

Business Educators Perception of Digital Skills Required by Office Technology and Management Students for Employability

John Celestina Dibbari & Lawrence Patience

Department of Office Technology and Management, Federal Polytechnic Bali, Taraba State

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.71054>

Received: 25 August 2023; Accepted: 05 September 2023; Published: 21 October 2023

ABSTRACT

The management of any organization be it private or public expects its employees to possess relevant digital skills to perform effectively in this dispensation. The study examined business educators' perception of digital skills required by Office Technology and Management students for employability. Based on the objectives of the study, two research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 111 business educators drawn from Polytechnics in North-East Nigeria. The entire population was studied, no sample since the population was manageable. A structured questionnaire developed on a five point Likert rating scale tagged "Business Educators perception of Digital Skills Required by Office Technology and Management students for Employability" (BEPDSOTMSE) with 23 items was used to elicit data from the respondents. The instrument was validated by three specialists in the field. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbrach Alpha which yielded a co-efficient of 0.77 signifying that the instrument was reliable. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that all the skills were highly required for employability by OTM students' based on the perception of business educators. The researchers recommended among others that Management of institutions should ensure that orientation be given to prospective candidates which is vital in the early stage of entry into the Polytechnics about the skills required for employment.

Keywords: Business Educators, Digital, Skills, Office Technology and Management, Employability

INTRODUCTION

Every nation's foundation is built on education, which is without a doubt the greatest legacy that may change a country and even future generations. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004) asserts that education is a fundamental tool for achieving genuine national development. Education, whether formal or informal, helps people develop the skills they need to support themselves and make a life. Through education, a person can develop the necessary physical and mental skills or competencies for the advancement of both himself and society. Koko (2016) defined education as a formal, planned, and organized process of instruction and training provided to individuals with the goal of facilitating observable, effective learning. The main goal of education is to give its students the necessary abilities. Exposing students to the fundamentals of skill acquisition, knowledge, and competence that may be achieved through office technology and management programs is one approach to empower the country.

Today's global economy demands highly educated students who possess digital skills that will give them an upper hand after graduation. This demand is due to the rapid progress of technology, rapid changes have occurred in all facets of modern life, including the working environment. Because of the rising need for employees who are digitally oriented as a result of these developments, employers of labor have raised their expectations.

Therefore embedding digital skills into the educational system become necessary to update the education

system, such skills include understanding computer fundamentals, word processing (office application skills & electronic record management skills) spreadsheet and database, among others. The priority is to equip and prepare students for the challenging modern office. OTM students who have an edge in digital skills will alone be successful in the contemporary office.

According to Uchendu (2015) the author observed that Nigeria educational system does not train our youths to acquire skills that will make them meet the needs of the society. The effect of this lack of skills is evident in the activities of the youths. Majority of the youths who are not employed and cannot begin a new business venture of their have resulted robbery, prostitution, political thuggery, vandalization of oil pipe among other societal ills that are exhibited in the society. Government and non-governmental organizations have tried to ensure that students acquire skills that may help them establish themselves without necessary waiting for the government. Today's employers are not only looking for skills specific to job but are seeking for students after graduation who possess digital skills such as office application and electronic management skills

Statement of the Problem

A workforce with computer literacy is necessary for the knowledge economy, as Giddens pointed out in Modibbo and Sani (2018). The future employees are made up of today's students. The skills that graduates should possess are important in the eyes of the employers. They are looking for candidates who are holistic and who can show proficiency in office applications, electronic record management, spreadsheet, and database management, including the use of the Microsoft Word package and the ability to create, edit, format, and print. Unfortunately, given the current employment market, many Office Technology and Management students who are searching for work after graduation could not be successful due to the digital skills needed in the modern workplace. In light of this, the researchers made the decision to conduct the study in order to examine business educators' perception of digital skills required by Office Technology and Management students for employability.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine business educators' perception of digital skills required by Office Technology and Management students for employability. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain business educators' perception of office application skills required by Office Technology and Management students for employability.
2. Assess business educators' perception of electronic record management skills required by Office Technology and Management students for employability.

