



Modern Office Skills And Employability Of Secretaries Amongst Graduating Office Technology And Management Students In Rivers State Tertiary Institutions

Prof. W. J. Ubulom¹ & West, Joeba Joe²

**Department of Business Education
Faculty of Education,
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
¹Will.ubulom@yahoo.com & ²Joebamwest@yahoo.com**

ABSTRACT

The study investigated modern office skills and employability of secretaries amongst graduating office technology and management students in Rivers State tertiary institutions. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of 294 Office Technology and Management final year students of the 2018/2019 academic session from Rivers State government owned universities and polytechnics. No sampling technique was adopted since the population was manageable. A structured questionnaire titled “Modern Office Skills and Employability of Secretaries Questionnaire” (MOSESQ) was used as instrument for data collection. Three experts validated the instrument while Cronbach alpha was used to establish the reliability coefficient of 0.88. 256 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and used for the study. Two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significant guided the study. The items were rated on a four 4 point rating scale; mean was used to analyze the research questions and z-test was used in testing the hypotheses. The findings revealed that graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Tertiary Institutions slightly possess computer and online computer skills for employability as Secretaries. The researcher therefore recommended that Office Technology graduates should endeavor to familiarize themselves with all the modern office skills necessary for them to function effectively in the global workplace.

Keywords: Office, Skills, Employability, Secretaries, Office Management and Technology.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of unemployment in Nigerian is assuming wider dimensions; where fresh graduates face a scenario of dimming expectations of gainful employment in positions directly related to their disciplines of study. The job opportunities of yesteryears are virtually non-existent on the one hand, and a great number of graduates may not have acquired the requisite employability skills needed by the employers of labour on the other hand (Osere, 2017). Employability which has to do with possession of requisite skills and abilities as to be able to secure employment is currently been influenced by the evolution of Information and Communication Technology in the business world.

The world of work today as ruled by Information and Communication Technology is a complex one and as such requires individuals to obtain the kind of education that will equip one with knowledge and skills in order to be functional in the society. Office Technology and Management formerly referred to as Secretarial Studies in Nigeria evolved out of a need to meet the technological and managerial demands of today’s workplace. According to Oyinloye and Oluwalola (2014), the new name Office Technology and

Management was approved by the supervising body for Nigerian Polytechnics, National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in 2004 and the programme was designed for two major reasons: first, as a response to the yearnings of the secretarial studies students and practitioners on the need to change the name of the programme as the former contents are only suitable for the traditional office environment. Secondly, and most importantly, as a result of the change in curriculum with more emphasis on Information and Communication Technology, managerial and entrepreneurial competencies so as to enrich the knowledge of the students and equip them with necessary skills needed in today's modern office environment. Uteh and Ihuekwumere (2013) asserted that the Office Technology and Management programme is structured to achieve the following grand objectives:

1. Equipping individuals with office secretarial skills.
2. Creating general entrepreneurship awareness in the students with a view to inculcating in them the right knowledge for productive purpose.
3. Laying foundations for advance studies.

Ahukannah (2008 as cited in Ovbiagele & Mgbonyebi, 2018, p. 71), further added that owing to the development in Information and Communication Technology, teachers in Office Technology and Management education are mandated to equip students with the following skills to ensure quality and also produce global graduates that can:

1. Provide office document and reports, using word processing.
2. Produce numerical information, using spreadsheets.
3. Produce office information in graphic form.
4. Manipulate access and retrieve information from computer based system.
5. Access a wealth of information in internet through the knowledge of webpage and
6. Manipulate office tools, and other modern technologies found in the virtual office.

Baba and Akaraha (2012) opined that Office Technology and Management is aimed at acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for individual to live and contribute to the development of the society. Accordingly, Iwhuoha and Chiwen (2018) maintained that Office Technology and Management is a programme designed to equip students with Secretarial/Office skills for employment in various fields of endeavor. Okoro and Amagoh (2008 as cited in Oyedele & Fadare, 2018, p. 264) noted that Office Technology and Management is an efficient, effective, productive and functional education which leads itself to self-employment, self-reliance, paid employment and consequently self-actualization. Thus, the Office Technology and Management programme can be viewed as a training or education programme that ensures that an individual is impacted with the right skills and attitudes needed for transition from school to work and for advancement in the Office Technology and Management career path.

