

EVALUATING THE IMPORTANCE AND PROBLEMS OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM IN ENHANCING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG GRADUATES

Taiwo Omoleye Adebayo
Omoadebayor@yahoo.co.uk

*Department Of Office Technology and Management
Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State*

Abstract

Innovations have been introduced into the curricula of tertiary institutions, with a view to producing entrepreneurs instead of job seekers. The new OTM curriculum embodied with ICT based courses replaced secretarial studies. This study explores the relative importance of OTM programme and how comprehensive and adequate it is to promote entrepreneurship among its graduates. The study also examined the problems of Office Technology and Management curriculum in enhancing entrepreneurship among graduates. Two research questions were raised for the study while questionnaire was the major instrument used for data collection. Population of study was Sixty OTM lecturers in five selected Polytechnics. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of each course in the programme in relation to the promotion of entrepreneurship. Respondents were also asked to identify those problems facing the full implementation of OTM curriculum. Mean method was used to analyse and interpret the responses to the questionnaire administered. Data analysed show that almost all the courses have high mean results and are good and adequate enough to ensure successful entrepreneurship among its graduates. Problems that could hinder the implementation of the programme were identified and recommendations drawn to avoid pitfall and failure of the programme.

Keywords: *Office Technology and Management, Curriculum, Entrepreneurship, Evaluating.*

Introduction

In recent times, the curricula of various courses in Nigeria tertiary institutions have undergone several radical changes to address various issues. Innovations in curriculum come with new ideas and new goals are set to address the new knowledge explosion. As the nation moves towards vision 20:2020 and the need to produce graduates with relevant skills, the pressing demands for meaningful reforms in curriculum become imperative. In line with this philosophy, the curriculum of secretarial

studies has undergone extensive review which resulted in the change of the name from secretarial studies to Office Technology and Management. Secretarial Studies was one of the foremost courses that were mounted in the Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology at both National and Higher National Diploma levels. Developments in office technology have changed the structure, content and methodology of office work in the 21st century and this led to series of calls for innovations of

the secretarial studies curriculum to office technology and management.

In 2004 the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) introduced the new Office technology and Management programme to replace the secretarial studies programme. The new programme is laced with courses in Information Technology (IT). This agrees with the reality as the technological innovations have massively flooded and is influencing daily business and office activities. According to NBTE (2004) the OTM curriculum is intended to equip secretarial and office education students with skills in office technology and management and develop work ethics and skills for employment in various fields of endeavor. OTM graduates are also expected to develop entrepreneurial skills and become employers of labour; to reduce unemployment and alleviate poverty in the society.

The goals of the new curriculum also conforms with the National Policy on IT (2000) which envisaged that knowledge and skills gained through IT should be adequate enough to provide gainful employment and self-employment opportunities for youths in both the rural and urban areas. The implication of this was that the youth will have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the social and economic development of their community and the country at large as well as living a better life in the society. On the other hand Office Technology and Management curriculum which replaced the Secretarial Studies curriculum has de-emphasised the concentration formerly laid on 'shorthand skills' and shifted base to the involvement of Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills and Entrepreneurship skills. These are very essential for employability,

employment opportunities and self-employment.

The major worry of this paper was that despite the laudable objectives of Office Technology and Management Programme and despite the efforts of government at all levels to eradicate unemployment and poverty in the society the nation's economy is still characterized by high rate of unemployment and poverty. Therefore, the need for a curriculum that will help to reform polytechnic education and other educational programme in Nigeria's educational system that will produce an individual that will possess knowledge and skills that will enable them contribute meaningfully to economic growth and development of the nation cannot be under estimated. The alarming rate of unemployment and poverty has brought about the dire need to carry out some modifications in the curriculum of various educational programme in Nigerian tertiary institutions in order to ensure that students will not only be exposed to a particular skill but also to creative thinking sufficient enough to establish and run a business at least at the small scale level. The emergence of the new OTM programme appears a vital option for alternative employment, hence the need to appraise and properly position the programme to fulfill the desired objectives. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts at evaluating the importance of the subject contents and problems of OTM curriculum in enhancing entrepreneurship among graduates.

