

ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCIES REQUIRE FOR SELF-RELIANCE BY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the competencies required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North-East Nigeria. The study had three specific objectives and three research questions which were meant to guide the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. A total of 260 of the instruments were randomly administered to selected business/computer center operators in North-East, Nigeria. The data collected with the instrument was analyzed using mean and standard deviations. The findings of the study revealed that word processing, communication and human relation/interpersonal competencies were positively related to self-reliance of OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria and they are highly required by OTM students for self-reliance. Hence, the mind of OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria can be change from search of unavailable white-collar jobs which always increases the level of the country's unemployment to self-reliance where graduates of OTM from colleges of education can establish their own business and contribute to the economy by reducing unemployment rate in the country. This could be achieved when OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria are well exposed to word processing competencies, communication competencies and human relation/interpersonal competencies.

Keywords: Competencies, Self-reliance, Office technology and Management

Introduction

Office Technology and Management (OTM) formerly known as Secretarial Studies is an integral part of vocational and technical education where emphasis is placed on acquisition of skills for national development. The National Policy on Education (2013) defined Office Technology and Management as an aspect of education which prepares students towards the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge needed to perform adequately in the world of work. In other words, the programme is focused on production of manpower that would be self-reliant and contribute to national manpower development. Komolafe and Ajayi (2020) described OTM as work-oriented educational programme which aims at skills acquisition for paid employment, self-reliance or employer of labour. They went further to say that training in OTM involves the acquisition and development of skills, competencies, attitudes and attributes to be able to function effectively in the millennium office. Orija (2022) described OTM as a specialized course of study designed to produce manpower of National Certificate in Education (NCE) that will maintain and sustain offices in both private and public organizations.

Through the programme, students can obtain marketable skills applicable to various careers and industries as well as cognitive skills transferable to other employment situations and life experience. The design of OTM programme components appears to be responsive to a global initiative with an objective that portends new academic direction in favour of ICT. The objectives, theoretical and practical contents of the new curriculum are geared towards integrating graduates of OTM department into the evolution of technology (Akpotohwo, 2017). NBTE further viewed that graduates should fit properly into the office of any computerized organization and perform professionally the function of a secretary which include relating in organizations, attending meetings and providing information as may be required, making accurate records of proceedings, filling and retrieving information, taking appropriate action independently when faced with challenges of secretarial office problems, showing personal qualities and attributes that are conducive and co-exist with the work group. OTM is viewed as concept associated with office automation, electronic technology and office globalization (Olukemi & Boluwaji, 2015).

OTM as work-oriented educational programme which aims at skills acquisition for paid employment, self-reliance or employer of labour. The training in OTM involves the acquisition and development of skills,

competencies, attitudes and attributes to be able to function effectively in the millennium office and preparing entrepreneurs that will establish businesses for national development (Komolafe and Ajayi, 2020). Unfortunately, most of the NCE OTM graduating students only add to the ever-increasing amount of unemployment in the name of waiting for white collar jobs (Olawoyin, 2020). The situation is not different in the North-East geo-political zone because even the few OTM graduates in the zone starting small businesses with the assumption that they know how to start and run a small-scale business successfully, but reverse is the case with so many starting and 80% of them failing within five to seven years of commencement and this increases the amount of unemployment in the region (Jerry 2019). The above argument agrees with Salihu (2020) who observed that North-East geo-political zone is ranked lowest in entrepreneurial aspirations, hence the upsurge in unemployment in the region. To buttress this, a recent report from Bureau of statistics put unemployment rate at 88 per cent with 49 per cent at urban cities and 37.9 percent at the rural areas (NBS, 2021).

Moreover, Nigeria have in recent time been experiencing the collapse and total extinction of small scale businesses owned by graduates leaving a high mortality rate which Nnaji, (2020) put at 80 per cent failure in five to eight years of operations. Anecdotal report showed that businesses fail because most people who start the business seemed to lack the critical skills and motivation sets required to start and manage the business to grow.

