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Optimizing Office Technology and Management Skills for Graduates Empowerment to Enhance National Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Office technology and management is a vocational program designed with the main objective of promoting vocational training as well as skills development. The study focused on determining office technology and management skills and means of optimizing them for the empowerment of graduating students for national development in Nigeria. Two research questions were raised to guide the study. Descriptive research design was used for the study. The population of the study consists of 135 office technology and management graduating students of the two institutions offering the program in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Total enumeration was used as the sample because of the manageable size of the population. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Both face and content validity of the instrument was ensured. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researchers and with the help of research assistants. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that office technology and management skills are needed by graduating students for empowerment and could be optimized to enhance national development. The study concluded that the integration of cutting-edge technologies and practical skills acquisition into office technology and management program is essential to enhance graduates career prospects and drive broader economic growth by fostering a skilled and adaptable workforce. It was therefore recommended among others that institutions should invest in modern technological infrastructures to provide students with conducive learning environment

INTRODUCTION

Education is a vital element for achieving developmental goals and objectives for the benefit of individuals and society at large (Ademiluyi, Bello and Akande, 2020). Education is regarded as a model document for preparing citizens to play effective roles in society (Nosakhare, 2023). Vocational education program is viewed to be crucial to the development and expansion of Nigeria's economy as it gives information, skills, and competence for individuals to operate well in office occupations and also generate jobs for themselves and others. Office technology and management however is a program designed to provide students with knowledge, skills, and competence leading to empowerment and advancement in office occupation, as well as self-empowerment. Ejeka and Mgbonyebi (2016) asserted that it is a program designed to develop graduates skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and encompassing of knowledge and information needed by individuals in order to enter and progress in employment.

Wikipedia (2020) described empowerment as an activity that improves awareness and identity, develops talents and potential, build human capital and facilitate employability, enhance the quality of life and realization of dreams and aspirations. It is a set of measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in graduates in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way. Graduates'

empowerment in the view of Oladunjoye (2016) entails creating and supporting enabling conditions that would enable them to act for themselves in an environment that supports access to knowledge, information and skills as well as a positive value system. This will result in creation of jobs and employment opportunities for graduates. Empowerment according to Gidado and Agbazuwaka (2019) focuses on giving graduates the opportunity of acting for themselves and having access to all the necessary ingredients needed for their self-employment. A nation therefore according to Oladunjo (2015) that would be economically vibrant must have citizens with relevant skills and knowledge needed for self-empowerment. When graduates are appropriately trained, Ahmad (2018) viewed that the achievements of rapid economic and social development can be guaranteed.

Amoor (2014) affirmed that a fundamental feature of office technology and management program is to prepare individuals for the acquisition of the needed skills to survive in a highly competitive labor market and to imbue in them the capacity to generate new employment that could foster economic growth. Amuchie and Matsayi (2018) reported that office technology and management played a vital role in national development, especially in areas of generating employment and creating job opportunities, entrepreneurship strategy, poverty alleviation, promoting the Nigerian economy, and promoting Nigerian culture and values. They further stated that it is a form of

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vocational education that is directed towards developing the learner to become productive in teaching, paid employment and self-employment. John and Yahaya (2020) opined that office technology and management is imperative in the economic development by providing knowledge into others and enables the students to handle sophisticated office technologies and information system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of National Development

National development is described by John and Yahaya (2020) as a situation where a country increases in value by possessing all that it takes to make life better. Geneva in Oluwalola (2020) noted that national development is a means by which people welfare can be improved by eliminating literacy, ignorance and poverty and providing amenities like education, transportation and health care. Musa (2024) averred that national development is a multifaceted and comprehensive term that encompasses the progress and improvement of a nation in various domains, including economic, social, political and cultural aspects. It is often used to describe the continuous improvements of a country's well being and quality of life for its citizens. Edi and Nkem in John Yahaya (2020) asserted that national development has to do with those approaches, plans and theories adopted by country to attain a level of advancement in all structures and sub-structures of the economy such as educational, technological, political, economic, social, cultural domains, social freedom and peace in a nation.

