



## **MICROSOFT PUBLISHER APPLICATION COMPETENCIES POSSESSED BY STUDENTS OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT FOR SELF-RELIANCE IN KOGI STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*This study sought to ascertain the level of Microsoft Publisher application competencies possessed by office technology and management (OTM) students for self-reliance. One purpose of the study and one research question guided the study while one null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study employed a descriptive research design. The HND students of 2019/2020 academic session in the two government owned polytechnics in Kogi State constituted the population for the study while the HND II (final year) students were purposively sampled for the study. The observational method was used to collect data. The instrument was face and content validated by three Senior Lecturers in the Department of Business and Entrepreneurship Education, Kwara State University, Maleta. A reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. The mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions. The hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study show that students moderately possessed Microsoft Publisher competencies. The result of the research hypothesis shows that the t-Cal value of 1.65 is less than the table value of 1.98. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained. This level of competencies possessed have great implications for OTM programme in Kogi State as it justifies the opinion in many researches that graduates of the Nigerian higher education institutions are not adequately competent enough to take to self-reliant ventures. The study therefore recommended that Management of the Polytechnics in Kogi State should recruit adequate number of competent lecturers for effective teaching and learning of Microsoft Publisher application.*

**Keywords:** *Microsoft Publisher, competencies, office technology management, self-reliance*

### **Introduction**

The high level of graduate unemployment has been a source of major concern all over the world. In Nigeria, the unemployment rate is said to be growing in geometric progression (Nwankwo & Ifejiofor, 2014). Stakeholders have often questioned whether educational institutions are effectively meeting the needs of the society. Office Technology and Management (OTM) programme which was considered a lucrative programme of study is not left out of the menace (Ejeka, Ebenezer-Nwokeji & Adaku, 2017; Ogungboyega, 2019). The goal of tertiary education is to contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training as well as to enable its recipients acquire both physical and intellectual skills, competencies and knowledge which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2012) makes clear the need for functional, relevant and practical



oriented education for the acquisition of appropriate skills and development of competencies as equipment for the individual to contribute to the development of his/hersociety.

Microsoft Publisher is one of the Microsoft office applications included in the Office Technology and Management curriculum. It is a desktop publication which is an introductory application for creating and publishing marketing materials. According to Agbongiasede (2014), competencies in this aforementioned application are necessary for OTM students who wish to be self-reliant and setup a private business through entrepreneurship venture. He adds that with this application, at graduation, OTM students can start business centres where the skills acquired can be put to good use to earn a living without searching for the elusive white collar jobs. In view of the forgoing, office technology and management programme in the Polytechnic is expected to offer students adequate training in the operations and usage of desktop publishing in order to enhance self-reliance.

In order to understand the relationship between Microsoft Publisher application and self-reliance of OTM students, it is imperative to consider the Trait and Factor Theory on which the study is hinged. Frank Parsons is considered as the Father of the vocational guidance movement. He initiated the trait and factor theory in 1909. The theory which is also known as the matching theory posits that the better the fit between the individual and the occupation, the better the satisfaction and success. The theory states that occupational decision making occurs when people have achieved an accurate understanding of their individual traits (aptitudes, interests, and personal abilities; skills, competencies, knowledge of jobs) and the labour market, and have made an objective judgment about the relationship between their individual traits and the labour market. The key assumption of the theory is that it is possible to measure both individual skills and the attributes required in particular jobs, which can then be matched to achieve a 'good fit'. It is when individuals are in jobs best suited to their abilities, they perform best and productivity is highest (Ifejika, 2015).

Trait and Factor theory is relevant in the assessment of the Microsoft Publisher application competencies possessed by OTM students for self-reliance, in the sense that, these students are expected to possess certain competencies necessary for self-reliance in the world of work. Thus, without the possession of these competencies, their expectation of being economically self-reliant will not be feasible. Parsons' theory helps to put a peg on whether the level to which the Microsoft Publisher application competencies possessed by the OTM students is in congruence with their capacity to be self-reliant.

