

Career Readiness Skills Required of Office Technology and Management Graduating Students for Job Placement in Technological Era

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Abstract: Office Technology and Management (OTM) career ready graduates should be able to navigate his or her pathways in order to achieve a fulfilling financially-secured and successful career in an automated office, in relation to the main objective of OTM programme of work oriented educational program which aims at skills acquisition for paid employment, self-reliance and employer of labour as specified by NBTE. This study titled Career Readiness Skills Required of OTM graduating Students for Job Placement in Technological Era, adopted a descriptive survey design. Two research questions and a null hypothesis were highlighted to guide the study. The population of the study was 140, which comprised HND1 = 40, HND 2 = 40 from Federal Polytechnic, Damaturu, Yobe State and HND1 = 25, HND 2 = 35 from Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri, Borno State. The population also served as the sample size because of its manageable size. A self structured 25 items closed-end questionnaire validated by three experts was the instrument used for data collection. The reliability of questionnaire was ensured through Cronbach Alpha reliability technique which yields a reliability coefficient of 0.81. Data collected was analyzed using mean rating standard deviation and t-test for testing the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significant. The findings of the research questions showed that the basic office skills are major career readiness skills required of OTM graduates in a current and knowledgeable economy. The findings also revealed that ICT skills are required of OTM graduates for workplace adaptability. Findings of the null hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses between male and female OTM graduating students on career readiness skills required of OTM graduates. It was recommended among others that OTM lecturers should do more on practical impartation of career readiness skills into 21st century OTM graduates that is, students must be provided opportunities to gain these career readiness skills and application of these acquired skills to real-world life and work situations. This will help bridge the gaps between what is learnt in schools and the reality of the 21st century workplace. It was also recommended that institutions offering OTM programmes should equip their laboratories with sophisticated technological gadgets use in modern offices for proper impartation of required ICT skills to learners for career readiness, and decent work in order to be relevant in the current labour market that is characterized by competition rapid increase graduates population.

Keyword: : Office Technology and Management (OTM), Career Readiness, Skills, Job Placement.

Introduction

No nation makes progress without education. Education is a training given to an individual in order for him or her to acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitude. It simply means a change of behaviour from negative to positive behaviour hence education is the bedrock for sustainable development. Education is recognized as one of the fundamental indicators of development and security of a nation. Education is the pivot of expected millennium national transformation hence, Nigeria education should be more of responsive shape in order to plant the nation and its continent,

Africa, on the map will need a whole lot of initiatives for new realities in paradigm creation (Nwachukwu, 2019).

The 21st century is the most advanced, sophisticated and complex era in human history because of the usage of technologies. The period is characterized by high-most aided introduction of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In the current knowledge economy, ICT is considered a critical and current tool in preparing and education individual to acquiring skills, knowledge, values and attitudes in the global system where knowledge is the global currency while ICT is the driver (Dixon, 2019). According to Davies (2019), the emergency of ICT and its rapid spread over the last decade has educated people so that they can continually adapt to a work of world of continuous technological innovations and made it easier for one to acquire any kind of knowledge as well access knowledge for career readiness which leads to national transformation and sustainable development. ICT is regarded as an engine for growth and tool for empowerment with profound implication on education change and socio-economic development. ICT enables utilization of information in the workplace, in the provision of public services and in the performance of the private sector (Marshall, 2019).

Noting that ICT is an essential requirement for survival and progress in the technological age hence, Marshall (2019), suggested that ICTs should be exploited into OTM programmes in polytechnics education in Nigeria to participate meaningfully in the global workplace digital enabled economy. Increasing competitiveness in the job market demands that students must possess knowledge, skills and relevant experiences that will help to set them apart from other job applicants. OTM programmes that was re-designed by National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in November, 2004 was to replace secretarial studies which has been in existence in Nigerian polytechnics since 1989. The review of secretarial studies to OTM was necessitated in order to keep pace with the recent global digital enabled economy. The introduction of OTM is in response to meet the demand of the increasing dynamics and computerization of the workplace. It is aimed at the production of highly proficient breeds of administrative personnel that would coordinate high office information system and provide technical skills with core career line functions.

