Office Technology and Management Skills and its Challenges in Nigeria

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Abstract--This paper discussed some of the challenges faced by the Office Technology and Management Skills due to present technological changes globally, today, the technological changes has reformed many professions with a view to meet the current global changes in many areas i.e. higher productivity, speed, accuracy, paperless office and excellent routine office work, packaging. However, all this process cannot be achieved without the use of modern machine is what is called "automation". At the introduction, the paper defined skill, office technology and management as well as its challenges, unemployment, aspect of office automation, it further highlighted some of the factors that hindered office technology and management skills (graduates). Recommendations was also made on how such challenges can be address. Finally, conclusion was offered for the institution offering the OTM courses to adopt the current global changes so as to restructure their curriculum to meet the global standard and for satisfactory job performances and personal fulfilment in the global labor market

Keywords--Challenges, Office, Technology, Management Skills.

I. INTRODUCTION

The modern office has gone through series of technological changes in recent years, as a result of growth and importance of information and communication technology. Today, virtually all office and business functions are been facilitated via advanced automated equipment and system. It is evident in recent times that the great impact of information and communication technology can be said to be on business education programmes, of which OTM is an off-shoot. However, it is not understatement that despite the potentials of ICT to OTM profession, very little has been achieved in whichever level of institutions offering OTM programme in Nigeria. Some of the problems include inadequate ICT infrastructure, over dependence of educational institutions on government for funding, inadequate teaching skills and methods.

As the name implies Office Technology and Management Skill, are those type skills acquired after passing through the rigorous training in the former Secretarial studies course which comprises of Typewriting now (Keyboarding) office practice, records management, web page design, desktop publishing to mention but a few. The nomenclature of the course was change by the Polytechnics regulatory body National Board of Technical Education (NBTE) in Nigeria, due to the global technological changes and the review of the curriculum at both Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The OTM course was introduced in order to boost the secretarial courses and to enable the Secretarial studies (OTM) graduate to be self-reliant. The course was offered at both National Diploma and Higher National Diploma level in the Polytechnics. The course gives the student theory and practical knowledge of becoming a qualified office secretaries. The course is a complete activity-based

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educational programme which is more of acquisition of office technology and management skills, understandings, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are necessary for the secretarial and office management occupations.

After the review of the OTM curriculum, much emphasis was given to ICT rather than Keyboarding or Typewriting and others with the sole aim of proving effective manpower that can manage various offices at both technology and managerial aspect in the organizations.

The knowledge and skills acquired enable the OTM graduate to operate computer and other ICT related effectively ranging from web page design, desk top publishing, records management, ward processing etc.

The OTM programme was re-design for the following major reasons, the desire of secretarial studies student, the practitioners need to change the name of the programme and being in a digital era where documents are stored in electronic form Adelakingy (2009). He added that also as a result of change in curriculum in which ICT and management was given much emphasis so as to equip the students with the necessary needed in today's modern office.

A. The Skills and the Office Technology and Management

Skill is said to be a knowledgeable response, after acquiring a particular training which will enable that person the capability to accomplish a particular task so as to achieve a specific objective Daniel (2006). Ekpenyong (1988) it is the ability of using one's knowledge effectively and readily in effecting of performance; technical expertness, a power or habit of doing any particular thing competently. Therefore, OTM can said to be a skill that encompasses practical knowledge with intelligence, expertise, dexterity and the capability to execute a function which could be acquired or learnt in school. The acquisition of practical skills can be classified in two forms learners' behavior and their willingness towards learning that skill to its highest level of expectation for beneficial employment in the global labor market. Furthermore, the OTM course offers skills, knowledge and attitudes that are necessary for effective employment in secretarial and management occupations. Merraim Webster Dictionary (2013) defines skill as the ability of coming from one's knowledge practice or aptitude to do something well.