The general purpose of this study is to evaluate the importance and problems of Office Technology and Management Curriculum in enhancing entrepreneurship among graduates. Specifically, the concern of this study is to:-

- Rate the importance attached to the content of each subject of the OTM programme in promoting entrepreneurship among its graduates.
- Find out the general problems that may be militating against successful achievement of the ideal of the new OTM curriculum in enhancing entrepreneurship among its graduates in Nigeria Polytechnic.

The scope of the study was limited to entrepreneurship potentials of each subject as contained in the OTM curriculum in Nigeria Polytechnic and the problems faced in the process of implementing the programme. This study also was restricted to five public polytechnics in five selected states in south western part of Nigeria.

Research Questions:

Two research questions were raised for the study.

- What rating of importance is attached to the content of each subject of the OTM programme

in promoting entrepreneurship among its graduates?

- What are the general problems faced in implementing the OTM programme in the institution?

Method

For the purpose of this study, survey research design was used. Survey method deals with people's opinions, attitudes, motivation and behaviours through the use of appropriate instrument for data collection. Survey method is good for finding group of people's opinion in a given area towards an issue which is of interest to the generality of the populace in the area (Adaranijo 2001).

The population of this study consists of One hundred and Ten lecturers teaching OTM subjects in Nigerian Public Polytechnics in South Western Part of the country. For the purpose of this study a purposive sampling technique was used to select five public polytechnics from four selected states out of six states in the south western part of the country consisting of sixty Lecturers Teaching OTM courses.

Name of the Institutions	Number of Lecturers Teaching OTM Courses
Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State	11
Osun State Polytechnic, Iree, Osun State.	13
Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State.	11
Ibadan Polytechnic, Ibadan, Oyo State.	13
Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State.	12
TOTAL	60

The major instrument used for the purpose of collecting relevant data from the respondents was questionnaire. Sixty copies of the questionnaire were drawn and the first part of the questionnaire which tends to provide answer to research question one contains thirty four courses as contained in the OTM

curriculum at both National and Higher National Diploma levels. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of each course in relation to the ability of each subject to promote entrepreneurship. The second part of the questionnaire which aims at providing answer to research question two contains

seven items statement in which respondents were asked to identify those problems facing the implementation of the curriculum. The researcher administered and retrieved all the questionnaires with the help of research assistants.

Mean rating were used to analyse and interpret the responses of the respondents. To provide answer to research question one, a mean of 3.0 and above was taken as Important while a mean score of less than 3.0 was considered Unimportant. The respondent expressed their ranking using a five-point scale of **Highly Important, Very Important, Important, Unimportant and Highly Unimportant** with weighting of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. On the other hand to provide answer to research question two, the problems identified as impediments to the successful implementation of the programme were analyzed using five-point likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Undecided (U), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) with weighting of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively with mean scores less than 2.5 regarded as Untrue while those above are rated True.

The findings of this study will be of much benefit to curriculum planners, management of institutions and OTM students and graduates. The curriculum planners will know which of the subjects need to be reviewed in line with the entrepreneurship vision. Management of institutions will appreciate the problems faced in the implementation of the curriculum and provide lasting solutions to them in order to ensure that qualitative programmes are organized in their institutions. On the other hand OTM students and graduates will understand the importance of the course, put in more efforts and be prepared to acquire

necessary skills to encourage entrepreneurship.

Literature Review

Office Technology and Management curriculum was introduced to Polytechnics by NBTE in 2004, to replaced secretarial studies. The change was as a result of extensive review of secretarial studies curriculum in order to make the recipients to be ICT compliant, fit appropriately to the world of work, most especially in modern offices characterised by various types of new communication technologies and to promote entrepreneurship among its graduates.

The design of components of the programme appears to be responsive to a global initiative with an objective that portends new academic direction in favour of ICT and self-reliance. According to Frank (2007), Akwa and Pwol (2010), OTM programme provides students with administrative office preparations to meet the demands and challenges in the business environment. The programme also allows students to obtain marketable skills applicable to various careers as well as cognitive skills transferable to other employment situations and life experience. The OTM programme is a way to expose the recipients to entrepreneur opportunities for the formation and running of small scale businesses.

