Current Issues and Challenges in the Acquisition of Office Technology and Management Education Skills in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba

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Abstract- This paper examined the current issues and challenges facing the acquisition of OTME skills in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba. Office Technology and Management is a synergy of three distinct words office, technology and management. It is a well-established fact that advances in technology has affected different professions with a view to meet global trends in higher productivity, speed networking and excellent packaging. Accomplishing the routine tasks with machines is known as automation. To this end, this paper examines inter alia the concept of office technology and management, the concept of skills, importance of acquiring OTME Skills in Nigeria skills available in OTME, and issues and challenges in the acquisition of OTME skills. This paper concludes that no meaningful OTME skill can be acquired in colleges of education without adequate provision of facilities, manpower and equipment needed in OTME departments to meet the changing needs of the society and workplace.

Keywords: current issues and challenges, acquisition, office technology and management skills.

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I. Introduction

The globalization of the world engineered by internet, and office automation has influenced the ways, means and scope of the functions of Office Technology and Management graduates. Across the world, and indeed, in Nigeria, professions of all kinds are fast adapting to challenges of changing situations. In the past, Office Technology and Management practice was only limited to very few operations like receiving people on business visit to the organizations, typing of official letters and memorandum, and other routine tasks. With the increasing volume of management operations, there is need for speed, accuracy and elegance in office management practice (Eke and Falahan in Osamade. 2017).

In the recent times, The National Board for Technical Education enhanced the objectives of secretarial training. Hence, the nomenclature changed to office Technology and Management. This affected both the curriculum of Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. The Polytechnic curriculum composes of four main components for both National Diploma and Higher National Diploma hence, General Studies/ Education Foundation courses, Professional courses, SIWES. The professional courses are courses which give the student the theory and practical skills he/she needs to practice as a secretary. This may account for between 60% to 70% of the contact hours of study.

To Agboola in Nwalado and Ezoem (2019) greater prominence is given to ICT courses that shorthand and keyboarding: which had credit hours drastically reduced. The purpose is to actualize the demand for supply of manpower that have appropriate office skills and competences to manage office new technologies to profit the organization given the current wave of information communication technology.

The Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) career encourages employment creation given multifaceted skills embedded in it including: reprographics, word processing. Micrographics, telecommunication, data processing and others. Merriam Webster Dictionary (2013) explains skill as ability coming from one's knowledge practice or aptitude to do something well. Etonyeaku in Onyesom (2019) added that it involves practical knowledge in combination with cleverness, expertise, dexterity and ability to perform a function which could be acquired or learnt in school.

There are areas which require immediate attention as standing on the perception of Aina in Osamede (2021) that business education inculcating OTME is concerned with development of Individuals, personal skills and attitudes, communication and occupational skills. Technological literacy, employability skills, broad specific occupational skills and knowledge. Oladunjoye (2015) asserts that the products of a deficient curriculum cannot function effectively and efficiently in today's consistent change in the work environment.

Computer studies were first examined at SSCE level – WAEC in 2014 and have become optional in SSCE. The basic Education at JSS level is exclusive of shorthand but optional in Secondary School. The revised edition of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) outlined that the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as

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equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society. The objective of each level of education is to give the individual a climbing stone to a higher level. Where the secondary school curriculum is inadequate, it cannot prepare students for useful living and solid higher education. It is obvious that there are various challenges facing acquisition of Office Technology and Management Skills. Thus, this study intends to examine the challenges in the acquisition of Office Technology and Management Skills in Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba, Delta state.

II. Office Technology and Management

Office Technology and Management is a synergy of three distinct words, office, technology and management. The word office is a description of a place in which business, clerical, or professional activities are conducted. Amos in Osamade (2017) noted that the historical evolution of the office is as old as the ancient civilization and the evolution of man because human brain itself has been functioning not only as think-tank but also as the reservoir of knowledge, innovation, skills and information. The author stated that human brain has long being recognized as a channel for processing, storing, dissemination and retrieval of information. An office simply means a professional place for work. Technology enables an organization to manage its operations efficiently and create a competitive advantage. Technology is the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes. It involves the use of machineries and devices developed from scientific knowledge to make work easier and faster (Microsoft, 2010). The management component refers to the art of getting things done through people.

