



DETERMINATION OF THE ADEQUACY OF PRACTICAL ELEMENTS OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME AS PERCEIVED BY GRADUATE SECRETARIES IN TARABA STATE

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to determine the adequacy of the acquired practical elements of OTM training as perceived by graduate working secretaries in Taraba State. The survey research design was adopted for the study. The studied practical trainings were classified into three, namely: ICT, Office Technology and Office Application elements. The population of the study was 75 graduate working secretaries in Taraba State. Sampling was not applied because the population was sizeable to handle. Three objectives and three research questions guided the study. A null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the opinions of the secretaries in public sector and those in private sector was tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistic. Four point response scale of Highly Adequate (HA), Adequate (A) Somewhat Adequate (SA) and Not Adequate (NA) was used to analyse the opinions of the respondents. Questionnaire with 33 construct titled Adequacy of Practical Elements of Office Technology and Management (APEOTMQ) was used to elicit data from the respondents. It was discovered that while the OTM graduates were adequate in the acquired practical elements, they were inadequate in some of the recent ICT skills occasioned by current technological development. It was therefore recommended amongst others that curriculum planners and lecturers should occasionally scan the work environment to determine nascent development that should be incorporated in the school curriculum so that graduates secretaries will continue to keep pace with computer age.

Keywords: *Practical, Elements, Office, Technology, Management, Secretaries.*

Introduction

Office Technology and Management, according to NBTE (2004) is a practical oriented programme meant to acquaint students with practical skills to enable them fit in properly in the business offices after graduation. It also equips students with



secretarial/office skills for employment in various fields of endeavour (Ekpenyong 2010). The adequacy of the practical elements such as ICT, Office application and Office technology need to be determined to ensure that the programme provides the recipients with adequate knowledge and skills required to succeed in the business world. The world is ICT driven. Computer literacy nowadays is regarded as the current literacy. The business offices of today, are equipped with high-tech machines and equipment which the graduate secretaries are expected to use effectively at work. New technologies such as scanners, computers, Xerox duplicator, android phones and laminating machines, slide presentation, Blogging, Mobile devices, iTunes, Twitter, Wikis, and so on are what is available in today's offices. The technological era is observed in the society through the use of these technologies such as career development packages, World Wide Web (www), ICT psychomotor knowledge, Global system of mobile communication (GSM), iPOD (Enobun-Nwidi, 2017). The adequacy of practical elements skills acquired by the graduates has effect on their business transactions through record keeping, calculation for accuracy, manipulation of keyboards, use of computer, use of stapler use of photocopier, use of internet and so on. It is also evident in their use of photocopier, shredder, scanner and other technologies found in the contemporary office.

The traditional offices which were filled with manual machines and equipment have become obsolete. The secretaries of today, are expected to be contemporary secretaries just like the modern offices where they are meant to serve. Where this is not so, the practical training received by the secretaries is not adequate. According to Qualman (2010) internet adoption was one of the most powerful changes at organizational and personal levels and is now catalyzing the next revolution of communication through social media. The business office of today is one characterised by different social media effects to call customers, communicate with customers and colleagues. The practical elements taught at school such as webpage design, desktop publishing and ICT should enable learners be ICT compliant. Practical skills, as integral part of OTM programme, are highly emphasised to forestall mere cognitive mastery of elements. Graduate secretaries, on completion of their studies, should have utilized a reasonable part of their time in school for the acquisition of practical skills. Graduate working secretaries ought to perform their tasks at work places in line with the acquired skills. Iwowo, Ogbiji and Ele (2017) opined that the ability to use computer is as basic and necessary to a person's formal education as reading, writing and arithmetic. They maintained that jobs become



increasingly oriented towards the use of information system (computers) in the modern office. Ntukidem (2005) asserts that today with the aid of database, information can be imputed, accessed, sorted, extracted and stored in a variety of ways by the office manager/secretary. Ntukidem stressed that as a result of this, computer has become a good electronic device, very reliable, safe and secure for ICT, and which implies the positive acceptability of computers in the 21st century office. Many organizations throughout the world have resorted to the use of computer in processing documents. In the opinions of Mamman and Nwabufo (2015) more emphasis must be placed on learning with technology. The default setting for many academics remains on teaching with technology. Runco, Heiberger and Loken (2011) support {the argument that active learning and deep interaction between students and their teachers require an extended degree of technological engagement.

