

INFLUENCE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM CONTENT ON ACQUISITION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AMONG GRADUATES OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT IN RAMAT POLYTECHNIC MAIDUGURI, BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the influence of business education curriculum content on acquisition of employability skills among graduates of office technology management in Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State. The study adopted survey research design involving the use of questionnaire. One research question and hypothesis guided the study. The population for the study was 273 office technology management graduates of 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 academic sessions in Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri. A total of 82 sample was purposively selected using convenient sampling technique. A four-point rating scale structured questionnaire titled: Influence of Curriculum Content on Acquisition of Employability Skills Among Graduates of Office Technology Management Questionnaire (ICCAESGOTMQ) and was validated by two research methodology experts in Faculty of Education, University of Maiduguri. The reliability estimates of .82 was achieved for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient after a pilot test, and each of the items was assigned four responses options of Highly Influenced, (HI-4points), Moderately Influenced (MI-3points), Slightly Influenced (SI-2points) and Not Influenced (NI-1points). The instrument was administered personally by the researcher. Mean was used to answer the research question while the standard deviation was used to determine the closeness of or otherwise of the responses from the mean. Independent sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The study revealed that office technology and management curriculum content significantly influenced acquisition of employability skills among graduates of office technology management, and there was no significant difference in mean responses of male and female graduates of office technology and management in Borno State on the extent of influence of office technology and management curriculum content on acquisition employability skills. The study recommended that office technology and management curriculum content should be redefined to includes skills of ICT era that will match the demand global labour market.

Keywords: Office Technology Management, Curriculum Content, Employability Skills, Graduates and Labour Market

Introduction

Education lies at the heart of every society. It is a key and a vital element in the broad development of the nation's youth's capacity to address and solve difficulties. Education forms the

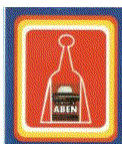


basis for the proactive and positive economic, social and political changes in the society. (Olawolu & Kaegon, 2012). Business education continuously builds on the knowledge, skills, values and attitude learnt at the lower phases of education. The greatest weapon against poverty is education of the youths. (Nwangwua, 2007). Nwangwua further explains that any form of education that does not equip its beneficiaries with skills to be self-reliant is a faulty system of education. Kaegon (2009) believes that business education must be ready to offer their recipients functional education that will enhance performance as well as assist them to contribute meaning to the economic development of the country.

Business education is that aspect of vocational education which provides skills, knowledge, competencies and attitudes necessary for effective employment in a specific business occupation. So, business education being an aspect of vocational education emphasized teaching of skill acquisition. According to Udo (2015) business education is a comprehensive activity-based occupational education programme that is concerned with the acquisition of practical skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in any chosen business occupation. Business education as a discipline is expected to expose its recipients to diversified curricula, hence, it is that type of education that inculcate in its recipients' attitudes, knowledge, skills, values that is required in the business world. This is a means of producing a healthy, literate self-reliant citizens that would create wealth for human development, when they become self-employed, thereby resulting to sustainable nation's development at large.

Office Technology and Management programme (OTM) is an educational programme offered under the Business Education programme in Nigeria Universities and Colleges of Education, as well as a programme of study in the Polytechnics in Nigeria. It is a comprehensive activity based educational programme that is concerned with the acquisition of office vocational skills, understanding, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in office management occupations. It is an efficient, effective, productive and functional education which lends itself to self-employment, self-reliance, paid-employment and consequently self-actualization. According to the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) (2008), the objectives of OTM programme in the Polytechnics include equipping the students with knowledge, competencies and specific skills that enable them to successfully hold positions as secretaries, managers in public and private sectors of the economy and to be self-employed. The programme exposes students to industrial work experience to practice their skills and equally develop students' potentials for further academic and Professional pursuit and to acquire occupational intelligence that will make them versatile and adaptable to changing situations in the world of work. In order to achieve the stated objectives, students of the programme are exposed to courses in education and in their special areas which include foundation courses, professional courses, entrepreneurship development and supervised industrial work experience scheme (SIWES). The training is to enable recipients to acquire vocational and interpersonal skills for effective work competencies.

