



## OFFICE SKILLS REQUIRED BY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS FOR EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE IN MODERN OFFICE

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### Abstract

*The study examined office skills required by office technology and management graduates for effective performance in modern office. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised of 254 respondents. A sample of 152 respondents made up of 64 males and 88 females HND students for 2019/2020 session was selected from OTM department of Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin and Federal Polytechnic, Offa. Office Skills required by Office Technology and Management Graduates Questionnaire (OSOTMGQ) which was duly validated with a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87 was used to gather data for the study. One hundred and fifty two copies of the questionnaire were administered and retrieved and used for the study. The data collected to answer the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The null hypothesis was tested using t-test statistics. The study found among others that office skills both of which include hard and soft skills are required by OTM graduates for effective performance in modern office which include; technology skill, internet skill, computer skill, problem solving skill, presentation skill, communication skill among others. Based on the findings, conclusion was made that for any graduate to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century office, hard and soft skills must be acquired. If these are not acquired it means that the graduates will find it difficult to perform their assigned job and the name tag of unemployable graduates would still continue to follow OTM graduates. The following were recommended among others that, polytechnic institutions should provide enabling environment for OTM programme to survive and that different types of office machines and equipment, internet facilities, computers, and other gadget and devices in line with the experiences and skills needed in modern offices should be made available for the training and preparation of the student to acquire skills, competences and knowledge as required in the modern office right from the school; there is also the need for OTM lecturers to expose students to adequate and relevant hard and soft skills which will enhance the graduates' effective performances in a modern office, because it's often said that hard skills will get you an interview but you need soft skills to get and keep the job.*

**Keywords:** Office, hard skills, soft skills, OTM, Modern Office

### Introduction

Education plays an unquantifiable role in societal, national and even global development. It is the only instrument that emancipates and safeguards the entire human rights via a balanced knowledge acquisition. Provision of qualitative education has been one of the challenges facing developing countries like Nigeria, which is a veritable tool for the development of individuals and nations. (Onasanya, Nathaniel, Laleye & Akingbemisilu, 2013). The world of work is more complex and fluid, newer approaches to work and learning are in high demand than before; this made most educational institutions to imbue their students with functional lifelong learning skills they need to



survive and meet the changes of the twenty-first century (Federal Ministry of Education, 2002). In the present office environment, technology has brought changes to the old methods of performing office works; thereby give way to new methods. This new methods requires new skills, competences, knowledge and abilities to be able to perform and succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century modern office. The new methods of performances of office duties as a result of technological changes in office environment call for training and preparation of prospective office workers to acquire skills, knowledge, and experiences needed to perform in the modernoffice.

Skill as a concept is a specific form of learning and the ability to be trained on a particular function, or task till you become an expert and master on the skill. Uzor and Ike (2010) described skill as ability to do something well, gained through training and experience. Skill is also seen as one's potential competencies in the performance of specific tasks acquired after a period of training or experience. Skill therefore is the rapidity, precision, expertise, dexterity and proficiency exhibited through mental and manual repetition of performance of an operation. Okoli (2013) defined skills as the economic-tools with which entrepreneurs confront and solve societal problems. Skills are practical activities which make one employable, self- reliant and relevant to the society. OTM graduates must possess these skills that are necessary to enable them perform effectively in the modern office.

This skill can be obtained through education, training or experience that will inculcate into the individual how to carry out or discharge his/her responsibilities very well with the new knowledge. Inalegwu (2016) viewed skill as expertness, aptitude and competences appropriate for a particular job; it has to do with expert knowledge and creative reasoning to a level of mastery. In order to attain these skills, the individual needs to acquire basic training or knowledge levels related to the task to be performed whether through formal, informal or combination of the two. Boytziz (2010) defined skill as the ability to demonstrate a system and sequence of behavior that is functionally related to attaining a goal. When necessary skills are acquired, tasks performance becomes easier.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013), noted that skill acquisition is one among other policies embarked upon in Nigeria with the sole aim to alleviate poverty, youth restiveness, sophisticated crimes and corruption rates, rural-urban drift, unemployment and other social vices by providing technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development. It is expected that graduates of OTM acquired skills that would enable them to perform in modernoffice.

Office Technology and Management is a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related science and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (Baba & Akarahu, 2012).