The rapid advancement of technology and new innovation in career have created various career needs, wants, challenges and has opened new opportunities like e-business, e-communication, e-purchasing, e-marketing, e-finance, e-learning, e-service, e-banking etc. All these make use of electronic devices to conduct business practices on-line. These new opportunities pose enormous challenges to OTM graduates who want to fit into the contemporary OTM careers, need to possess the competencies required by employers of labour to have competitive edge over others. Career choice has been the major continent of vocational advocacy. However, preparedness to the adjacent of the openings in the area of career choice is more important than the more choice of a career. To development a career is a lifetime process encompassing the growth the change processes of childhood, through formal education at school throughout a person's working adulthood and into retirement. Career development occurs through life ad it is enhanced by lifelong learning. According to Herr, Cramer and Niles (2020), is a sequence of interaction of individuals with society, education and organization throughout their life span. The interaction, proposes, is no longer merely just a sequence of jobs but is now a story or an identity that working people build about themselves. A career can also be defined as pattern or work experiences comprising he entire life span of a person and which is generally seen with regard to a number of phases or stages reflecting the transition from one stage of life to the next.

Developing a career is as complex as personality development, which is not just a one short event. Developing a career is not just a decision that takes place at the entry point to a job, but it involves the totality of an individual's psychological, sociological and educational events which eventually results into occupational choice and other life roles. The quality of this career development significantly determines the nature and quality of individual lives the kind of people they become, the sense of purpose they have, the income at their disposal. It also determines the social and economic contribution they make to the communities and societies of which they are part. Career development requires specialized training in a particular direction or path, and this makes the role of education prominent in preparation for a career.

Career education plays a prominent role in preparing an individual to make and advance in a career path and this justifies why the role of school in career readiness is absolutely unavoidable. Career education is seen as an aspect of education and training which helps an individual to develop his fullest capacity and their potentialities in order to utilize their capacities for the benefits of society. Career education is a comprehensive educational program that focuses on an individual and prepares a person for industrial/commercial occupations.

Career readiness refers to a broader understanding of workplace skills. It also incorporates engaging workplace experiences that allow a person to apply academic and technical learning to real-world projects and problems alongside professional. This starts with career awareness and exploration and includes job shadowing internships, apprenticeships and service learning. Career readiness also involves three major skill areas which include Core Academic Skills and ability to apply those skills to concrete situations in order to function in the workplace and in routine daily activities, Employability Skills and Disposition (such as critical thinking and responsibility) that are essential in any career area, and Technical, Job-specific Skills related to a specific career pathway.

These skills allow students to enter true career pathways that offer family sustaining wages and opportunities for advancement (Career Readiness Council, 2019). An effective OTM career ready student navigates his/her pathways that connect education and employment to achieve a fulfilling financially secure and successful career. A career is more than just a job, it also includes an ever-changing global economy requires adaptability and a commitment to lifelong learning, along with mastery of key knowledge, skills and dispositions that vary from one career to another and changing over time as a person progresses along a developmental continuum, knowledge, skills and dispositions that are inter-dependent and mutually re-enforcing.

A career ready person is proficient in the core academic courses, as well as in technical topics. This foundational knowledge-based includes competence in a broad range of academic subjects grounded in rigorous internationally benchmarked standards. It also includes a level of technical skill proficiency aligned to a chosen career field and pathway, and technical learning in the context of a career. A career ready person has a good understanding of their interests, talents and weaknesses and a solid grasp of the skills and dispositions necessary for engaging in today's fast paced global economy. These according to Jimoh, Lateef and Babajide (2020), include, but are not limited to: goal setting and planning, managing transitions from schools to work and back again, and from one occupation along a career pathway to another, clear and effective communication skills, critical thinking and problem solving, working productivity in teams and independently, effective use of technology and ethical decision-making and social responsibility.

Employability skills have often been cited by employers as the skills most critical to workplace success in the 21st century economy. These skills and competencies amongst which include: career and self development, communication, equity and inclusion, leadership, professionalism, team work technology and critical thinking represent what students need to know, and be able to demonstrate in a variety of ways, to be successful in the specified career area.