Skills are often referred as competencies. Okoro (2014) asserted that competencies are the minimum skills required of individuals who have participated in a course of programme. Ikelegbe (2016) viewed skill as expertness, aptitude and competences appropriate for a particular job. Skill has to do with expert knowledge and creative reasoning to a level of mastery. The relevance of skill acquisition in Office Technology and Management cannot be overemphasized. Skills and office competencies acquired in the programme prepares its recipients with multi-skills necessary to function efficiently in the modern office as required by employers. Analysts have argued that in Nigeria generally, the skills that job seekers possess do not match the needs and demands of employers (Oduwole, 2015) and Chigbuson, Timya and Silas (2018) revealed that employers of labour are of high demand of graduates that are work ready and who have intellectual capacity and are also equipped with Information and Communication Technology skills.

Agbongiasede (2014), outlined the following skills and office competencies need of Office Technology and Management to include, ability to use Information and Communication Technology equipment for communication, ability to manage information at the right time, ability to recognize and utilize office automation, ability to communicate effectively, using oral and written skills, ability to acquire management and supervisory skills, knowledge of accounts, costing and preparing financial statement, ability to acquire the knowledge of law and ability to recognize trends such as technological trends and

government action amongst others. In achieving these skills, it is expected that certain modern office machines/facilities are used in teaching and learning in the Office Technology and Management programme. Amiaya (2016) listed the needed Information and Communication Technology facilities to include; radio set, television set, audio tape player/cassette and video players, projectors, satellites connection, sensor and other hardware and software, essential in delivery of instruction. According to Oyedele and Fadare (2018) the modern office technology needed for building skills through Office Technology and Management courses includes Information and Communication Technology hardware like radio set, television, telephone, computer, overhead projectors, electronic whiteboard, video tape recorder, filmstrip, CD-ROM, photocopier, scanner and Information and Communication Technology software such as Microsoft word, Microsoft power point, coral draw, database (Microsoft Access), Microsoft Excel, Web Page, chartroom, e-mail and internet.

These office technologies when used in teaching and learning in Office Technology and Management help build an efficient and skillful secretary for the word of work. Secretaries are individuals that are professionally trained in the management of information. Secretaries are found in virtually all business organizations and are responsible for the information management system which in recent time is been automated and requires the use of various Information and Communication Technology facilities. The rapid growth and affordability of Information and Communication Technologies have also resulted to a change in the role of a secretary in today's workplace. Ifejika (2015) opined that the roles of secretaries are no longer limited to typing, taking shorthand dictations, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails, but are now expected to be skilled in usage of more sophisticated technologies that could make work easier.

Statement of the Problem

The secretarial profession just like every other profession and human activities is been influenced by the development brought by Information and Communication Technology. Office Technology and Management is a deviation from the traditional method of processing and managing information. Currently, the business world has experienced so much transformation in terms of communication and transacting business; all to the credit of Information and Communication Technology. Thus, employers of labour are gravely in need of graduates that are skillful in the applications of these modern office technologies. Secretarial graduates with modern office skills are attractable and employable in the world of work.

Observation shows that there is continuous increase in the outcry on the kind of graduates our institutions chunks out; graduates' that are theoretically sound, with little or no modern office skills. Despite the introduction of Information and Communication Technology in all level of education and the transformation of the secretarial studies with improved Information and Communication Technology based curriculum to make students fit for the world of work in modern offices; students are still found to be lagging behind (Idele & Paul-Mgbeafulike, 2018; Soludo, 2012 as cited in Ifejika, 2015, p. 12) 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. This study therefore seeks to ascertain if the graduating Office Technology and Management students are employable as Secretaries.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine modern office skills and employability of secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Tertiary Institutions. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Determine the computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Tertiary Institutions.
2. Determine the computer-online skills possessed for employability as Secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Tertiary Institutions.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Tertiary Institutions?