Adequacy connotes the quality of being able to meet a need satisfactorily. How the practical elements are used and how they are integrated into the learning process is important for the OTM graduates survival in the business office. Motivation and student dispositions will influence their ability to engage in interactive learning through technologies. Interactive learning through smartphones and portable devices within lectures, seminars and tutorials contribute in the improvement of the students' skills and enable the practical elements to be adequate (Mamman & Nwabufo 2015). Nwabuona (2010) asserts that the revised OTM curriculum focused on combination of office information technical skills with adequate and relevant business knowledge in solving organizational problems. This is targeted towards the production of hybrid administrative professionals who will respond to the demands of dynamic and intensely computerized modern business office. Ebenezer-Nwokeji, Amasike and Dike (2018) pointed out that to meet the challenges of globalisation, it would in fact appear necessary to prepare individuals for workplace where responsibilities are constantly changing, where vertical management replaced networking, where information passes through multiple and informal channels, where initiative-taking is more important than obedience and where strategies are especially complex because of the expansion of markets beyond national borders. The authors added that education must help individuals to perform tasks for which they were not originally trained, to prepare for a non-career path, to improve their team skills, to use information independently, to develop their capacity for improvisation as well as their creativity and finally, to lay the basis of complex thinking linked to harsh realities of practical life.



According to Ebenezer-Nwokeji, Amasike, and Dike (2018) management information system is another aspect of the curriculum that gives it a global picture. This course is intended to enable students acquire the knowledge of data and information processing techniques and communication at all levels of management. Students should be able to understand systems analysis and design in a modern office. Through MIS, students are exposed to in-depth knowledge of office information system with particular emphasis to file creation, storage, management and manipulation. It is also intended to generate management reports using a modern computer software application system like Microsoft Access (MS Access).

OTM programme according to NBTE (2006) should be able to give graduates vocational skills in OTM and socio-psychological work skills for employment in various fields of endeavour. Oguejiofor and Nwogu (2014) state that professional competency means the ability to perform duties of a profession or jobs and to perform a certain task related to a job, with skill of good quality. This means that the practical elements acquired by the secretary should include habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clerical reasoning, emotions, values and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and community being served. They maintained that the office manager who is at center of information has duty of providing comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date information promptly to enable them take quality management decisions. Office automation and organizational restructuring have led secretaries to assume a wider range of new responsibilities once reserved for managerial and professional staff. New technologies in office has evolved the functions of office to rely on different types of improved and standardized equipment. A professional secretary is not only required to have theoretical and practical knowledge of the new technology but to be competent in the usage of some computer packages like excel, data base management etc. They should be competent in e-commerce, browsing the website, data protection techniques and security, and knowledge of how to use search engines (Salami, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

A preliminary survey to determine the marketability of Office Technology and Management (OTM) graduates in Taraba State revealed that many graduates of OTM are employed in both private and public organizations within the state. The



survey also revealed an avalanche of emergent new technology that adorn some of the offices, and these facilitate performance of tasks in office related duties. We recall that the present OTM programme, as against the old Secretarial Studies programme evolved as a result of technology. The need to address the challenge of contemporary technological innovation. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) conceived the OTM programme as one that would meet this challenge and therefore, designed it to acquaint students with practical skills for the contemporary offices after graduation. From the inception of the OTM programme in 2004 till date, technology has further improved and there are new developments everywhere. The adequacy of the curriculum in the light of present realities is a question that demands an answer. The need to ascertain whether those that acquired the practical training so far, based on the existing curriculum is very important. It is against this backdrop that the researchers decided to determine the adequacy of the acquired practical elements of OTM programme as perceived by graduate secretaries in Taraba State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study.