Abdulrahman (2013) viewed national development as an exploitation and utilization of both human and material resources to improve the lots of a nation and according to him, it involves the improvement of the social welfare of the people of that nation. He further argued that to attain great achievement of productivity and sustainable economic environment and national development in this modern world, appropriate attention and optimum recognition are to be given to the promotion of office technology and management. Nomor, Yange and Ugbedu (nd) described national development as the ability of a nation to give its citizen a new lease of life and according to this view, it encompasses the significant improvement in the indices of development mentioned earlier. Oluwalola (2020) explained it as a concept which explains the encompassing nature of living standard of a country. According to Ojimba in Ademiluyi, Bello and Akande (2020), national development is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while simultaneously sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. They further classified it as development that meets the needs of the present and future generations without compromising each other.

Effective delivery of office technology and management program can be used to achieve individual's empowerment, economic and national development and

according to Okafor cited in Ademiluyi, Bello and Akande (2020), the attainment of empowerment goals ensures a smooth progress in economic and national development and the aim of the program is to bring advancement and development of graduates, so as to enable them contribute to the economic and national development of their nation.

Office Technology and Management

Lawal in Abdulrahman (2013) described office technology and management as a program that prepares graduates who could apply relevant practical skill to make positive changes within their society and afford a self-dependent life. He further argued that this form of program has been attested severally as a program that provides self-employment, enhance productivity and self-reliance. Omoniyi and Elemure (2014) opined that office technology and management program is designed to equip students with office skills for employment in various fields of endeavors. They further asserted that office technology and management program provide students with in-depth administrative office preparation to meet the demands and challenges in the business environment. Ntukiden in Umezulike and Anozie (2022) also maintained that office technology and management prepares and equips students with skills that increase their chances of finding jobs across territorial boundaries after schooling. He also argued that office technology and management equip the students with knowledge and skills they need to create their own employment. Omoniyi and Elemure (2014) believed that through the program, students can obtain marketable skills applicable to various careers and industries as well as cognitive skills transferable to other employment situations and life experience.

Office technology and management program is concerned with training students to acquire skills, understanding, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in office management occupations and in the view of Umezulike and Anozie (2022), the program is a vital instrument for nation building and for achieving government developmental objectives, especially the question for sustainable national development. Abdulrahman (2013) averred that office technology and management is a weapon that can be used to bring or achieve a quick desirable changes or development in the country's economic, sociological and human resources. Ezeani in Umezulike and Anozie (2022) observed that office technology and management program is a productive and functional form of education which leads itself to self-employment, self-reliance and consequently self-actualization. Umezulike and Anozie (2022) opined that office technology and management program is designed to equip its recipients with the necessary knowledge, attitude and skills to be self-reliant economically. The program is crucial to the development and expansion of the economy as it gives information, skills, and competence for individuals to

operate well in office occupations and also generate jobs for themselves and others. Abdulrahman (2013) submitted that the promotion of office technology and management would enable an individual to be better, more useful and productive citizen of the society for a sustainable development in Nigeria. He further argued that for a country to advance both socially, economically and technologically, its citizens must be productive and creative. It must have a productive citizen majority of which can be job creators rather than job seekers.

Ikelegbe (2020) averred that office technology and management is a program in Nigerian tertiary institutions designed to with the main objective of promoting vocational education and training, technology transfer as well as skills development. Sokyese, Wetnwan, and Bewaran (2018) further described office technology and management as an aspect of vocational education which among other things emphasizes job competencies, career preparation and work adjustment. Ubogu and Money (2018) revealed that the underlying rationale for funding of office technology and management is to equip graduates with the requisite knowledge, skills and capacity to enhance the quality of life and increase productivity and capacity to gain knowledge of new techniques so as to be able to participate evocatively in the development process. Suleiman (2018) maintained that office technology and management program provides graduates with functional and suitable skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values that would enable them to be fit in the field of work and contribute to economic development of the nation. He further revealed that it takes cognizance of the dynamics of the labor market, equips its graduates with occupational skills and competences to enable them be self-reliant.

