

MICROSOFT OFFICE APPLICATION COMPETENCIES POSSESSED BY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN POLYTECHNICS FOR EMPLOYABILITY AND SELF RELIANCE IN KOGI STATE

By

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Abstract

This study analysed the Microsoft office competencies possessed by students of Office Technology and Management (OTM) in Polytechnics in Kogi State. It adopted the descriptive research design. Three purposes of the study, three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The sample population consisted of 107 OTM students of Federal Polytechnic Idah and Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja. Cronbach alpha reliability test was used to obtain reliability coefficients of 0.763. Mean, standard deviation and t –test statistics were the statistical tools used for analyses. Findings showed that the respondents were competent in Microsoft Word, but not competent in Microsoft Excel and Microsoft PowerPoint applications. Gender and institution type showed no significant difference in the respondents' mean ratings on their possessed Microsoft office competencies. The researcher concluded that OTM students have not adequately possessed Microsoft office application competencies, which is an obvious pointer to the reason why the level of unemployment is high, while self-reliance among her graduates is low. Based on the findings and conclusion, it was recommended, among others, that government should provide adequate funds for the polytechnic to enable them procure ICT facilities to enable students practice adequately and be acquainted with Microsoft office application.

(Keywords: Microsoft office, Office Technology and Management, Kogi State)

Introduction

The high level of graduate unemployment has become source of major concern all over the world and as such, there seem to be doubts as to whether educational institutions are effectively meeting the needs of the society. In Nigeria, indications from past studies indicates that the level of unemployment experienced by graduates of tertiary institutions has not only resulted from lack of jobs, but also because of a dearth of candidates with employable skills (Emeh, Nwanguma & Abaroh 2012; Pitan, 2015).

Evidences in support of this assertion show that out of over 40 million unemployed youths in the country 23 million are unemployable partly because they lack necessary skills for employment (Emeh Nwanguma and Abaroh, 2012). Analysts have argued that in Nigeria generally, the skills that jobseekers possess do not match the needs and demands of employers (Oduwole, 2015). In the same vein, Soludo (2012) describing the Nigerian situation said unemployment is not a problem in Nigeria rather Nigerian graduates are not employable and

they are misfit for today's workplace OTM Programme was designed by the NBTE in 2004, to replace the Secretarial Studies Programme which is an aspect of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE).

The objectives the Programme is to provide; the technical knowledge and vocational skills for commercial and economic development; give training and impart the necessary skills to every individual who wants to be employable or self-reliant economically. It is expected that graduates of the Programme should fit properly into the office of any computerized organization and perform professionally the functions of a secretary in various fields of endeavour (NBTE, 2004, Etoneyaku 2009).

Office education Programme according to Adelakin (2009), was introduced for two key reasons: first, as a response to the yearnings of the secretarial students for change in the nature and content of the Programme, as their products had become only suitable for the traditional office environment; and secondly, there was need for change in the curriculum with greater emphasis on Information and Communication Technology in order to meet the present needs of business organizations. The evolution in technology has made computer an indispensable device in today's office.

The knowledge of computer systems and the ability to work with Microsoft office applications have become an essential requirement for most employees in the business world, especially for office managers in the discharge of their tasks and duties. Microsoft office application is a package of office productivity software released by Microsoft. It is a set of interrelated applications and services designed specifically to be used for office and business collectively known to as an office suite. The various applications contained in the all-in-one package include Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Publisher and Microsoft Access amongst others.

Employability skills of prospective Office Technology and Management graduates can be viewed as an important dimension reflecting the degree to which an individual will be successful in his or her chosen occupation. Self-reliance could be seen as the ability to be economically independent such that individuals rely on their own capability to meet their personal needs. Umoru and Nnaji (2015) defined self-reliance as the ability an individual has to establish a business of his own instead of working for another person.

The adequacy and worth of the Programme of study is measured in terms of how far it can assist the graduates of the Programme to secure employment or become self-reliant. OTM Programme, like any other technology based Programme thrives on relevance and usefulness. What is important is the extent to which the training provided assists students to enter and succeed in the world of work. The Programme of training should therefore involve adequate acquisition and development of marketable skills that are relevant to the evolving work environment. To this end, the Programme has a responsibility to help students develop these skills and competencies required to be saleable.

Aside from being gainfully employed, there abound other business opportunities available to OTM graduates competent in Microsoft office skills.

