



ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN THE OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

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Abstract

The alarming rate of unemployment in Nigeria has necessitated the change in the name and curriculum of secretarial studies to Office Technology and Management to enable graduates of OTM meet with the trends and advancement in modern technology. This has created entrepreneurial opportunities for graduates of OTM. This paper is a literature review aimed at identifying entrepreneurial opportunities in the OTM programme. These opportunities were discovered to abound in the areas of ICT, desktop publishing, website design and management, electronic commerce etc. The OTM programme also equips youths with vital skills needed for entrepreneurial success. These skills were found to include human relations skills, time management skills, etc. The researchers consequently recommended among others, that there should be training and retaining of academic staff of OTM departments to enable them acquire and update their skills in the areas of ICT, desktop publishing, website designing etc.

KEYWORDS: *Entrepreneurial opportunities, OTM programme.*

Introduction

The Polytechnic education in Nigeria was established to impart the youths with practical and employable skills. Regrettably however, the contrary seems to be the situation. Teaming number of polytechnic graduates are unemployed and jobless. This scenario is not far-fetched from the fact that they were ill-equipped with entrepreneurial skills in the course of their education.

The polytechnic education in Nigeria as in other parts of the world was established with a view to imparting relevant and necessary work skills to prospective students. Every course of study in Nigeria polytechnics has potentials for entrepreneurship. It is, however, regrettable that most Nigerian youths, who attend polytechnics, lack entrepreneurial skills which could make them to be employable or self-employed/self-reliant after their graduation from school. Kitzer (2007) defined entrepreneurship as a process in which individuals pursue opportunities, fulfilling needs



and wants through innovations, together with the attendant risks. According to Klaipeda Business School (2009) Entrepreneurship is defined as the main skill necessary in order to conform to the conditions of the ever-changing knowledge and information society. Esene (2010) defined entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investments, establish and run an enterprise successfully. The author further stated that the concept of entrepreneurship has been associated with several activities concerned with the establishment and operation of business enterprises. These activities as opined by the author include identification of investment opportunities, decision making as to the opportunity to exploit, promotion and establishment of business enterprises, aggregation of scarce resources required for production and distribution, organizing and management of the human and material resources for the attainment of the objectives of the enterprises, risk bearing and innovation.

Obviously the effective performance of the above activities is critical to the birth, survival and growth of the business enterprises. Thus, entrepreneurship is a vital factor. Nwanaka and Amaechule (2011) are of the view that Nigeria's social and economic problems will be drastically reduced if students are given adequate vocational training in skills, raw materials, machineries and equipment.

Polytechnics play a vital role in the educational, scientific and technological progress of Nigeria. They are established to train and produce the technical manpower necessary for the execution of the Nation's development plans, goals and strategies. This is a role which they have effectively played since the establishment of the first polytechnic, Yaba College of Technology, in 1947. (exceed.ucoz.com/index/polytechnics_in_Nigeria/0-151). Polytechnic education is one of the systems of tertiary education in Nigeria which offers programmes at National Diploma and Higher National Diploma levels mainly for the production of Technicians, Technologists and Entrepreneurs to meet the needs of the world of work. Self employment (entrepreneurship) is an undertaking in which an individual creates and manages an enterprise for personal, social, developmental and economic purposes. It entails planning, organizing and coordinating activities and resources necessary to manage an enterprise.

The Office Technology and Management education offered in the Polytechnics emphasizes the acquisition of skills needed to manipulate office machines and serve as supporting staff to management of organizations where they are employed. (Igbinedion 2012). Government in collaboration with UNESCO reviewed the secretarial education curriculum in polytechnics with a view to keeping pace with modern realities with emphasis on technology revolution thereby renaming the course from Secretarial Studies to Office Technology and Management. Office Technology and management is an efficient, effective, productive and functional education which leads to self employment,



self reliance, paid employment and consequently, self actualization (Okoro and Amagoh (2008).Office Technology and Management is a programme designed to equip students with secretarial skills for employment as office managers in various organizations. Students in the programme will be offered professional, foundation and general education courses, which will enable them, acquire vocational and interpersonal skills in Office Technology and Management for effective work competencies. (UNESCO – Nigeria Project 2004).

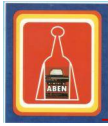
Unfortunately, enrolments into Office Technology and Management programme in the Polytechnics have not been encouraging over the years because many parents still consider it as one which is meant for underachievers. (Sanusi 2011). The Department of Office Technology and Management was established to train and lead students to the acquisition of effective technical skills and work competence as well as general work skills which are very paramount to the beneficiary's business and social interactions with others. Thus, the programme is designed to equip students with secretarial skills for employment in diverse fields of human endeavors including being self-employed after graduation.(<http://www.federalpolyede.edu.ng/otm.htm> Therefore, one can infer that successful Office Technology and Management graduates are equipped and thus encouraged to develop a desire for self-employment rather than dependency on white collar jobs..