Self-reliance in the views of Umoru and Nnaji (2015) is the ability of an individual to establish a business of his own instead of working for another person. They add that, it is the ability for independent decision making. In the same vein, Ibrahim, Adamu and Ibrahim (2018) consider self-reliance synonymous with self-sufficiency. It means doing things for ourselves rather than having things done for us. They further highlight that self-reliance is the personal initiative in the ability and effort to identify, harness and manage effectively and efficiently the personal and collective resources, human or natural in the immediate surroundings in order to uplift one's or a people's life quality, standard and condition of existence.

In a nutshell, self-reliance refers to the reliance on one's capabilities; knowledge, skills, competencies abilities to improve life or an individual depending on his/her own resources; skills, competencies, knowledge, etc. for economic gains instead of being an employee. Thus, a self-reliant person is an individual who relies on oneself or on one's own powers and resources, depending less on other people in the management of human and material resources.

Microsoft Publisher is one of the commonly utilised desktop publishing applications. Desktop publishing helps produce textual document, manipulate text, sentences, paragraphs store and retrieve text and get printed texts or documents that are publishable. It also help users in creating fliers, posters, pamphlets, text documents and it is seen as a perfect replacement for the use of the archaic stencil based rolling machine. Desktop publishing and graphic design makes documents look better and more presentable. But beyond that, it enhances visual communication and streamlines the process of disseminating information of all kinds. It is also the method of file preparation that ensures file print properly so that the communications get out in a timely manner.



In addition to the above, Microsoft Publisher application competencies are needed for the preparation of academic brochures, admissions, graduations, conferences and meetings invitation cards and programmes. The Microsoft Publisher terminates the problem of multiple typing, re-typing and reprinting huge numbers of materials and enables secretaries to print the needed materials and documents without delay and waste of too many materials.

Competency in Microsoft Publisher is reflected in students' ability to set page size, ability to set page margins, ability to create text areas, ability to text frames, ability to column widths, ability to create column spacing, ability to use various font styles, ability to use various font sizes, ability to import text files, ability to import images, ability to design publication. ability to design brochure, ability to design pamphlet, ability to use lines, ability to use border features, ability to save publication, ability to save master pages, and ability to print composite among others.

Umukoro (2014) observes that the implication of the objectives of the components of the Microsoft Publisher course specification is that its recipients are expected to be imparted with skills that will enable them to create fliers, brochures, pamphlets, typeset for printing firms, etc. The author adds that it is disheartening to note that, majority of OTM graduates being churned out today lack the requisite set of skills needed in today's labour market to carry out the earlier mentioned tasks which according to him, has inhibited the graduates from either being gainfully employed or self-reliant.

This gap in learning outcome could be traceable to various factors among which is epileptic nature of power supply. Computers and projectors cannot be operated without power supply; unfortunately, it has been observed that most institutions where OTM programmes are mounted are plagued with irregular power supply without alternative sources of power. Thus, only the theoretical aspects of the curriculum are taught leaving out the practical aspect, a situation that leaves students half-baked and incompetent (Nwaokolo, 2014). Studies indicate that OTM lecturers consider themselves fairly competent in database management system, desktop publishing and webpage design (Okoro, 2014). In addition, Okafor (2017) asserts that some of the possible causes of student's lack of competency in desktop publishing could be attributed to lack of access to computer for practice and poor teaching methods. The author reveals that, in some institutions, desktop publishing is still being handled by lecturers from Computer Science Department who are lacking in the appropriate teaching methodology.

OTM students competent in Microsoft Publisher could be employed by government and private organisations; newspaper houses, publishing firms, etc. High competency in desktop publishing equips and qualifies office managers to become desktop publishing professionals who could establish and run desktop publishing centres where the production of items such as invitation cards, headed papers, business cards, brochures, certificates, etc. can be produced for individuals, governments, corporate organisation, etc. (Ezeahurkwe & Ameh 2017; Habila, 2013). More so, they could set up training outfits to those interested in acquiring the skill.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In 2004, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in collaboration with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), came up with a comprehensive content review of the curriculum for secretarial studies programme for polytechnics in Nigeria for a critical content overhaul of the then existing curriculum. Two critical elements were incorporated into the curriculum; Microsoft office applications and entrepreneurship education. The programme developed following the review became known as Office Technology and Management (OTM). One of the key purposes was to promote self-reliance of its graduates in the face of adverse economic situation in the country.