Nwabuona (2010) stated that OTM programme focuses on combination of office information technical skills with adequate and relevant business knowledge in solving organizational problems. Nwabuona went further that the target of the programme is to produce hybrid administrative professionals to respond to the demand of a dynamic and intensely computerized work place.

Odunaike and Amoda in Ibrahim (2015) stated that the goal of OTM is primarily to produce competent, skillful and dynamic office managers, office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work. Oliver in Ibrahim (2015) stated that business education OTM inclusive is the sum total of the knowledge, skills and attitude that are required for successfully promoting and administering business enterprises. Komolafe and Ajani (2010) corroborated that OTM is a work oriented educational programme that aims at skill acquisition which are useful and employable in the labourmarket.

Office Technology and Management programme therefore, is an educational programme meant for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, office ethics and competencies needed to prepare the individual to enter gainful employment in specific business and office occupation. It is a veritable programme of study which builds its participants and graduates to be able to contribute meaningfully to national development. The programme is designed to equip students with the competencies required to work in a modern office environment. This implies that students must possess office skills that will enable them to perform successfully as secretary or office administrator in a modern office. Therefore, office technology and management as a programme prepare students to possess some certain skills which are germane to their successful performance in a modern office or world of work right from the school.



With the advent of technology the old methods of performances in office settings has given way to the new methods and it is expedient that these new technology be included in OTM curriculum in Polytechnics. Therefore, it became imperative that acquisition of OTM competences, skills and abilities is a must by students for successful performance in 21<sup>st</sup> century office. The changing nature of work environments, the emergence of technology-driven processes, and the diversified needs of clientele are the emerging challenges of higher education institutions in order to meet the demand for employable graduates (Same Inanotech,2014).

The office skills required for effective performance of secretary in a modern office are soft and hard skills. This can be divided into technical elements and behavioral elements (Noe, Hollenbeck & Gerhart, 2015). Technical elements measure hard or technical skills. These skills are used as a basis for the development of educational curriculum, future profiling of jobs and the technical functions that the industry desire most (Kennedy, 2016). Hard skills are the technical skills individual use each day to perform the job for example computer skills or procedural knowledge applied in job (Dennis & Jimmy, 2011, Jane & Helen, 2008). This implies that hard skills are the core competences and knowledge acquired for effective performance of office works and duties such as ability to operate office machines and equipment, keyboarding skill and many others. It is a technical knowledge or training that you have gained through any life experience including in your career or education. The communication elements measure soft skills which include the attitudes and approaches applicants take to their work, such as the ability to collaborate on team projects (Daud, Abidin, Sapuan & Rajadurai, 2012). Soft skills refer to a cluster of personal qualities, habits, attitudes and social graces that make someone a good employee and compatible to work with. Soft skills defined as desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge, they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude (Jungsun, Mehmet, JeoungWoo, & Hwayoung, 2011). Soft skill can be seen as personal qualities, an inbuilt traits and attitudes that guide ways of behavior of an individual. Soft skills are personal habits or traits that shape how you work on your own and with others. It is skills that enable you to fit in at a workplace. They include your personality, attitude, flexibility, motivation, and manners. Soft skills are personality traits and behaviors. Soft skills are not about the knowledge you possess but rather the behaviors you display indifferent situations.

Global trend in education have shown that students of various disciplines including business education students in general and OTM students in particular leave school without acquiring the pre-requisite skill that foster individual, community or national development. Therefore it is important that the skills required by employers must be equivalent with the skills possessed by the graduates. It is on this note that this study intends to examine office skills required by Office Technology and Management students for effective performance in modern office.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many people today lamented that Nigerian graduates are not employable with the kind of skills required in modern offices and industries. This is because they are unable to perform as expected in the 21<sup>st</sup> century office, as a result of acquisition of inadequate office skills and competences that are required to perform. Audu, Abdulkadir and Abdul (2013) corroborated this in a recent survey research carried out, that over 40 million graduates are unemployable into the industries because of lack of technical and vocational skills required for jobs available. Indeed there are vacancies for jobs in Nigeria but right now, there are little or no human resources with appropriate skills to fill the vacancies for the available jobs (Alfred, 2010).

This is an indication of the insignificance skill acquired in the programme offered in schools to the employment needs of individual learners. Based on this, acquisition of adequate office skills in OTM programme is to enhance the competences, knowledge and abilities of the graduates to be able to fit into the 21<sup>st</sup> century office and be able to perform optimally. Therefore, it is pertinent for the study to determine the office skills required by office technology and management graduates for effective performance in a modern office.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the office hard skills required by OTM graduates for effective performance in modern office?
2. What are the office soft skills required by OTM graduates for effective performance in



modern office?

