



## **The Trends Of Teaching And Learning 21st Century Skills By OTM Lecturers And Students For Employability Skills In Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study was concerned with the trends of teaching and learning 21st century skills by OTM lecturers and students for employability skills in Nigeria. The study adopted a review research design because of the qualitative research approach used to synthesize opinions of various scholars on the topic under study. The amalgamated opinions were used to address the major and specific objectives as well as the research questions of this study. Based on the reviewed literatures, it was concluded that the trends of teaching and learning 21st century skills by OTM lecturers and students lead to employability skills, soft skills, foundational skills, work-readiness skills, or job-readiness skills, such as ICTs, problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, conflict management, and ethical skills. Others are self-improvement, interpersonal relations, communications, career preparation, leadership, teamwork, self-discipline, self-confidence, good work ethic, and showing courtesy which play great roles to the employees to be employed by allowing effective communication with coworkers, solve problem, understand roles within the team, make responsible choices, and take charge of their own career as OTM students in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** trend, teaching and learning, 21st century skills, employability skills, OTM

### **INTRODUCTION**

Teaching is concerned with assisting a learner to acquire of knowledge, experience, skills and competencies. These are usually organized within a discipline and, more generally, the provision of stimulus to the psychological and intellectual growth of a person (learner) by another person called the teacher or artifact. Teaching is the process of assisting or guiding an individual or a group of individuals to acquire knowledge, experience, skills and competencies as well as attain academic excellence (IGI Global Publisher of Timely Knowledge, 2020). So, teaching aid and facilitate studying, especially, where there is a positive teacher – student relationship, which may assist the mind and mindset of the learner positively and make it productive. Learning is the activity or process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practicing, being taught, or experiencing

something. It also the way and manner one interact with the physical and abstract environments. Learning is about what students do, not about what we as teachers do. This means that for learning to take place the student must do something to show a relatively permanent change in his/her behaviour.

Office Technology and Management (OTM) programme is designed to offer students training in different skills for employment in various fields of endeavour. Moreover, in these modern economies which continuous innovations have led to major transformations in workplaces, giving rise to pervasive skill gaps and skill mismatches. In order to bridge the skill gaps, OTM programme is investing significant effort and resources in training of students in different skills taught in OTM programme include 21st century skills. The 21st century skills are often referred to as generic, non-technical, or employability skills that facilitate the creative and productive application of disciplinary skills and knowledge in the workplaces (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). The 21st century skills or soft skills are the traits and abilities of attitude and behaviour rather than of knowledge or technical aptitude. The 21st century skills include ICTs, problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, conflict management, and ethical skills. Self-improvement, interpersonal relations, communications, career preparation, leadership, teamwork, self-discipline, self-confidence, good work ethic, and showing courtesy. Additionally, the listed soft skills include honesty, team building, problem solving, critical thinking, and communication skills. Abdullah, Muhammad and Nasir (2019) stated that soft skills are crucial skills required by future workplace in the corporate world. Acquisition of these skills could influence employment prospect of Office Technology and Management students for wealth creation.

ICTs skills have become more pervasive in society that led to a concern about the need for ICT skills in everyday life of learners. These include the use of variety of ICT tools such as email, v-learning platforms, desktop conferencing, online programmes such as web, video conferencing, social media platforms, web cam, internet, all hardware and software which impart the necessary ICT skills to students for gainful employment after graduation, The recent shifts in education and labour market policies have resulted in OTM programme being placed under increasing pressure to produce employable graduates. However, contention exists regarding exactly what constitutes employability skills which students' attribute that can foster employability skills among students and lead to employment. In support of this view point, Mehrotra and Elias (2017) stated that modern employment wants students who are primed for work, able to communicate, share skills and appreciate their place in a wider organization and its business. Students on graduation want jobs that exercise their abilities, confer status and provide commensurate pay as well as a route for career development. For this reason, it is important for OTM students to have extra skills rather than academic knowledge. The employers also perceive that students are often not prepared to face the workplace and expect tertiary institutions (polytechnics inclusive) to produce more employable graduates (Spowart, 2011).

