

**NEED ANALYSIS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A
FRAMEWORK FOR INTEGRATION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS INTO
OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM IN NIGERIAN
POLYTECHNICS**

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ABSTRACT

This paper discussed the need analysis of a framework for integration of employability skills into Office Technology and Management OTM curriculum in Nigerian polytechnics in order to enhance the employability of OTM graduates and to bridge their employability skills gap. The theoretical research originates from an aspiration to update and improve the OTM programme of study. The review of literature indicates that learners' need will have to be addressed if the course is to be successful. The literature suggests important principles for investigating OTM students' needs, specifying that attempts should be made to meet those needs in actual teaching and learning situations, which further involve attention to curriculum development. The need analysis for a framework development described in this paper is to determine the supply and demand of employability skills required in the labour market which include technical and soft skills as well as reviewing literature on processes of need analysis that include: situational analysis, planning learning outcomes, course organisation, selection and preparing teaching materials, providing for effective teaching methodologies and evaluation which are all integrally interconnected. This is done to provide a guide for integration of employability skills into

the OTM curriculum, and if well implemented can help in integration of employability skills and improve OTM curriculum. Evaluation can be done while the course is underway to establish if learner needs have been met. By thoroughly reviewing literature on need analysis for framework development and validation, it can prove useful for OTM teaching and learning contexts and subsequently enhance the acquisition of these skills.

Key Words: Framework, Employability Skills, Integration, Need Analysis, Curriculum

Introduction

Office Technology and Management (OTM) is one of the program offered in polytechnics. Several studies have been carried out on the evaluation of OTM graduates employability skills which most of the studies showed that the graduates of these programs lacked the fundamental skills required for productive employment in today's labour market (Azih & Ejeke, 2015). The program curriculum was attributed for being deficient to provide adequate employability skills required to meet up with the challenges that are essential for the execution of the daily office routine in the labour market. The development and validation of a framework for integration of new employability skills into the OTM curriculum will enhance students' performance and also filled the training gap as outcry by employers.

The curriculum of OTM which is used in the training of the students for the performance of duties as secretaries or office managers continued to remain unchanged without being reviewed since 2004. The curriculum therefore became far away from the modern technological advancement and not keeping pace with rapid globalisation (Sumathy, Malini & Salai, 2019). As a result of the fact that the curriculum of OTM programme has remain without being reviewed and not up-to-date, the need to revisit and overhaul the curriculum of OTM in Nigeria to be able to train the polytechnics OTM graduates to meet up with the requirements of the labour market in terms of employability skills required by the organisations and industries for employment has become necessary.

The gaps established between the curriculum and the new technological innovations have made the required skills for actual work in the offices to continue to remain obsolete and deficient. The consequence is that most of the graduates of the programme are usually not employable whereas majority of the Skill acquisition is a key, which opens all doors. Ezemma, Ejedoghaobi, Yerima, Celestina and Abiola (2020) stated that skill acquisition opens new opportunities, helps one to learn something new, practice and become experts. The acquisition of employability skills for securing employment positions is very vital in an organization. To acquire employability skills, there must be some form of training which is guided by curriculum. This is because modern office skills and technology requires a higher degree of ability and operating skills. Employability skills development can be accomplished through work experience or through education in school, attending seminars, workshops and practical in laboratories. The types of employability skills required of OTM graduates which include technical and soft skills are important to an individual's career progression and employability. It is for this reason that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) emphasize on the role of institutions in economic and national development and the need for collaboration between the

institutions of learning and the industries for development of required skills in the labour market.

Based on the problems identified in the background of the study which revealed that graduates of OTM lack the employability skills that are required for gainful employment and progressing in the world of work, the situation might be as a result of the fact that the curriculum is out dated and need to be reviewed through the development of a framework that can serve as a guide for the integration of these employability skills which comprised of both hard and technical skills, specific courses where the skills can be integrated, teaching methodologies, instructional tool and equipment that support the teaching and learning of the skills. A thorough review of related literature is conducted to heightened awareness concerning approaches to need analysis for development and validation of employability skills framework for integration into OTM curriculum. The significance of the needs analysis has led to the coming up with several approaches for development of employability skills framework for integration into the curriculum (Sampson & Ordu, 2020). The literature on need analysis and curriculum review provides important principles for investigating learner needs, a suitable and practical OTM employability skills framework which comprised of many office skills taxonomy, teaching methodologies, instructional materials and assessment techniques.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that emerging workplace technologies and globalization is one of the major challenges of tertiary institutions and its resultant consequences have increasingly impacted mostly on graduates' employability. Despite the appropriateness of the objectives of OTM in Nigeria for requisite office skills and knowledge development, the various learning experiences lack employability skills needed by students to discharge their duties effectively and efficiently in the labour market (Onojetal, 2014).

