



SKILLS REQUIRED BY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION (OTME) STUDENTS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN DELTA STATE FOR EMPLOYABILITY

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Abstract

This study examined skills required by Office Technology and Management Education students (OTME) in colleges of education in Delta state for employability. Two research questions guided the study. The population of the study consists of all the 28 OTME lecturers in the three (3) colleges of education in Delta State. There are Federal college of Education (T), Asaba, College of Education Warri, and College of Physical and Health Education Mosogar. There was no sample, because the population was manageable. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire, developed on a four point rating scale. The instrument was validated by two experts from two colleges of Education in Delta State. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha correlation Method, and a coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. Twenty eight (28) copies of the validated instrument were administered by the researcher and two OTME lecturers as research assistants. Out of the twenty eight instruments administered, twenty seven were retrieved which was used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that, hard skills and soft skills are highly required by OTME students for employability on graduation. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the curriculum of OTME at the colleges of education level be reviewed to accommodate the hard and soft skills as part of the course content for employability.

Keywords: Skills, OTME, Employability, Colleges of Education

Introduction

Education is a bedrock and instrument for economic and social transformation, technological and economic sustainability of any nation. Education generally empowers and develops the citizenry to acquire skills and knowledge that would prepare them for the world of work. One of the educational subject areas that can be acquired in institutions of higher learning is Business education. Etonyeaku in Nwube (2019), sees business education as a formidable force that would equip individuals with appropriate skills, knowledge, attitudes, abilities, and competencies that would lead to suitable economic development. One of the main objectives of business education is to empower students with desirable skills, knowledge and values to become gainfully employed or to be self-reliant upon graduation (Nwagu and Nwankwo, 2016). Business education has three major specialized subject areas, they are; Accounting Education, Marketing Education and



Office Technology and Management Education. According to Oyinkoye and Oluwalola (2010), Office Technology and Management Education is a new nomenclature that emerged and replaced the former Secretarial Studies Programme and was introduced by the National Board for Technical Education in 2004. They emphasized that the replacement is meant to make the programme and its recipients more ICT complaint and to adequately fit into the world of work appropriately, where equipment and new machines are emerging daily. Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) is an aspect of business education programme, a specialized course of study offered in Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities (Olumese and Ediagbonya, 2016). Office Technology and Management Education curriculum is aimed at producing graduates who would be able to effectively manage the electronic driven office, and be equipped with secretarial and office skills for employment in various fields of endeavor. Yamme (2020), noted that modern offices are equipped with brand new business models, complex technology, right digital tools that connect and support employees for improved productivity. These new methods of performance in office duties as a result of technological changes in office environment call for adequate training and preparation of prospective graduating Office Technology and Management Education students to acquire knowledge, skills, competencies and experiences needed to perform above board in these 21st century modern offices. This is because; no worker excels in work place with adequate and relevant skills.

Ojo and Akhademe (2016) state that, OTME programmes are designed to equip students with office skills for employment in various field of human endeavor. These specific skills include knowledge, skills, and competencies that will enable them successfully hold positions as secretaries, managers and secretarial administrators in both public and private sectors of the economy. It also exposes students to industrial experience thereby, affording them the opportunity to practicalize their skills, and to develop in the students an occupational intelligence that will make them versatile and adaptable to the changing situation in the world of work. To achieve these objectives, the OTME curriculum at the college of education level must emphasize and inculcate in the students' employability skills that are relevant and required to function effectively in this modern day technological world.

The colleges of education in Nigeria are the "train-the-trainers" colleges as they are responsible for the production of middle manpower and teachers who will teach at the primary and junior secondary school levels. The colleges as stated in Federal College of Education Act (1986, No. 4) are to perform the following functions: to provide full time courses in teaching, instruction and training in technology, applied science, humanities and management; to conduct courses in education for qualified teachers; to arrange conferences, seminars and workshops relative to the fields of learning specified in "a" above and to perform other functions as in the opinion of the council may serve to promote the objectives of the college. To achieve the above functions, colleges of education programmes especially OTME should strive to equip the recipients with necessary skills that will make them employable on graduation (Odozie, 2019).