Some of these opportunities include:

1. **Establishment of business centres:** business centres exist everywhere and have contributed immensely in creating self-employment for many OTM graduates thereby curbing unemployment and contributing to the nation's economic development.
2. **Establishment of computer training centres:** the training acquired through OTM Programme offers the recipient opportunity to establish computer training centres.
3. **Opportunity in data processing:** Microsoft office application courses offers OTM graduates knowledge of data entry, processing and analyzing services using computer applications such as MS Word, MS Excel, MS Access etc. Competencies in these

courses therefore create self-employment opportunities in offering data processing services to companies and the public.

4. **Opportunities in IT consultancy:** through Microsoft office application, graduates are equipped with competencies which can enable them establish and manage consultancy companies to assist growing firms to establish electronic office and records management procedures
5. **Opportunities in desktop publishing:** graduates of the Programme with Microsoft office competencies could establish and run desktop publishing centres where the production of items such as: invitation cards, headed papers, business cards, brochures etc. can be produced for individuals, governments, corporate organization, etc.(Ezeahurkwe and Ameh 2017; Habila, 2013; Wikipedia, 2019).

However, Anyaeneh and Nzegwu (2015) observed that office education Programme is faced with diverse problems in a bid to effectively achieve its aims and objectives.

Among these problems are:

1. **Poor Funding:** this has always been a major issue in office technology and management Programme. The quantity and quality of equipment and machines needed for effective implementation of the Programme is affected by inadequate funding (Fadare, 2014; Akarahu, 2010; Adedeji, 2009).
2. **Large class size:** laboratories and classes in many public Polytechnics in Nigeria are overcrowded with too many students. This makes it impossible for teachers to give students individual attention needed in teaching and learning process.
3. **The high student-teacher ratio:** this affects quality delivery of practical courses like Microsoft office applications (Agboola, 2015).
4. **Epileptic power supply:** Lack of constant electricity supply is another problem confronting the Programme in the country. Power supply is necessary to run computers, unfortunately it is hardly available and where it is, it is epileptic in nature thus, only the theoretical aspect is taught leaving out the practical aspect, a situation that leaves students half baked (Nwaokolo, 2014).
5. **Inadequate ICT competent educators:** as no one can possibly offer what he does not have. In like manner, Onyesom and Ashibgwu (2018) asserted that no matter how properly designed an educational Programme is, it cannot succeed without an adequate crop of teachers. The objective of OTM Programme for employability and self-reliance cannot be achieved in the face of gross inadequate competent educators, as lack of skill in ICT office application have limited the effective impartation of Microsoft office competencies (Folorunso and Taiwo 2018).

It is thus against this background therefore, that this study seeks to analyse the Microsoft office competencies possessed by office technology and management students in the Polytechnic for employability and self-reliance.

Statement of the Problem

In 2004, the National Board for Technical Education in collaboration with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), came up with a comprehensive review of the curriculum for secretarial studies programme for polytechnics in Nigeria. It was indeed a critical content overhaul of the then existing curriculum. The outcome of the review became known as office technology and management (OTM). Its purpose was clear; it was to guarantee the employability and promote the self-reliance of its graduates in the face of adverse economic situation in the country.

Hence, the objectives, theoretical and practical contents of the current curriculum were geared towards integrating OTM students into the world of technology. Two main purpose of

the overhaul of the curriculum was to increase the employability and reliance of graduates of the Programme such that, their ICT competencies are brought at par with the requirements of the modern technology-oriented office. It has been close to two decades since Microsoft office application had been incorporated into the Office Technology and Management curriculum in an attempt to ensure that students of the Programme acquired the requisite skills compatible with the demands of modern offices.

It is however disheartening to note that, only minimal impact has been felt in this regard as graduates of the Programme reportedly have had to even be retrained to use these Microsoft office applications effectively. Indications from previous studies points to the fact that graduates are not well prepared for the work place as there exists a gap between the skills acquired and that which required (Hennemann & Liefner, 2010; Rasul & Mansor, 2013). Most OTM graduates regrettably, acquire theoretical knowledge which does not match well with the requirements of the work place.

This continued mismatch between Microsoft office competencies acquired by students and the expectation of employers in the world of works if not promptly addressed, will jeopardize all the efforts made in terms of; the review of the curriculum and the continued huge government investment in the Programme. In view of the foregoing, there seems to exist a gap between the training received by OTM students and the employers' expectation which this study intends to fill. This study therefore seeks to analyse the Microsoft office application competencies possessed by office technology and management students for employability and self-reliance in Kogi state.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to analyse the Microsoft office application competencies possessed by Office Technology and Management students in Polytechnics for employability and self-reliance in Kogi state.