Office Technology and Management Programme as a course of study in Polytechnics is recognized as a tool for economic and social empowerment of any nation. Section 1 of the Nigeria National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) states that there is the need for functional education to be relevant, practical and built towards the acquisition of skills for the development of the entire society. This implies that teaching and learning, especially in Polytechnics have to be geared towards inculcating values, acquisition of skills and competencies necessary for social, cultural, economic and technological development. Modibbo and Hamman (2020) stated that office technology and management programme is the office education programme in the polytechnic, which used to be secretarial studies programme. The change was approved in 2004 by National Board for Technical Education which is the supervisory body of Polytechnics in Nigeria. This change necessitated a comprehensive review of the curriculum. The new objectives, theoretical and practical contents of the new curriculum were geared towards integrating students of OTM programme into the evolution



of technology. The programme in Polytechnics could be seen as a curriculum response to the demand of changes in technology and indeed computerized workplace, which is aimed at the production of highly proficient breeds of office administrative personnel that would coordinate high office information systems, and provide technical skills in discharging their office duties. The introduction of the programme came in line with National Policy on Education (2013) that emphasizes the provision and acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical that will help individual to live and contribute to the development of the society.

In the view of Ezeani and Eze (2013), for Office Technology and Management education which is part of business education to fulfill its promises to society, attain its objectives and meet the expectation of various stakeholders such as individuals, government, establishment, conglomerates and parastatals, it should join the race for continuous strive for excellence and quality in all ramifications. According to them, this will amplify its advantages over general education, justify the capital-intensive nature of this field of study and enhance its sustainability especially in view of the various technological challenges of the 21st century and diverse implications it has on the world of work. Furthermore, Udo (2008) stressed that OTM is a comprehensive activity-based educational programme that is concerned with the acquisition of office technology and management skills, understandings, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in secretarial and office management occupations.

Office Technology and Management curriculum according to Okoro cited in Okereke, Michel, and Brown (2018) is designed to build in the learner different skills and knowledge that would enable learners earn a living by becoming an employee, entrepreneur, employer and self-employed. The curriculum of Office Technology and Management has the potential of equipping the recipients with skills in business management, business communication, records management, secretarial studies, office practice, advertising, information communication technology among others (Sunday & Akekunle, 2018), which are all necessary for the promotion and survival of business enterprises capable of salvaging unemployment.

Curriculum refers to all students' school experiences relating to the improvement of skills and strategies in thinking critically and creatively, solving problems, working collaboratively with others, communicating well, writing more effectively, reading more analytically, and conducting research to solve problems (Brown, 2006). Onyi (2012) remarked that the curriculum consists of all the learning experiences or educational programs planned for students under the auspices of the school, according to Silva (2009) stated that the concept of what students can do with knowledge, rather than what units of knowledge they have, the essence of 21st-century skills. Curriculum refers to a group of courses or planned experiences in proper sequence of topics designed to prepare an individual for efficient service in a specific vocation, it is the offering of a socially valued knowledge, skills and attitudes that is made available to students through a variety of arrangements in schools, colleges or the universities or other arrangements (Adebayo & Lawal, 2011). *Unemployment has become an issue of major concern in different countries of the world. Thus, this problem can be combated through skill acquisition especially in business education being one of the majors in vocational courses that offers numerous skills to its recipients.*

Skill acquisition is the systematic and sequential development of skills that promotes efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of a specific job. In order to combat unemployment in the country, there is need for students of business education to be acquainted with the skills in business education programme. Therefore, Business education students should be willing to cultivate keen interest in acquiring the skills and competencies in the business education programme; Students should be committed and dedicated to the practical contents of business education programme.