Skills are seen as proficient, capacity and competence, appropriate for a particular job, and has to do with expertise knowledge and creative resources to a level of mastery



(Faderein Inalegwu, 2016). To acquire skills, an individual needs to obtain basic training or knowledge level related to the task to be performed whether formal, informal or a combination of the two. Boytziz (2010) in his view, describes skill as the ability to demonstrate a system and sequence of behavior that is functionally related to attaining a goal. However, skills can be referred to as the ability to do something well, usually gained through training or experiences that is needed. These skills when acquired would make OTM graduating students employable or self-reliant. The uncomfortable truth is that, colleges of education seem to have failed in their mandate of addressing the future of her OTME students. The scenario is that, those skills that employers seek in employees are not being taught or are taught half hazard during their training which makes OTM students a round hole in a square hole, employers of labour expect employees to be technologically incline and generally versed in their choice of profession because there is a correlation between hiring a graduate and acquisition of employability skills. These skills are referred to as employability skills or "work readiness". The acquisition of these skills in the words of Mike (2014), brings with it such benefits as being self-employed, ability to create diverse job opportunities, and reduction in crime rate. On the other hand, failure to acquire these skills or poorly acquired lead to unemployable graduates and for those employed, are at best under-employed and are paid peanuts in comparison with what they would have deserved to earn if well placed in work place. This can only be achieved if the OTME students are properly trained.

Employability skills are core skills that is expected from an applicant that quest for job in the labour market. It is referred to as a saleable skill that any graduating student is supposed to possess. OTME students in higher institutions in Delta State are expected to be above board in their field of study, but the reverse is the case. Ali, Lang, Zainol, and Manser (2012), expressed that OTME graduating students lack adequate employability skills needed by employers of labour to be able to meet the 21st century modern office.

Skills required of OTME graduating students are high critical thinking skills that enable (OTME) graduating students to remember, understand, apply, create, evaluate and analyze knowledge/information. It includes competencies to apply hard skill and soft skill useful in achieving professional aspirations and organization goals. These hard and soft skills are further divided into technical element and behavioral elements (Noe, Hollenbeck and Gerhart, 2015). Technical elements or hard skill are used as a basis for the development of educational curriculum and future profiling of jobs and the technical functions that, public and private organizations desire most. Hard skill according to Kennedy (2016), are the skills OTME graduating students require each day to perform a job or task for example computer skill, or procedural knowledge applied in office job. Dennis and Jimmy (2011), see hard skills as the core competences and knowledge required from OTME graduating students for employability in modern day office such as the skill to operate office equipment, keyboarding, navigate word processing, compose messages, use stylus keyboard in shorthand writing, take minutes of meetings accurately, data analysis with computer package, protect documents with code.

Soft skills which is also referred to as behavioral or communication element, include attitudes and approaches applicants take to their work place which will enable them collaborate on team work. Daudu, Abidin, Sapuan and Rajadurai (2012), define soft skill as a cluster of personal qualities, habits, attitudes and social grace that indicates that an employee will be obedient and compatible to work with.



Soft skill has nothing to do with employees knowledge, rather it is the behavior that employee exhibit at one situation or the other at work environment. Moreover, many researches have been carried out on skills required of students in some subject areas, the works of Audu, Abdulkadir and Adul (2013), Mike (2014), Kennedy (2014) amongst others. It was observed that non-of this study was on OTME students. This is the gap this study intends to fill.

Statement of the Problem

It is not a gain saying that, the major source of livelihood today is the possession of saleable skills by the prospective graduating students especially the students of OTME department from colleges of education in Delta State. Office Technology and Management Education offers set of instruction in this direction as it is a skill course. But the researcher observed that, OTME students do not graduate with adequate skills that are needed for employment in today's modern office. Audu, Abdulkadir and Abdul (2013), corroborated this in a recent survey research carried out, that over 40 million graduates are unemployable into the industries because of lack of technical and vocational skills required for jobs available This is an indication of the insignificance skill acquired in the programme offered in schools to the employment needs of individual learners . Based on this, there is need for OTME program to accommodate adequate and relevant skills that will enhance the competencies, knowledge and abilities of the students to be able to fit into the 21st century office and be able to perform optimally. Therefore, it is pertinent for the study to x-ray the skills required by Office Technology and Management Education students in Colleges of Education in Delta States for employability.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain the skills required by OTME graduating students in Colleges of Education in Delta State for employability. Specifically, the study sought to determine;