Office Technology and Management, according to Eneche and Audu in Obiajulu (2017), is the planning, organizing, directing and controlling of office activities to ensure that various resources (human and materials) are put into optimal utilization so as to achieve the organization. Amos in Osamade (2017) also sees office technology and management as the branch of management which is concerned with services of obtaining, recording and analyzing information. Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) is formerly referred to as secretarial studies in Nigeria. It evolved out of the need to meet the technological and managerial demands of today's workplace. The name OTMEE was approved by National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in 2004: Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) programme was designed for two major reasons. As stated by Adelakin in Osamade (2017) first, as a response to the yearnings of the secretarial studies students and practitioners on the need to change the name of the programme as their products are only suitable for the traditional office environment. Secondly, as a result of the change in

curriculum with more emphasis on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), managerial and entrepreneurial competencies so as to enrich the knowledge of the students and equip them with necessary skills needed in today's modern office environment. Udo in Osamade (2017) noted that OTME is a comprehensive activity-based educational programme that is concerned with the acquisition of office technology and management skills, understandings, attitudes. work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in secretarial and office management occupations. The OTME programme is a career training or education to ensure that an individual is career ready with the right skills and attitudes needed for transition from school to work or for advancement in the OTME career path.

Office Technology and Management Education Programme as outlined in National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2012) is designed to equip the students with relevant knowledge, skills and competencies needed to function as office workers, teachers and entrepreneurs, OTME students at their final focus on courses that will make them master their area of specialization. OTME programmes aims at providing the business world with highly skilled and knowledgeable workers who will manage information efficiently, effectively, being well equipped with a comprehensive range of skills including managerial, technological and communication skills (Adelaken in Nwosu, 2010).

III. Concept of Skills

A skill is the learned capacity to carry out pre-determined results often with the minimum outlay of time, energy or both Osammade (2017) Skill usually requires certain environmental stimuli and situation to assess the level of skill being shown and used. The word skill has been viewed by many authors. Homby (2012) views skill as the dexterity in doing things or in performance or in application to practical purpose, and ingenuity, wisdom and knowledge in carrying out u function. Tonne, Popham and Freeman in Ekwue (2013) viewed skill as ability to use ones' knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance: technical expertness; a power of habit of doing any particular thing competently. This definition stresses that skills are based on using knowledge; the objectives is to bring knowledge to the level of competency. Tonnel et al in Obi (2011), defined skill as the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in performing an act, or a habit of doing a particular thing competently. In addition to the above, Hull in Obi (2011) defined skill as manual dexterity acquired through repetitive performance of an operation. According to Oxford dictionary, the term "skill" refers to the ability to do something expertly and well. Skill is an activity that

requires controlled physical movement to be made under the guidance of the mind, which receives its stimulus through sensory input. The ability of an individual to perform specific task on its own successfully is skill. According to Obi (2011), a person is said to have acquired a skill when he can finish a given piece of work at a given time with minimum errors. To attain this level of minimum error, the individual needs to acquire basic training or knowledge relating to the assignment or task to be performed whether through formal training or a combination of both (Formal and informal training).

Skill is a learned capacity or talent to carryout predetermined work often with the minimum outlay of time, energy or both (open encyclopedia 2019), Skill usually requires certain environmental stimuli and situation to assess the level of skill being shown and used. Office Technology and Management graduates need a broad range of skills in order to contribute to a modem economy and take their place in the technological society of the century (Igbodo. Ezoem, Ikejiofor, Nwaladoand Ayemhenre, 2013). It has been observed that the workplace is changing, and so are the skills that Office Technology and Management graduates must have to be able to cope with such changes with it. In summary therefore, skill is an acquired attitude, abilities and behaviours exhibited after an exposure to theories and practices in the individual's field of study. Importance of Acquiring OTME Skills in Nigeria

Maximum skills acquisition helps OTME students to be engaged in productive work either for themselves or for the employers of labour. According to Okorie and Ezeji in Udo (2014) the acquisition of requisite skills is a means of increasing the productive power of any nation They also added that Nigerian society should recognize the fact that every citizen should be well equipped to contribute effectively to the welfare of the country. The acquisition of such practical skills is important because when efficient and skillful hands are employed in any fields of human endeavours, high productivity is usually achieved.