OTM programme is aimed at providing a functional training that would help the students acquire relevant employable skills. In this regard, the high rate of unemployment and its attendant consequences among OTM graduates can only be stemmed if they acquire adequate employability skills through training so that even if they do not secure employment they can be self-reliant. In fact, it seems that a gap exist between the employability skills content of OTM curriculum and expectation of skills required by business organizations (Oladunjoye, 2015).

Literature Review

Polytechnics in Nigeria are supposed to train OTM graduates so that upon completion of their programmes they are supposed to have acquired the employability skills to be able to gain employment in the labour market or become self-employment. However, employers of labour have kept on complaining that OTM graduates cannot perform the office routine effectively and efficiently without further training. This assertion was supported by Ugwuanyi (2012) who stated that, most of the organisations in Nigeria have expressed their worry over the quality of OTM graduates in terms of employability skills possession necessary for the current technological edge and globalisation in the discharge of their office duties. This has compelled many organisations to design several re-training programs in order for the graduates to be

employable due to ineffective quality of teaching they received from their various institutions of learning and inadequate instructional materials and above all lack of digital approach in teaching and learning OTM which lead to acquisition of 21st century employability skills acquisition.

Several studies conducted in Nigeria have questioned the relevance of the OTM graduates considering the employability skills they possessed. This is attached to the wide gap created between the requirement of the industry and that of the labour market with the call for the re-structuring and reviewing the OTM curriculum to meet up with the requirements of the labour market (Okoro, 2013). Okoro further noted that tertiary institutions especially polytechnics form the knowledge foundation for basic professional understanding and development of new skills for in-depth information acquisition, therefore, there is need to re-think of revising the OTM curricula according to changing world of work demands and provide the services and methods of instruction that are demanded by the employers.

OTM graduates need adequate employability skills for them to effectively work in the contemporary office environment. Suleman (2018) defined employability skills as the convertible skills desirable by an individual to make him/her employable. Along with upright technical thoughts plus subject knowledge, employers frequently outline a set of skills that they want from an employee. These skills are what they consider will enhance the personnel to display their roles adequately to the best of their abilities. Employability is subject to discipline specific knowledge and soft skills as well as attitudes exhibited by employees.

Undoubtedly, the emerging workplace technologies and globalization have brought about a change in the employers' job skills requirements thereby making the labour market more competitive. Thus, OTM programme must equip its recipients with appropriate employability skills necessary for global competitiveness. It is against this background that Ezewanfor and Olaniyi (2018) cautioned that failure to equip students with job employability skills critical to job success is equivalent to placing employability barriers in their paths and to allow students to graduate with these deficiencies has far reaching implications. Already, the Nigerian economy cannot generate sufficient employment opportunities to absorb the teeming youth graduates. It is likely that a large number of young potential workers will face a bleak future through being unemployed except something is done to reverse the trend. Thus, to enhance the graduates' chances of securing appropriate jobs that suit their education and training, tertiary institutions offering programmes need to equip students with relevant competencies for the labour market that will increase their capacities to meet specific workplace demands. Hence, the need for integration of employability skills contents into OTM curriculum.

Moreover, Audu, Abdulkadir and Abdul (2013) stated that, the existing skills gap between the graduates of OTM and the industry has become a major concern of business organisations and educators in Nigeria. Employers of labour have continued to express their concern and worry over the quality of the current graduates of OTM programme in their short of relevant skills required for employment (Idris & Rajuddin, 2012). Most employers of labour in Nigeria complained of inadequate skills of OTM graduates for most cutting edge technology, low practical knowledge and lack of confidence in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

Supply and Demand of Employability Skills

Fundamental to understanding how to best equip any student with relevant employability skills is a consideration of how to match talent (supply) with employer needs (demand). Much literature also currently focuses on the needs of employers (Greive, 2013) or the attempts to nurture employability skills within tertiary institution of learning (Andrew & Higsons, 2014). Some point to a gap between what employers need and what students have, but the cause of the skills gap is disputed. Some point to structural issues while for others, an emphasis is on hard skills training and measurable knowledge outcomes (Adebakin, Ajadi & Subair 2015).