1. Hard/technical skills required of OTME graduating students in Colleges of Education in Delta State for employability.
2. Soft/behavioral skills required of OTME graduating students in Colleges of Education in Delta State for employability.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do OTME students in colleges of education in Delta State require hard/technical skills for employability?
2. To what extent do OTME students in colleges of education in Delta State require soft/behavioral skills for employability?

Methods

The design for the study was descriptive survey. According to Abimbola (2014), descriptive survey design is a research design in which the entire population or representative of a sample is studied by collecting and analyzing data from a group of respondents through the use of questionnaire. This design is suitable for this study because the researcher used questionnaire to sought opinion of respondents. This study was carried out in Colleges of Education in Delta State. The population of the study consists of 28 OTME lecturers in both Federal and State owned colleges of education in Delta state.



These are Federal College of Education (Tech), Asaba (15), College of Education Warri (7), and College of Physical and Health Education, Mosugar (6). All the 28 OTME lecturers in the above Colleges were used for the study because the population was manageable hence, there was no sample. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Skills Required by OTME Students in colleges of education for employability Questionnaire (SROTMGSEQ). The questionnaire was subjected to face validity by three experts from OTME departments in the above mentioned institutions used for the study. The Cronbach Alpha Method was used to measure the degree of consistency and it arrived at 0.81 which showed that the instrument was reliable. The instrument was structured on a four (4) point rating scale, with responses categories as Very Highly Required (4), Highly Required (3), Moderately Required (2) and Not Required (1). The questionnaire was administered by the researcher which made it possible to have high return rate, out of the twenty eight (28) questionnaires administered, 26 were retrieved indicating 93% return rate which was used for data analysis. The research questions were answered and analyzed using mean and standard deviation, any response from 2.50 and above were taken as the criterion mean value of acceptance, while any response below 2.50 were not accepted.

Research Question1: To what extent do OTME students in colleges of education in Delta State require hard/technical skills for employability?

Table 1: Mean rating of the responses of OTME lecturers in Colleges of Education in Delta State on the hard/technical skills required of OTME students for employability. (N= 26)

S/N	Hard/technical skills required by OTME students	X	SD	Remarks
1.	Ability to operate word processing applications	3.19	0.79	Required
2.	Ability to access, start and boot the computer system	3.42	0.79	Required
3.	Ability to mail merged documents	3.15	0.80	Required
4.	Ability to operate Microsoft excel and prepare accounting information effectively	3.19	0.74	Required
5.	Ability to protect documents using code	3.37	0.73	Required
6.	Ability to use power point for presentation	3.39	0.74	Required
7.	Ability to use graphic and design flyers	2.92	0.84	Required
8.	Ability to use desktop publishing	2.85	0.95	Required
9.	Ability to take shorthand dictations and transcribe same using computer	2.85	0.91	Required
10.	Ability to organize online video conference	3.19	0.73	Required
11.	Ability to access the e-mail	3.38	0.79	Required
12.	Ability to take minutes accurately during meetings	3.27	0.81	Required
13.	Ability to Paginate and print documents	3.35	0.78	Required
14.	Proficiency in typing skills	3.46	0.75	Required
15.	Analytical skill	3.27	0.71	Required
16.	Record Management skill	3.27	0.76	Required
Grand Mean		3.04		Required

Note: X= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N= Number of Respondents



The data presented in table one (1), shows that the mean ratings of all the respondents range from 2.85-3.46 which are greater than the cut-off point value of 2.50 on the four(4) point rating scale. This indicates that, the 16 items on hard/technical skills are required of OTME students upon graduation for employability in any organization. The standard deviation values of the 16 items on the table, range from 0.71 – 0.95 which signifies that the responses of the respondents are close to one another and the mean.