Research Questions

The following research question were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the business educators' perception of office application skills required of Office Technology and Management students for employability?
2. What are the business educators' perception of electronic record management skills required by Office Technology and Management students for employability?

Office technology and Management is a programme designed in (2006) by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) to replace the secretarial studies programme. The programme was to equip students with competences required to work in the modern office. Esene (2013), described OTM programme as a type of education deliberately designed for the development of skills and knowledge which can be useful for both the individual concerned, the immediate family and the entire nation. OTM as defined by Olukemi and

Boluwaji (2014) is the use of scientific knowledge, tools, and systems to speed up and improve the transmission of information. It is also thought of as a notion connected to electronic technology, office globalization, and office automation. Nwabuno, (2010) described the OTM education as focusing on a combination of office information and technical skills with adequate and relevant business knowledge in solving organizational problems. The author averted that the target is to produce hybrid administrative professionals who can respond to the demand of a dynamic and intensely computerized workplace. Office technology and management programme provides its recipients with skills to be relevant to the working environment.

According to Nwokike and Joseph (2019), a business educator is a teacher who has the necessary certificate in business education from a recognized university or college of education. The employees who carry out the goals of business education at the high institution level are known as business educators. They are in charge of making sure that learners at this level have the essential information, skills, and abilities for independence. Business educators play a crucial role in the digital transformation of societies, especially when it comes to providing office technology and management (OTM) students with the necessary digital competencies to help them integrate successfully into the workforce.

A person demonstrating skill is one who can do a task unsupervised. According to Faderein and Inalegwu (2016), skills are defined as proficiency, capacity, and competency that are suited for a given work and have to do with knowledge, creativity, and expertise at a mastery level. An individual must get fundamental training or understanding about the task at hand, whether it be official, informal, or a combination of the two. According to Boytziz (2010), skill is the capacity to exhibit a system and sequence of actions that are functionally relevant to achieving a goal. But the capacity to do anything well, typically acquired via training or experience, can also be referred to as a skill. When these abilities are attained, OTM students will be employed or independent. According to Okoro and Ifesi (2016), skill is the capacity that results from a person's knowledge and aptitude to carry out an action effectively.

The demand of education is based on its ability to provide digital skills that will help individuals to engage in meaningful occupation. Digital skills are a collection of abilities that allow someone to use information technology to their advantage. To use digital technology, you need to possess certain skills. They can also be described as a group of abilities, instruments, and know-how required to use networks, digital tools, and various online media applications that facilitate the management of information in accordance with the requirements of working environments, educational environments, and problem-solving scenarios. UNESCO in **Digital Marketing Institute, (2023)** define digital skills as a range of abilities to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information. They enable people to create and share digital content, communicate and collaborate, and solve problems for effective and creative self-fulfillment in life, learning, work, and social activities.

Employability is the level of self-assurance and readiness for the job market that an employee possesses. The characteristics of a person that make them able to get and keep a job are referred to as their employability. It takes more than just landing a job to succeed in the workplace. An employee needs to have a certain set of talents and traits. Producing graduates with the whole range of educational values from knowledge transfer to skill development and attribute development is what makes graduates more employable. Employability skills are a collection of abilities, comprehensions, and character traits that increase graduates' chances of finding employment and excelling in their chosen fields, which is advantageous to them, the labor force, the community, and the economy (Babalola, 2016). According to Selvam (2017), the author defined employability skills as a set of abilities necessary for students to not only find employment but also succeed in their chosen careers or occupations, which benefits themselves, business endeavors, the workforce, the community, and the economy.