Skill acquisition is the main focus of business education programme for self-reliance and more employable motives. Skill does not depend solely upon a person's fundamental, innate



capacities but must be developed through training, practice and experience an individual acquired. Skill according to Bolt-Lee and Foster (2003) is the art of possessing the ability to power, authority, or competency etc. to do the task required of an individual on the job. It is the ability to be trained on a particular task or function till you become an expert on the skill. Omidiji and Ogwu (2019) defined skill acquisition as a systematic and sequential development of skills that promotes efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of a specified job. Skill acquisition is the process of developing capacities through all levels of education and training, occurring in formal, non-formal, and on-the-job settings, which enable individuals in all areas of the economy to be fully and productively engaged in livelihoods and to have the capacity to adapt their skills to meet the changing demands and opportunities of the economy and labour market especially in the e-world (Enang & Okute, 2019). Some of the needed skills in business education for one to be self-reliant include communication skills, reading skills, and manipulative skills. Skill acquisition has been describing by many as the recipe for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by creating avenue for employment, thereby creating job opportunities and wealth creation. Gumbari in Mshelia (2019) asserts that skill acquisition in Nigeria should be perceived as a catalyst to increase the rate of economic growth, create job opportunities, reduce import of manufactured goods and decrease trade deficits that result from such import. Ezeji and Okorie as cited in Nwanaka and Amaehule (2011) assert that while stressing the importance of skill acquisition in the national growth, emphatically contended, "that Nigeria's social and economic problems will drastically reduce if people are given adequate vocational training in skills, raw materials, machineries and equipment". It is only with skilled men that materials can be harnessed, manipulated and transformed into products with quality skill acquisition programme. Barret (2008) also listed the following as skills required in entrepreneurship:

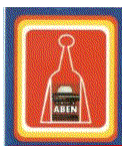
Technical Skills: These include writing, oral communication, monitoring environment, technical business management, technology, interpersonal, listening, ability to recognize, network building, management style, coaching and being a team player.

Business Management Skills: These include planning and goal setting, decision making, human relationship, marketing, finance, accounting, management, control, negotiation, venture, launch and managing growth.

Personal Entrepreneurial Skills: These include inner control discipline, risk taking, innovative, change oriented, persistent visionary leader and the ability to manage change. However, this involves the personal needs of the entrepreneur as well as helping employees in new skills development which will be of immense benefit to the business.

Global trends in education have shown that students of various disciplines including business education students leave school without acquiring the prerequisite skills that foster individual, community or national development (Chertavian, 2014). Hence, a fundamental feature of business education is to prepare individuals for the acquisition of the needed skills to survive in a highly competitive labour market. Being an integral part of vocational and technical education (Amoor, 2014), states that business education not only prepares individuals for responsible citizenship, it also imbues in them the capacity to generate new ideas that could foster economic growth. In the vein where business education has not achieved this ideal, high rate of unemployment, weak economy and low technological development persist (Eze & Okorafor, 2016). It has therefore become pertinent that business education students acquire the skills commensurate with the programmes of the course, to display the applications of professional skills in job market and self-reliance.

As the nature of work continues to change, business education becomes increasingly important for all students. It is obvious that if young people are to take their rightful place in society as productive and responsible citizens, they should have the chance to acquire skills and principles of business as they relate to their personal and professional lives. It was on the basis of this background that this study seeks to examine the influence of office technology and management



curriculum content on acquisition of employability skills among graduates of office technology and management in Ramat polytechnic Maiduguri, Borno state, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

One of the challenges facing Nigeria youths is the problem of finding saleable/employable skills after graduation. This endemic challenge has plunged the nation into massive unemployment as a result of over reliance on the government for gainful employment. Many business education graduates are unemployed or rather under-employed due to mismatch between labour market demand and the graduates' competencies. Indeed, the most prominent challenge for the youths is the issue of developing saleable skills with business orientation in the course of their academic pursuit, which is capable of placing them on the brink of self-reliant endeavours. To achieve a self-reliant system there is the need for paradigm shift in the business education curriculum of learning institutions to accommodate employable skills of 21st century that is capable of making business education graduates engaged in business activities or gainfully employed in the labour market and be able to compete in the global market. This backdrop has created a gap between the objectives of business education programme and employment opportunities for graduate of business education in Nigeria.