Statement of the Problem

Increasing competitiveness in the job market demands that students must possess knowledge, skills and relevant career experiences that will help to set OTM graduating students apart from other job applicants. OTM programmes are embedded with a conglomerate of courses inclined to development of skills and competencies. It has been observed that there are certain criteria which must be met by teachers, students and policy makers in order to achieve the overall objectives of the programmes in polytechnics in Nigeria. With the unprecedented rate of change in technology as requiring knowledge, skills and competencies of workers and creating entrepreneurs' opportunities, students need to be adequately be prepared to make career choices and acquire basic skills to enhance learning (Oduma and Ile, 2019). The introduction of sophisticated office technology equipments like computers and other information technology resources coupled with new management techniques have completely change old work habits I the office and triggered off a new business orientation which an OTM graduates of the 21st century should possessed the skills, competencies, knowledge, values and attitude (Secretary Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (2018). Critical issues requiring immediate attention include as follow: inadequate number of trained teachers in OTM programmes, poor societal perceptions, retraining of teachers on e-teaching platforms, poor industry/institutional collaborations, incessant strike actions and improper utilization of modern ICT gadgets in tertiary institutions. It is on the basis of these identified gaps that have led the researcher to investigate on Career Readiness of Graduating OTM Students for Job Placement in Era of Technology.

Research Questions

The following corresponding research questions were raised in line with specific purposes and were answered in this study:

- (1) What are the office skills required of OTM graduating students for job placement in technological era?
- (2) What are the ICT skills required of OTM graduating students for job placement in technological era?

Hypothesis:

A null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant to guide this study:

Ho – There is no significant difference in the mean responses between male and female students on career readiness skills required of OTM graduating students for job placement in technological era

Methodology:

This study adopted descriptive survey design, since it is basically an enquiry to investigate Career Readiness of OTM graduating Students in the Era of Technology. According to Ewoma-Oghene (2018), Survey research involves the assessment of attitude, opinion,

preference, perception and motivation of people. Nworgu (2018) viewed survey design as a study concern with current events with findings, describing and interpreting an existing phenomena condition/relationship between or among people by collecting and analyzing data from only a few persons or items considered to be the representative of entire group. Research design is the framework or the plan for data collection in the most objective and logical manner in order to test the research objectives (Gabasa, Wazamtu et al, 2018). The study was carried out in two polytechnics in the north east offering OTM programmes. One of the polytechnic is Federal polytechnic, Damaturu, Yobe State and Ramat polytechnic (state own) Maiduguri, Borno State. The population of the study is 140 HND 1 and HND 2 OTM students from the above stated polytechnics. The population comprised of 40 HND 1 and 40 HND 2 students from Federal Polytechnic, Damaturu, Yobe State and 25 HND 1 and 35 HND 2 students from Ramat polytechnic, Maiduguri. The population also served as sample size because of its manageable size. A 25 closed-ended constructs questionnaire tagged “Career Readiness Skills Required of OTM Graduating Students’ Questionnaire (CRSROTMGSSQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire was a 4-points rating scale of Highly Required (HR - 4), Required (R - 3), Moderately Required (MR - 2), and Not Required (NR - 1).

The drafted questionnaire was validated by three experts. One expert each from department of OTM Federal polytechnic Damaturu and Ramat polytechnic, Maiduguri, while the other one from department of Measurement and Evaluation, University of Maiduguri for content ad face validity. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, same questionnaire was administered to all 60 OTM graduating students of Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic, Bauchi. Cronbach Alpha reliability technique was then used to ascertain its internal consistency and it yielded a reliability coefficient value of 0.81 which indicated the instrument is reliable. The data collected regarding the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while the null hypothesis was analyzed using t-test. The researcher with the aid of a well trained research assistant personally administered the 140 copies of the questionnaire. 127 copies of the administered questionnaire were retrieved from respondents after two days interval in good conditions. It was 91% returned rate.

In discussing the questionnaire item, the mean scores which have 2.50 and above were regarded as Highly Required while the mean scores of 2.49 below were regarded as Moderately Required. T-test was used to test the null formulated hypothesis at 0.05 level of significant. If the probability value (p-value is equal or greater than the level of significant (alpha) then the null hypothesis is not rejected. On the other hand, when the p-value is less than the level of significant then the hypothesis is rejected.

Results:

Research Question One: What are the office skills required of OTM graduating students for career readiness in technological era?