It has been close to two decades since Microsoft Publisher application has been incorporated into the Office Technology and Management curriculum in an attempt to ensure that students of the programme acquire the requisite skills needed to function effectively and efficiently in modern workplaces. However, it appears that, only minimal impact has been felt in this regard as graduates of the programme reportedly have had to proceed for retraining to use these applications effectively. Indications from previous studies, point to the fact that most graduates of this programme are economically unengaged despite the presumed acquired skills; graduates are not well prepared for the world of work as the Microsoft Publisher competencies possessed are inadequate to venture into self-reliant endeavours (Oduwale, 2015). This continued low level of



Microsoft Publisher Application competencies acquired by students if not promptly addressed, may deprive OTM graduates of the opportunity to embark on self-reliant venture rather than searching for the illusive white collar jobs. In view of the foregoing, this study aims at identifying the gap between competencies possessed and competencies expected with a view to filling it.

### Research Question

To what level are students of Office Technology and Management competent in Microsoft Publisher application for self-reliance?

### Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female office technology and management students on the level of Microsoft Publisher application competencies possessed for self-reliance.

### Method

The descriptive survey research design was used. According to Otache (2016) descriptive research design describes the elements or subjects being studied. Descriptive research design is therefore considered suitable for this study because it is centered on individuals and their competency levels. The population of the study consists of 120 participants; 60 HND II students of the Federal Polytechnic, Idah and 60 HND II students of Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja for the 2019/2020 academic session.

The instrument for data collection was direct observation. Data was obtained using a 12-item observation form developed by the researcher to measure the level of competencies titled: Levels of Microsoft Publisher Application Competencies Possessed by Office Technology and Management Students for Self-reliance (LMPACPOTMSS) to measure the levels of students' competencies. The choice of this instrument is in line with the recommendation of Gold (1958) that, observation method is often deemed the most appropriate method of assessment for practical skills. A four point modified Likert numeric rating scale of Highly Possessed (HP) - 4, Moderately Possessed (MP) -3, Fairly Possessed (FP) -2, Not Possessed (NP) -1, was used. The instrument was validated by three Senior Lecturers in the Department of Business and Entrepreneurship Education, Faculty of Education, Kwara State University, Malete.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation co-efficient (r) formula was used to determine and obtain the correlation coefficient of 0.72 for the instrument. The value obtained is in agreement with the views of Isyaku (2010) who states that an instrument is reliable if the value of correlation is close to 1. Where the observed significant value from the SPSS statistical output for t-test obtained or computed is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected, otherwise the null hypothesis was retained. Out of the 120 expected participants only 89 presented themselves for observation. Therefore the analysis will be based on the 89.

### Presentation of Data

Data collected were analysed in the following tables:

**Table 1:** Mean responses and standard deviation of observation on Office Technology and Management Students' Level of Competencies Possessed in Microsoft Publisher Application for Self-Reliance (N=89)

| S/N | Demonstration of Participant on Microsoft Publisher Competencies Possessed | X    | SD   | Remarks              |
|-----|--|------|------|----------------------|
| 1   | Loading MS Publisher   | 3.24 | 0.82 | Moderately possessed |
| 2   | Saving a Publication   | 3.01 | 0.71 | Moderately possessed |
| 3   | Importing Text   | 2.72 | 1.47 | Moderately possessed |
| 4   | Creating Text Columns  | 2.43 | 1.43 | Fairly possessed     |
| 5   | Creating a New Master Page   | 2.22 | 1.13 | Fairly possessed     |
| 6   | Finding and Replacing Text   | 2.56 | 1.35 | Moderately possessed |



