BUSINESS EDUCATORS’ PERCEPTION OF THE CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABLE OFFICE TECHNOLOGY SKILLS ACQUISITION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract  
The main purpose of the study was to determine business educators’ perception of the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State. One research question guided the study and two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The design of the study was descriptive survey research design. The area of the study was Delta State, Nigeria. The population comprised 116 business educators in Delta State. The entire population was studied without sampling due to the size. A researcher-developed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot test and data collected analyzed with Cronbach alpha reliability test. The reliability test yielded reliability coefficient value of 0.82. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data related to the research questions and to check the closeness or otherwise of the respondents’ responses to the items, while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and z-test were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that business educators perceived poor funding, lack of students’ commitment to learning, inadequate information and communication technology tools in the business education laboratories and lack of collaboration between administrators of business education programme and employers of labour as some of the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State. It was also revealed that gender and years of experience of the business educators did not significantly affect their opinions on the challenges to sustainable office education skills. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that government should ensure that modern office technology tools and facilities are readily made available for the teaching of business education students. It was also recommended that government should go into partnership with private organizations so as to provide on the job training programmes like work based learning that will expose office education students to modern office technology skills.

Keywords: Business Education, Perceptions, Challenges and Tertiary Institutions
INTRODUCTION

Business education is a programme designed to equip students with the necessary skills and competencies needed in the world of work. Business education is a form of vocational education that is directed towards developing the learner to become productive in teaching, paid employment and self-employment (Amoor, 2010). Business education prepares beneficiaries for gainful employment and sustainable livelihood. It is generally seen as education for and about business. As education for business, it is that aspect of vocational education which provides instruction and preparation for office occupations such as secretariship, shorthand-typist or stenography, bookkeeper, data processor, computer analyst and accountant (Atakpa, 2010). On the other hand, education about business provides knowledge and understanding of the economic, financial, marketing, accounting, management system and other branches of business endeavor. In other words, education about business prepares students to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy.

Amoor (2010) opined that business education plays a significant role in economic development by providing knowledge and skills to the learners, thereby, enabling them to adequately impart knowledge into others, and handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems. The goal of business education is primarily to produce competent, skillful and dynamic business teachers (business educators), office administrators and businessmen and women that will effectively compete in the world of work. It has as its primary aim, the preparation of people for roles in enterprises. Such roles could be as employees, entrepreneurs and employers or simply as self-employed.

Given the present day office innovations, business education students are expected to possess those skills (Business management, marketing, accounting, technical, communication, entrepreneurship skills among others) and competencies that will enable them to be gainfully employed in modern day offices after graduation. Modern office technology has reshaped the way information is created, stored and disseminated. As a result of changes in technology, the role of secretaries has changed tremendously from that of typewriting and shorthand writing, answering phone calls and processing of mails to information and communication technology (ICT) driven activities. ICT is the technology required for information processing. It is the use of electronic computers, communication devices and software applications to convert, store, protect, process, transmit and retrieve information from anywhere, and at any time.

According to Okute and Agomuo (2010), information communication technology is concerned with the managing and processing of information through the use of electronic computers and computer software to convert, store, protect, process, transmit and retrieve information. It is the handling and processing of information for use by means of electronic and communication gadgets such as computers, cameras, telephones among others (Atakpa, 2010). The advent of the internet and computer technologies has changed the role of secretaries, which has resulted in the loss of jobs of most secretaries. Individuals preparing for careers in Office Technology and Management should possess skills on how to use the internet to facilitate communication in the offices. They should be able to use current computer softwares in word processing and spreadsheet, software presentation, desktop publishing packages, computer packages in managing information, performing electronic inventory control, data management, webpage design, among others. The change
of the course title “secretarial studies” to “Office Technology and Management (OTM)” is not only to incorporate technology skills in the training of OTM students, but to equip students with the required ICT skills needed in the modern day offices.

Some office technology skills required of office education graduates according to Ezenwafor (2012) include; use of micro computer with software application to produce documents; skilful keyboarding, using broadcast material or CD ROM for information collection and storage; e-mailing and messaging; internet browsing using search engines, window messengers, yahoo chartrooms; and using projectors, slides and multimedia projectors for presentation among others. Furthermore, Emeasoba and Nweke (2016) opined that other office technology skills include the ability to use word processing, excel, desktop publishing, e-mail presentation software, videoconferencing, teleconferencing, multimedia message services among others in accomplishing office functions.