Many young graduates are today unemployed and those who managed to pass through tertiary institutions are seen as lacking the skills for entrepreneurship. Okagbare (2009) asserts that an educational system which makes no adequate provision or preparing graduates for their future live is exposing them to great psychological, economic and social tension. It is in a bid to prepare youths for the future in the face

of massive unemployment that the Polytechnic curricula were restructured with emphasizes on ICT and entrepreneurship. Office Technology and Management programme is an example of such restructuring where the students are exposed to the acquisition of vocational skills in office management as well as enterprise.

The New Curriculum

Curriculum can be described as the heart and soul of education. According to Ogiagah (2010) curriculum is all the learning activities planned for students which are directed by the school to attain specified educational goals. Curriculum is a mapped out plan of instructions or guides to be followed in the process of teaching and learning in a formal learning institution. Curriculum consists of a carefully mapped out programme containing what to teach, how to teach it, whom to teach, where to teach it and the materials and equipment needed to teach it. Properly carved out curriculum concerns itself with the subject matter, content, the pedagogical methods required to administer the content, the student, the teacher, the physical and psychological environment of the learners. All these are required for the achievement of goals of education.

The new OTM curriculum aims at equipping students with skills needed at work for planning, organizing and controlling the clerical aspect of the organization. Most of these works are performed with the application of ICT which has become necessities in the modern business environment and demonstration of resilience, right attitude at work and robust human relations.

The new OTM programme contains various courses at both the National Diploma and Higher National Diploma levels. The courses at the

National Diploma level include: Career Development, Citizenship Education, Desktop Publishing, Information and Communication Technology, Keyboarding, Introduction to Business, Introduction to Entrepreneurship, Modern Office Technology, Office Practice, Communication Skills, Principles of Accounting, Principles of economics, Principles of Law, Records Management, Research Techniques, Shorthand, Social Psychology, Students' Industrial Work Experience scheme, Technical English, Webpage Design and Project.

At the Higher National Diploma level, the courses are: Advanced Desktop Publishing, Advanced Transcription, Advanced Webpage Design, Business Communication, Business Law, Database Management, Elements of Human Resources Management, Entrepreneurship, Human Capital Development, ICT Office Application, Management Information System, Nigerian Labour Law, Office Administration and Management, Communication Skills, Career Development, Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility, Research Methods, Shorthand, Social Psychology and Project. **NBTE Curriculum (2004)**

Frank (2009) opined that the new OTM programme came at the right time when clamour for economic survival with very serious emphasis on entrepreneurship became the order of the day in the country. Entrepreneurial opportunities exist in OTM programme and individuals just need to recognize and exploit them; leading to economic growth for the individuals and the nation in general. Adequate knowledge and skills in ICT have been identified as aids to poverty alleviation, promoters of entrepreneurship and economic wellbeing of the recipients. However,

since its implementation, how far has the programme gone to achieve its expected goals? The evaluation of the contents of

the curriculum and problems associated with its implementation becomes timely.

Data Analysis/Results

Research Question I: What rating of importance is attached to the content of subjects in the OTM programme in promoting entrepreneurship among its graduates?

Table 1: Respondents' rating of importance attached to OTM subjects in promoting entrepreneurship