The acquisition of OTME skills is a veritable tool for national and manpower development. According to Peter (2010) office education graduates is expected to be competent in performing basic skills. He further remarked that employers and customers have not reduced their demand for graduates who are competent in the use of grammar, punctuation, spelling and proper word choice and who can express themselves well both orally and in writing. He highlighted that listening skills are also essential, the ability to follow directions and accurately collect fact and information to be stored and later retrieved are important skills that go far beyond what we normally thought as proofreading.

More so, maximum skills acquisition by OTME students and other will help to enrich the Nigerian society economically and in this way tend to facilitate economic development. Okorie and Ezeji in Udo (2014) opined that a rich nation is one that is capable of meeting the economic, social, moral and political needs of the citizenry. Nigeria as a nation will enjoy economic stability it OTME students in particular and all other VE students in general acquire maximum skills in their specialties.

Furthermore, politically. OTME skills tend to promote personal and national greatness. Okorie and Ezeji in Udo (2014) pointed out that the behaviour of an individual in a society or the behaviour of a nation in a community of nations may be influenced by the skills possessed by that individual or nation. Socially, the acquisition of relevant OTME skills helps a person to provide amusement, happiness, love, affection etc. to other individuals as well as the entire nation. It also helps to reduce criminal activities such as kidnapping, armed robbery and other social vices among youths. If OTME students will give priority to the acquisition of maximum and relevant OTME skills, it is hoped that they will help alleviate poverty, promote equity, especially in relation to gender.

a) Skills Available for OTME Students
Skills to be acquired by OTME students are as follows:

- *Information processing skill:* Information Processing is the handling of alphabetical and alphanumeric information electronically. Kentos (2011) states that the term was coined to emphasize the manipulation of certain types of data, characters combined to form words, sentences, paragraph, memos, letters and reports. The information processing system comprises equipment procedures, and people whereby thoughts, ideas and opinions are expressed and circulated in hard copy and/or soft copy form. According to Marshall in Osamade (2017), OTME graduates possesses mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility, the secretary displays initiative, exercise judgment and makes decisions in today's office. The work of the OTME graduates has become more demanding and highly vast, in nature compared to what it used to be in the past. It is now necessary for office technology and management graduates to change from the use of archaic and slow manual office equipment and machine to highly sophisticated office equipment and machines which include information technology resources and interest development that will enhance the productivity and efficiency of OTME graduates work in the office.

- *Communication Skill:* Communication is the life wire of any organization, nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively. For any worker to succeed in his career, he/she must be effective in writing, speaking and listening (Nwalade,

2016). The term communication is derived from a Latin word "Communise meaning to share, to impact, to make common or to transmit. Communication is very important in every organization because most organizational process requires communication to solve problems and accomplish goals. The manner, in which OTME graduates communicate, goes a long way to affect the goodwill of the organization.

- *Human/Public Relations Skill:* Every OTME graduate is trained and exposed formally or informally to some basic human/public relations skills such as courtesy, politeness, tolerance and patience. objectivity, empathy, recognition of second party, acknowledgement and awareness, positive handling of visitors, open-mindedness, friendliness, humorous willingness to accept responsibilities, respect, etc. (Nwalado, 2016) The importance of human/public relations in any work environment cannot be ever emphasized; as such, work environment is a collection of different kinds of people who interact on daily basis. These groups of people include the employers, employee's visitors, contractors etc. How a stuff is perceived by the employers, and co-workers and even visitors to the office plays a large role as minor as your day-to-day happiness at the office and as major as the future of your career. Public/human relationship skills have to do with those unique qualities, abilities and ways of doing things that promote and enhance harmony and cooperation among human persons (Ikeke and Eke in Osamade, 2017).