Office Technology and Management Skills

Office Technology and Management program according to Onajite (2016), encompasses an education program that seeks to develop in the learners basic skills for personal use in the future. With emphasis on quality in the delivery of the program, Nwokike and Okoli (2015) maintained that students can obtain marketable skills applicable to various careers and industries as well as cognitive skills transferable to other employment situations and life experience. Among the basic goals of office technology and management program in the view of Umar (2014) are the various business attributes acquired in class to real life situation and personal attributes and competencies required for the performance of basic business job. Aina (2019) submitted that office technology and management program is expected to provide occupational skills either as employees or self-employed.

Suleiman (2016) viewed office technology and management program as a functional education that takes cognizance of the dynamics of the labor market, equips its graduates with occupational skills and competences to enable them be self-reliant. Ejeka and Mgbonyebi (2016) further asserted that office technology and management

is an educational program meant for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, office ethics and competencies needed to prepare the individuals to enter gainful employment in specific business and office occupation. Ubulom and Ogwunte (2017) affirmed that office technology and management assists students to develop positive attitudes, innovation and skills for self-reliance, rather than depending on the government for employment and which in-turn produces graduates with self-confidence and capacities for independent thought to discover new information leading to economic development.

Office technology and management skills needed for prospective graduate's empowerment are viewed as entrepreneurship skills and internet communication skills. Cephas and Bitrus (2022) asserted that entrepreneurship skills inculcate in the individuals the willingness and ability to look out for investment opportunities, establish and manage a business successfully. This according to them is also seen as vital to promoting innovation, competitiveness and economic growth, fostering the creation of new firms and business growth. Stanley and Chukwudi (2024) believed that entrepreneurship is the panacea for societal development through job creation, poverty alleviation and employment generation. They further argued that entrepreneurship skills acquisition is phenomenal to growth and development of every nation, through its influence on provision of essential abilities, skills, motivation and awareness to students. In the view of Cephas and Bitrus (2020), entrepreneurship skills provide benefits regardless of whether a person sees their future as starting a business to earn a living which requires creativity, initiative, tenacity, teamwork and a sense of responsibility. Ors (2015) described internet communication skills as a means of communication that enables millions of computers around the world to communicate through the telephone system and other devices. In his view, it is one of the most important tools for an organization of our days to exchange information, build a network and guarantees a smooth running work flow within a firm. Internet is a computer-based global information system (Comer, 2009). Today, new technologies have emerged due to globalization and the 21st Century has made it possible for information to be produced, distributed and shared which is made easy by internet communication.

Statement of Problem

In today's rapidly evolving digital economy, the effectiveness of organizations, both in the private and public sectors, is increasingly dependent on the proficiency of office technology and management skills. However, there is a growing concern that many prospective graduates entering the workforce lack the essential office technology and management skills required to meet the demands of modern workplace. This skill gap not only hampers their personal empowerment and career growth but also limits their ability to contribute meaningfully to national development. Close observation shows that despite the

integration of office technology and management courses into educational curricula, many graduates still struggle to apply these skills effectively in real-world settings. This disconnects between academic training and practical application poses a significant challenge in creating a workforce capable of driving innovation, productivity and efficiency within organizations. Moreover, the lack of continuous professional development opportunities exacerbates this issue, leaving graduates ill-prepared to adapt to technological advancements and evolving workplace dynamics.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine office technology and management skills needed by graduating students for empowerment to enhance national development.
2. To identify means of optimizing office technology and management skills for empowerment of graduating students to enhance national development.