The Nigeria education system has for a long time been producing graduates who leave school depending on acquiring white collar job. The federal government however mandated the study of entrepreneurship education by all undergraduates in tertiary institutions nation wide (FGN 2004).

Self employment and self reliant are two concepts that currently enjoy pride of place in the nation's schedule of things. This is because Nigeria has come to realize the importance of pragmatic and effective education for self reliance. It carries with it, the pride of being one's own master and the singular ownership of the fruits of one's enterprising initiatives (Ezeahurukwe, 2015)

Entrepreneurial opportunities in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Ojukwu and Ojukwu (2006) identified ICT as the acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination of vocal, pictorial, textual and numeric information by a micro-electronic based combination of computing and telecommunications.



The opportunities in the area of ICT are Establishment of Business Centers

Business centers exist in urban/sub-urban areas and have contributed immensely in creating self employment for many OTM graduates thereby curbing unemployment and, contributing to the nation's economic development and survival. (Alpha, 2012).

Keyboarding, document creation, editing, formatting, paper set up operations, saving, previewing and printing are some of the basic skills required by OTM graduates who wish to venture into this enterprise. It begins with the knowledge of ability to boot the computer. The acquisition of these basic skills will enable the entrepreneur to operate computer software applications such as Microsoft word, Page makers, Microsoft excel etc.

Modern office equipment/facilities like computers connected to the internet, photocopiers, scanners, duplicating machines telephones/GSM phones are required and utilized to enhance the various services provided by business centers. Speed and accuracy in producing documents and provision of other services is the tool and background as this is what differentiates OTM graduates from others who venture into this enterprise. An OTM graduate who runs a business center owes his customers quality services. This when achieved will lead to economic survival in the midst of soaring unemployment.

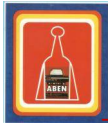
Establishment of Computer Training Centers

The skill acquired through OTM training offers the recipients opportunity in establishing computer training centers. These centers offer training and retraining and orientation for newly employed staff of establishments that have no training facilities to enhance their job performance in this era of ICT. Also many young school leavers opt for computer training to acquaint them with knowledge of ICT which has become necessary to fit into the current global world.

Establishment of Cyber Cafés

The world has been shrunk into a global village thereby increasing the need for individuals' quest to be connected to the rest of the world. Netpreneurship or internetpreneurship is the ability to start and manage a small business based exclusively on the internet (Spencer and Pruss, 2000). The authors opined that website is one of the most crucial tools for on-line business transactions and it can be used to sell products and services online. A competent Office Technology and Management graduate can engage in e-business like selling e-book, e-zines, tickets, software design and art etc.

Cyber cafés provide people with the opportunity to browse the internet at a cheaper rate. It provides users opportunity of utilizing services like sending e-mails, e-learning, on-line checking of results, on-line research, on-line application etc.



Cyber cafés also provides users with the opportunity of downloading and uploading of information through the internet.

Entrepreneurial Opportunities in Data Processing

Wikipedia (2013) defines a data processor is an individual who processes data. Data processing is any process undergone by a computer programme to enter data, summarize, analyze or otherwise convert data into usable information. This process may be automated and run on a computer. It involves the processes of recording, analyzing, sorting, summarizing, calculating, disseminating and storing data. Typically, data processing system manipulates raw data as input to produce information as output. It went further to define Data processing as a sequence of operations on data to convert it into useful information. Information is a vital aspect of any business as no business can thrive without information.

The course ICT office applications II offered at ND and HND levels offers OTM graduates knowledge of data entry, processing and analyzing services through the use of computer applications such as Ms Excel. The skill obtained through this course therefore creates self employment opportunity in offering data processing services to companies and the public.

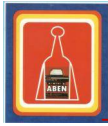
Entrepreneurial opportunities in IT Consultancy

The OTM programme through training in managerial and ICT courses equips graduates with skills which can enable them establish and manage consultancy companies to assist growing firms to establish electronic office, records management procedures, and supply ICT and other office facilities/equipment to such firms. This is another self employment opportunity created through the study of Office Technology and Management.

Entrepreneurial opportunities in the area of Desktop Publishing

Desktop publishing involves the application of computer software to format and combine text, data, photographs, charts and other graphic art into prototypes of pages and other documents that are printed. It gives users opportunity of designing, creating graphics that accompany text, convert photographs into digital images and manipulates texts and images to display information in an attractive format.

Azuka (2013) defined desktop publishing as a modern printing process that combines personal computer and design software to create and edit layout for producing all kinds of materials such as reports, books, magazines, brochures, flyers newsletters etc. The author further stated that desktop publishing is the use of electromechanical equipments like the computer, telephone, internet and other gadgets for the collection,



analysis, processing, storage and retrieving of data/information for the attainment of a particular objective in all aspects of life.