- *Problem solving skill:* Problem solving skill is a vital aspect of every office worker and as such should not be neglected Problem solving is an indispensable aspect of a worker in carrying out his specific job. According to Oyedipe in Nwalado (2016), problem solving is the process of working through details of a problem to reach a solution. It may include mathematical, scientific, analytical or systematic operations and can be a standard to measure the individual's critical thinking skills. OTME students need to see problem as friends, teachers or as hurdles to scale through in order to grow, mature, become more knowledgeable and better future leaders in an organization. Oyedipe in Nwalado (2016) listed four steps in problem solving as:

(a) Recognize that you are confronting a problem
(b) Reduce the problem or reject it according to your discernment of the source of the problem and what is your establishment's principle in this particular situation.
(c) Respond to the problem positively and wisely using the accompanying pressures to motivate you to see the resolution of the problem.

(d) Release the problem once you have appropriated the answers to it.

OTME students who possess this skill will use it to solve personal and organizational problems any time for the upliftment of the business.

- *Attitudinal skill:* This involves the totality of ones' personality. The totality of personality on the job would involve a complex orchestration of knowledge, psychomotor skills and attitudes towards job, employer, employees and peers (Nwalado 2016). This skill would enable OTME students to surmount problems accruing from the fact that the world exposes people to come in contact with others whose believes, language, values, methods, cultural history, methods etc. are quite different from their own. This skill is dynamic; it influences the total personality of individuals. Such as honesty, accepting responsibility, exhibiting moral integrity, showing critical and responsible attitude, adapting to situations, emotional control, recognition of appropriate authorities, care and love for others, secretfulness (confidentiality), and finishing assignment on time and so on.

- *Entrepreneurial skill:* Entrepreneurial skills are competencies on resourceful skills capable of steering an individual to be self-reliant, independent and productive in meeting life's challenges (Kalikwu 2019). According to Izungha in Kalikwu (2019) entrepreneurial skills are survival skills which an individual needs to function effectively and face challenges of life, OTME students are equipped with relevant entrepreneurial skills that will enable them start up or establish their own small scale enterprises or business.

b) *Issues and Challenges in the Acquisition of Office Technology and Management skills*

The following are current issues and challenges in the acquisition of Office Technology and Management skills in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba:

- *Unstable power supply:* Irregular supply of electricity to operate computer devices such as laptops, desktops, photocopying machine, printers, scanners, laminating machines etc. appears to be one of the greatest problems militating against the acquisition of OTME skills Virtually, all the computer devices depend on electronic power to function. Electricity instability has been a major setback for the acquisition of OTME skills.

- *Inadequate funding:* Njoku (2015) observed that the absence of proper funding does not only hamper implementation of OTME programme but also affects the quality of students produced, the operational mode of the institutions, attitude of teachers and infrastructural development of the

institutions. In Nigeria, education is completely underfunded. Government investment for OTME growth is wholly low, as can be observed by the ratio of students per computer (Ezeugbor and Nwachukwu in Egenti 2020). The Nigeria economy is poor and helpless to finance the complete acquisition of OTME skills in our colleges of education. The poor state of the economy has adversely affected the educational growth and development of the country (Nwalado and Ikenokwalu, 2019). Thus, inadequate fund or finance is a major challenge to the acquisition of OTME skills because it takes money to maintain these facilities (Nwadiokwu, 2019).

- *Poor Internet Connectivity:* This has negatively affected both teachers and students from using e-learning facilities in effective teaching and learning OTME skills in our colleges of education. According to Nwakwudo, Oguejiofor and Nwankwo in Nwalado and Ikenokwalu, (2019), e-learning provides students and teachers with practical and functional knowledge of computer, internet and other associated areas. Moreover, internet facilities should be made available 24 hours to teachers and OTME students in order to prepare them to meet up with the current information era.

- *Inadequate Facilities and Equipment:* Our schools and colleges lack the necessary facilities and equipment needed for the effective teaching and learning of OTME skills and competencies (Udo, 2014). For example, there are inadequate numbers of manual and electric typewriters, computers, printers etc. for teaching-learning of ICT in OTME departments in Federal college of Education (Technical), Asaba.

- *Poor Maintenance Culture:* The government in power does not release money for yearly maintenance of facilities and equipment. In fact, most of our schools and colleges are worse than piggery farms in abroad. According to Udo (2014), we have many dishonest students and leaders who are all out to steal and destroy whatever the government has made available in our schools and colleges.