Several studies (see for example, Jerry 2019; Chibuike, Amadi, &, Aruchi, 2018) opine that word processing, human relation/interpersonal and communication competencies are critical for starting, growing and sustaining businesses and may lead to self-reliance, reducing unemployment and increasing national growth and development. It is in view of these arguments that this paper assessed level of competencies required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in north east Nigeria, with specific focus in word processing, human relation/interpersonal and communication competencies. The study's outcome will be relevant to the OTM students of colleges of education in terms of identifying the competencies require for self-reliance.

Purpose of the Study

The study assessed the competencies required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North-East Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Determine the word processing competencies required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria.
2. Determine the communication competencies required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria.
3. Determine the human relation/interpersonal competencies required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria

Research Questions

The following question are formulated:

1. To what extent do the word processing competencies require for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria?
2. To what extent do the communication competencies require for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria?
3. To what extent do the human relations/interpersonal competencies require for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria?

Literature Review

Concept of Self-Reliance

Self-reliance is defined by independence. It is the ability to think and act without the help or influence of others, the ability to decide what you should be or do (Charles, & Lotsmart, 2023). There is no gainsaying that the concept of self-reliance is positioned centrally within the discourse of community development and is linked to similar terminologies like self-help, mutual-help, indigenous participation and rural development. Self-reliance encourages the need for people to improve their living conditions using home initiatives and resources at their disposal. This concept is being given great attention and considered as a new blueprint for community development. Nworgu (2017) posits that the widespread acceptance of this concept in the development planning of most African countries has the tendency to give greater stimulus and cohesiveness to community development in these countries. Thus, Ojameruaye, (2015) defines self-reliant economic development as that type of development that relies on the human and material resources of the economic unit whose development is the subject of discussion. In other words, it is development that relies on "internal" resources as opposed to development that relies heavily on "external" resources.

It is pertinent to note that Self-reliant development is not autarky; it should allow for “external” support, however, it is propelled and sustained by “internal” resources. Consequently, one general objective discovered in economic plans or blueprints of continental, regional, national and state organizations or governments is “to promote self-reliant development”. This means that in as much as rural economies are encouraged to pursue policies of self-reliance and strive to ensure “autonomy”, they should allow for substantial external support. Ojameruaye contends that in many cases external resources do make a difference and can challenge the independence of the economic unit. Hence, self-reliance ought to be viewed as a continuum that is bounded on the left-hand side by parasitism and on the right-hand side by autarky but which does not include both boundaries.

Concept of Competency

Concept of skills and entrepreneurial skills are many, but they centre on the ability to seize opportunities, deal with uncertainty, gather necessary resources, and organise business process to pursue specific goals. Skills as basic ability is the means by which man adjust to life. A person’s attitude and work functions are required and necessary antidotes suggesting the suitable skills performance and acquisition of same by going through a given work sample. In the work place, skill is what the workers give in exchange for numeration Hisrich and Peters (2022). If the skill (or the cluster of skills popularly referred to as aptitudes) given is satisfactory, the worker gets satisfaction and the employer gets satisfactoriness in correspondence. This process, if sustained culminates in promotion, retaining and prolonged tenure that leads to productivity (Adeyemo, 2015; Adeyemo, 2019). In a classroom situation, skill is the ability to perform some tasks creditability. Up to a point, the more practice in the doing of specific task the faster and better they can be done. Van Vuuren and Nieman (2015) identified six scales and eighteen skills that can be sorted and grouped to describe various aptitudes in students for placement, when the promotion and remediation is a highly treasured experience which every OTM student must possess.

Skill is thought of as a quality of performance which does not depend solely upon a person’s fundamental, innate capacities but must be developed through training, practice and experience. Although skill depends essentially on learning, it also includes the concepts of efficiency and economy in performance. Modern concepts of skill stress the flexibility with which a skilled operator reaches a given end on different occasions according to precise circumstances. However, it must be reiterated that even though basic human capacities are not sufficient to produce skills, they form the necessary basis of their development; skills represent particular ways of using capacities in relation to environmental demands, with human being and external situation together forming a functional system (Adeyemo, 2019). Steinhoff and Burges, in Igberahaha, (2018) pointed out that it takes special skills to succeed as an entrepreneur. These skills are entrepreneurship knowledge, attitude, skills and ability (ASA). Skill is a special ability to do something well, especially as gained by learning and practices. From their definition, most skills come by learning and practicing.