Office Application Skills are concerned with the capacity to comprehend the role of ICT in the workplace,

recognize the essential parts of a computer, function well in any window setting utilizing word processing software, and apply important health and safety rules in the workplace (Okoro, 2009). Olukemi and Boluwaji (2014) state that in order for OTM students and business education students to remain relevant in the modern work environment and fit into modern offices, they must develop office application skills such as database management, word processing, word processing for documentation, networking skills, and computer excel manipulation. Office applications, including word processing, spreadsheets, database management, and e-mail, are software programs used in corporate operations, (Okeke and Ifes 2018). ICT, word processing, computer appreciation, and web page design according to Esene (2012) are the components of office applications that make up OTM. Okoro (2009) listed additional office application skills that OTM students must have in order to function in modern offices, including: Expertise in using a keyboard as an input device; Advanced transcription, including the ability to accurately transcribe passages spoken at various speeds; High speed when producing information using a personal computer; and ability to reproduce documents, knowledge of word processing for documents, abilities to network, abilities to manipulate spreadsheets on a computer, running Microsoft Word for Windows, Creating and maintaining websites using Internet services Knowledge of video/teleconferencing, e-commerce, e-tailing, and other e-business principles, search engine proficiency, ability to do electronic presentations using Microsoft PowerPoint Database.

A record is a document that serves as historical documentation, particularly a written or other permanent track of the past. Records are important assets that should be handled and safeguarded (Mnjama & Wamukoya 2015). Records are crucial for the evaluation of organizational performance in addition to serving as the primary record of organizational transactions, activities, and decision-making. Organizations cannot successfully monitor and record their transactions to gauge their level of production without trustworthy records. Records are a trustworthy, legally verifiable source of proof of organizational decisions and activities, according to the World Bank (2017).

Electronic record according to the International Records Management Trust IRMT (2011), is one that a computer is capable of manipulating, transmitting, or processing information. It is stored in binary code on a magnetic or optical medium (such as magnetic tapes, cassettes, CD-Roms, hard disks, etc.) and can only be read with the aid of computer gear and software. This is readily manipulated and may be modified, eliminated, etc. Electronic records are records that rely on relevant devices for access or reading using computer software and hardware, according to Tafor (2016). According to McDonald (2018), an electronic record is a soft intangible record that is generated, controlled, shared, and stored using an ICT system for information and communication. The phrase “electronic records,” according to the author, accurately describes the reality of the modern workplace, where the majority of tasks depend on the availability of computers. Records Information Management (RIM), also known as Electronic Records Management (ERM), is a crucial component of corporate business compliance efforts. Digital records provide for time, money, and space savings. According to Wamukoya and Mutula (2014), a significant barrier to hiring secretaries both now and in the future is a lack of understanding of computerized record-keeping and administration. To support good work performance in a modern office, records should constantly be accessible, secure, and kept correctly. The authors contend that this is accurate since records, by their very nature, serve as evidence of an organization’s or individual employee’s actions. Records are essential to the successful and efficient management of an organization, making them a necessary skill for future secretaries.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. According to Nworgu (2015), a survey design is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered appropriate to be representative of the entire group. The design was considered appropriate for the study since it intend to collect data from business educators .The population of the study

comprised of one-hundred and one (111) business educators drawn from the five (5) Polytechnics that offer Office Technology and Management in the North-East. These include: Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi, Federal Polytechnic Mubi, Adamawa, State Polytechnic Numan, Federal Polytechnic, Bali, Taraba, and Taraba State Polytechnic, Suntai. There was no sampling since the population is manageable. A draft copy of the instrument was given to three experts from the Department of Office Technology and Management in Federal Polytechnic Bali, Taraba State. Based on their criticism and suggestions corrections were made and effected in the instrument before they were administered to business educators in the polytechnics in the study area. The instrument for data collection for this study was structured questionnaire tagged Business Educators perception of Digital Skills Required by Office Technology and Management Students for Employability (BEDSROTME) questionnaire. The questionnaire contain 23 items and is divided into two sections. Section A is for the demographic data of the respondents, while section B is designed to collect and collate data. For proper data collation and analysis, the research data collection process was designed in form of items to which respondents are to express their views either required or not required. The construct were measured using four-point Likert scale of Highly Required (HR) 4 points with boundary limit of 3.50-4.00, Required (R) 3 points with boundary limit of 3.00-3.49, Moderately Required (MR) 2 points with boundary limit of 2.50-2.99, Not Required (NR) 1 points with boundary limit of 1.50-2.49. To ensure the reliability of the instrument for study a pilot study was conducted in Plateau State Polytechnic, Barkin Ladi. Twenty copies of the instrument were administered to lecturers of Office Technology and Management department Plateau State Polytechnic, Barkin Ladi. The result obtained after the pilot study was subjected to the test of internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha Reliability procedure to measure the reliability of the instrument before it was used for the study. The test yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.77 indicating that the instrument was quite reliable for the study. The instrument was administered to the respondents and collected personally by the researchers and research assistants. A total number of 111 copies were administered and 111 copies were duly completed which was used for the study. The data generated from the two research questions were analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation. The decision rule was that any mean response of 2.5 and above were used as bench mark for accepted and upheld, while any mean response below 2.5 were used as bench mark for rejection.