However, it has been observed that business education graduates have failed to showcase these skills in the workplace (Emeasoba & Nweke, 2016). Business education graduates are expected to possess effective office technology skills. Sadly, Nwaokwa and Okoli (2012) noted that office education graduates have failed to effectively apply office information systems skills in their workplaces. This according to Nwaokwa and Okoli is evident in the lack of skills in the area of webpage design, desktop publishing, office application, networking, proficiency in accessing the internet, among secretaries in business organizations and government offices. This has subsequently become a source of worry to the management of many organizations.

According to Abuya (2014), this lack in skills is caused by various factors like inadequate office technology tools/equipment and problem of integration of old technology with new technology. In another vein, Udo (2014) saw the challenges to sustainable office technology as lack of commitment by business education students to acquire office skills. Udo further averred that office technology and management students should be determined to overcome the poor reading culture prevalent in the Nigerian society. In fact, without a strong determination to overcome it, students will not be able to read study materials and textbooks intensively and extensively. Similarly, the students will not be able to tackle their practical squarely. Udo (2014) further alleged that OTM students in particular refuse to use their pocket money to buy textbooks, facilities and equipment that can enhance their skills acquisition. Indeed, most of them prefer to use their pocket money to buy expensive handsets and recharge cards to phone their parents, friends and relatives at the expense of their studies (Udo, 2014).

Ugwuogo (2013) highlighted the challenges to sustainable office technology skill development in tertiary institution to include:

a. **Unqualified Teachers:** Teachers are critical stakeholders in curriculum implementation. The employment of unqualified teachers to teach business courses is a great disservice to quality of business education graduates. It is a well known fact that most of the higher institutions that offer business education programme suffer from shortage of qualified teachers (Amoor in Ugwuogo, 2012).

b. **Obsolete Technologies:** Manual typewriters are still largely in use. Some available modern ICTs are grossly inadequate.

c. **Large Class Size:** The high teacher-student ratio affects quality of delivery of practical courses like word processing, data processing, shorthand and others.
d. **Poor Funding:** Many administrators fail to understand that business education programme is capital intensive. It is a well known fact that one of the major problems bedeviling education in Nigeria today is inadequate funding and business education is no exception (p. 133).

Some authors have blamed the deficiency in office skills among business education graduates on lack of collaboration between the industry and the school in the area of office information skills needed by office education graduates. According to Ahmed in Gimba (2011), the formal education and training system is not sufficiently linked with the world of work, which makes it difficult for graduates particularly those who study vocational or professional courses to secure employment in areas related to their fields of study. This perhaps is because of the inability to fit into the current needs of the society (world-of-work) regarding possessing or acquiring office technology skills. In their own opinion, Omoniyi and Elemure (2014) noted that office education graduates’ inability to cope with the ICT demands of the modern office is as a result of poor curriculum implementation. This according to the authors has resulted in the production of half-baked and poor graduates who cannot perform effectively and efficiently in the world of work.

However, these views are theoretical assumptions and have not been empirically proven to be the case with office education graduates in Delta State. It is against this backdrop that the researcher sought to establish business educators’ perception of the challenges to sustainable office technology skills in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

**Theoretical Underpinning**

This study is strengthened by the psycho-production skill acquisition theory as propounded by Fitt in 1984. The theory states that an adult, or even a child of a few years of age, never begins the acquisition of a new form of skilled behaviour except from the background of many already existing, highly developed (both general and specific) skills. Fitts developed three learning phases that humans undergo in developing new skills. The first phase is called the cognitive phase. The cognitive phase occurs when individuals create a mental image of the skill they want to learn, divide the skill into smaller parts and identify each part. The second phase is the associative phase, which involves practicing the different parts of the skill and then joining them together. This is also the phase where individuals may value feedback as they learn a skill. The final phase, the autonomous phase, occurs when the individual has repeated the skill often enough that the individual does not need to think about it too deeply. Reaching this autonomous phase requires significant and sustained practice of the new skill, but can be very rewarding. The psycho-production skill acquisition theory serves as the theoretical foundation for the study because it helped the researchers understand the factors that could affect business education graduates acquisition of office technology skills.

**Statement of the Problems**

Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) is embedded with a conglomerate of courses inclined to the development of skills and competencies. It has been observed by business educators that there are certain criteria which must be met by
teachers, students and policy makers in order to achieve the overall objectives of OTME programme. With the fast and continuous rate of change in technology requiring knowledgeable workers and creating entrepreneur opportunities, OTME students need to be adequately prepared to make choices and acquire basic skills to enhance learning. Unfortunately, the OTME programme seems to be far from meeting this need. It is against these backdrops that this study ascertained the perception of business educators regarding the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the business educators’ perception of the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Research Question

One research question was developed to guide the study;

1. What is the perception of business educators regarding the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business educators on the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of business educators on the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State based on years of experience.