In the polytechnics, OTM students can improve their soft skill before facing a real career after finishing their study if they understand the roles of these skills in their employment and wealth creation. Moreover, unemployment and poverty that are some of the economic challenges among Nigerian graduates can be overcome by acquiring soft skills. According to Mitchell in Abdullah, Muhammad and Nasir (2019), employers highlighted soft skills as significant skills for modern workplace and recommended their integration into business education curriculum and OTM in specific. However, the concern of this study is whether OTM lecturers and students teach, learn, and even value these soft skills for future employment and wealth creation. Also, if these 21st century skills lead to employment creation for the learners. As reported by Abdullah, Muhammad and Nasir (2019) and Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), students see the nature and relevance of 21st century skills differently. Students are either unaware of the importance of soft skills or they undermine the influence of certain soft skills to their employment prospects. It is against this background that this study aim to explore the trends of teaching and learning 21st century skills by OTM lecturers and students for employability skills in Nigeria.

#### **Statement of the problem**

The curriculum of OTM programme is geared towards equipping students with broader requisite 21st century skills such as ICTs, problem-solving, team-working, critical thinking, entrepreneurial

and leadership upon graduation. Admittedly, OTM students on graduation do suffer labour market discriminations in areas of administrative, banking and financial institutions among others in Nigeria. In view of this, OTM curriculum seems to be inadequate and has very little capacity to develop students' 21st century skills for job opportunities in various fields of endeavour. Additionally, high unemployment rates among OTM graduates have led employers and OTM students to question the kind of skills they are being taught. The problem of this study is that, the new OTM programme has incorporated range of 21st century skills in its curriculum to meet the current employment needs of the learners. However, unemployment rates and poverty among its graduates suggests that OTM students on graduation simply lack the 21st century skills required for being outstanding in the workplace where employers are looking for well rounded employees, instead of the traditional graduates with only basic technical knowledge. It could be deduced from this that, trends of teaching and learning 21st century skills by OTM lecturers and students for employability skills in polytechnics have not been adequately implemented to equipped learners with employability skills. Therefore, the rationale for this study: "Trends of teaching and learning 21st century skills by OTM lecturers and students for employability skills"

## **METHODOLOGY**

The design used in this study was literature review research design. The justification for adopting literature review research design was because this study adopted qualitative research approach to synthesize opinions of scholars on the topic "the trends of teaching and learning 21st century skills by OTM lecturers and students for employability skills". The amalgamated opinions were used to address the major and specific objectives as well as the research questions of this study. Also, the various specific objectives were used to form headings that addressed the problem of the study based on the reviewed literatures.

### **Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to determine the trends of teaching and learning 21st century skills by OTM lecturers and students for employability skills in Nigeria. The study specifically seeks to:

1. Find out how the trends of teaching entrepreneurial skills leads to OTM students employability skills
2. Find out how the trends of implementing leadership skills leads to OTM students leadership skills

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How does the trends of teaching entrepreneurial skills leads to OTM students employability skills?
2. How does the trends of implementing leadership skills leads to OTM students leadership skills?

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **How the trends of teaching entrepreneurial skills leads to OTM students employability skills**