2. What are the computer-online skills possessed for employability as Secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Tertiary Institutions?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of graduating Office Technology and Management students of Rivers State Universities and Rivers State Polytechnics on the computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of graduating Office Technology and Management students of Rivers State Universities and Rivers State Polytechnics on the computer-online skills possessed for employability as Secretaries.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design and the population for the study comprised of 294 Office Technology and Management final year students of the 2018/2019 academic session from Rivers State government owned universities and polytechnics as indicated in the table below;

Table 1: Population Distribution

S/N	INSTITUTIONS	TOTAL OTM FINAL YEAR STUDENTS
1.	Rivers State University, Port Harcourt	88
2.	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt	40
3.	Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic, Port Harcourt	120
4.	Kenule Benson Polytechnic, Bori	46
TOTAL		294

Source: Institutions Departmental Offices, 2019.

The entire population size was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was 20 item-structured questionnaire titled “Modern Office Skills and Employability of Secretaries Questionnaire” (MOSESQ). The instrument provided response to the two research questions. Item 1-10 dealt with research question one, item 11 – 20 dealt with research question 2 in a 4-point rating scale of “Highly Possessed” (HP) – 4 points, “Possessed” (P) – 3 points, “Slightly Possessed” (SP) – 2 points and “Not Possessed” (NP) – 1 point. To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by two experts in Office Technology and Management from the Department of Business Education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation, all of Faculty of Education in Rivers State University. To ensure the consistency of the instrument, the Cronbach alpha method of reliability was adopted in establishing a reliability coefficient of 0.88. Only 256 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and used for the study. The data analysis was done using the mean to analyze the research questions while z-test was used to test the hypotheses. The mean was obtained by the summation of all responses as assigned to a rating scale in an item divided by the total number of responses: $4+3+2+1/4 = 2.50$. The mean score of 2.50 and above indicated an agreement, while those below 2.50 indicated disagreement. Also, the decision rules for the hypotheses was that hypothesis with z-calculated value less than the z-critical table value of 1.96 was accepted whereas if it is greater than the critical table value it was rejected.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: *What are the computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Tertiary Institutions?*

Table 2: Mean ratings on computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Universities.

S/n	Statements	Universities		Polytechnics		G/Mean	G/Sd	Remarks
		122		134				
		Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd			
1	Ability to produce text document	2.77	0.29	2.68	0.33	2.73	0.31	P
2	Ability to save document	2.79	0.84	2.75	0.26	2.77	0.55	P
3	Ability to view and delete documents	2.82	0.43	2.79	0.83	2.81	0.63	P
4	Ability to use Microsoft excel package	2.28	0.98	2.20	0.44	2.24	0.71	SP
5	Ability to use PowerPoint package	2.43	0.34	2.36	0.23	2.39	0.29	SP
6	Ability to use scanners.	2.36	0.56	2.33	0.36	2.35	0.46	SP
7	Ability to use electronic keyboard	2.89	0.56	2.86	0.42	2.88	0.46	P
8	Ability to make designs using CorelDraw	2.34	0.44	2.29	0.65	2.32	0.55	SP
9	Ability to use photocopier	2.49	0.34	2.44	0.28	2.47	0.31	SP
10	Ability to use projector	2.46	0.32	2.41	0.30	2.44	0.31	SP
Grand Mean/SD		2.33	0.51	2.28	0.41	2.31	0.46	SP

Source: Field data 2019.

The data in Table 2 showed that items 1, 2, 3 and 7 with mean scores of 2.73, 2.77, 2.81 and 2.88 were rated high. This implied that the respondents agreed that they possess the ability to produce text document; ability to save document; ability to view and delete documents and ability to use electronic keyboard. On the other hand, items 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 with mean scores of 2.24, 2.39, 2.35, 2.32, 2.47 and 2.44 were rated below average, which implied that the respondents agreed that they slightly possess the ability to use Microsoft excel package; ability to use PowerPoint package; ability to use scanners; ability to make designs using CorelDraw; ability to use photocopier and ability to use projector. However, the grand mean of 2.32 indicated that graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Tertiary Institutions slightly possess computer skills for employability as Secretaries.

Research Question 2: *What are the online computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Tertiary Institutions?*

Table 3: Mean ratings on online computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Universities.