Method

The study was a descriptive survey. The population of the study consisted of 116 business educators in Delta State. The instrument was validated by three experts in business education. To establish the reliability of the instrument, it was administered on 10 business educators in tertiary institutions in Anambra State who were not included in the population of the study. The application of the Cronbach Alpha reliability method on the obtained data yielded a co-efficient value of 0.82 for internal consistency which was deemed high for the study. The researchers administered copies of the instrument personally and with the aid of three research assistants. Out of the 116 copies of the questionnaire administered, 108 (93.10%) copies were returned. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The mean value was used to answer the research question while the standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents’ ratings. The decision rule on each item was based on the real limit of numbers as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response option</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Real Limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.50-5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.50-4.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and z-test were used to analyze the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Where the calculated f or z value was less than the critical value of f or z, it means that there was no significant difference and the hypothesis was accepted. Conversely, where the calculated f or z value was equal to or greater than the critical f or z value, it means that there was significant difference and the hypothesis was not accepted.

Result
The results of the study are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Research Question
What are the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State?
Table 1: Respondents mean responses on the challenges to sustainable office technology skills in tertiary institutions in Delta State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/No.</th>
<th>Challenges to sustainable office technology skills</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lack of adequate funds for purchase of office technology tools</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Lack of collaboration between administrators of business education programme and employers of labour</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Poor commitment to learning by the business education students.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Presence of obsolete facilities in the business education laboratories</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Lack of awareness of new technologies by business educators.</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>Moderately Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Lack of ability to utilize modern office technologies by business educators.</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Poor curriculum implementation by business educators.</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Inadequate information and communication technology tools for learning</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>High ratio of students to business educators.</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Recruitment of unqualified lecturers to teach business education students.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>Moderately Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents opined that eight items - 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 with mean ratings of 3.57, 3.98, 4.00, 3.62, 3.70, 4.24, 4.55 and 3.75 are accepted as challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in Delta State. Items 5 and 10 with mean ratings of 3.46 and 3.33 respectively are accepted as moderate challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in Delta State.

Hypothesis 1
There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business educators on the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State.
Analysis of data in respect of this hypothesis is shown in Table 2.
Table 2
z-test Analysis of Respondents’ Mean Responses on the Challenges to Sustainable Office Technology Skills in Tertiary Institutions Based on Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>( z )-cal</th>
<th>( z )-crit.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Bus. Edu.</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Bus. Edu.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in Table 2 show that the calculated \( z \)-value of 0.79 at 106 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance is less than the critical value of 1.96. This shows that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business educators on the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Hypothesis 2
There is no significant difference in the mean responses of business educators on the challenges to sustainable office technology skills in tertiary institutions in Delta State based on years of experience.

Analysis of data in respect of this hypothesis is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Summary on Mean Responses of Respondents on the Challenges to Sustainable Office Technology Skills in Tertiary Institutions Based on Years of Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variance</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F-cal</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42.83</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>574.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>73.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information in Table 3 indicates that the F-value is 0.71 and the F-critical is 3.89. Since the F-value is less than the F-critical, the null hypothesis is accepted. On the basis of this, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of business educators on the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State based on years of experience.

Discussion
Findings on the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions in Delta State indicated that the respondents agreed that the challenges listed in this study were challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in
tertiary institutions in Delta. This is in agreement with Abuya (2014) who opined that inadequate office technology tools/equipment, poor funding, lack of integration of new technology are challenges militating against the attainment of sustainable skills development amongst business education students in Nigeria. In agreement, authors like Ahmed in Gimba (2011) opined that the formal education and training system is not sufficiently linked with the world of work, which makes it difficult for graduates particularly those who study vocational or professional courses to secure employment in areas related to their fields of study. This perhaps is because of the inability to fit into the current need of the society (world-of-work) in possession or acquiring of office technology skills.

The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of business educators on the challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition in tertiary institutions on the basis of gender and years of experience. These findings indicate that male and female business educators irrespective of years of experience agreed that the challenges listed in this study were challenges to sustainable office technology skills acquisition.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proffers the following recommendations:

1. Government should ensure that modern office technology tools and facilities are readily made available for the teaching of business education students. This will enable the students to have practical understanding of the application of office technology skills.

2. Administrators of office education programmes should also engage in retraining programmes for lecturers of the programme to equip them with the needed office technology skills needed in modern offices. This can be done through the organization of in-service training programmes like conferences, workshops and seminars.

3. Government should go into partnership with private organizations so as to provide on-the-job training programmes like work based learning that will expose business education students to modern office technology skills.

4. Administrators of business education programme should seek for alternative sources of improving the funding of business education programme. This can be done through collaboration with non-governmental organizations, donor agencies and public private partnership ventures.
References