S/N	Course Content	Response Categories					Mean	Remarks
		HI	VI	I	U	HU		
1	Introduction to Business	200	40	06	10	3	4.3	Highly Important
2	Career Development	175	60	03	08	02	4.2	Highly Important
3	Introduction to Entrepreneurship	210	48	03	08	02	4.5	Highly Important
4	Desktop Publishing	160	68	09	04	06	4.1	Highly Important
5	Information and Communication Technology	210	48	03	08	02	4.5	Highly Important
6	ICT Office Application	200	40	06	10	03	4.3	Highly Important
7	Keyboarding	150	72	06	10	05	4.0	Highly Important
8	Citizenship Education	15	20	06	08	10	2.2	Unimportant
9	Webpage Design/Advanced	155	60	12	10	05	4.0	Highly Important
10	Technical English	80	120	15	08	08	3.8	Very Important
11	Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme	160	72	15	04	03	4.2	Highly Important
12	Social Psychology	90	128	06	10	03	3.1	Very Important
13	Shorthand	15	20	06	60	20	2.0	Unimportant
14	Advance Transcription	25	10	03	60	20	2.0	Unimportant
15	Research Techniques/Methods	150	84	09	10	02	4.3	Highly Important
16	Records Management	140	88	03	12	04	4.1	Highly Important
17	Principles of Law	75	120	09	04	10	3.6	Very Important
18	Principles of Economic	120	72	16	06	10	3.6	Very Important
19	Principles of Accounting	85	120	09	08	06	3.8	Very Important
20	Communication Skills	90	128	06	12	02	4.0	Highly Important
21	Office Practice	160	64	12	12	04	4.0	Highly Important
22	Modern Office Technology	110	112	03	12	04	4.0	Highly Important
23	Business Communication	135	72	12	10	06	3.9	Very Important
24	Advanced Desktop Publishing	85	128	06	06	06	3.8	Very Important
25	Professional Ethics and Social Responsibilities	90	108	09	16	04	3.8	Very Important
26	Office Administration and Management	115	80	12	12	07	3.8	Very Important
27	Nigerian Labour Law	120	72	16	06	10	3.7	Very Important
28	Management Information System	85	36	12	80	06	3.6	Very Important
29	Human Capital Development	15	72	12	06	10	3.8	Very Important
30	Entrepreneurship	90	104	09	08	09	3.7	Very Important

31	Elements of Human Resources							
	Management	115	100	15	06	04	4.0	Highly Important
32	Data Base Management	110	104	15	06	04	4.0	Highly Important
33	Business Law	85	112	06	06	10	3.7	Very Important
34	Project	85	36	12	80	06	3.6	Very Important
	Grand mean						3.73	Very Important

Source: Field Study (2016)

Table 1 reveals the respondents rating of importance attached to OTM subjects offer at both ND and HND level in promoting entrepreneurship. Sixteen of the subjects was rated Highly Important, fourteen was rated Very Important, one rated Important, three was rated Unimportant while none was rated Highly Unimportant. Research Question 2: What are the general problems faced in implementing the programme in the institution?

Table 2 Showing responses to types of problems faced in the implementation of the new curriculum

S/N	Statement	Mean	Decision
1	Your institution has inadequate essential modern equipment for instructional purposes.	3.9	True
2	Enough funds is made available to procure and maintain equipment and consumable materials for the implementation of the programme.	1.9	Untrue
3	OTM lecturers are adequately trained for successful implementation of the new curriculum.	2.0	Untrue
4	There is adequate institution-industry collaboration for effective feedback.	1.8	Untrue
5	Students have access to ICT tools for constant practice.	1.8	Untrue
6	Students take part in SIWES to acquire necessary experience.	1.9	Untrue
7	There is always constant supply of energy to operate the gadgets for teaching and learning	1.7	Untrue
	Grand mean.	2.14	Untrue

Source: Field study (2016)

The data presented in Table 2 reveals that all the seven items have their means value range from 1.7 to 3.9, indicating that the respondents were not too far from the opinion of one another they overwhelmingly agreed to the problems confronting the effective implementation of OTM programme.

Discussion of findings

Table I shows that courses listed in the curriculum are all considered vital towards making OTM graduates entrepreneurs and self-reliant. The courses are expected to equip OTM students with adequate knowledge and skills in ICT which is now in vogue. With a number of ICT based small businesses springing up, graduates of

OTM will be better suited to manage and successfully operate such entrepreneurial establishments. Supporting this view, Okiti-Okagbare (2009), Akwa (2009) identified various entrepreneurship opportunities open to OTM graduates to include among other ICT training centre, cybercafé, provision of internet services, business centre, among others. They added that OTM graduates must however be both knowledgeable and skillful in their various courses for them to succeed.

This study finds that the courses are capable of developing in OTM graduates characteristics and traits necessary for successful entrepreneurship. These traits include skills in adequate planning, strong perception, information source, interpersonal innovative ability, financial discipline, principles of management. However, Shorthand and Advanced Transcription are considered Unimportant towards promoting entrepreneurship among OTM graduates.