Research Question 1: What are the business educators’ perception of office application skills required by Office Technology and Management students for employability? N = 111

Table 1: Business educators’ perception of office application skills required by Office Technology and Management students

S/n	Item Statements	X	SD	Decision
1	Producing documents of different forms using Microsoft Office Word such as webpage, database management, skills among others	3.22	0.87	Required
2	Ability to create and name directories, folders	3.06	0.24	Required
4	Being able to move, copy and rename files	2.92	0.47	Required
5	Ability to search engines to locate valuable information	3.24	0.69	Required
6	Being able to retrieve information from electronic files	3.27	0.8	Required
7	Ability to send information within and outside the organization using email	3.21	0.95	Required
8	Ability to use page orientation and customize page size, margin and page set	3.6	0.62	Highly Required
9	Ability to use mailing menu for mail merge	3.09	0.29	Required
10	Being able to use storage devices(hard disk, CD, flash) for storing and sharing files is a skill required	3.37	0.82	Required

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 1 revealed the mean responses on business educators’ perception of office application skills required by Office Technology and Management students for employability. Based on cut off points of 2.5, the respondents indicated required for nine items, one (1) for highly required. Mean ranging from 2.27-3.37. The table showed that the respondents indicated that most of the items were required. It was noted that office application skills are essential as it help the office manager to produce mail able documents, create move, copy and rename files.

Research Question 2: What are the business educators’ perception of electronic record management skills required by Office Technology and Management students for employability? N=111

Table 2: Business educators Perception of electronic record management skills required by Office Technology and Management students

S/n	Item Statement	X	SD	Decision
1	Skill in knowing how to, when to and where records are physically stored are required skill	3.44	0.69	Required
2	Ability to know how record are classified for retrieval and future use	3.26	0.66	Required
3	Being able to know the sensitivity of information kept is a skill required	3.53	0.53	Highly Required
4	Ability to know how to access procedures for sensitive records	3.49	0.74	Required
5	Ability to classify records for ease retrieval	3.4	0.62	Highly Required
6	Ability to store inactive records in an organization is a required electronic skill	3.32	0.68	Required
7	Ability to prevent and recover record	3.02	0.72	Required
8	Being able to backup records to avoid loss of information is an electronic record management skill	3.71	0.45	Highly Required
9	Being able to know the environmental condition of your storage facilities	3.39	0.65	Required
10	Ability to identify the procedures when transferring data between files are electronic record management skill	3.34	0.66	Required
11	Ability to store record on magnetic or optical medium, tapes, cassettes, CD-ROMs, hard disks and so on	3.59	0.58	Highly Required
12	Being able to dispose records as at when due is an electronic record management skill required	3.07	0.87	Required
13	Soft skills such as, communication, listening, time management, team work are skill required for electronic management	3.32	0.61	Required