Specific purposes of the study are:

1. To determine the level of Microsoft Word application competencies possessed by Office Technology and Management students in Polytechnics for employability and self-reliance in Kogi state.
2. To find out the level to which Office Technology and Management students in Polytechnics possess Microsoft Excel application competencies for employability and self-reliance in Kogi state.
3. To identify the level of Microsoft PowerPoint application competencies possessed by Office Technology and Management students in Polytechnics for employability and self-reliance in Kogi state.

Research Questions

Based on the purposes of the study, the following research questions were raised to guide the study;

1. To what level are students of Office Technology and Management competent in Microsoft Word application for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state?
2. To what level are students of Office Technology and Management competent in Microsoft Excel application for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state?
3. To what level are students of Office Technology and Management competent in Microsoft PowerPoint application for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female office technology and management students on the level of Microsoft Word application competencies possessed for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state.
2. H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of office technology and management students in Federal and State Polytechnics on the level of Microsoft Excel application competencies possessed for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state.
3. H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the male and female office technology and management students on the level of Microsoft PowerPoint application competencies possessed for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state.

Significance of the Study

The following stakeholders will benefit from the findings of this study: Government, lecturers, graduates, students, society and future researcher: Government invested heavily in the review of secretarial studies curriculum to meet the expectations of today's workplace and has continued to invest in the funding of office technology and management Programmes thus. they will be interested in finding out if this heavy investment is justified. This study will also, acquaint the Lecturers/Instructors with a wide range of employability skills in Office Technology and Management which could in turn cause them to embark on retraining Programmes on the areas they are lagging behind. As a result the quality of instruction will be enhanced. The findings of the study will benefit graduates of Office Technology and Management Programme. The employed and unemployed would evaluate themselves and become aware of the expectations of employers and the demands of their potential jobs. The result will also provide graduates with information that will help them know their areas of incompetence and thereby encourage them to remedy it.

This research work will also benefit the students immensely as the findings of this research work will provide information on the level of their employability and self-reliance. it will therefore help the students focus their effort in developing areas of their training that are yet to be suited for employment and self- reliance. Society will benefit from the result of this study, as the students are part of the larger society. Therefore, anything that affects the students is of interest to the society. When student graduate and get employed, they contribute to the development of the country's economy and the society at large.

Finally, the findings of this Research will be of benefit to intending researchers who wish to carry out further research work on the competence of graduating students and the skills required of them to be employable and self-reliant.

Scope of the Study

The Study focused on the Microsoft office application competencies possessed by Polytechnic Office Technology and Management students for employability and self-reliance in Kogi state. This study covered only the Microsoft office applications captured in the NBTE curriculum for office technology and management which are: Microsoft word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, Microsoft Publisher and Microsoft PowerPoint.

This study was also delimited to only HND II graduating students. The adoption of this decision was borne out of the need to have students that have had relevant level of classroom training on ICT office applications; MS Word, MS Excel, MS Access, MS Publisher and MS PowerPoint to a remarkable extent. More so, they have job experience from the student's industrial training experience and from the student industrial work experience scheme (SIWES).

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used for the study. It was considered appropriate because according to Otache (2016), descriptive studies are undertaken to describe the elements or subjects being studied. The population of the study was 107 respondents comprising of 56 HND II students of Federal Polytechnic, Idah and 51 HND II students of Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja. The researcher decided to study the entire population in line with the postulation of Ademiluyi and Okwuanaso (2009), that it is ideal to study the entire population when it is manageable.

Therefore, there was no need for sampling as the entire population was manageable. The data for the study was collected using a structured questionnaire titled: Students Microsoft Office Application Competencies for Employability and Self-reliance Questionnaire (SMOACES-Q) with a 4-point scale of Very Competent (VC) 4 points, Competent (C) 3 points, Fairly Competent (FC) 2 points, Not Competent (NC) 1 point. The questionnaire was duly validated by two experts who are Chief Lecturers in the School of Management, Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja.