Ademiluyi (2008) had suggested, in addition to the above, competencies in oral, written, interpersonal and electronic communication for success in any business venture. He argues further that there were illiterate or semi illiterate people who turned out to be excellent entrepreneurs; but times have indeed changed because of the indispensability of communication to business success in the current trend of global market..

Table 2 shows that with 3.39 mean scores, the institutions studied possess no adequate modern machines and equipment needed to successfully implement the programme. The new curriculum has set a minimum standard regarding the quantity of equipment each institution is expected to have in order to qualify for accreditation. The use of such facilities as computers, projectors, scanners, internet facilities CD Rom,

flash drives, memory cards and so on. Also needed are laboratories, workshop and model offices. But most of these facilities are either grossly inadequate or not available, according to findings of this study. Courses such as Webpage design and desktop publishing that required practical application of basic skills are theorized due to lack of enough equipment. It means that the entrepreneurial skills which the office technology and management graduates are supposed to acquired will be absent in them. It is impossible to successfully teach office technology and management courses when the ICT equipment and materials are not available.

The issue of inadequacy of training facilities had attracted the attention of scholars in secretarial and business education over the years. Oguguwa, (2002), Aja (2003), Balogun (2003), Folorunso (2006) have identified this problem; the problem has led in part, to the existing missing links between the world of work and training programmes in higher institutions in Nigeria. Despite several calls for a reversal, the problem remained unabated even with the OTM curriculum.

Regarding funding, available data indicated that there is generally inadequate supply of funds. Inadequate funding of education has been on for sometimes. Oyedokun(2003) says 'government funding of higher education in Nigeria is inadequate' Oke(2004) says the Federal government's advise to educational institutions to generate funds internally to cater for a number of their needs shows that the problem of funds may persist. The paucity of funds has led in part, to the problems of inadequacy of equipment and consumables needed to pursue the curriculum. To implement OTM curriculum calls for rising costs for capital and recurrent expenditures which

are subject to inflation. With a result of poor funding, everything that will be needed for effective implementation of this laudable programme will be in short supply and the quality of the products will not be commendable. It will also hinder '....expansion aspirations to meet the mounting demand for educational places' (Gbadamosi, 1997).

Institutions studied were adequately staffed in terms of the numerical strength of staff in the programme. However, most of the staff are untrained in the teaching of the OTM subjects to enable students acquire practical skills. Many of the teachers were trained using the old curriculum for secretarial studies, it should be noted that the performance of the students depends to a large extent on the competence of the teacher.

There is inadequate institution-industry collaboration for effective feedback. There are no policy or conscious efforts at cementing firm relationship between the generators of this knowledge and skill and the users. This could be deduced from advertisements for secretarial personnel in national dailies which suggest that many companies, organizations, parastatals and ministries are even unaware of the existence of the OTM curriculum, its contents and the differences between the new and the old secretarial studies curricula. Many vacancies declared for secretarial staff still require old skills and competencies.

An alternative to the practical knowledge and skills which would have been provided with the aid of machines and equipment is the Supervised Industrial Work Experience scheme (SIWES). Although specifically provided for in the curriculum, OTM, the Industrial Training Fund has continually excluded OTM students from the

category of students to benefit from the scheme. Yet, OTM students require a greater mastery of the skills and knowledge provided with the machines on a daily basis in order to successfully turn the wheel of socio economic progress of both the private and public sectors.

Most of the equipment for implementing OTM curriculum is electrically powered. Yet, there is low level of power supply in the country. The study affirms that there is always power failure in the institutions studied. The use of generating sets is not helpful because they are expensive in terms of cost and maintenance. The cost of diesel is outrageous and beyond the capabilities of many Institutions.

Conclusion

This paper focused on the possibility of course contents of OTM curriculum in promoting entrepreneurship among its graduates in order to reduce unemployment and advance economic development of the nation. The analysis shows that all the courses except shorthand and advanced transcription are vital towards tackling the entrepreneurship problems in Nigeria. The paper also highlighted problems militating against the successful implementation of the programme as faced by various institutions of learning offering the course.