Source: Field work, 2023

Table 2 revealed that the respondents indicated required for nine (9) items, four (4) highly required. Mean ranging from 3.0-3.71. The table showed that the respondents indicated that most of the items were averagely required electronic record management skills by Office Technology and Management students for employability. It can be noted that knowing how to, when to and where records are physically stored, to know the sensitivity of information kept are imperative in every organization. The mean responses was all above 2.50 this indicates that the items are highly required of Office Technology and Management students for employability.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the presentation and interpretation of the study data, the respondents have accepted that all the proposed skills were highly required by OTM students for preparation for employment in the globe and also effective and proper implementation of the program will enhance students' performance. The results of the study relating to research question one on business educators' perception of office application skills required by Office Technology and Management students for employability was highly required in the Polytechnics in the North- East. This findings is in consonance with the assertions of Olukemi and Boluwaji (2014) that OTM students must acquire office application skills if they are to remain relevant in the present dispensation and fit into modern offices. The study also found out that ability to produce documents from different forms using Microsoft Office Word such as webpage, database management, advanced desktop publishing skills among others are part of the required skills. In the same vein Okoro (2009) enumerated some of the office application skills OTM students must possess in order to fit into modern offices which include ability to reproduce documents, knowledge of word processing for documents, ability to assemble reports from complex sources such as retrieving information from electronic files.

In the second research question, the respondents in this study indicated that electronic record management skills are required by Office Technology and Management students for employability in North-East which include knowing how to, when to and where records are physically stored ,how record are classified for retrieval and future use. Ability to know the sensitivity of information kept, how to access procedures for sensitive records classify records for ease retrieval is a skill require. Ability to store inactive records in an organization, prevent and recover record, backup records to avoid loss of information is a skill require, Being able to know the environmental condition of your storage facilities, identify the procedures when transferring data between files are electronic record management, store record on magnetic or optical medium, tapes, cassettes, CD-ROMs, hard disks and so on, dispose records as at when due is an electronic record management is a skill require. The findings of this study agreed with that of Wamukoya and Mutula (2014), the authors ascertain that records should always be available, protected and managed effectively so as to ensure effective performance of job in modern office. This according to the authors is true because records by their very nature provide proof of the activities of the organization or personnel records. The findings also collaborate with the findings of Baba (2018), who identified electronic record management skills required by OTM students include proper backup to avoid loss of information and store record on magnetic or optical medium, tapes, cassettes, CD-ROMs, hard disks and so on. He also emphasized that future office manager will contribute maximum productivity of his/her organization by taking proper care of the storage facilities and its environment

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study can be concluded that business educators in the North-East are convinced that digital skills are highly required by OTM students for employability after graduation. It can also be concluded that business educators believed that when OTM students acquire office application skills and electronic record management skills they have the fortune for an upper hand in terms of employment opportunity. The findings of this study confirmed that office application and electronic record management skills are imperative, since the emergence of Information and Communication Technology. Finally it can be concluded that office technology and management curriculum has a high potential of imparting digital skills through business educators to OTM students because of its adequacy in the provision of office application and electronic skills often required by employers' of labor.

Implication of the Study

This study has far reaching implications for curriculum planners and implementers' researchers and students

alike. It is imperative for people to have a thoughtful understanding of whatever field they intend to embark on.

While curriculum planners will have a resounding assurance that their effort is in the right direction, implementers will be armed with the understanding that the skills they try to inculcate are in high demand. Implementers may also need to continually acquire and update their ICT skills through capacity building, refresher courses, workshops and conferences as this will boost their efficiency in delivery.