S/n	Statements	Universities 122		Polytechnics 134		G/Mean	G/Sd	Remarks
		Mean	Sd	Mean	Sd			
11	Ability to send electronic mails	2.52	0.51	2.50	0.36	2.51	0.44	P
12	Ability to use mobile phones	3.57	0.67	3.55	0.41	3.56	0.54	HP
13	Ability use social networks	2.51	0.43	2.50	0.38	2.51	0.41	P
14	Ability to upload information into the net	2.22	0.51	2.20	0.48	2.21	0.49	SP
15	Ability to use search engines	2.20	0.34	2.18	0.30	2.19	0.32	SP
16	Ability to do online transactions	2.01	0.21	2.00	0.19	2.01	0.20	SP
17	Ability to use chat apps	2.55	0.36	2.52	0.33	2.54	0.35	P
18	Ability to do video conferencing	2.00	0.18	2.00	0.11	2.00	0.15	SP
19	Ability to browse and download from net	2.11	0.40	2.10	0.39	2.11	0.39	SP
20	Ability to interconnect systems	1.98	0.29	1.90	0.22	1.94	0.26	SP
Grand Mean/SD		2.37	0.39	2.35	0.32	2.36	0.36	SP

Source: Field data 2019.

The data in Table 3 showed that items 11, 12, 13 and 17 with mean scores of 2.51, 3.56, 2.51 and 2.54 were rated high. This implied that the respondents agreed that they possess the ability to send electronic mails; ability to use mobile phones; ability to use social network and ability to use chat apps. On the other hand, items 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, and 20 with mean scores of 2.21, 2.19, 2.01, 2.00, 2.11 and 1.94 were rated below average, which implied that the respondents agreed that they slightly possess the ability to upload information into the net; ability to use search engines; ability to do online transactions; ability to do video conferencing; ability to browse and download from net and ability to interconnect systems. However, the grand mean of 2.36 indicated that graduating Office Technology and Management students in Rivers State Tertiary Institutions slightly possess online computer skills for employability as Secretaries.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of graduating Office Technology and Management students of Rivers State Universities and Rivers State Polytechnics on the computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries.

Table 4: z-test result on computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students

Respondents	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	z- Cal Value	z- Crit Value	L/Sig	Decision
Universities	122	2.33	0.51					
				254	0.86	1.67	0.05	Accepted
Polytechnics	134	2.28	0.41					

Source: Field Data, 2019.

Table 4 above revealed a z-calculated value of 0.86 which is less than the standard z-critical value of 1.67; thus, the null hypothesis was accepted. The result therefore is that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of graduating Office Technology and Management students of Rivers State Universities and Rivers State Polytechnics on the computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of graduating Office Technology and Management students of Rivers State Universities and Rivers State Polytechnics on the online computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries.

Table 5: z-test result on online computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries amongst graduating Office Technology and Management students

Respondents	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	z- Cal Value	z- Crit Value	L/Sig	Decision
Universities	122	2.37	0.39					
				254	0.45	1.67	0.05	Accepted
Polytechnics	134	2.35	0.32					

Source: Field Data, 2019.

Table 5 above revealed a z-calculated value of 0.45 which is less than the standard z-critical value of 1.67; thus, the null hypothesis was accepted. The result therefore is that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of graduating Office Technology and Management students of Rivers State Universities and Rivers State Polytechnics on the online computer skills possessed for employability as Secretaries.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

One of the findings of this study was that the respondents agreed that that they possess the ability to produce text document; ability to save document; ability to view and delete documents and ability to use electronic keyboard but slightly possess the ability to use Microsoft excel package; ability to use PowerPoint package; ability to use scanners; ability to make designs using CorelDraw; ability to use photocopier and ability to use projector; this indicated that the respondents slightly possess computer skills for employability as Secretaries. This finding agrees with Oduwole (2015) who argued that in Nigeria generally, the skills that job seekers possess do not match the needs and demands of employers. This might be as a result of the continuous use of traditional methods of teaching which has to do with

talk and chalk. If graduates of Office Technology and Management desire to secure jobs as secretaries, then they must possess highly the modern office skills that are required in automated office.