### Research Hypothesis

One hypothesis was formulated for the study. This was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female students on office skills required by OTM students for effective performance in modern office.

### Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all HND students for 2019/2020 session in the department of Office Technology and Management of Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin and Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The HND students were used because they had undergone and had experience in one year industrial training programme. There was a total population of 254 HND students. The students sample was selected using research advisor sample size table. The sample size was thus made up of 152 comprised of 64 males and 88 females. Random sampling technique was used to select the student respondents from each polytechnic.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged Office Skills required by Office Technology and Management Graduates Questionnaire (OSOTMGQ). The questionnaire was made up of 62 items; which was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of 25 items on office hard skills required by OTM graduates for effective performance in modern office while the second part consisted of 37 items on office soft skills required by OTM graduates for effective performance in modern office. The items were placed on 4 point rating scale of Very Highly Relevant (VHR) = 3.50- 4.00, Highly Relevant (HR) = 2.50-3.49, Moderately Relevant (MR) = 1.50-2.49, and Not Relevant (NR) = 0.0-1.49. The instrument was face validated by three experts at Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin and Federal Polytechnic Offa. The Cronbach Alpha reliability test was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.87. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected for the study. Independent t-test was used to test the hypothesis. For the Ho, if the observed p-value is less than the fixed p-value, the Ho was not rejected, if otherwise, the Ho was rejected.

### Results

#### Research Question One

What are the office hard skills required by OTM graduates for effective performance in modern office?

**Table 1:** Mean and Standard deviation of the respondents rating of office hard skills required by OTM graduates for effective performance in modern office

| S/N | Item Statement   | $\bar{X}_1$ | SD | Remark |
|-----|--|-------------|----|--------|
| 1   | Technology skill.  | 3.210.76    |    | HR     |
| 2   | Office machines and equipment operating skill.                             | 2.971.21    |    | HR     |
| 3   | ICT skill.   | 3.001.02    |    | HR     |
| 4   | Keyboarding skill.   | 3.120.89    |    | HR     |
| 5   | Computer skill.  | 3.670.61    |    | VHR    |
| 6   | Word processing skill.   | 3.450.79    |    | HR     |
| 7   | Shorthand skill.   | 3.710.57    |    | VHR    |
| 8   | Database management skill.   | 3.090.82    |    | HR     |
| 9   | Presentation skill.  | 3.510.66    |    | VHR    |
| 10  | Ms-Excel skill.  | 3.770.55    |    | VHR    |
| 11  | Skill to organize meeting.   | 3.890.45    |    | VHR    |
| 12  | Ability to upload and download file.                                       | 3.011.01    |    | HR     |
| 13  | Practical skills to demonstrate originality and inventiveness.             | 3.400.78    |    | HR     |
| 14  | Ability to copy, cut/move and paste documents.                             | 3.760.56    |    | VHR    |
| 15  | Ability to save and retrieve documents in computer and other storage media | 3.420.80    |    | HR     |
| 16  | Ability to use e-mail  | 3.340.92    |    | HR     |



|                                       |                                      |      |      |     |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|------|-----|
| 17                                    | Responsibility skill.                | 3.38 | 0.97 | HR  |
| 18                                    | Research skill.                      | 3.28 | 0.89 | HR  |
| 19                                    | Webpage design skill.                | 3.61 | 0.62 | VHR |
| 20                                    | Desktop publishing skill.            | 3.11 | 0.90 | HR  |
| 21                                    | Graphic design skill.                | 2.78 | 1.30 | HR  |
| 22                                    | Management information system skill. | 3.79 | 0.52 | VHR |
| 23                                    | Management skill.                    | 2.97 | 1.21 | HR  |
| 24                                    | Entrepreneurship skill.              | 3.01 | 1.01 | HR  |
| 25                                    | Record management skill.             | 3.00 | 1.02 | HR  |
| Aggregate mean and standard deviation |                                      | 3.33 | 0.83 | HR  |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2020

Table 1 revealed that the mean ratings of the respondents to items 5,7,9,10,11,14, 19 and 22 are 3.67, 3.71, 3.51, 3.77, 3.89, 3.76, 3.61 and 3.79 respectively indicated veryhighly relevant. It was also showed that the mean ratings of the respondents to items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8,12,13,15,16,17,18,20,21,23,24 and 25 showing 3.21, 2.97, 3.00, 3.12, 3.45, 3.09, 3.01, 3.40, 3.42, 3.34, 3.38, 3.28, 3.11, 2.78, 2.97, 3.01 and 3.00 respectively indicated highly relevant. The standard deviation ranged from 0.45 to 1.3 which indicated low variability in the respondents' responses. This was also signified by the aggregate mean and standard deviation of 3.33 and 0.83 respectively.