Desktop publishing is gradually replacing the tedious traditional printing process which was time consuming and expensive. The application of the computer as a designing and publishing tool enhances the production of high quality publications.

Graduates of OTM have self employment opportunities in establishing and running of desktop publishing centers where the production of items such as invitation cards, calendars, brochures, logos, engraving on gift items, flyers, letter heads, business cards etc can be produced for individuals, governments, corporate bodies, organizations etc.

Entrepreneurial opportunities in the area of Website Design and Development

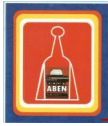
With the internet being an instrumental tool in the world of marketing it is important that businesses are able to create, maintain and develop websites. Although web design has a fairly recent history, it can be linked to other areas such as graphic design. However web design can also be seen from a technological standpoint. It has become a large part of people's everyday lives. It is hard to imagine the Internet without animated graphics, different styles of typography, background and music. Web design refers to both the aesthetic portion of the website and its usability. Web designers use various design programs such as Adobe Photoshop to create the layout and other visual elements of the website. Walter (2001) defined web design as a term normally used to describe the design process relating to the front-end (client side) design of a website including writing mark up. The author stated that it is a grey area as it is covered by web development. Lisbeth (2007) stated that web designers are responsible for the visual aspect, which includes the layout, colouring and typography of a web page.

The Office Technology and Management Programme equips students with skills in courses such as Web page Design at the ND level and Advanced Webpage Design at the HND level which would enable them establish and operate their own website design/development companies.

The knowledge and application of the following Webpage design attributes enable Office Technology and Management students to design attractive websites:

Application of various Fonts: These are set of printable text characters in a specific style and size. The application of various font styles and size enhance web page design.

Application of Colour: The clientele and the purpose determine the choice of colour. It ranges from simple black and white to multi colour designs which convey the personality of an individual or the brand of an organization.



Layout: Depicts the pattern in which the graphics are arranged in the world web. The key role is to enable users view information they require at a glance. It is also concerned with the maintenance of balance, consistency as well as the integrity of the design.

Graphics: Graphics design is defined as an interdisciplinary problem solving activity that combines visual sensitivity with skills and knowledge in the areas of communication technology and business.

HTML Coding: Office Technology and Management students are taught about HTML coding, CSS, JavaScript, etc. (Lisbeth 2007). These enable them design attractive web pages.

The knowledge of web page design enables OTM graduates acquire skills which lead to specialization in the structuring and organization of visual information to aid communication and orientation. Web page design process which is a problem solving process requires substantial creativity, innovation and technical expertise. Those who possess this expertise can venture into web site design, online advertisement, online publication, web development, database administration and IT consultancy.

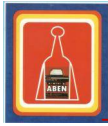
Database Management Services

Database administration according to Haigh (2006) is the function of managing and maintaining database management systems (DBMS) using software like Ms Access, Oracle, My Structured Query Language (SQL), IBM DB2, Microsoft SQL server, etc. Graduates of OTM can venture into this enterprise to offer database management services to companies in the areas of installation, configuration, upgrading, administration, monitoring and maintenance of databases.

Database administrators apply database software to store and manage information. They ensure that the database stored are backed up regularly, stored effectively, and secured from unauthorized access. The course Database Management System offered at the HND level exposes OTM undergraduates to skills in Database Administration and Management.

Entrepreneurial opportunities in Electronic Commerce

The concept of the virtual office has to some extent come to stay. Virtual office according to Agomuo, (2014) is the capability of performing office functions in non traditional office setting and telecommuting which is an office work practice where the worker does not travel to the office or meet with clients or customers daily in the office but receives and gives information using varieties of telecommunication resources. The success of the virtual workplace and telecommuting depends on the entrepreneur's ability to carry out business electronically. Agomuo (2014) defined electronic commerce as a



modern methodology that addresses the use of information technology as an essential enabler of business, supporting both internal and external business activities. External electronic commerce is concerned with the use of information technology to support business interaction with the market place while the internal electronic commerce deals with the use of information technology to support internal processes, functions and operations of business.

Electronic commerce is the exchange of goods and services through the use of internet resources. This includes any business transaction that takes place via digital process over the network (Osuala 2004). The author went further to say that since it holds that production of goods and services is not complete until they get to the final consumer, the speed required to reach the consumers scattered all over the local and international markets can only be achieved through the use of modern electronic information technologies. Dissemination of today's marketing information relies heavily on electronic commerce for effective reaches.

Electronic commerce therefore, comprises primarily of the distributing, buying, selling, marketing and servicing of products or services over electronic system such as internet and other computer networks hence the various acquired acronyms of online commerce like e-commerce, e-market, e-sales, e-business, etc.