The study also revealed that the respondents agreed that they possess the ability to send electronic mails; ability to use mobile phones; ability to use social network and ability to use chat apps but slightly possess the ability to upload information into the net; ability to use search engines; ability to do online transactions; ability to do video conferencing; ability to browse and download from net and ability to interconnect systems. This indicated that the respondents slightly possess online computer skills for employability as Secretaries. This finding aligns with Idele and Paul-Mgbeafulike (2018) who asserted that despite the introduction of Information and Communication Technology in all level of education and the transformation of the secretarial studies with improved Information and Communication Technology based curriculum to make students fit for the world of work in modern offices; students are still found to be lagging behind.

CONCLUSION

Office Technology and Management is an efficient, effective, productive and functional education which leads to self-employment, self-reliance, paid employment and consequently self-actualization. Office Technology and Management is a training or education programme that ensures that individuals are impacted with the right skills and attitudes needed for transition from school to work and for advancement in the Office Technology and Management career path. However, this study shows that graduating students of Office Technology and Management are lagging behind in terms of possession of the required modern office skills. The advent of Information and Communication Technology has brought about increase in demand of technologically skilled employees by employers of labour. To be employable as secretary, prospective employees' needs to possess the requisite computer and online computer skills which seems not to be possessed by Office Technology and Management students in the institutions studied.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Office Technology graduates should endeavor to familiarize themselves with all the modern office skills necessary for them to function effectively in the global workplace.
2. Government should provide enough funds to equip tertiary institutions with relevant Information and Communication Technology resources and connect the laboratories with internet for practical instructional delivery as this will help students possess the requisite computer skills.

REFERENCES

- Agbongiasede, E.E. (2014). Office technology and management curriculum in polytechnic: *A appraisal. Nigeria Journal of Business Education.* 1(3), 30 – 36.
- Amiaya, A.O. (2016). Availability and utilization of new technology in business education for teaching office technology and management in Delta State Polytechnics. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education.* 3(2), 64-72.
- Baba, E. I. & Akaraha, C. U. (2012). Adequacy of educational resources for office technology and management programme in polytechnics in Kogi State. *Business Education Journal* 8(2), 198 – 208.
- Chigbuson, A. J., Timya, N., & Silas, T. N. (2018). Information and communication technology skills needed by office technology and management students for self-sustenance and national development. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education,* 5(2), 206 – 213.
- Idele, E. F. & Paul-Mgbeafulike, V. S. (2018). Strategies for improving quality use of ICT tools in office technology and management programme in polytechnics in delta state for national development. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education,* 5(2), 206 – 213.
- Ifejika, L. C. (2015). Career readiness of the office technology and management students in polytechnics in Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu states, Nigeria. *Unpublished MEd Thesis,* Department

- Ikelegbe, S. (2016). Information and communication technology competencies required for success as perceived by business center operators in Delta State. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 3(1), 350-358.
- Iwhuoha, C.U. & Chiwen, E. (2018). Impact of teaching innovations on the academic performance of office technology and management undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Imo State. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 5(2), 150 – 156.
- Oduwole, T. A. (2015). Youth unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*, 1(2), 23-39.
- Okoro, J. (2014). Assessment of accounting competencies possessed by postgraduate university Business Education students to handle entrepreneurship business challenges in Nigeria. *World Journal of Education*, 4(1), 1 – 10.
- Osere, C. N. (2017). Entrepreneurship education curriculum for Employability: Teachers as catalysts. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 4(2), 77 – 84.
- Ovbiagele, A. O. & Mgbonyebi, D. C. (2018). Quality assurance and skill acquisition in office technology and management programme for National development. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 5(2), 63 – 76.
- Oyedele, J. F. & Fadare, G. O. (2018). New technologies in teaching and learning of office technology and management. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 5(1), 264 – 273.
- Oyinloye, O. T. & Oluwalola, F. K. (2014). Modern office instructional facilities in office technology and management in Polytechnics: A means to insecurity management in Nigeria. *Association of Business Educators of Nigeria Conference Proceedings*, 1(1), 125 -133.
- Uteh, C. K. & Ihuekwumere, O.C.E (2013).The effect of teacher factor in enhancing quality assurance in programme in polytechnics. *Association of Business Educators of Nigeria. Book of Readings*3 (1). 56 – 60.