Word Processing Competency

Ajaero, (2020) defined word processing has the production of written documents such as letters or reports by using software programs and computers. Usually, these documents are shared in printed form. Increasingly, however, written documents are shared and read online. Electronic mail messages, for example, are often used to communicate within a company. Some word processing programs allow the user to save documents in HTML format. These documents can be posted on the company intranet, for example, and viewed in browser software (Ochai, 2017). Proof reading: this is the ability to have a keen eye for spotting errors, to be a professional proof reader, it is important to develop a keen eye for spotting errors and to be successful in any business venture, it is important to develop eyes for sighting and identifying an opportunity in the environment being able to capture the opportunity (Ajaero, 2020). Desktop publishing is closely related to word processing and requires many of the same skills. Desktop publishing is the producing of documents that include both text and graphics. Examples of these documents include newsletters, brochures, and forms. Basic desktop publishing can be done using word processing software such as Microsoft Word. Desktop publishing software programs, such as Adobe PageMaker, are used for advanced desktop publishing (Etoneyaku, 2020).

The essential skills include: Keyboarding with speed and accuracy, Knowledge and skill in use of software programs, Skill in formatting and proofreading documents, a large vocabulary Proficiency with grammar, punctuation, and spelling, Ability to learn special vocabularies, Ability to follow instructions, Skill in preparing copy from audio recordings, if employed as a transcriptionist, Skill in dictating text and commands if using speech recognition software.

Communication Competency

Communication according to Agboola and Ademiluyi (2021), is the means or the system of sharing and exchanging of ideas, attitudes, opinions, feelings, information, and so on within a person (intra-personal) and among persons (interpersonal) and collective (mass). In the views of Olutayo, (2015), communication is a sum

of significant human interaction on physical planes. As a self-reliant person, one will have to work closely with people – this is where it is critical to be able to build great relationships with your team, customers, suppliers, shareholders, investors and more. Some people are more gifted in this area than others, but, fortunately, one can learn and improve these skills (Osso, 2021). Communicative algorithms applied during social communication and interaction in order to reach certain effects or results (Okechukwu, 2019). Communication skill is used often in business contexts to refer to the measure of a person's ability to operate within business organizations through social communication and interactions.

It is how people relate to one another. In this era of highly competitive business environment, where customerism is key player, communication plays a vital role. An entrepreneur needs interpersonal skills to be able satisfy their customers. Having good communication skill means relating well with others and being sensitive to their needs, giving a good listening ear, and being empathic (Ezeh 2021). According Ezeh, Entrepreneurs usually interact with a wide variety of people, such as investors, lawyers, insurance agents, accountants, employees, suppliers, customers, clients, government officials, donors and volunteers. Interacting with these people effectively increases the value of the contribution they are likely to make to the new venture. Successful entrepreneurs must relate effectively to others, understand what motivates them, and the sense of motivation in them. These has to be achieved although one to one communication.

Human Relation/Interpersonal Competency

Human relation competency means relating well with others and being sensitive to their needs, giving a good listening ear, being empathic on issues and having a sense of humour in interpersonal relationships (Ezeh 2021). In the same vein, Ajaero, (2020) defined Human relation competency as the ability to understand, alter, lead, and control behaviour of other individuals and groups, the ability to communicate and motivate people and to mould individuals into a cohesive team distinguishing effective from ineffective workers. The first skill to develop as an entrepreneur is the personal skill. Personal characteristic skills according to (Ajaero, 2020) simply mean those skills that are attached to one's personality, (more like characteristics). They are the characters possessed by successful entrepreneurs. These involve inner locus of control (discipline), Human relation, interpersonal skills, risk taking, being innovative and creative, being change oriented, being persistent and being a visionary leader, coaching others, perseverance in the face of uncertainty, self-awareness and self-motivation and others.

Developing human relations with respect to building business means developing entrepreneurial mindset. That is, change of mindset to get along with people that is typical of successful entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur has to be in the right mindset before ever starting a business. Being in the right mindset entails having to abandon the "get rich quick" mentality and above all, having integrity and being focused. Again having a reputation for honesty, being courageous, passionate are all attributes of successful entrepreneurs especially in relationships as a core skill for their entrepreneurial calling (Lavinsky, 2015).