The implication was that office hard skills are required by OTM graduates for effective performance in modern office. This is because the acquisition of office hard skills by OTM graduates will enhance effective performance of work and easy achievement of office objectives in a 21<sup>st</sup> century modern office.

### Research Question Two

What are the office soft skills required by OTM graduates for effective performance in modern office?

**Table 2:** Mean Rating and Standard deviation of office soft skills required by OTM graduates for effective performance in modern office.

| S/N | Item Statement   | $\bar{X}_1$ | SD   | Remark |
|-----|--|-------------|------|--------|
| 1   | Discovery/Creativity skill.  | 3.21        | 0.76 | HR     |
| 2   | Interpersonal Skills: enhance relationships, rapports and bond between people in office. | 2.97        | 1.21 | HR     |
| 3   | Skills to appreciate self-worth, boldness and confidentiality in oneself.                | 3.00        | 1.02 | HR     |
| 4   | Problem solving skill  | 3.12        | 0.89 | HR     |
| 5   | Responsibility skill.  | 3.67        | 0.61 | VHR    |
| 6   | Integrity/ Honesty.  | 3.45        | 0.79 | HR     |
| 7   | Human relations skill.   | 3.71        | 0.57 | VHR    |
| 8   | Motivational skill.  | 3.09        | 0.82 | HR     |
| 9   | Communication skill.   | 3.51        | 0.66 | VHR    |
| 10  | Personal skill.  | 3.77        | 0.55 | VHR    |
| 11  | Team work.   | 3.89        | 0.45 | VHR    |
| 12  | Leadership skills.   | 3.01        | 1.01 | HR     |
| 13  | Critical thinking.   | 3.40        | 0.78 | HR     |
| 14  | Conflict resolution.   | 3.76        | 0.56 | VHR    |
| 15  | Negotiation skills.  | 2.32        | 0.83 | MR     |
| 16  | Decision making.   | 3.34        | 0.92 | HR     |
| 17  | Self-motivation.   | 3.38        | 0.97 | HR     |
| 18  | Self-confidence  | 3.28        | 0.89 | HR     |
| 19  | Self-awareness.  | 3.61        | 0.62 | VHR    |
| 20  | Kindness and courtesy skills.  | 3.11        | 0.90 | HR     |
| 21  | Professional ethics.   | 2.78        | 1.30 | HR     |



|    |   |      |      |     |
|----|---|------|------|-----|
| 22 | Time management and working under pressure. | 3.79 | 0.52 | VHR |
| 23 | Telephone skills                            | 2.97 | 1.21 | HR  |
| 24 | Positive attitude                           | 3.01 | 1.01 | HR  |
| 25 | Professionalism                             | 3.00 | 1.02 | HR  |
| 26 | Presentation skill.                         | 3.88 | 0.45 | VHR |
| 27 | Public speaking                             | 3.68 | 1.03 | VHR |
| 28 | Persuasion skill.                           | 3.34 | 1.05 | HR  |
| 29 | Work ethic                                  | 3.89 | 0.45 | VHR |
| 30 | Flexibility                                 | 2.30 | 0.67 | MR  |
| 31 | Adaptability                                | 2.97 | 1.21 | HR  |
| 32 | Desire to learn                             | 2.12 | 0.84 | MR  |
| 33 | Logical thinking                            | 2.10 | 0.78 | MR  |
| 34 | Enthusiasm                                  | 2.41 | 0.73 | MR  |
| 35 | Friendliness                                | 3.01 | 1.01 | HR  |
| 36 | Dealing with office politics                | 3.79 | 0.52 | VHR |
| 37 | Listening skill.                            | 2.01 | 0.74 | MR  |
|    | Aggregate mean and standard deviation       | 3.18 | 0.82 | HR  |

**Source:** Field Survey, 2020

Table 2 revealed that respondents mean ratings ranged from 2.01 to 3.89. Items rated very highly relevant are 12; items rated highly relevant are 19 and items rated moderately relevant are 6 respectively. The standard deviation ranged from 0.45 to 1.30 which indicated low variability in the respondents' responses. This was also signified by the aggregate mean and standard deviation of 3.18 and 0.82 respectively. This implied that all the office soft skills are required by OTM graduates for effective performance in modern office.