How adequate are the ICT practical element skills acquired by OTM graduate secretaries in Taraba State?

How adequate are the Office Technology practical element skills acquired by OTM graduate secretaries in Taraba State?

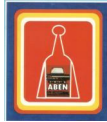
How adequate are the Office Application practical element skills acquired by graduate secretaries in Taraba State?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of the graduate secretaries in Public Sector and those in Private Sector on the adequacy of practical elements acquired by OTM graduate secretaries in Taraba State.

Methods

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 75. It was an intact population since the population was sizeable to handle. Structured questionnaire titled: Adequacy of Practical Elements of Office



Technology and Management (APEAOTMQ) was used to gather data for the study. The questionnaire contained 33 constructs in three clusters which was measured on a 4-point rating scale as follows: Highly Adequate (HA) 4-points, Adequate (A) 3-point, Somewhat Adequate (SA) 2-point and Not Adequate (NA) 1-point. The questionnaire was validated by two experts from the Department of OTM Federal Polytechnic Bali. The Cronbach alpha reliability test was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and it yielded a coefficient of 0.84. A total of 75 copies of questionnaire were administered and collected by the researchers. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data in order to provide answers to the research questions while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance with t-test inferential statistic.

Results

The data collected are presented in the following tables.

Research Question 1

How adequate are the ICT practical element skills acquired by OTM graduate secretaries in Taraba State?

Mean responses and Standard Deviation on the adequacy of ICT practical element skills acquired by graduate Secretaries in Taraba State.

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	OTM graduates can properly use the computer	3.12	0.89	Adequate
2.	Make use of data base management	3.42	0.82	Adequate
3.	Graduates can work effectively with Microsoft word	3.89	0.45	Adequate
4.	Efficiently process information	3.45	0.79	Adequate
5.	OTM Graduates can back up documents through Google Cloud	2.29	0.91	Not Adequate
6.	Work with Microsoft Excel	3.13	0.85	Adequate
7.	Can generate management report using Microsoft Access	3.01	1.01	Adequate
8.	Use iPod	3.34	0.92	Adequate
9.	Graduates can handle Mobile devices properly	3.51	0.66	Adequate
10.	Can use the World Wide Web	3.00	1.02	Adequate
11.	Graduates can use iTunes for office work	2.26	1.35	Not Adequate
12.	Graduates can make use of Bloggs, Twitter and Wikis	2.31	0.92	Not Adequate
13.	Graduates can utilize speech-text Technique to record instructions	2.43	0.80	Not adequate
Grand Mean/SD		3.01	0.87	Adequate

Source: Field Survey 2019



Table 1 reveals that respondents indicated that items 1-4 and 6-10 regarding ICT skills acquired by OTM graduates secretaries in Taraba State were adequate while items 5, 11, 12, and 13 were Not adequate with mean scores of 2.29, 2.26, 2.31 and 2.43 respectively. Respondents' response proved that ICT skills acquired by graduate secretaries in Taraba state are adequate as the grand mean of 3.01 and standard deviation of 0.87 confirmed it. From the analysis OTM graduates can properly use the computer scored a mean of 3.12, make use of data base management scored a mean of 3.42, graduates can work effectively with Microsoft Word scored a mean of 3.89, efficiently process information had a mean score of 3.45. Work with Microsoft Excel scored a mean of 3.13, Can generate management report using Microsoft Access had a mean score of 3.01, use iPod scored a mean of 3.34, graduates can handle mobile devices mean score of 3.51, can use world wide web with a mean score of 3.00. The grand mean of 3.01 indicates that findings in table 1 proved that ICT skills acquired by OTM graduate secretaries in Taraba State are adequate.

