0.51	HE
12	ability to work on computer networks to access information from different units of computers	1.69	0.91	LE
13	ability to mass reproduce information using reprographic technologies	2.62	0.50	HE
14	ability to use database to maintain information	1.88	0.71	LE
15	ability to use email to disseminate relevant information	3.88	0.84	VHE



Grand mean	2.71	0.69	HE
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Source: 2020 field survey

Table 3 shows the respondents are of the opinion that to a very high extent they acquire the ability to use email to disseminate relevant information with mean score of 3.88 and standard deviation of 0.84. The respondents are also of the opinion that to a high extent they acquire the ability to operate Microsoft suits to process information and ability to mass reproduce information using reprographic technologies with mean scores of 3.46, 2.62 and standard deviation of 0.51 and 0.50 respectively. The respondents are also of the opinion that to a low extent they acquire the ability to work on computer networks to access information from different units of computers and ability to use database to maintain information with mean scores of 1.69, 1.88 and standard deviation of 0.91 and 0.71 respectively. However, when the mean of 2.71 and standard deviation of 0.69 are considered, it can be concluded that to high extent OTME final year undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State acquire information technology skills

Research Questions 4: To what extent do OTME final year undergraduate students acquire information protection skills?

Table 4: Summary of Mean Value on the Extent OTME Final Year Undergraduate Students Acquired Information Protection Skills. n = 120

s/n	Items	X	SD	Decision
16	ability to oversee processes restricting access to information during management	2.19	0.98	LE
17	ability to use physical security to restrict access to information environment.	3.62	0.94	VHE
18	ability to password systems to prevent unauthorized access to information	1.35	0.50	VLE
19	ability to password application file to prevent unauthorized access to information	1.15	0.46	VLE
20	ability to lock data to prevent unnecessary manipulation of data	1.12	0.43	VLE
	Grand mean	1.89	0.66	LE

Source: 2020 field survey

Table 4 shows the respondents are of the opinion that to a very high extent they acquire ability to use physical security to restrict access to information environment with mean score of 3.62 and standard deviation of 0.94. The respondents are also of the opinion that to a low extent they acquire the ability to oversee processes restricting access to information during management with mean score of 2.19 and standard deviation of 0.98. The respondents are also of the opinion that to a very low extent they acquire the ability to password systems to prevent unauthorized access to information, ability to password application file to prevent unauthorized access to information and ability to lock data to prevent unnecessary manipulation of data with mean scores of 1.35, 1.15, 1.12 and standard deviation of 0.50, 0.46 and 0.43 respectively. However, when the grand mean 1.89 and standard deviation 0.66 are considered, it can be concluded that to a low extent OTME final year undergraduate students in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State acquire information protection skills.

Discussions of Findings

The finding of the study shows that to a low extent OTME final year undergraduate students in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State acquire record management skills. This finding emanated from the fact that the respondents are also of the opinion that to a low extent they acquire the ability to validate records of information, ability to classify records using appropriate classifications and the ability to convert recorded data into information for users. This finding is supported by the discovery of Okoli and Onuigbo (2014) when they reported insufficient records management skills as one of the constraint affecting office personnel's efficiency in Nigerian universities. The finding is also supported by Okolocha and Baba (2017) when they reported that secretaries moderately possess electronic



records management skills that have to do with records creation and retention but lowly possess electronic records management skills relating to records disposal. However, the difference of these results to the present study finding is that the present study finding relates to potential secretaries who are graduates of OTME and not existing secretaries.

The finding of the study also shows that to a low extent OTME final year undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State acquire communication skills. This finding emanated from the fact the respondents are also of the opinion that to a low extent they acquire the ability to manipulate video conferencing device to participate in meetings and to write report to communicate outcome of concluded exercise. This finding also emanated from the fact that the respondents also are of the opinion that to a very low extent they acquire the ability to share information on local area network to communicate relevant information amongst users.

The finding of the study also shows that to high extent OTME final year undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State acquire information technology skills. The finding emanated from the fact that the respondents are of the opinion that to a very high extent they acquire the ability to use email to disseminate relevant information. The finding also emanated from the fact that the respondents are also of the opinion that to a high extent they acquire the ability to operate Microsoft suits to process information and ability to mass reproduce information using reprographic technologies. The finding of this study is contrary to the discovery of Adeshina, Udoh, Ndomi and Aliyu (2013) when they reported that secretarial teachers (OTME students) in the Nigeria colleges of education lacked some vital Information technology skills. such as, ability to operate data base, ability to extract relevant information using integrated software packages, ability to extract information using electronic mails and application software. The finding is also contrary to the discovery of Titus and Yakubu (2018) when they reported in their study that business education students slightly possessed the ability to use different Microsoft suit packages like Ms word, Ms office, Ms excel, Ms access. However, the finding is supported by the discovery of Duktur (2019) when the author's study revealed that most final year undergraduate business education students were competent in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the present findings only related to final year undergraduate students.

The finding of the study shows to a low extent OTME final year undergraduate students in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State acquire information protection skills. This finding emanated from the fact that the respondents are also of the opinion that to a low extent they acquire the ability to oversee processes restricting access to information during management. The finding also emanated from the fact that the respondents are also of the opinion that to a very low extent they acquire the ability to password systems to prevent unauthorized access to information, ability to password application file to prevent unauthorized access to information and ability to lock data to prevent unnecessary manipulation. The finding of this study is supported by the discovered of Guo, Yuan, Archer and Connelly (2011) when they reported that most office personnel (secretaries inclusive) using ITs to drive information management lack information protection knowledge and skills because they don't consider information security as part of their job. Hence, the potential graduates of OTME are also not equipped with information protection skills.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that OTME final year students in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State acquire less of record management skills, communication skills and information protection skills relating to office information management. It can also be concluded that the students acquire more of information technology skills relating to office information management. Therefore, it can be concluded that the tertiary education institutions offering OTME are more concerned with exposing their student of information technology skills without much consideration for other skills that would complement their students' utilization of IT in order to drive effective office information management after graduation. It can also be concluded that the method of guiding the students to acquire record management skills, communication skills and information protection skills are not as effective as that used to guide the students to acquire information technology skills. Whatever may be the case, the present situation at the tertiary education institutions in Rivers State is not good enough for the all-round development of the OTME students to fit into office jobs relating to information management after graduation.



Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are put forward for implementation:

- i. Managers of OTME in tertiary education institutions in Rivers State should monitor the implementation of OTME course contents by those who can assist the students to develop all forms of office information and management skills that would aid their productivity in the future.
- ii. OTME lecturers should adopt teaching methods such as activity method and experiential learning method in order to expose their students to practical activities related to record management, communication and information protection.
- iii. OTME courses should be given more hours for practical exercises that would enable students of the programme acquire relevant office jobs skills before graduation.

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