Entrepreneurship refers to the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully (Esene, 2014). The concept of entrepreneurship has been associated with several activities concerned with the establishment and operation of business enterprises. The activities include identification of investment opportunities, decision-making as to the opportunities to exploit, promotion and establishment of the business enterprises, aggregation of the scarce resources required for production and distribution, organization and management of the human and material resources for the attainment of the objectives of the enterprises, risk bearing, and innovation (Ifejika, 2015). Ifejika further affirmed that the OTM students need entrepreneurial qualities such as self-reliance, ability to identify and exploit opportunities, creativity; willingness to take chances, even if it means to expose oneself to risk and finally, personal drive. Entrepreneurial skills are essential skills needful to perform optimally when employed in today's business organizations as a 21st century skill. Akunnaya (2012) defines entrepreneurship skills as those skills that will enable the individual to maximize the

resources around him within the limits of his capabilities. Entrepreneurial skills are those activity skills that will enable learners to manage his own enterprise upon graduation. Entrepreneurial skills as 21st century skills are the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours an OTM student should possess to enable him identify business opportunities, stimulate creativity and transform ideas into practical and economic activities in his organization.

Entrepreneurial skills are simply vocational business skills, which a student acquires to enable him function effectively in business environment. Creativity as an element of the 21st century skill is the spark that drives entrepreneurial development and passion is what gets entrepreneurs started. OTM students must possess entrepreneurial skills so as to be able to guide their organization quickly in response to changing market needs when employed after graduation.

Pitan (2015) listed some of the entrepreneurial skills that enhance employment opportunities of students to include ability to identify opportunities not obvious to others, assess the competitive advantage of ideas, identify customer or client requirements. Others include being creative, initiating ideas and innovative solutions, determine the commercial viability of ideas, translate ideas into action, liaise with stakeholders and sponsors, use a range of business communication methods, market and sales of product or service. Other entrepreneurial skills are ability to: constantly seeing business opportunities or ideas that have commercial values, grow or build businesses. Being creative and regularly come up with new ideas, proffer solutions to business problems, convert lectures to marketable ideas, stand the ground even in difficult decision. Come up with more than one way to solve a problem, be decisive when making important decisions in business, look at business problems from all angles to find the best solution, be active, have functional skills and ideas to create jobs, and explore government programmes for entrepreneurship like the YOUWIN project as some of the 21st century skills that lead to employability skills.

#### **How the trends of implementing leadership skills leads to OTM students leadership skills**

Leadership is the process of influencing others and is an important resource for any group in establishments. Leadership has been defined as the art of motivating a group of people to achieve a common goal. Gerhardt (2019) affirmed that the research has that intervention among students' leadership and confidence towards employment for students are necessary. Nolan-Arañez and Ludvik (2018) mentioned that leadership development activities influence employability among students. Leadership skills help employees to cope with the challenges associated with meeting office demands. Leadership skills are abilities to present a vision, make commitment among followers and risk acceptance when facing opportunities that cause efficient use of available resources with respect to the leader's vision. In fact, leadership skills include all necessary abilities for constant value creation of managers with respect to business goals.

In today's competitive business environment, having just hard skills is not enough for gainful employment. OTM students need to have leadership skills in order to be successful in their profession. Leadership is generally defined as the process of influencing employees of an organization in order to achieve organizational goals, and is a 21st century skill (Esmer & Dayi, 2016). Leadership skill is the ability to sustain innovation and adapt to an uncertain environment style. Faizan and Zehra (2016) stated that graduates should be "team-oriented, transformational, and value-based. The growth of an organization is not recorded without the assistance of individual and collective efforts; thus, business growth needs human agency.

OTM students on graduation need the ability to contribute to organizational growth, stirring their team by ensuring adequate communication, appreciating the views of others colleagues and encouraging contributions. Leadership is the ability to influence others and to be able to put into action for specific goals and targets. On the other hand, leadership is the ability of creating support and confidence needed to achieve organizational goals among the people. According to Esmer and Dayi (2016), leadership skills are abilities to take calculated risks, seize opportunities, pursue innovation and be innovative, producing, interchanging and strategic goals. Leadership basics skills include the ability to understand the basics of how the organizations operate-through projects, processes and cultures, and examine organizations' business systems and people alignments to better understand what the organization and its stakeholder expect from the business. Furthermore, leadership skills are abilities to present a vision, make commitment among group and risk

acceptance when facing opportunities that cause efficient use of available organizations' resources with respect to the leader's vision. Leadership skills is a 21st century skill that include all necessary abilities for constant value creation with respect to business goals. Leadership skills needed for performance in modern organizations are proactive skills, innovative skills and risk-taking skills that are stated and explained below:

**Proactive skills**

Proactive skills involve ability to actively influence and lead the future rather than waiting to be influenced by it. Exploit business opportunities and accept the responsibility of failure, anticipate future business problems, identify need for business change and improvement, and respond to environmental opportunities.