The skills needed necessary by the OTM students as outline by the NBTE in its curriculum are office skills, managerial skills, entrepreneurial skills, ICT skills, communication skills and socio psychological skills. (Ojukwu, 2009) added that all the above mentioned skills could be acquired from the courses offered by the OTM students. OTM skill is technical skill which is purely of basic secretarial duties in the office. The technical skills of OTM include keyboarding skills, and shorthand skills. According to FGN (2004) it is expected that on graduation OTM students should possess the office skills such as shorthand, typing and bookkeeping. They are also required to be able to write in shorthand for some minutes perfectly and transcribed it on the typewriter accurately. They are also expected to type good office job with a high degree of accuracy.

B. Concept of Office Technology and Management Programme

The OTM course provides training in keyboarding skills and document formatting using a word – processing application programme as well as office projects to develop competences in language skills and document production.   According to Oyinkoye and Oluwalola (2010), Office Technology and Management is a new nomenclature that emerged to replace the former Secretarial Studies Programme and was introduced by the

National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in 2004 which is a body that controls the polytechnics operations throughout the country. The change was meant to make the programme and its recipients more ICT educators and to adequately fit into the world of work appropriately, especially in this modern age of globalization, where equipment and new machines are emerging daily. The Committee on Research and Publications of the American Vocational Association in Esene (2013) defined OTM (Secretarial Studies) as education designed to develop skills, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and appreciations encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis.

OTM programme involves the process of guiding and initiating the learners to acquire the necessary skills, facts, knowledge, habits and attitudes that will make them co – exist with others as useful and productive members of the society. It is a programme of instruction designed to equip its recipients with knowledge and skills for gainful employment. Nwabuona (2010) described the OTM programme as focusing on combination of office information technical skills with adequate and relevant business knowledge in solving organizational problems. He noted that the target is to produce hybrid administrative professionals to respond to the demands of a dynamic and intensely computerized workplace. While Komolafe and Ajani (2010), OTM is a work oriented educational programme that aims at skill acquisition which are useful and employable in the labour market. They further added that the programme is designed to development participant's skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation of encompassing knowledge and information needed by individuals in order to enter and progress in employment on a useful and productive base. 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 individuals 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. It is a component of business education and indeed vocational and technical education. Graduates of the programme at the polytechnics in Nigeria are awarded National Diploma after two years of studies and a Higher National Diploma certificate at the advance level coupled with an Industrial Training experience in between the two programmes of studies.

C. Office Technology and Management Programme in the Past

In the olden days, the traditional methods of training for training secretaries throughout Nigeria was simple and primitive. Its curriculum was poorly structured thereby limiting its scope mainly to clerical services like; typewriting, audio typing and transcription, handling mails, receiving calls to mention but a few.

D. Office Technology and Management Programme Today

The introduction of ICT and the global technological changes have revolutionized business and office services so much that OTM profession has become more vast and demanding. This is because work of the professional secretary has changed from the traditional office routine of handling mails manually, to the application of modern office techniques, and the use of sophisticated office equipment. Oueyiola (2005) also added that OTM programme that meets the contemporary demands of the business world and the challenges of the work environments is on the era of information processing/administration and communication, keyboarding, word processing and human relations skills. Therefore, the former inadequacies in scope and structure have virtually given way to well-structured and coordinated programme of studies offered in Polytechnics, Colleges of

Education and Universities throughout Nigeria. Among the courses it offers are; word processing, data processing, secretarial duties, office management and many others.

II. CHALLENGES OF OTM PROGRAMME

It is interesting to note that while computer and other modern office equipment have been instrumental in changing the way business and office routine operate in Nigeria, they seem to have had little effect on the OTM programme in many institutions in Nigeria. The following are some of the related issues and challenges:

E. Quality and Quantity of OTM Lecturers:

Lecturers are regarded as the soul of any school. The quality of education in any nation is reflected by the quality of people who serve as teachers (lecturers) in its educational system.