The acquisition of employability skills of graduates of office technology and management is at the center of the learner's effectiveness and office technology and management curriculum content. However, Modibbo and Hamman (2020) observed that most of the office technology and management graduates are performing below the expectation of employers and that most of the graduates are idle due to lack of proper skill acquisition. These proves raised a tremendous concern to both educational managers, employers, society and students. For business education graduates in Nigeria to avail themselves of the post economic recession job opportunities, it is imperative to redefine and boost the business education programme curriculum content to include employability skills that match with current trends in business environment. This paper is carried out to determine the influence of office technology and management curriculum on acquisition employability skills and identify relevant skills that will help office technology and management graduates to be job creators instead of job seekers for post economic recession.

Research Question

To what extent does office technology and management curriculum content influence the acquisition of employability skills among male and female graduates of office technology and management students of Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri in Borno State?

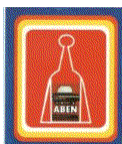
Research Hypothesis

One hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀: Office technology and management curriculum contents has no significant influence on the acquisition of employability skills among male and female graduates of Ramat polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State.

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design involving the use of questionnaire. The study was conducted at Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri, Borno State, North-East, Nigeria. The population for the study was 273 business education graduates of 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 academic sessions from Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri. A total of 82 sample was purposively selected using convenient sampling technique. A four-point rating scale structured of ten-items questionnaire titled: Influence of Curriculum Content on Acquisition of Employability Skills Among Graduates of Office Technology Management Questionnaire (ICCAESGOTMQ) and was validated by two research methodology



experts in Faculty of Education, University of Maiduguri was used to elicit responses from the respondents. The reliability estimate ranging of .82 was achieved for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient after a pilot test. Each of the items was assigned four responses options of Highly Influenced, (HI-4points), Moderately Influenced (MI-3points), Slightly Influenced (SI-2points) and Not Influenced (NI-1points). The instrument was administered personally by the researcher. This was done after relevant information about the problem being researched was explained to the respondents. The mean was used to answer the research question while the standard deviation was used to determine the closeness of or otherwise of the responses from the mean. Positive decision rule for the study was established at a mean of 2.50 and above while any mean less than that was regarded as negative. Independent sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. Hypothesis of no significant difference was retained when the observed probability value was greater than or equal to the value at 0.05 level of significance. Where the calculated probability value was less than the value at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Results

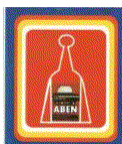
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Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation of responses on the influence of office technology management curriculum content on acquisition of employability skills of graduates of office technology management.

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
1	Communication skills	3.11	1.12	Moderately Influenced
2	Problem solving skills	3.24	0.95	Moderately Influenced
3	Numeracy skills	3.34	0.53	Moderately Influenced
4	Critical thinking skills	3.30	0.68	Moderately Influenced
5	Teamwork skills	3.18	0.77	Moderately Influenced
6	Decision making skills	3.19	0.62	Moderately Influenced
7	IT/Computer	3.25	0.84	Moderately Influenced
8	Planning and organizing skills	3.29	0.72	Moderately Influenced
9	Marketing skills	3.34	0.50	Moderately Influenced
10	Creativity skills	3.36	0.49	Moderately Influenced
	Weighted Average	3.26	0.72	Moderately Influenced

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Data obtained in Table 1 show the responses of office technology and management graduates of Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State on the influence of office technology and management curriculum content on acquisition of employability skills. The result of the analysis revealed that all the constructs outlined influence acquisition of employability skills of graduates of office technology and management with a weighted average mean of 3.26. The close range of the standard deviations valued at 0.72 showed that the respondents were not very far from each other in their responses. This implies that the office technology and management curriculum content influenced acquisition of employability skills among office technology and management graduates exposed to the programme curriculum content is moderately.



Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Office technology and management curriculum contents has no significant influence on the acquisition of employability skills among male and female graduates of Ramat polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State.

Table 2: Summary of independent sample t-test of the difference between the mean responses of male and female office technology and management graduates on the influence of office technology and management curriculum content on acquisition of employability skills

Group	N	X̄	SD	Df	t _{cal}	P-value	Decision
Male	44	3.22	0.26	80	-1.265	0.210	Not Rejected
Female	38	3.31	0.43				

P>0.05

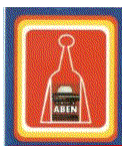
Source: Field Survey, 2022.

The data in Table 2 reveal that there are 44 male and 38 female graduates of office technology and management. The male and female graduates' responses showed that office technology and management curriculum content moderately influence the acquisition of employability skills by graduates of office technology and management of Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State (Mean= 3.22, SD=0.26) and (mean = 3.31, SD =0.43). Their responses are close to the mean as the standard deviations are very low. The Table revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female graduates of office technology and management on the influence of office technology and management curriculum content on acquisition office technology and management education graduates did not differ in their responses regarding the influence of office technology and management curriculum content on acquisition of employability skills in Borno State. Though there was a slight difference between their mean responses with male graduates having higher mean responses, but the difference was not statistically significant (Mean = 0.09).

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that acquisition of communications skills, problem solving skills, numeracy skills, critical thinking skills, teamwork skills, decision makings skills, IT computer skills are moderately influenced by office technology and management curriculum content. Also, office technology and management curriculum content influenced the acquisition of planning and organizing skills, marketing skills and creativity skills moderately. The findings further revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female business education graduates on the influence of office technology and management curriculum contents on acquisition of employability skills among graduates of office technology and management from Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State ($t_{80} = -1.265$. P>0.05).

This finding vindicates Awaiyiga, Onumah and Tsamenyi (2010) for asserting that the acquisition of communication alongside technical and functional skills are indispensable if accounting education graduates' desires to be self-fulfilled. On the other hand, the finding upholds the averment of Baker (2013) that teamwork skill is a "cannot do without" skill for marketing option graduates if they must secure employment and progress in it. The finding equally agrees with Ekwe and Abuka (2014) who contemporaneously stressed the abiding need for accounting education graduates to be sufficiently inundated with employability skills. Furthermore, the finding was in consonance with the plausible belief of Romanus and Arowoshegbe (2014) that prospective accounting education graduates must consciously strive to acquire among other skills organizational abilities. To support



the findings of the study is Udo (2015), he opined that business education is a comprehensive activity-based occupational education programme that is concerned with the acquisition of practical skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in any chosen business occupation. Equally Business education curriculum according to Okoro cited in Okereke *etal.*, (2018) is designed to build in the learner different skills and knowledge that would enable learners earn a living by becoming an employee, entrepreneur, employer and self-employed. The curriculum of business education has the potential of equipping the recipients with skills in book-keeping/accounting, business management, marketing, business communication, records management, secretarial studies, office practice, marketing, advertising, information communication technology (Sunday & Akekunle, 2018), which are all necessary for the promotion and survival of business enterprises.

Conclusion

Based on the findings in this study, it was concluded that office technology and management curriculum content have a positive significant influence on acquisition of employability skills among graduates of office technology and management in Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State. Going by this pleasing revelation, it will be increasingly inspiring for to redefine and boost office technology and management curriculum content to suit technological advancement in skills acquisition so the goal of business education will be fulfilled and graduates to of office technology and management job creators, self-employed and self-reliant if no desperate moves are made to skim off the slags in the curriculum and reposition the program for the better.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study was recommended that office technology and management curriculum content should be redefined and enriched in line with global trends in labour market and employability skills in ICT era considering its influence on acquisition of employability skills for graduates of office technology and management in Borno State and Nigeria at large.

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