**Innovative skills**

Innovative skills on the other hand are the ability to think creatively, develop novel and useful business ideas in opportunity recognition, utilize available resources to run businesses successfully.

**Risk taking skills**

Risk taking skills are ability to absorb business uncertainty and take the burden of responsibility for the future. Calculated risk taking is one of the common characteristics of employees particularly in the early stages of employment. A graduate must have the capability to calculate the risks involved in any office project, assesses situations and focuses special attention on the risks involved. Risk taking on the other hand, includes the determination to devote resources to opportunities with a high probability of failure. Stauffer (2020) outlined the following as the 21st century employability skills and abilities that today's students need to succeed in their careers during the information age as: Critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity and social skills. The skills are summarily graphically presented and broken down below:

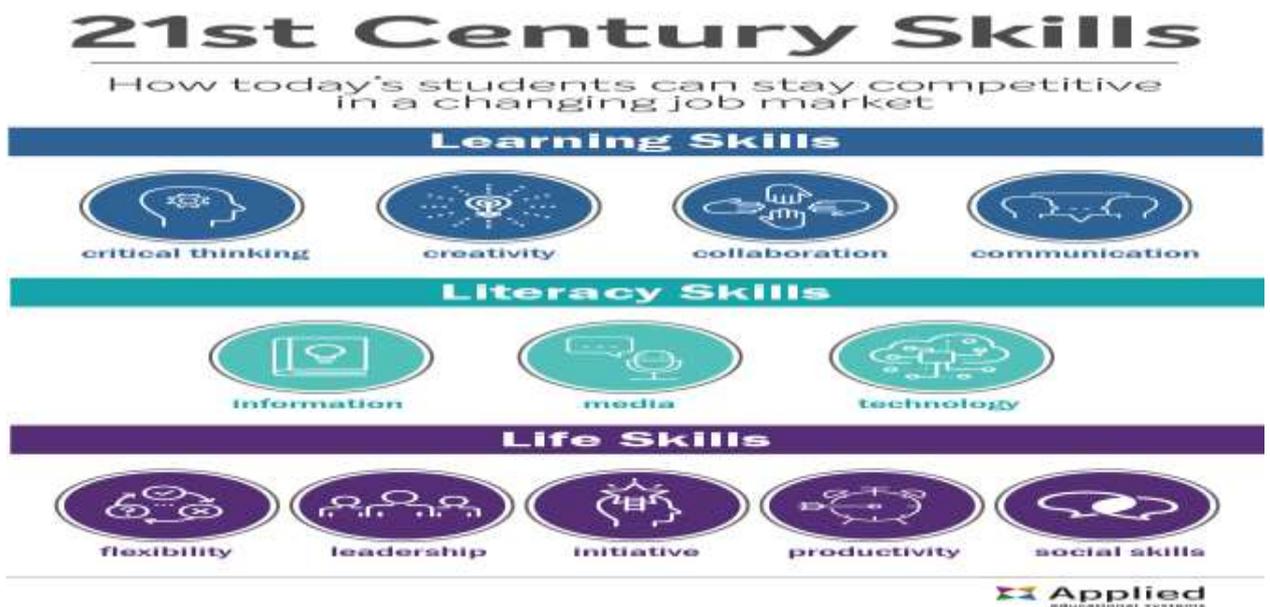


Figure 1.1: the 21st century employability skills (Stauffer, 2020)

Each of the above 21st Century skills on the chart is broken into one of three categories below:

1. Learning skills
2. Literacy skills
3. Life skills

Learning skills, (the four C's) teaches students about the mental processes required to adapt and improve upon a modern work environment. Literacy skills (IMT) focus on how students can discern facts, publishing outlets, and the technology behind them. There is a strong focus on determining trustworthy sources and factual information to separate it from the misinformation that floods the

Internet. Life skills (FLIPS) look at intangible elements of a student’s everyday life. These intangibles focus on both personal and professional qualities.