Research Question 2: To what extent do OTME students in colleges of education in Delta State require soft/behavioral skills for employability?

Table 2: Mean rating of the responses of OTME lecturers in Colleges of Education in Delta State on the soft/behavioral skills required of OTME students for employability. (N=26)

S/N	Soft /behavioral skills required by OTME students.	X	SD	Remarks
1.	Compatibility skill	2.96	1.01	Required
2.	Positive attitude towards colleagues	3.32	0.89	Required
3.	Ability to manage office stress without transfer of aggression	3.15	0.77	Required
4.	Telephone skills	3.27	0.76	Required
5.	Leadership skills	3.84	0.87	Required
6.	Motivational skill	2.96	0.77	Required
7.	Confidentiality skills	3.58	0.83	Required
8.	Listening skills	2.96	0.90	Required
9.	Problem solving ability	3.08	0.87	Required
10.	Decision making ability	3.04	0.76	Required
11.	Communicative skill	3.39	0.90	Required
12.	Self-confidence skill	3.19	0.79	Required
13.	Adaptive skill	3.15	0.82	Required
14.	Managerial skill	3.04	0.85	Required
Grand Mean		2.74		Required

Note: X= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N= Number of Respondents

The data presented in table two (2) revealed that the mean ratings of all the respondents range between 2.96-3.58 which are greater than the cut-off value of 2.50 on four (4) point rating scale. The grand mean is 2.74. This indicates that, the fourteen (14) identified items on soft/behavioral skills are required by OTME students upon graduation for employability. The standard deviation of the fourteen (14) items ranges from 0.76-1.01 which implies that the responses of the respondents are close to one another and the mean.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in table 1 agreed that hard/technical skills are required by OTME graduating students for employability. All the items on hard/technical skills received mean scores above 2.50. The grand mean of 3.04 indicated that OTME lecturers in Colleges of Education in Delta State agreed that OTME graduating students require hard/technical skill for employability in any organization. This finding is in line with Ojo and Akhademe (2016), who found out that hard/technical skills are required for employability in the electronic office. This is because the ability to use hard/technical skills to process



information, which is the bedrock of office functions, was rated high in the frequency table. Acquiring up to date hard/technical skills in the area of business cannot be overemphasized considering its importance. Hard/technical skills just like other sphere of life, have actually had impact on the operations of modern offices due to rapid changes in science and technology today.

More so, from the findings in table two (2), lecturers in colleges of education in Delta State agreed to a high extent with a grand mean of 2.74, which indicates that soft/behavioral skills are very much required by OTME graduating students for employability which is in line with Daudu, Abidin, Sapuan and Rajadurai (2012), who affirmed that, soft/behavioral skills are very essential for the employability in the automated offices. Soft/behavioral skills are one of the skills that an employee must adequately exhibit, because the very life of an organization is tied to one form of communication or the other which are part of soft/behavioral skills. Kennedy (2016), also indicated that employers require workers who are equipped not simply with hard/technical know-how but also with the ability to create, analyze and transform information and interact effectively with others.

Conclusion

Education generally empowers and develops the citizenry to acquire skills and knowledge that will prepare them for the world of work. It is the process of leading and initiating individuals to acquire necessary skills, facts, knowledge, and attitudes that will enable them to work and coexist with others as useful and productive members of the society. OTME is a programme that is designed to equip students with office skills for employment in various fields of human endeavor. The findings of this study revealed that hard skills and soft skills are very much required by OTME students for employability on graduation. Therefore, it is necessary for the OTME curriculum to be reviewed to accommodate hard and soft skills which are requirements for employability.

Recommendations

1. Government at the federal and state levels should constantly organize training and retraining programmes for Office Technology and Management lecturers on hard and soft skills so that they can effectively and efficiently inculcate such skills on their students upon graduation for employability.
2. School authorities and stakeholders in education should make adequate provisions of facilities required for the inculcation of these soft and hard skills for colleges of education teachers and students.
3. The curriculum of OTME at the colleges of education level should be reviewed to accommodate the hard and soft skills required for training students for employability.

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