The instrument which contains 30 questionnaire items was designed from the relevant literature reviewed and used to collect data. With the use of Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test (CART), the reliability co-efficient calculated for the study was found to be 0.763 which indicated that the instrument for the study was reliable. Mean and standard deviation were the tools used to analyse the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using independent t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

One hundred and seven (107) copies of the questionnaire were administered by the researcher and two trained research assistants. All the copies of the questionnaire and the questionnaire items were duly completed and retrieved by the same. In answering the research question items, any mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as competent. On the other hand, any mean score below 2.50 was regarded as not competent. In testing the research hypotheses, the hypothesis was accepted where the t-table calculated value is less than the t-critical value. However, the hypothesis is rejected if the t-table calculated value is higher than the t-critical table value.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

This section presented and analysed the data generated in the study.

Research Question One: to what extent are Microsoft Word application competencies possessed by Polytechnic Office Technology and Management students for employability and self-reliance in Kogi State?

Table 1: Mean ratings on the extent of Microsoft Word application competencies possessed by Polytechnic Office Technology and Management students for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state?

S/NO	ITEM	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Ability to launch MS word application	3.0	1.5	Competent
2	Ability to create a new document, enter text, and save it	2.9	1.4	Competent
3	Ability to open and edit existing documents	3.0	1.0	Competent
4	Ability to navigate in a document and perform a search	2.0	0.5	Not Competent
5	Ability to select and move text	3.0	1.5	Competent
6	Ability to format characters and paragraphs	2.5	1.0	Competent
7	Ability to use AutoCorrect and Help tools	1.8	0.4	Not Competent

8	Ability to create and edit tables	2.8	1.6	Competent
9	Ability to control page and document appearance	1.8	0.2	Not Competent
10	Ability to print documents, envelopes, and labels	2.4	0.2	Not Competent
Grand mean		2.52	0.93	Competent

Source: (Field Survey, 2018)

The result in Table 1: respondents indicated that they were competent in items: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8 with a maximum mean score of 3.0 while the indicated that they were incompetent in the rest 4 items with a minimum mean score of 1.8 and a grand mean of 2.51. From the above, it is clear that the respondents are competent in Microsoft Word application. Research question two: to what level are Microsoft Excel application competencies possessed by Polytechnic Office Technology and Management students for employability and self-reliance in Kogi state?

Table 2: Mean ratings on the level of Microsoft Excel application competencies possessed by Polytechnic Office Technology and Management students for employability and self-reliance in Kogi state?

S/NO	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Ability to start Microsoft Excel	2.8	1.2	Competent
2	Ability to open files	2.6	1.0	Competent
3	Ability to use page setup and save data	2.8	1.4	Competent
4	Ability to understand navigation and movement techniques.	2.7	1.5	Competent
5	Ability to use simple arithmetic functions in the formulas	2.5	1.0	Competent
6	Ability to enter, edit and manipulation of data	2.8	1.2	Competent
7	Ability to produce a basic spreadsheet with formulae	1.8	1.3	Not Competent
8	Ability to create arithmetic formulae	1.8	1.4	Not Competent
9	Ability to use common functions	2.4	0.2	Not Competent
10	Ability to modify a database and insert data from another application	2.0	0.4	Not Competent
Grand mean		2.42	1.06	Not Competent

Source: (Field Survey, 2018)

The result in Table 2: respondents indicated that they were competent in items: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, with a maximum mean score of 2.8 while they indicated that they were incompetent in the rest 4 items with a minimum mean score of 1.8 and a grand mean of 2.42. From the above, it shows that the respondents are incompetent in Microsoft Excel application. Research Question Three: to what level are students of Office Technology and Management competent in Microsoft PowerPoint application for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state?

Table 3: Mean ratings on the level of Microsoft PowerPoint application competencies possessed by Office Technology and Management students for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state?

S/NO	ITEMS	MEAN	SD	REMARK
1	Ability to launch ms power point	2.8	1.2	Competent
2	Create title and bullet slides	2.6	1.0	Competent
3	Create Slides in Outline view	2.8	1.4	Competent
4	Modify slide text and check spelling	1.8	1.5	Not Competent
5	Select a template	2.5	1.0	Competent
6	Insert a table	1.8	1.2	Not Competent
7	Work with text, drawn objects, and drawing tools	1.8	1.3	Not Competent
8	Use ClipArt and WordArt	1.8	1.4	Not Competent
9	Create an Organization Chart and use options	2.4	0.2	Not Competent
10	Edit a Column Chart	2.0	0.4	Not Competent
Grand Mean		2.23	1.06	Not Competent

Source: (Field Survey, 2018)

The result in Table 3: respondents indicated that they were not competent in items: 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 with a maximum mean score of 2.8 while the indicated that they were competent in the rest 4 items with a minimum mean score of 1.8 and a grand mean of 2.23. Going by the above, it is obvious that the respondents are incompetent in Microsoft PowerPoint application.

Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female student of Office Technology and Management on the Microsoft Word application competencies possessed for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis showing the difference between mean ratings of male and female office technology and management students in Polytechnics on the level of Microsoft word application competencies possessed for employability and self-reliance

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	P	t-cal	t-cit	Decision
Female	65	2.51	0.93	105	0.05	0.07	1.96	Accepted
Male	42	2.52	0.91					

Table 4 shows the t-calculated table value of 0.07 is less than the t-critical table value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean of the responses on Microsoft word competencies possessed by OTM students with respect to their gender. The hypothesis is thus accepted. This agrees with Eze and Okoroafor (2012) who established that gender is not a significant factor for computer operations.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Federal and State Polytechnic office technology and management students on the Microsoft Excel application competencies possessed for employability and self-reliance in Kogi state.

Table 5: Summary of t-test analysis showing the difference between mean ratings of federal and state office technology and management students in Polytechnics on the level of Microsoft Excel application competencies possessed for employability and self-reliance

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	P	t-cal	t-cit	Decision
Federal	56	2.43	1.06	105	0.05	0.09	1.84	Accepted
State	51	2.41	1.04					

Table 6 shows the t-calculated table value of 0.09 is less than the t-critical table value of 1.84 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean of respondents on Microsoft PowerPoint competencies possessed by OTM students with respect to their institution. The hypothesis is thus accepted.

H0₃: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female student of office technology and management on the Microsoft PowerPoint application competencies possessed for employability and self-reliance in Polytechnics in Kogi state.

Table 6: Summary of t-test analysis showing the difference between mean ratings of male and female office technology and management students in Polytechnics on the level of Microsoft PowerPoint application competencies possessed for employability and self-reliance

Respondents	N	X	SD	Df	P	t-cal	t-cit	Decision
Female	65	2.24	0.59	105	0.05	0.08	1.96	Accepted
Male	42	2.24	0.61					

Table 6 shows the t-calculated table value of 0.08 is less than the t-critical table value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The findings suggest that there is no significant difference in the mean of the responses on Microsoft PowerPoint competencies possessed by OTM students with respect to their gender. The hypothesis is thus accepted. This agrees with Eze and Okoroafor (2012) who established that gender is not a significant factor for computer operation.

Discussion of findings

The tables show that students were only competent in 17 out of the 30 areas of competencies required for employability and self-reliance. Table 1 simply reveals that respondents were competent in six (6) items of the ten (10) Microsoft Word competencies required to be employable and self-reliant. The students are competent since the grand mean 2.52 is more than the criterion mean of 2.50. This in agreement with the findings of a research conducted by Ndinechi and Gude (2014) which showed that OTM students considered themselves barely proficient in Microsoft word with a grand mean of 2.76.

The data analysed in table 2 showed that respondents indicated that they were competent in six (6) out of the ten (10) areas of Microsoft Excel application needed for employability and self-reliance, with a grand mean obtained is 2.42 which is less than the criterion mean of 2.50, it indicates that they are not competent. This finding is in consonance with Ndinechi and Gude (2014) who remarked that OTM students are not competent in Microsoft Excel.

The data presented in table 3 simply revealed that respondents were not competent in six (6) areas of the ten (10) Microsoft PowerPoint application competencies necessary for employability and self-reliance. Going by the grand mean of 2.23 which is less than the criterion mean of 2.50, it indicated that the students are also not competent in Microsoft PowerPoint.

Conclusion

Office Technology and Management students have not adequately possessed Microsoft

office application competencies; this is an obvious pointer to the reason why the level of unemployment among her graduates is high while the extent of self-reliance is low. The need for competencies in Microsoft office application cannot be overemphasized as a vast majority of the offices in the world of work today have Microsoft office applications operating on their systems. It is therefore necessary that something urgent should be done to ensure that students obtain adequate Microsoft office application competencies as stipulated in the NBTE curriculum so as to ensure employability and self-reliance.

Recommendations

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

1. Government should provide adequate funds for the polytechnic to enable them procure ICT facilities to enable students practice adequately and be acquainted with Microsoft office application.
2. Periodic workshops, training and regular retraining should be organized for OTM educators for adequate acquisition of Microsoft office application skills in order to impart it effectively on the students.

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