One disturbing phenomenon is that most institution that mount OTM programme across the country (Nigeria) employ the services of unqualified personnel. The implication is that learners' skills are not adequately made-to-order to suit the demand of the present world of work. In another view, people are of the said, "poorly trained teachers will no doubt produce poorly trained doctors, engineers, lawyers, architects, lecturers and the like".

Therefore, appropriate mechanism which will accord OTM lecturers the opportunity for training and upgrading their skills and methods from time to time be put in place. While on the quantity of OTM lecturers in Nigeria, there is clear severe shortage of lecturers in the institutions. One major reason is that, the demand for qualified OTM graduate is higher than the supply.

F. Quality of OTM Graduates:

To this effect, there is no much changes in the curriculum of OTM in Nigeria except the recent review made by the National Board for Technical Education Board (NBTE). The minimum standard given for OTM programme is not adequately responsive to the present technological changes, as such; the OTM graduate are not adequately skilled to cope with the quality needed in the global labour market of today.

G. Quality of Quantity of OTM Facilities

It is important to note that the teaching of OTM courses at both secondary and tertiary levels is lacking of adequate and functional facilities as well as instructional materials such as model office, lecture classes, text books, typewriters, shorthand laboratories, ICT facilities, most especially computers, and where they exist the problem of power supply is another major problem which makes its existence of little or no significance to both lecturers and the students. As such this what leads lectures to be theory and skipping the practical, this save as a major challenge to the OTM profession. It is only with the help of NCCE and TET Fund little changes was introduced. Since the time the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in Nigeria introduces this OTM programme, most of the graduates appeared not to be competent in the use of ICT facilities in the office. Looking at the curriculum which is more of ICT and that of modern office. This has negatively affected the idea of introducing the new programme. In the same line Okoro (2013) asserted that both HND and ND graduates do not have adequate competency in ICT application in their place of work. This can equally be seeing as to the quality

of OTM graduates. This could lead to the issue of the provision of teaching and learning equipment and resources in the Nigerian Polytechnics that offers OTM.

Today, computer and other modern office equipment had brought tremendous changes to the performance and development of OTM, because computer can be seen as a device of transmitting man's knowledge of a specific law with the help of his or her skills into real object so as to bring global changes. It is the machine, which is capable of taking input data, sorting, processing, storing as well as given out the processed data as information for human use.

The OTM faces drastic technological changes this is because computer has made many works admirable and enjoyable by civilizing the input and output of many office work. The introduction of computer and other modern office machines has replaced many concepts in OTM and develop the system of the routine work and increase production of work in today's organizations.

H. Student Enrolment

The most common problem of Nigerian tertiary institutions today is that of students' enrolment that favours other disciplines to the detriment of OTM programme. Despite the laudable objectives of this programme, the society is yet to accord this aspect of education its rightful place. To this effect, no particular programme at the Nigerian institution has the required number of students admitted. This resulted to a situation that practical is not being given adequately in the institutions where the practical equipment was provided.

Opportunity for Advancement

Another challenge face by the OTM programme today in Nigeria is that of opportunity for advancement of OTM education unlike its peers in other sector of education, the opportunity is limited. Only few Universities in Nigeria offer Secretarial Studies/Administration at bachelor's degree. The opportunity for advancement of OTM programme need to be given like other peers of educational sector.

III. CONCLUSION

The overall educational system should be adequately funded. However, much success in this regard will depend on the institutions ability to collaborate with private sector, or seek alternative funding sources through community adequate participation, since it is obvious that government alone cannot cater for the need of education sector.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

As per the above presentation, the following recommendations are made:

- NBTE as the body that regulates the polytechnic programmes in Nigeria (NBTE), should re-evaluate the programme for current teaching and learning of office technology and management courses so as to cope with the present technological changes.
- Provision of modern teaching and learning facilities should be made by the Federal/State Government.

- Staff of OTM department be sponsored from time to time in attending seminars, workshops, conferences and training.
- The facilities provided need to be improved as well as the lecture room.

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