Students will also understand that if these skills are essential for today's digital world, it is imperative that they should be up and doing in their effort at learning. It implies that acquisition of these competencies will be compulsory for practitioners of any brand of business that is management or office related. Tertiary institutions where Office Technology and Management practitioners train, may need to make necessary efforts to acquire necessary equipment that will enhance skill acquisition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

1. Management of institutions should ensure that orientation be given to prospective candidates which is vital in the early stage of entry into the Polytechnics about the skills required for employment.
2. Office Technology Management students should try to work extra miles to improve their digital skills in the area of office application and electronic record management for better performance in work place.
3. Institutions of higher learning and implementers of OTM programme should ensure that adequate and up-to-date equipment for teaching and learning should be provided by the Federal government and relevant agencies

REFERENCES

1. Babalola, Y.A. & Timaya, R. (2013). Job creation and economic empowerment through business education. *Journal of Information and Knowledge management* 3 (3).
2. Boytziz, C. (2010). *The Need for Modern Technology in the Training of Secretaries*. Chicago: South Western Publishing Company.
3. Esene, R.A. (2013). Perceptions of office technology and management educators and non- OTM educators towards quality assurance in OTM programmes in Polytechnics in Delta and Edo State. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education* 1(2),23-39
4. Federal republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy of Education*. Lagos: NERDC press.
5. Inalegwu, M. O. (2016). Influence of word processing and Shorthand skills on Professional Secretaries Functions on Modern Offices in North –west Geo – Political Zone, Nigeria. Master Degree thesis Submitted to the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaira.
6. koko, M.N. (2016). *Business education: A historical perspective*. Port Harcourt: Harvey publication Coy.
7. McDonald, A. (2018). Electronic records. *Encyclopedia of Governance*. (S I): SAGE Publication (Online) Available: <http://0-www.sage>
8. Mnjama, N. & Wamukoya, J. (2015). "E-government and Records Management: An Assessment Tool for e-Records Readiness in Government," *The Electronic Library*, 25(3), 274 – 284.
9. Modibbo, M.,B., & Sani, A., (2018). Death of facilities and equipment: A challenge to office technology and management education education programme. *Vocational Business Education Journal*, 6(1) 41-44

10. National Board for Technical Education (2004). New Course Specification for the National Diploma and Higher National Diploma in office Technology and Management. Kaduna: NBTE Press.
11. Nwabuona, E. (2010). Office technology and management: Some issues and solution. *The Scribe*. 1(1), 7-8.
12. Nworgu, B.G., (2015). Educational research. Base issues and methodology (3rd Edition) Nsukka: University trust Publishers
13. F.O. & Joseph. N.C. (2019). Integrating of new technologies in teaching business education courses in Universities in the E-world. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*. 6(2) 206-214
14. Okoro, F. (2009). Polytechnic teachers perception of the relevance of the components of office technology and management programme in meeting the ICT needs of contemporary office. *Business Education Journal* 7(1), 45-61.
15. Okeke, A. U & Ifesi, C., (2018). The extent office technology and management graduates in Bauchi State possess office application skills for modern office needs. *Unizik Journal of Educational Management and Policy (UJOEMP)* 2 (1) 118-130
16. Okoro, F. & Ifesi, C. (2016) Teachers' perception of the marketability of the secretarial profession in meeting the needs of the present day Nigerian labour market. *Journal of Professional Secretaries and Administrators* 22 (8), 58-66.
17. Olukemi, J. O., & Boluwaji, C. E. (2014). Challenges of curriculum development in office technology and management in tertiary institutions. *International Journal of Technology and Inclusive Education (IJTIE)*, 1(3), 475-484.
18. Selvam, T. (2017). Promoting factors of employability skills. *International Journal for Research in Engineering Application & Management*, 4(3).
19. Uchendu, C.C (2015). Assessing university students skill acquisition for employability in Cross River State. *International Journal of Education, learning and Development* 4(1), 45-51
20. Tafor, V. (2016). Digital Technology – understanding the problems posed by information technology in generating and managing records from a third ESARBICA Journal 22:72-77
21. Wamukoya, J. Mutula, I. (2014). Strategic Issues for Electronic Records Management: towards open System Interconnection, New York: ACCIS
22. World Bank (2017) Managing records as the basic for effective service delivery and public accountability in development: an introduction to core principles for staff of the world bank and partners. Online) Available: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTRARCHIVES/Resources/Core%20Principles.pdf><https://digital marketing institute.com/>