### Test of Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female students on office skills required by OTM students for effective performance in modern office.

**Table 3:** Summary of t-test Analysis between the mean rating of male and female students on office skills required by OTM students for effective performance in modern office

| Group  | N  | Mean | STD  | Df  | t-Cal | t-Crit | P    | Remarks |
|--------|----|------|------|-----|-------|--------|------|---------|
| Male   | 62 | 2.91 | 0.96 | 148 | 0.59  | 1.96   | 0.05 | NS      |
| Female | 88 | 3.01 | 0.95 |     |       |        |      |         |

Table 3 indicated that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female students on office skills required by OTM students for effective performance in modern office. The table showed that t-calculated value of 0.59 is less than t-critical table value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 148 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

### Discussion of Findings

The study found that office skills required by office technology and management graduates for effective performance in modern office comprised of hard and soft skills. Such office skills are necessary for effective performance of OTM graduates in a modern office. The hard skills are computer skill, keyboarding skills, ability to operate office machines and equipment; presentation skill, ability to organize meeting; internet skill, MSExcel and word processing skills are among the identified skills required by office technology and management graduates for effective performance in modern office. The finding of this study was in line with the findings of Ezenwafor and Olaniyi (2016) who noted that business education (OTM) graduates needed all the technical skills because the technical know-how relevant to business area is very crucial for business success and effective performance of OTM graduates in modern office. The authors went further that job specific knowledge and technique that are required to perform organizational role is necessary.

Moreso, the study found that office soft skills such as creativity, communication, interpersonal, motivational, honesty, decision making, and time management, ability to work under



pressure, negotiation, conflict resolution, self-confidence, respect, kindness and courtesy are among the office soft skills for effective performance of OTM graduates in modern office. This finding supports the earlier finding of Irukaku and Noeleen, (2018) who stated that fundamental feature of business education (OTM) is to prepare individuals for the acquisition of the needed skills to survive in a highly competitive labour market. The authors therefore become pertinent that students must acquire the skills commensurate with the programmes of the course, to display the applications of professional skills in job market and self-reliance.

Ibrahim, (2015) noted that modern organizational practices have broadened tremendously to include the challenging need of workers to adapt to the rapidly changing techniques, new equipment and work processes. Drucker, (2010) stated that knowledge workers are now needed by knowledge organizations that operate in knowledge economy. This implied that, OTM graduates are expected to acquire and perform their work with the required office skills which include both hard and soft skills for effective performance in modern office.

The test of the null hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean responses of both male and female students on office skills required by OTM students for effective performance in modern office was upheld. This implied that acquisition of office skills by OTM students for effective performance in modern office is important. The office skills will make the students to compete favourably in the world of work and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century modern office.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study revealed different types of office skills required by OTM graduates for effective performance in a modern office. The office skills include hard and soft skills among which include; technology skill, ability to operate office machines and equipment, internet skills, creativity skill, motivation skill, negotiation skill, and communication skill among others. This implied that for any graduate to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century office, these must be acquired. If these are not acquired it means that the graduates will find it difficult to perform their assigned job and the name tag of unemployable graduates would still continue to follow OTM graduates.

The possession of these office skills by OTM graduates will enhance effective performance of work and increase their efficiency. Based on this, adequate and relevant office skills required for effective and efficient performance of OTM graduates is important.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Polytechnic institutions should provide enabling environment for OTM programme to be able to prepare students with the required skills. This can be done by way of providing different types of office machines and equipment, internet facilities, computers, and other gadget and devices. In addition, the experiences and skills needed in modern offices should be made available for the training and preparation of the student to acquire skills, competences and knowledge as required in the modern office right from the school.
2. There is the need for OTM lecturers to expose students to adequate and relevant hard and soft skills which will enhance the graduates' effective performances in a modern office. It's often said that hard skills will get you an interview but you need soft skills to get and keep the job.

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