Recommendations

Having realized the potentials of OTM in promoting entrepreneurship and obstacles against successful implementation, the following recommendations are made:

- The government should make adequate provision for the training and re-training of

- academic staff involved in teaching the courses.
- Lecturers should provide for enough practice and trials for students and create better practice fields or practical sessions with proper supervision for skill acquisition and development.
 - OTM teachers should pay great attention to their own self development through a number of processes which include internet browsing, attending seminars and conferences, reading of current books and journals which are relevant to their profession, in addition to registering and playing active roles in relevant professional bodies.
 - The provision for SIWES as contained in the new OTM curriculum should be effected immediately by ITF. If needed, the legal instrument establishing ITF be amended to accommodate the OTM students. While on the attachment the students should work in relevant fields and packages so as acquire practical skills necessary for becoming successful entrepreneurs.
 - The problem of inadequacy of facilities and equipment is usually attributed to low funding. Government and other stakeholders' like wealthy individuals, alumni, associations and corporate bodies must invest heavily in the provision of modern facilities for OTM. This will go a long way in improving the quality of graduates produced and ensure smooth transition from the classroom to the world of business and job opportunities.
 - OTM students should brace up and face the challenges with

confidence to enable them acquire the life skills which will enable them, on graduation, become self-reliance and contribute positively to the economic and social development of the nation.

References

- Adaranijo, L. O. (2001): Ibadan. Aseda Publishing.
- Ademiluyi, L. F. (2008): Communication Competencies needed for successful entrepreneurship, Iree, *Journal of Information and Communication Technology*. 1(2): 50-65
- Aja, A. R. (2003): Evaluation of training facilities for Business Studies in Polytechnics in Southern State of Nigeria. Ede, *Journal of Business and Administrative Management*. 1(1):.260-269
- Akwa and Pwol (2010): Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Office Technology and Management, Ede, *Secretarial Forum Journal*. 4(1):60-75
- Balogun, F. A. (2003): Inadequacy of Business Studies equipment and facilities in selected institutions in South West State of Nigeria, *Business Education Journal*, Book of Reading. 1(3): 45-60
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2000): National Policy on Information Technology, Abuja, Government Press
- Folorunso, I. O. (2006): Effects and Solutions to inadequacy of instructional equipment for Secretaries Studies in our tertiary institutions, Agbor, *Journal of Business Education*. 1(2): 58-70
- Frank O. (2009): Perceived importance of Office Technology and Management Programme as a panacea for Entrepreneurship Malady of Nigerians: Paper delivered at the National Conference of the School of Business Studies, Federal Polytechnic, Ede.
- Gbadomosi, L. (1997)S: Funding of Higher education in Ogun State: A Financial Distress? Focus on *Ogun State University. Ogun Journal of Educational Studies*. 4(1): 35-51
- National Board for Technical Education (2004): National Diploma (ND) Curriculum and Course Specifications for Office Technology and Management Department, Kaduna, Government Press
- National Board for Technical Education (2004): Higher National Diploma (HND) Curriculum and Course Specifications for Office Technology and Management Department, Kaduna, Government Press
- Ogiagah, Z. M. (2009): Current Issues in Office Technology and Management Curriculum, Ede, *Secforum Journal*. 4(1): 32-45
- Oguguwa, D. D. (2002): Training for the World of Work - A Missing Link, *Business Education Journal*, 11(2): 68-80
- Okagbare E. (2009): Problems and Prospects of Teaching OTM Curriculum in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions, *Secform Journal*, Ede. 3(1): 25-37

- Oke, J. S. (2004): Address delivered on the 11th Matriculation ceremony, Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State
- Oke, J. S. (2004): Address delivered on the 11th Matriculation ceremony, Federal Polytechnic, Ede, Osun State
- Okoji, B. I. (2008): Secretarial Administration Practice in this Millennium: Trends and Issues, Ede, *Secretarial Forum*. 2(1): 32-48
- Oyedokun, T. O. (2003): Funding Tertiary Education in Nigeria, The College Review, Ila Orangun, *Osun State College of Education*. I(1): 45-60.