Category 1: Learning skills (the four c’s)



Figure 1.2: Learning skills (the four c’s) (Stauffer, 2020)

Stauffer, (2020) also argued that the four C’s are by far the most popular 21st century employability skills. These skills are also called learning skills. Some educators know about these skills because they are universal needed for any career. They also vary in terms of importance, depending on an individual’s career aspirations.

**Critical thinking skill**

Arguably, critical thinking is the most important quality for someone to have in different employment. In business settings, critical thinking is essential to improvement. It is the mechanism that weeds out problems and replaces them with fruitful endeavours.

**Creativity skills**

This is equally important as a means of adaptation. This skill empowers employees to see concepts in a different light, which leads to innovation. In any field, innovation is key to the adaptability and overall success of a company.

Learning creativity as a skill requires someone to understand that “the way things have always been done” may have been best 10 years ago, but someday that has to change.

**Collaboration skills**

This is a means of getting employees to work together, achieve compromises, and get the best possible results from solving a problem. Collaboration may be the most difficult concept in the four C’s. But once it is mastered, it can bring companies back from the brink of bankruptcy. The key element of collaboration is willingness. All participants have to be willing to sacrifice parts of their own ideas and adopt others to get results for the company. That means understanding the idea of a “greater good,” which in this case tends to be company-wide success.

**Communication skills**

Communication is the glue that brings all of these educational qualities together. Communication is a requirement for any company to maintain profitability. It is crucial for employees to learn how to effectively convey ideas among different personality in public and private firms.

Category 2: Literacy skills (IMT)



Figure 1.3: Literacy skills (IMT) (Stauffer, 2020)

Literacy skills are the next category of 21st century employability skills. They are sometimes called IMT (Information, Media and Technology) skills, and they are each concerned with a different element in digital comprehension such as:

- ❖ Information literacy

Understanding facts, figures, statistics, and data

- ❖ Media literacy

Understanding the methods and outlets in which information is published

- ❖ Technology literacy

Understanding the machines that make the Information Age possible. Information literacy is the foundational skill. It helps employees to understand facts, especially data points that they will encounter online. More importantly, it teaches them how to separate fact from fiction. In today's age of chronic misinformation, finding truth online has become a job all on its own. It is crucial that employees can identify honesty on their own, otherwise, they can fall prey to myths, misconceptions, and outright lies. Media literacy is the practice of identifying publishing methods, outlets, and sources while distinguishing between the ones that are credible and the ones that are not. Just like the previous skill, media literacy is helpful for finding truth in a world that is saturated with information. This is how employees find trustworthy sources of information in their lives. Without it, anything that looks credible becomes credible. Meaning with it, they can learn which media outlets or formats to ignore. They also learn which ones to embrace, which is equally important. Technology literacy goes another step further to teach employees about the machines and software involved in the information age. As computers, cloud programming, and mobile devices become more important to the world, the world needs more people to understand those concepts. Technology literacy gives employees the basic information they need to understand in what gadgets perform, what tasks and why. This understanding removes the intimidating feeling that technology tends to have. After all, if you do not understand how technology works, it might as well be like magic and very phobic. So, technology literacy unmask the high-powered tools that run in today's business world. As a result, employees can adapt to the world more effectively and play an important role in its evolution.