Further to increase in emerging workplace technologies, Bhat (2013) noted that we live in a global world where technology, especially information and communication technology, is changing the manner in which daily office routine are being performed in organisations, how we work, and how we interact, relate and communicate with subordinates. Houston (2017) presented some technologies that are transforming the very foundations of global business and the organizations that drive it: cloud and mobile computing, big data and machine learning, sensors and intelligent manufacturing, advanced robotics and drones, and clean-energy technologies. These technologies are not just helping people to do things better and faster, but they are enabling profound changes in the ways that work is done in organizations. Another serious scenario is the fact that due to the intense ravaging of corona virus, the world of work has changed many things in terms of office activities. Ordu (2020) opined that COVID-19 pandemic has changed the social bearing of both humans and organizations, and this has totally impacted education delivery in terms of demand and supply of employability skills needed in the labour market.

What Employers Need

Due to increased competitive pressure, employers across sectors have identified a strong need for non-technical skills, including problem solving skills, teamwork skills, communication skills, time management, and cultural adaptability (Bailey, 2014). Interpersonal and communication skills, including listening skills, are particularly highlighted with respect to the hiring and promotion of employees in a variety of industries (Grieve, 2013).

Need Analysis of a Framework Development

Syakur, Zainuddin and Hasan (2020) emphasises that the processes of needs analysis include: situational analysis, planning learning outcomes, course organisation, selection and preparing teaching materials, providing for effective teaching and evaluation are all integrally interconnected. They place teachers at the centre of the planning and decision-making process. The processes in improving curriculum reflect the contributions of a variety of people with various roles and goals.

The subject of needs analysis also extends to curriculum improvement by action research. The spiral, iterative and evaluative procedures of action research plus its belief in change for an improvement demand consideration (Skyhar, 2021). Action research usually originates from a 'thematic concern which is learner needs in the present situation.

The concern leads to the first moment which is planning that involves building learner needs into the first half of a curriculum. Research then proceeds to subsequent moments such as acting, observing and reflecting. Implementing and evaluating are engaged to ascertain whether or not the curriculum meets learner needs. Action research generates spirals of investigation which “unfold from themselves and fold back again into themselves” (Gilbert, 2020). With this consideration, a curriculum is redesigned based on learner needs discovered in the initial procedure of teaching and learning, which are then implemented and evaluated in the second half. Change for improvement is another important characteristic. Action research is “an inquiry which is carried out in order to improve some educational practice. In employing action research in needs analysis, needs are checked in the first component; elements which are suitable can be integrated to improve the curriculum to comply with learners’ need more effectively.

In designing a framework careful analysis and investigation of the resources available to the implementers must be made. Also factors such as what to integrate in the framework, how to integrate and where to integrate should also be taken into cognizance along with the components that make up the framework. Other useful aspects include reviewing of various models and theories that can aid the development of the framework, consideration of policy makers’ views and validation procedure to check whether the framework is applicable or not (Kituyi & Tusubira, 2013).

Conclusion

Findings of the study indicated that emerging workplace technologies and global trends necessitate the need to develop a framework for integration of employability skills content in OTM curriculum of Nigerian polytechnics. The study concluded that emerging workplace technologies and global trends are basic factors that demand the need for integrating employability skills content in the curriculum of OTM in Nigeria to enhance job performance in the labour market.

Recommendations

The study recommended that lecturers of OTM must exploit beyond academic and technical curricula experiences by integrating the knowledge, skills, values, and competencies needed to function in multi-culture environments and labour. The study correspondingly suggested that curriculum planners of polytechnics in collaboration with the employers of labour should carry out a review of the OTM curriculum to incorporate emerging workplace technologies and new employability skills into the curriculum in order to improve the employability opportunities of the OTM students.

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