Research Questions

1. What are the office technology and management skills needed by graduating students for empowerment to enhance national development?
2. What are the means of optimizing office technology

and management skills for empowerment of graduating students to enhance national development?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive survey design was employed for the study. The study was conducted in two tertiary institutions within Ekiti State, Nigeria: namely, The Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti and Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti.

Participants and Procedures

The population of the study comprised 135 graduating students in two tertiary institutions offering the program in Ekiti state, Nigeria. Total enumeration was used as sample because of its manageable size. Quantitative insights were gathered through structured surveys.

Instruments and Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was the main instrument used for the study in which the respondents were requested to indicate their views and opinions on a Likert-type 4 points rating scale of 'Strongly Agree' = 4 points, 'Agree' = 3 points, 'Disagree' = 2 points, 'Strongly Disagree' = 1 point. The instrument was personally administered to the respondents by the researchers. Data were analyzed using

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation showing OTM skills needed by graduating students for empowerment to enhance national development

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remarks
1,	Digital literacy and ICT skills that include proficiency in office software, database management and competency in managing professional communication	3.59	0.68	Agreed
2.	Information management and data processing skills which include document management, data entry and analysis and information security.	3.54	0.52	Agreed
3.	Organizational and time management skills which include task prioritization, calendar and project management	3.49	0.56	Agreed
4.	Communication and interpersonal skills which include verbal and written communication, customer service and interpersonal skills.	3.33	0.50	Agreed
5.	Critical thinking and problem solving skills which include decision making, troubleshooting and process improvement.	3.49	0.50	Agreed
6.	Leadership and management skills that includes team coordination and conflict resolution.	3.41	0.60	Agreed
7.	Financial management skills that involve office budgeting and skills in managing office supplies	3.41	0.64	Agreed
8.	Adaptability and learning skills which involve commitment to continuously updating skills and flexibility to adapt to new office equipment.	3.50	0.57	Agreed
9	Ethical and cultural competence skills that involves professional ethics and sensitivity to cultural differences within the workplace.	3.47	0.60	Agreed
10.	Legal and regulatory knowledge skills that has to do with knowledge of relevant loss and regulations governing office information management.	3.43	0.61	Agreed
	Average mean	3.47	0.05	Agreed

mean and standard deviation. Decision rule was based on the mean value of 2.50 such that any calculated mean ($\bar{x}$) equal or greater than 2.50 was regarded as agreed, while any mean ($\bar{x}$) less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreed. The research questions were adjudged on the following basis: 1.00 - 1.49 Strongly Disagree (SD), 1.50 - 2.49 Disagree (D), 2.50 - 3.49 Agree (A), 3.50 - 4.00 Strongly Agree (SA). The decision rule was that any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as Agree (A) while any item with a mean score below 2.49 was regarded as disagree (D).

Data Analysis

Research Question 1

What are the office technology and management skills needed by graduating students for empowerment to

enhance national development?

The data analysis presented in the table above depicts the office technology and management skills that are needed by graduating students to enhance national development. The respondents rated items one to ten as agreed with mean ratings ranging from 3.33 to 3.59, while the standard deviations also range from 0.50 to 0.68. The average mean discloses a mean of 3.47(0.05). The above mean score implies that office technology and management skills are highly needed by graduating students for empowerment to enhance national development.

Research Question 2

What are the means of optimizing office technology and management skills for empowerment of graduating students to enhance national development?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation showing means of optimizing OTM skills for empowerment of graduating students to enhance national development