|                            |                            |             |             |                             |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 7                          | Creating a Drop Cap        | 2.34        | 1.42        | Fairly possessed            |
| 8                          | Changing paragraph spacing | 2.45        | 1.36        | Fairly possessed            |
| 9                          | Inserting Table            | 2.48        | 1.32        | Fair possessed              |
| 10                         | Creating Graphics          | 2.12        | 1.02        | Fair possessed              |
| 11                         | Inserting Word Art         | 2.54        | 1.89        | Moderately possessed        |
| 12                         | Printing Publication       | 3.34        | 0.60        | Moderately possessed        |
| <b>Grand Weighted Mean</b> |                            | <b>2.62</b> | <b>1.21</b> | <b>Moderately possessed</b> |

Source: Field Study, 2020

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of OTM students rating in each of the items in Microsoft Publisher application competencies. The maximum means computed are in loading, saving and printing MS Publisher (items 1, 2 and 12) while the minimum mean are in creating graphics and creating new master page (items 5 and 10) The grand weighted mean of

2.67 and standard deviation of 1.21 indicates that OTM students moderately possesses competencies in Microsoft Publisher application. The relatively wide range of the standard deviations shows that the participants were quite far from each other in the observations made.

**Table 2:** Summary of t-test analysis showing the difference between mean ratings of male and female office technology and management students in Polytechnics on the level of Microsoft Publisher application competencies possessed for self-reliance

| Comparison variables (Gender) | N  | S    | $\bar{x}$ | Df  | t-Cal | t-Tab | Decision |
|-------------------------------|----|------|-----------|-----|-------|-------|----------|
| Male                          | 48 | 0.23 | 2.60      | 119 | 1.65  | 1.78  | NS       |
| Female                        | 62 | 0.34 | 2.58      |     |       |       |          |

$P < 0.05$  \*NS  $\equiv$  Not Significant

Table 2 shows that the t-calculated value of 1.65 is less than the table value of 1.78 at 0.05. level of significance. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the level of Microsoft Publisher application competencies possessed by male and female OTM students for self-reliance. The null hypothesis is thereby retained.

### Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the study reveals that OTM students are moderately competent in MS Publisher. This finding is at variance with result of the study carried out by Okoro (2014). According to him, OTM lecturers consider themselves fairly competent in desktop publishing consequently student are not adequately taught. Similarly, the result is contrary to the findings of the investigation carried out by Okafor (2017). The author asserts that some of the possible causes of student's lack of competency in desktop publishing could be attributed to lack of access to computer for practice and poor teaching methods.

The study also indicates that male and female office technology and management students comparatively were rated alike in their Microsoft Publisher application competencies possessed for self-reliance. This is in agreement with the results of contemporary studies which show that gender gap in computer application competencies is gradually closing up, especially among students in tertiary institutions as evident in a study conducted by Ozoemelen (2010). He adds that the gender gap in spreadsheet and desktop Publisher have narrowed significantly. More so, the finding is also in agreement with the study carried out by Ndinechi and Gude (2014) that reveal that there is no significant difference in male and female competencies in Microsoft office applications (MS Publisher inclusive). Similarly, Okoye (2018) corroborates this finding when he underscores that competencies in office applications possessed is not gender sensitive as it was evidently shown in a study carried out by the author.



## Conclusion

Based on findings of the research work, the study makes the following conclusion:

Findings of the study show the students barely possess MS Publisher in moderately. In view of the economic situation, and the fact that government and private organization alone cannot fully address the unemployment challenges in the country, the need for OTM students to achieve high competency in Microsoft publication cannot be overemphasized. When the level of MS Publisher competencies possessed by graduates of the programme is inadequate, it erodes the drive to launch into self-reliant ventures which is one of the purposes for the curriculum review.

Considering the numerous economic opportunities available to MS Publisher competent graduates, it is therefore crucial for urgent steps to be taken by stakeholders to ensure that students of the programme are effectively taught to achieve high competency levels.

## Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that Management of the Polytechnics in Kogi State should recruit adequate number of competent lecturers for effective teaching and learning of Microsoft Publisher application.

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