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviations office skills required of OTM graduating students' for job placement in technological era

S/No.	Constructs on Office Skills	Mean	Std	Remark
1.	Ability to write shorthand consonants correctly	3.50	0.50	H/Required
2.	Ability to use stylus keyboard to do shorthand writing	2.30	0.57	M/Required
3.	Ability to write shorthand at a minimum speed of 80 wpm	3.51	0.64	H/Required
4.	Ability to apply the principles of vocalization position in Shorthand writing	3.42	0.75	H/Required
5.	Ability to read back fluently dictated passages at the Rate of 80 wpm – 100 wpm	3.10	0.37	H/Required
6.	Ability to use the keyboard without fixing eyes on The key	3.64	0.53	H/Required
7.	Ability to create word document on the computer	3.38	0.53	H/Required
8.	Ability to open, save, and close word document On the Microsoft office	3.49	0.54	H/Required
9.	Ability to use the cutting, copying and pasting Functions on the menu bar when working on Microsoft word	3.72	0.49	H/Required
10.	Ability to set paragraph and align text on the Microsoft office word	3.19	0.61	H/Required
11.	Ability to use the Microsoft power point for Presentation	3.67	0.49	H/Required
12.	Ability to keep detail record of account in Microsoft excel	3.56	0.50	H/Required
Grand Mean		3.37	0.54	H/Required

All constructs except construct two had mean ratings between 3.19 and 3.64 on office skills required of OTM graduating students on career readiness for job placement, which above the cut-off point of 2.50 with a grand mean of 3.37 which falls at a highly required response option. While construct two had a mean rating of 2.30 which is below the cut-off point of 2.50, which indicated that it is moderately required of OTM graduating students on career readiness for job placement. This result showed that eleven out of twelve constructs are assessed and identified as highly required of OTM graduating students on career readiness skills for job placement in this era of technology.

Research Question Two: What are the ICT skills required of OTM graduating students on career readiness for job placement in the era of technology?

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation of ICT skills required of OTM graduating students on career readiness for job placement in the era of technology

S/No.:	Constructs on ICT Skill	Mean	Std.	Remark
13.	Ability o access and navigate the computer On my own	3.44	0.53	H/Required
14.	Ability to browse and download information From the internet on my own	3.19	0.57	H/Required
15.	Ability to use e-mail effectively	3.67	0.54	H/Required
16.	Ability to use Microsoft excel to analyze Information, do basic calculations and view Data in spread sheet	3.80	0.33	H/Required
17.	Ability to use search engines to search information	3.75	0.49	H/Required
18.	Ability to chat with my family/friends etc using Yahoo chat, Google chat, Face book, Skype	3.47	0.51	H/Required
19.	Ability to download materials and save effective On my computer or external storage device	3.53	0.57	H/Required
20.	Ability to organize my e-mail, contents, schedule Using Microsoft outlook	3.42	0.54	H/Required
21.	Ability to use Microsoft grove and one note to Share notes for team projects	3.08	0.61	H/Required
22.	Ability to prepare a slide show using Microsoft Power point	3.65	0.42	H/Required
23.	Ability to make simple design to flyers, memos on Microsoft publisher	3.39	0.72	H/Required
24.	Ability to use internet banking platform	3.51	0.41	H/Required
25.	Ability to use multimedia for video conferencing During meetings	3.73	0.49	H/Required
Grand Mean		3.51	0.52	H/Required

The above table 2 shows a mean scores ranging from 3.08-3.80 and an overall mean score of 3.51 which fall at highly required response option. This implies that all constructs on ICT skills on career readiness are highly required for job placement in technological era on OTM graduating students. The standard deviation of the constructs ranges from 0.41-0.61 indicating that the respondents responses were close to one another in their options.

Table 3: T-test Analysis on the significant difference between the mean response of male and female students on career readiness skills required of OTM graduating students for job placement in a technological Era.

Variables	N	Mean	Std.	df	T.value	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Male	70	52.8	4.37	138	0.34	0.75	NS
Female	70	52.9	5.94				

The result of data analysis in table 3 above revealed T-value of 0.34 and a significance value of 0.75. The p-value of 0.75 is greater than the alpha significance of 0.05 at which it is being tested. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is hereby no rejected and this means that there is no significant difference in the mean responses between male and female students' skills required for career readiness of OTM graduating students.