Research Question 2

How adequate are the Office Technology practical element skills acquired by OTM graduate secretaries in Taraba State?

Mean responses and Standard Deviation on the adequacy of Office Technology practical element Skills acquired by graduate Secretaries in Taraba State.

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	OTM graduates can properly use xerox duplicator	2.96	0.98	Adequate
2.	The graduates can use scanners properly	3.03	0.99	Adequate
3.	Graduates can effectively use laminating machine	3.47	0.69	Adequate
4.	Can effectively use the printer	3.50	0.51	Adequate
5.	Can use electronic calculators	3.76	0.56	Adequate
6.	Can shred papers	3.4	0.78	Adequate
7.	Can use modern devices to store documents	3.34	0.92	Adequate
8.	Graduates can make photocopies of documents	3.67	0.61	Adequate
9.	Can make minor repairs in the printer	3.12	0.89	Adequate
10.	Can make minor repairs in the computer and photocopier	3.09	0.82	Adequate
Grand Mean/SD		3.33	0.77	Adequate

Source: Field Survey 2019

The results in Table 2 show that the respondents unanimously agreed with all the items on adequacy of Office Technology practical element skills acquired by OTM graduates Secretaries in Taraba State with mean scores ranging from 2.96 to 3.76.



The findings revealed that the practical element skills acquired by Office Technology and Management graduate secretaries in Taraba State are adequate. This was approved with a grand mean of 3.33. Furthermore, the standard deviation which ranged between 0.77 and 7.75 indicate that there is closeness in the opinions of the respondents.

Research Question 3

How adequate are the Office Application practical element skills acquired by graduate secretaries in Taraba State?

Mean responses and Standard Deviation on the adequacy of Office Application practical element skills acquired by graduate Secretaries in Taraba State.

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Graduates can take initiative without being guided	3.38	0.97	Adequate
2.	Employ shorthand skill in the office	2.51	1.23	Adequate
3.	Type accurately	3.12	0.89	Adequate
4.	Use information independently	3.28	0.94	Adequate
5.	Develop their capacity for improvisation	3.00	1.02	Adequate
6.	Can lay the basis of complex thinking	3.61	0.62	Adequate
7.	Can handle harsh realities of practical life	3.34	0.92	Adequate
8.	Know data protection techniques and security	3.67	0.61	Adequate
9.	Have knowledge of how to use search engines	3.77	0.55	Adequate
10.	Be able to utilize computational skills	3.76	0.56	Adequate
Grand Mean/SD		3.34	0.83	Adequate

Source: Field Survey 2019

The result of Table 3 shows that all the respondents agreed in their responses to all the constructs in the table even though the mean score of 2.51 on employ shorthand skill in the office is not very high. This adequacy was very evident as all the mean scores were above the fixed decision value of 2.50. The standard deviation ranged from 0.55 to 1.23 which indicates low variability in the responses of the respondents. The grand mean score of 3.34 and standard deviation of 0.83 respectively reinforces this. This implies that office application practical elements skills acquired by graduate secretaries in Taraba State are adequate.

Hypothesis Testing

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of the graduate secretaries in Public Sector and those in Private Sector on the adequacy of practical elements acquired by OTM graduate secretaries in Taraba State.



Table 4: *t*-test analysis of mean differences in the mean responses of graduate secretaries in Public Sector and those in Private Sector.