Agomuo, (2014) identified the services conducted through e-commerce to include, retail businesses that sell products to consumers, service providers that provide and sell services to consumers, auctioneers that create a market place for products and services, and business-to-business commerce. Retail transactions make up the largest part of e-commerce in that consumers can now find computers, automobiles, clothing, books, music, airline and event tickets, food, and just about anything else on the internet. The author further went on to classify types of e-commerce into four as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a. Product transactions | b. Service transactions |
| c. Auctions | d. Business-to-business transactions. |

The increasing cost of office space and unemployment among the teeming Nigerian youths has paved way for OTM graduates who possess skills in electronic commutation to venture into this enterprise through knowledge and skills acquired during their OTM training.

Entrepreneurial skills Imparted by the OTM Programme

Entrepreneurship education has contributed immensely to job creation and reduction of unemployment in Nigeria. Nwangwu (2007) articulates the objectives of entrepreneurial education at the tertiary level to include offering functional education for youths to enable them to be self employed and self reliant, providing graduates with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel



business opportunities, offering graduates adequate training in the acquisition of skills that will enable them to meet the manpower needs of the society.

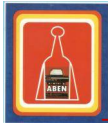
The OTM programme enables the OTM students acquire certain vital skills which are required for entrepreneurial success. These skills include:

Human Relations Skills: Buzzle (2011) stated that people in human relations interact overtly, face to face or even anonymously. Human relations occur between people who feel each other's explicit or implicit physical or emotional needs in some ways. The entrepreneur according to the author most learn how to relate with people to enable him be successful in his business. He posits it that human relation is needed in enterprises since it enhances the entrepreneurs maintenance of harmonious relationship among individuals, to work effectively as group members, build team work among colleagues, encourage cordial relationship between the entrepreneur and his customers and enhance productivity towards achieving organizational goals and objectives.

Risk Management Skills: Risk management is the considerations and decisions taken on the ways of preventing uncertainties thereby minimizing the occurrence of risk (Adidu and Olannye 2006). The authors are of the opinion that it concerns the identification of risks inherent in a business, categorizing them according to their importance to the business and knowing the best way to reduce or avoid such risks. Entrepreneurs are risk takers whose qualities include the ability to manage risks associated with business. Risks can be managed through avoiding risks, risk retention and transfer of risk (Akhideno, 2004). According to the author, avoiding risks means that the entrepreneur can avoid risk by deciding against the procurement of certain assets or not developing certain projects because of known or predicted risks involved.

Time Management Skills: Samson in Ugwuanyi (2014) defined time management as a set of principles, practices, skills, tools, and systems that help one to use ones time to accomplish what he wants. The author further stated that it teaches someone to manage his time effectively and make good use of it. Organizational effectiveness is impaired when entrepreneurs are poorly organized thereby not managing their activities in relation to time. The foundation of good time management starts with personal goal setting and developing priorities. By prioritizing what is most important to someone, time management allows him to spend quality time doing important things that add value to his life (Ugwuanyi, 2014).

Independence: The major drive that leads one to become an entrepreneur is the desire to be independent. Entrepreneurs do not need to depend on government or the private sector for employment. They rather create wealth by venturing into businesses of their own thereby becoming self reliant and to some extent employers of labour, thereby contributing to curbing unemployment.



Creativity and Innovativeness: Entrepreneurs need to have the ability to create and build something from practically nothing, through creating value by pulling together a unique package of resources to exploit an opportunity (Singh and Sharma 2011). According to the authors, the need of the time is to empower people technically through acquisition of skills to cope with the changing times and applying the skills acquired in setting up and sustaining enterprises.

Persistence and Perseverance: They do not give up in the face of ups and downs, not discouraged by difficult challenges. They remain committed to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives which they have set. Through determination and persistence, they change their vision and aspirations into reality.

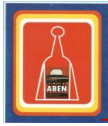
Conclusion

From the literature reviewed, various entrepreneurial opportunities exist through the study of OTM. These opportunities are found in the areas ICT desktop publishing website design and management, electronic commerce, among others. The OTM programme also equips graduates with vital skills required for entrepreneurial success. These skills include; human relation skills, risk management skills, time management skills etc.

Recommendations

Based on the literature reviewed, the following recommendations were made.

1. Office Technology and Management departments should be provided with adequate equipment and facilities like computers, scanners, photocopiers internet facilities to enable the youths upon graduation, be equipped with adequate skills to run entrepreneurial ventures of their own.
2. Government should provide and create an investor –friendly environment to enable the sustenance of small/medium scale enterprises.
3. There should be training and retaining of academic staff of OTM departments to enable them acquire and update their skills in the areas of desktop publishing and website designing.
4. Workshops and seminars should be organized for entrepreneurs by the various government training agencies to enable sustenance and success of entrepreneurs. This will in turn enhance self reliance and economic development.



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