Discussion of Findings:

Research Question One revealed the Basic Office Skills required of OTM graduating students such as book-keeping ability on Microsoft excel, ability to use the cutting, copying, and pasting function when working on Microsoft office, ability to set paragraph and align text on the Microsoft office, ability to use the keyboard without fixing eyes on the keys, ability to apply the principles of vocalization position in shorthand etc are identified as skills required of OTM graduating students for career readiness in the current knowledge of technological era, because all constructs had a mean scores above 2.50 which is the cut-off point and with a grand mean of 3.37 which fall at highly required responses option. This finding is in agreement with Jimoh, Lateef, and Babajide (2020) that the possession of secretarial skills will facilitate effective job performance of the office in the areas of receiving, recording, processing, analyzing and passing on business information. This finding also aligns with the submission of Dajur, Bakle and Tuamyil (2019) that secretarial skills are inevitable in every office since most business documents or correspondence are processed on the computer and other electronic office machines which have been embedded in the curriculum of Office Technology and Management (OTM) since the approval of the new nomenclature. The findings are in consonance with the finding of Uwaifo (2019) noted that OTM is a comprehensive activity based educational program that is concerned with the acquisition of office skills, understanding, attitudes work habits and competencies that are requisite for success in secretarial or office administration occupation.

Research Question Two revealed that ability to navigate the internet, ability to download materials and save effective on the computer or external storage device, ability to do online video conferencing using skype, Google handout, Yahoo messenger, ability to make simple design to flyer on Microsoft publisher, ability to use Microsoft groove and one note to share notes for team project, ability to organize my e-mails, contents, schedule using Microsoft outlook etc are assessed and identified as ICT skills required of OTM graduating students for career readiness in current knowledge economy and technological era because all constructs had mean scores above cut-off point of 2.50 and with a grand mean of 3.51 which fall at highly required response options. This finding is not far from the fact that we are currently in knowledge explosion era where internet has exploded with a boom in technology providing individual from all over the world the opportunity to communicate instantly with one another (Bellafricana, 2019). The world is now almost connected by telecommunications as well as the internet as everyone now has access to any information they want, they can learn anything, contact anyone, carryout business transactions, even set up their own business brand and all from the comfort of their couch. This finding is in

consonance with the study of Johnson, (2019) who noted that the world has become a global village due to technological gadget. In the age of globalization, liberalization and privatization the entire socio-cultural life has been totally changed. This finding is also in consonance with Bongotons and Onyenwe (2020), who asserted that ICT skills is the technology which supports activities involving the creation, storage manipulation and communication of information together with their related method management and application. According to their report it was stated that for any OTM graduating student to function well in today's automated office, she must be conversant with these modern technologies since OTM program is meant to prepare secretaries who can fit into today's modern office, the need to fully incorporate the study of ICT into OTM curriculum becomes paramount.

The finding of the hypothesis tested as shown in Table Three found that there is no significant difference between the mean responses between male and female students on career readiness skills required of OTM graduating students for job placement in technological era. This is because the result of analysis showed a significant value of 0.75 which is greater than the alpha significance value of 0.05. This result agreed with the report of Olafare, (2019) that there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students' perception on the status of vocational and technical education in curbing unemployment among youths in Nigeria.

Conclusion:

The introduction of sophisticated office technology equipment like computers and other information technology resources coupled with new management techniques have completely change old work habits in the office and triggered off a new business orientation which an OTM graduate of the 21st century should possess the skills, competencies, knowledge, values. OTM programme aims at skills acquisition for paid employment, self-reliance and employer of labour. There is therefore, the need to enhance the basic office and ICT skills existing in the course for job placement and wealth creation become a necessity. This can be achieved through effective implementation of OTM programme curriculum, employing the vital variables such as appropriate learner-centered methods, availability, accessibility and functionality of the ICT gadgets used in modern offices in OTM laboratories. It can therefore, be inferred that employers are now interested in graduates that can display a high level of career readiness skills and character traits which are needed for daily organization functions and goal attainment in a current knowledge and highly competitive economy.

Recommendations:

Based on the results of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Students should be provided opportunities to gain these basic office skills and also learn to apply them to real-world life and work situation
2. Institutions offering OTM programmes should be equip their laboratory with sophisticated technological gadgets in use in modern offices for proper impartation of the required skills unto students.

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