Respondents	No	Mean	SD	Df	T-cal	t-crit	Decision
Public Sector Secretaries	40	3.05	0.76	73	0.96	1.95	NS
Private Sector Secretaries	35	3.18	1.25				

The result of Table 4 shows that graduate secretaries in public sector had a mean of 3.05 and standard deviation of 0.76 while graduate secretaries in the private sector had a mean of 3.18 and standard deviation of 1.25. The *t*-cal value of 0.96 with *t*-crit of 1.95 is greater than 0.05 at 0.05 level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis which stated that there no significant difference between the responses of graduate secretaries in the public sector and those in the public sector on the adequacy of practical elements acquired by OTM graduates secretaries in Taraba State was retained.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from research question one show that the respondents agreed that ICT practical elements acquired by OTM graduate secretaries in Taraba State are adequate because they agreed that OTM graduates can properly use computer, make use of data base management, graduates can work effectively with Microsoft word, efficiently process information, work with Microsoft Excel, can generate management report using Microsoft Access, use iPod, graduates can handle Mobile devices properly, can use the World Wide Web, have the technique to record instructions. This finding collaborates with the view of Iwowo, Ogbiji and Ele (2017) who opined that the ability to use computer is as basic and necessary to a person's formal education as reading, writing and arithmetic. They maintained that jobs become increasingly oriented towards the use of information system (computers) in the modern office. The finding is also in agreement with the views of Enobun-Nwidi (2017) who states that technological era is observed in the society through the use of these technologies such as career development packages, World Wide Web (www), ICT psychomotor knowledge, Global system of mobile communication (GSM) iPod.

The result of research question two revealed that OTM graduates can properly use Xerox duplicator, graduates can use scanners properly, can effectively use



laminating machine, can effectively use the printer, can use electronic calculators, can shred papers, can use modern devices to store documents, graduates can make photocopies of documents, can make minor repairs in the printer, can make minor repairs in the computer and photocopier. This finding is agreement with the opinions of Mamman and Nwabufu (2015) who state that more emphasis must be placed on learning with technology. The default setting for many academics remains on teaching with technology. Runco, Heiberger and Loken (2011) support this argument. They argued that active learning and deep interaction between students and their teachers require an extended degree of technological engagement. In agreement, Mamman and Nwabufu (2015) emphasised that interactive learning through smartphones and portable devices within lectures, seminars and tutorials contribute in the improvement of the students' skills and enable the practical elements to be adequate. Nwabuona (2010) in agreement with this noted that the revised OTM curriculum focused on combination of office information technical skills with adequate and relevant business knowledge in solving organizational problem. This is targeted towards the production of hybrid administrative professionals who will respond to the demands of dynamic and intensely computerized modern business office.

The finding of research question three proved that graduates can take initiative without being guided, employ shorthand skill and type accurately in the office, use information independently, develop their capacity for improvisation, can lay the basis of complex thinking, can handle harsh realities of practical life, know data protection technique and security, have knowledge of how to use search engines, be able to utilize computational skills. This finding is in agreement with the study of Oguejiofor and Nwogu (2014) who state that professional competency means the ability to perform duties of a profession or jobs and to perform a certain task related to a job, with good quality skills. This implies that the practical elements acquired by the secretary should include habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clerical reasoning, emotions, values and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and community being served.

Result of hypothesis testing proved that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents in public and private sectors on the adequacy of practical elements acquired by OTM graduate secretaries in Taraba State.



Conclusion

This study has established the adequacy of practical elements of Office Technology and Management programme on the graduate secretaries in Taraba State. It has been able to determine that the practical elements of ICT, Office Technology and Office Application received by OTM graduate secretaries in Taraba State are adequate. This is important because the reason for training students in these courses is to enable them perform optimally in the work place after graduation. This study, therefore has proffered answers to the problems of the study.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study the following recommendations were made:

New technologies should be provided in the modern business offices where graduate secretaries work to enable them maintain the standard on which they were trained

Although OTM graduate secretaries are adequate in the use of modern technologies, this paper recommends that they should always upgrade their knowledge in order to meet up with the demands of the ever evolving technologies.

Where there is no white-collar job coming forth immediately after graduation, graduates should engage in self-employment in order to retain the skills acquired.

Curriculum planners and lecturers should occasionally scan the work environment to determine nascent development that should be incorporated in the school curriculum so that graduates secretaries will continue to keep pace with computer age.

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