Methodology

In this study, a descriptive survey research design was to the competencies required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North-East Nigeria. A descriptive survey method is used when a researcher is interested in studying the opinions, feelings, and thoughts of the respondents about a particular situation (Nannim, 2018). This method enables the researchers to collect and analyze quantitative data. Hence, a descriptive survey design was appropriate for achieving the objective of this study. The population of this study comprised 376 registered business/computer center operators in North east Nigeria (SMEDAN 2021). The authors also argued that they are employment generating people that can provide better information for competencies require for self-reliance. The sample size for this study consisted of 260 owners/managers of computer/business centre. The sample was statistically determined using GPower, a statistical procedure used for determining the appropriate minimum sample size required for a study. A simple random sampling technique was used in the study because this sampling technique is believed to produce samples which are free from bias (Salkind, 2018).

The variables of this study were measured using Self-Reliance of Office Technology and Management Students' Questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from previous studies (Etonyeaku, kanu, Ezeji, & Chukwuma, 2015; Aijene, 2019). The research consists of three (3) variables: word processing competencies (7 items), communication competencies (11 items) and human relation/interpersonal competencies (7 items). In this study, the five-rating scale was adopted for all the items, the respondents were asked to indicate their responses to each question on a five-rating scale. The five- rating scale used in this study is as follows: Very highly require (VHR) =5; Highly require (HR) =4; Require (R)=3; Fairly require (FR) =2 and Not Require (NR) =1.

To ensure the reliability of instrument of the present study, the pilot test was conducted with 30 registered business/computer Centre operators in Plateau states, Nigeria. Because the state is outside the study area but the respondents have similar characteristics with the sample of this study. In this study, the reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach alpha, the reliability coefficients of the three variable are; word processing competencies (0.83), communication competencies (0.76), and human relation/interpersonal competencies (0.82). The results suggested that the instrument is reliable based on the recommendation given by Hair et al. (2017). According to them Cronbach alpha coefficient of at least .70 is considered satisfactory and acceptable. Finally, for cleaning of data and analysis, SPSS 23 was used throughout the process to run the mean and standard deviation.

Results

The results of descriptive statistics documented in 1 revealed that the mean score of respondents in all the measurement items of word processing competencies are greater than 4.00. The mean scores of word processing competencies items are between 4.14 to 4.36. The grand mean of 4.23 was obtained. The result suggested that word processing competencies are highly required for self-reliance by OTM students of colleges of education in North East Nigeria.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of word processing competencies require for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Keyboarding with speed and accuracy ability	248	4.15	.855	Highly required
2	Skill in formatting and proofreading documents	248	4.28	.754	Highly required
3	Use the power point effectively	248	4.25	.865	Highly required
4	A large vocabulary Proficiency with grammar, punctuation, and spelling	248	4.14	.849	Highly required
5	phototypesetting to typeset, edit and reproduce documents using the computers	248	4.36	.767	Highly required
6	Do desktop publishing using the computer	248	4.14	.913	Highly required
7	Write, send and receive mails using the E-mail internet facility	248	4.32	.829	Highly required
Grand Mean			4.23	.373	Highly required

The descriptive statistic was carried out to ascertain extent to which communication competencies require for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria. The statistical evidence documented in Table 2 showed that mean scores of all the ten items of public relation skills are above 4.0. The mean scores of communication competencies items are between 4.18 to 4.42. The grand mean of 4.31 was obtained. The result suggested that communication competencies are highly required for self-reliance by OTM students of colleges of education in North East Nigeria.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of communication competencies require for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Prepare good written communication	248	4.36	.729	Highly required
2	Conduct quality oral presentation	248	4.25	.749	Highly required
3	Have good listening habit	248	4.18	.864	Highly required
4	Demonstrate high level of cooperation with other stakeholders	248	4.23	.892	Highly required
5	Ability to be a good team builder	248	4.23	.811	Highly required
6	Create good network chain for the business	248	4.38	.668	Highly required
7	Maintain an atmosphere of trust	248	4.20	.714	Highly required
8	Integrity and good moral conduct.	248	4.39	.750	Highly required
9	Interpret and pass information to others effectively	248	4.39	.832	Highly required
10	Emotional intelligence to interact positively to get along with all types of people	248	4.42	.733	Highly required
11	Tolerate customers of aggressive disposition	248	4.42	.738	Highly required