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remarks
1,	Curriculum enhancement in educational institutions that include project based learning and integration of ICT in curriculum	3.32	0.69	Agreed
2.	Establishment of strong partnership with businesses and government agencies to provide students with internship opportunities where they can gain practical experience	3.47	0.69	Agreed
3.	Assess to modern technology and resources which includes up to date computer laboratories, online learning platforms, digital libraries and resources	3.36	0.64	Agreed
4.	Certification and professional development which include obtaining industry recognized certification in office management software and tools	3.25	0.77	Agreed
5.	Establishment of mentorship programs and career counseling to guide and support students and equally help them in career path in office management	3.36	0.60	Agreed
6.	Government and institutional support that foster public private partnership that invest in the development of office management skills to ensure the equipment of graduates	3.40	0.64	Agreed
7.	Promotion of entrepreneurship to encourage graduates to start their own businesses	3.30	0.70	Agreed
8.	Networking and collaboration which involve creation of networks where graduates can connect with each other, share job opportunities and collaborate on project that enhance their skills	3.36	0.64	Agreed
9	Implement regular assessment of graduates' office management skills to ensure they meet with industry standards	3.24	0.72	Agreed
10.	Leveraging technology for training by developing e-learning modules that focus on specific office management skills	3.32	0.72	Agreed
	Average mean	3.34	0.04	Agreed

The data presented in the table above depicts the means of optimizing office technology and management skills that are needed by graduating students for empowerment to enhance national development. The respondents' rated items one to ten as agreed with mean ratings ranging from 3.25 to 3.47 while the standard deviations also range

from 0.60 to 0.77. The average mean discloses a mean of 3.34(0.04). The above mean score implies that office technology and management skills could be optimized for empowerment of graduating students to enhance national development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The finding of the study showed that office technology and management skills are highly needed by graduating students for empowerment to enhance national development. The result of the study is in agreement with the findings of Omoniyi, Elemure and Abiodun (2019), who viewed that office technology and management programs in our education system could open wide opportunities to improve industrialization in Nigeria. According to him, the use of vocational knowledge by the recipients would help in expansion and establishment of more businesses in the society, ultimately promoting national development. He further opined that it could stimulate industrial development by producing competent workers that are capable of developing and utilizing technologies for economic growth leading to general development of any nation. The result of the study is also consistent with the findings of Sokyes, Wetnwan & Bewaran (2018) which believed that office technology and management program is a vital instrument for nation building and for achieving government developmental objectives, especially the quest for sustainable national development. Onwuchu in Umezulike and Anozie affirmed that office technology and management is aimed at production of competent, skillful, dynamic and knowledgeable graduates that can work in the world of work or impact knowledge into others, and be able to handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems.

The result of the study showed that office technology and management skills could be optimized for empowerment of graduating students to enhance national development. This result is consistent with the findings of Ebinga (2014) who affirmed that office technology and management equips graduates with the necessary skills and theoretical knowledge needed for performance in the business world; either for job occupations or self employment. The result was also in agreement with the study of Nwaigburu and Eneogwe (2013) which affirmed that funding of office technology and management program will result in providing not only the skills required for operating machines or doing any specific job, but also provide such knowledge and skills required for self reliance and sustainable developments.

The result of this finding further agrees with the report of the finding of Babalola and Tihamiyu (2013) who posited that office technology and management develops the mental and physical qualities of graduates thereby increasing their skills, knowledge and attitudes required for utilizing the natural resources needed for economic development of the nation and for their own self-empowerment.

CONCLUSION

Optimizing office technology and management in tertiary institutions is pivotal for empowering graduates and enhancing national development by equipping students with required skills and competencies, institutions can

ensure that graduates are well prepared to meet the demands of the modern work place, contributing to increase productivity and innovation across various sectors. This empowerment not only enhances individual career prospects but also drives broader economic growth by fostering a skilled and adaptable workforce. The integration of cutting edges technologies and practical skills acquisition into office technology and management program is essential for producing graduates who can effectively manage information systems and support organizational goals.

Recommendations

1. Institutions should invest in modern technological infrastructures to provide students with a conducive learning environment.
2. Educational stakeholders should prioritize the development and implementation of policies that supports office technology and management program in tertiary institutions
3. Institutions should establish strong partnership with industries and other stakeholders to ensure that the program meet the current needs of employers.

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