- *Remuneration:* Lack of proper motivation of OTME lecturers discourages them from carrying out their duties and responsibilities adequately. So many of them abandon their jobs or neglect their duties sourcing for other businesses outside the school that will yield them more money.

- *Poor Attitudes of OTME Students:* Poor attitudes of OTME students towards the acquisition of the skills and competencies inherent in OTME courses make them loose personal interest and willingness to concentrate and acquire maximum level of skills

expected of them. One of such negative attitudes is failure to sit down and make wise use of their time and energy in acquiring maximum relevant skills for self-development and fulfillment (Udo, 2014). More so, OTME students fail to find time to engage themselves in practical exercises in courses such as typewriting, word processing and shorthand to mention just a few. When assignments are given in any of the courses listed above, it is often discovered that about eighty (80) percent of OTME students in the class did not find time/ot take time to do it. Udo (2014) asserts that students fail to take their studies seriously as they often come late to class and even when they know they are terribly late, yet they would be listening to pop music/other music or talking to people with their phones.

- *Low level of computer literacy among OTME teachers:* Lack of OTME teachers with the right knowledge of computer usage is one big barrier militating against the effective acquisition of OTME skills (Nwalado and Ikenokwalu, 2019). Another issue is the computer literacy skills of both the teacher and the learner (Harper, Hedburg, Bernnet and Lockyer in Nwalado and Ikenokwalu, 2019). Teachers need the skills for preparing course materials and learners equally need it for the comprehensive learning process. Unfortunately, most OTME teachers in Nigerian colleges of education lack the confidence to make effective use of computer facilities in and outside the lecture room.

- *Unwillingness of OTME students to change their thinking and behavior positively:* It is common place that one hundred (100) percent of OTME students' success in life or in their studies is dependent on positive attitudes to whatever they are taught (Udo, 2014). He also asserts that, the willingness of OTME students to change positively their attitudes and behaviours could help them to acquire maximum effective and relevant skills expected of them for the labour market. Unfortunately, many OTME students are often unwilling to change their negative attitudes. In fact a majority of business students in our schools and colleges are often unwilling to concentrate and study the skills content of OTME courses to maximum level. For example, in teaching and learning of typewriting many students only want to operate the typewriter or computer keyboards with two or three fingers instead of nine fingers.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Office Technology and Management programme is a career training or education to ensure that an individual is career ready with the right skills and attitudes needed for transition from school to work or for advancement in the OTME career path. Office

Technology and management inadvertently is a major skilled area which is highly Inclined to assist in achieving the demands of modern workplace and creating self-employment. Unfortunately, there are numerous issues and challenges facing the acquisition of OTME skills in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. From the above analysis, it is obvious that no meaningful OTME skills can be acquired in colleges of education without adequate provision of facilities, manpower and equipment needed in OTME departments to meet the changing needs of the society and workplace.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations become imperative if OTME skills must be acquired:

1. Government and stakeholders should ensure there is regular power supply in institutions of higher learning where OTME courses are being offered and also the management of institutions can improvise for power supply to avoid interruption during teaching learning Process.
2. Funding should be adequate and regular. Government and stakeholders in education should make adequate provision for the educational institutions NCCE and TETFUND should constantly disburse funds needed for appropriate implementation OTME programme in Colleges of Education to enable them meet the current state of art in education
3. The school management should provide alternate source of internet connection should the school's server be lone to enable smooth teaching and learning.
4. Government should provide adequate facilities and equipment needed for the acquisition. Of OTME skills.
5. Lecturers and students who make use of these equipment and facilities used for skill acquisition should ensure that these facilities are properly cared for after usage and there should be constant maintenance and response whenever there is breakdown in the usage of any of these facilities or equipment.
6. OTME teachers should be adequately motivated to enable them put in their best in discharging their duties and responsibilities.
7. There should be constant training and retraining of lecturers on new technologies introduced into the OTME programme.
8. There should be massive awareness campaign on the benefits of studying OTME so that the negative attitude of students towards skill acquisition will be reduced or eliminated.

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