Grand Mean **4.23** **.373** **Highly required**

The descriptive statistics of human relations/interpersonal competencies documented in Table3 revealed that the mean score of respondents in all the measurement items of human relations/interpersonal competencies are greater than 4.00. The mean scores of human relations/interpersonal competencies items are between 4.03 to 4.38. The grand mean of 4.21 was obtained. The result suggested that human relations/interpersonal competencies are highly required for self-reliance by OTM students of colleges of education in North East Nigeria.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of human relations/interpersonal competencies require for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Pass a developed critical business idea for the understanding of others	248	4.20	.956	Highly required
2	Being tactful in pursuing recognize business opportunities in the environment	248	4.03	.886	Highly required
3	Take a decision to go into the right legal form of business (small scale business enterprise)	248	4.23	.845	Highly required
4	Maintain ethical conduct in relating with other.	248	4.38	.722	Highly required
5	Accept constructive criticisms	248	4.26	.814	Highly required
6	Plan staff needs before securing the services of anybody.	248	4.04	.791	Highly required
7	Motivate subordinates	248	4.33	.975	Highly required
Grand Mean			4.21	.382	Highly required

Discussion

The findings of research question one revealed that word processing competencies are highly required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria. The findings concurred with arguments in the existing literature, such as the study conducted by Nnaji, (2020) in Enugu State and he established that word processing, spreadsheet, graphics and internet skills are the skills required by teachers for sustainable skills acquisition among students. In another study consistent with the current study by Adebayo, (2019) revealed that word processing skills produce competent and qualified OTM education graduates for improved employability. The findings of research question two indicated that communication competencies are highly required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria.

The findings concurred with arguments in the existing literature, such as the study conducted by Chigbuson, et al., (2018) in in Plateau State, the study revealed that communication skills were needed by Office Technology and Management students for self-sustainability and national development. Similarly, Umoru, & Shaibu, (2018) in their study of teacher’s competencies and instructional strategies utilization for skills requirement of office technology and management students in polytechnics in South-Western Nigeria revealed that communication competencies are highly required for preparing OTM students to be self-reliance.

The findings of research question three showed that human relation/interpersonal competencies are highly required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria. The findings concurred with arguments in the existing literature, such as the study conducted by Adebayo, et al, (2020) in southwestern states, the study revealed Business Education students highly required communication, financial management and interpersonal competencies to be become successful entrepreneurs. Similarly, Adegboyega, et al, (2020) established that communication competencies, human relation and city planning skills were among the needed generic green skills by business education students in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ogun State for entrepreneurial development and sustenance.

Conclusion

This research work examines the competencies required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North-East Nigeria. This study proved empirically that word processing competencies, communication competencies and human relation/interpersonal competencies were significantly related to self-reliance of OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria. More importantly, the study discovered that word processing, communication and human relation/interpersonal competencies are highly required for self-reliance by OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria. Therefore, the mind of OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria can be change from search of unavailable white-collar jobs which always increases the level of the country’s unemployment to self-reliance where graduates of OTM from colleges of education can establish their own business and contribute to the economy by reducing

unemployment rate in the country. This could be achieved when OTM students in colleges of education in North East Nigeria are well exposed to word processing competencies, communication competencies and human relation/interpersonal competencies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. The regulatory body such as national commission for colleges of education through quality assurance should ensure that OTM students in colleges of education are well exposed to word processing competencies, communication competencies and human relation/interpersonal competencies.
2. Workshops and seminars should be organized by national commission for colleges of education for OTM lecturer in colleges of education on the importance of word processing competencies, communication competencies and human relation/interpersonal competencies for students' self-reliance.
3. School management from time to time should sensitize OTM students in colleges of education on the significance of word processing competencies, communication competencies and human relation/interpersonal competencies for students' self-reliance after graduation.

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