Category 3: Life skills (FLIPS)



Figure 1.4: Life skills (FLIPS) (Stauffer, 2020)

Life skills are the final category, and called FLIPS. The skills all pertain to employees' personal life but they also bleed into professional settings as stated and explained below.

- Flexibility  
Deviating from plans as needed
- Leadership  
Motivating a team to accomplish a goal
- Initiative  
Starting projects, strategies, and plans on one's own
- Productivity  
Maintaining efficiency in an age of distractions
- Social skills  
Meeting and networking with others for mutual benefit

Flexibility skills

This is the expression of someone's ability to adapt to changing circumstances. This is one of the most challenging qualities to learn for employees because it is based on two uncomfortable ideas:

1. Your way is not always the best way
2. You have to know and admit when you are wrong

That is a struggle for a lot of employees, especially in an age when you can know any bit of information at the drop of a hat. Flexibility requires them to show humility and accept that they will

always have a lot to learn, even when they are experienced. Still, flexibility is crucial to employees' long-term success in a career. Knowing when to change, how to change, and how to react to change is a skill that will pay dividends for someone's entire life.

#### **Leadership skills**

This is employees' penchant for setting goals, walking a team through the steps required, and achieving those goals collaboratively. Whether someone is a seasoned entrepreneur or a fresh hire, and just starting his or her careers, leadership applies to career. Entry-level workers need leadership skills for several reasons. The most important is that it helps them understand the decisions that managers and business leaders make.

#### **Initiative skills**

True success also requires initiative, and requiring employees to be self-starters. Initiative only comes naturally to a handful of people. As a result, students need to learn it to fully succeed. This is one of the hardest skills to learn and practice. Initiative often means working on projects outside of regular working hours.

The rewards for students with extreme initiative vary from person to person. Sometimes they are good grades, and other times they are new business ventures. Sometimes, it is spending an extra minutes at their jobs wrapping something up. Regardless, initiative is an attribute that earns rewards. It is especially indicative of someone's character in terms of work ethic and professional progress. That goes double when initiative is practiced with qualities like flexibility and leadership. Along with initiative, 21st century skills require students to learn about productivity.

#### **Productivity skills**

Is the ability of an employee to complete work in an appropriate amount of time. In business terms, it is called "efficiency". The common goal of any professional ranges from entry-level, employee to CEO, which is to get more tasks done in less time. By understanding productivity strategies at every level, employees discover the ways in which they work best while gaining an appreciation for how others work as well. That equips them with the practical means to carry out the ideas they determine through flexibility, leadership, and initiative.

#### **Social skills**

These skills are crucial to the ongoing success of a professional. Business is frequently done through the connections with persons. This concept of networking is more active in some industries than others, but proper social skills are excellent tools for forging long-lasting relationships. While these may have been implied in past generations, the rise of social media and instant communications have changed the nature of human interaction. As a result, today's employees need to possess a wide range of social skills. Some are more socially adept than others. Some are far behind their peers, while some lucky few may be far ahead as socializing comes naturally to them. However, most employees need a crash training in social skills at least. Etiquette, manners, politeness, and small talk which still play major roles in today's world.

### **CONCLUSION**

The trends of teaching and learning 21st century skills by OTM lecturers and students for employability skills in Nigeria as long time ago started but it should be given adequate attention it deserved. Twenty-first century skills (employability skills) are a set of skills and behaviors that are very necessary for every job performance for graduates. These employability skills are sometimes called soft skills, foundational skills, work-readiness skills, or job-readiness skills, which play great roles to the employees to be employed by allowing effective communication with coworkers, solve problem, understand your role within the team, make responsible choices, and take charge of their own career. Also, employers of labour value employability skills because they are linked to how employees get along with coworkers and customers, job performance, and career success. Finally, the trends of teaching and learning 21st century skills by OTM lecturers and students for employability skills assists the society to solve problems of un-employability and un-marketability skills as well as create employment for the society since learners acquired the skills and become gainfully employed in both public and private firms.

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