THE NEED FOR CURRICULUM REVIEW OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT (OTM) FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE POLYTECHNICS

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Keywords:	**Abstract:** This paper examines the need for curriculum review of Office
Curriculum, Office Technology and Management, Quality Assurance, Business Education.	*Technology and Management (OTM) for Quality Assurance in polytechnics. It looks into the concept of Business education curriculum, the concept of Office Technology and Management, Quality Assurance, the curriculum implementation and curriculum challenges in the preparation of business education students. The paper examines also the emerging challenges which ranges from inadequate contact hours allotted to keyboarding practice, and ICT practical 's and so on. On the whole, the researchers made succient recommendations which includes among others that the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should be more proactive in order to refocus polytechnic education to meet international standard and that management of polytechnics should endeavor to provide the right manpower, instructional material, laboratories, workshop and other infrastructural amenities to make the programme more functional in educational development in Nigeria.*

Introduction

Curriculum can be seen as the plan, blue point or road map applied in teaching and learning so as to bring about positive change of behaviour in the learner. It is through that a society translates its hopes into concrete realities. Oforma (2019). Sees curriculum as a document containing the subjects and subject matter ta be taught by the teacher and learned by the students. The documents include the objectives, the methods, activities, resources and evaluation procedures appropriate for assessing the curriculum at the end of implementation.

Curriculum is also defined as the structured sources of learning experiences intended for the education of the learner. The learning experiences are the interactions of the learners with the learning environment, there are three major classroom interactions: learner-teacher, teacher-learner and learner material resources. Learning experiences are embedded courses taught to the learners in school (Oforma 2019). They are presented to the learners to create

Umezulike, Anthonia, N. (Ph.D) and Anozie Patience Ukamaka

interactions and make the learners to participate actively in the class activities.

Curriculum is a field of study offered in the school for the education of the learners, and which students pursue in order to get a degree, a certificate, a diploma or any other forms of academic awards. Curriculum has three major components: programme of studies, programme of activities and programme of guidance (Oforma 2019). These components reflect the three classifications of educational objectives: cognitive, psychomotor and affective behaviours respectively. The essence of education is to liberate man from dungeon ignorance and to transfer into man, knowledge, facts, values and attitudes learnt from the environment to solve problems for him and this is done through well-planned curriculum. One of the functions of curriculum is to provide a template which enables learning to take place.

Curriculum per se entails all the activities involved in grooming of a student in a formal school system. In other words, it is a planned and guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience, under the auspices of the school for the learner's continuous and willful growth in personal and social competences, (Tanner 2019). Curriculum is an educational programme of experience offered to the learner under the guidance of a school in order to effect certain charges in the behaviour of the learner.

Uga (2018), opined that curriculum is intended to bring charges and opportunities to students, and the assessment of the extent to which these charges have taken place.

Polytechnic education which is part of technical education programme in tertiary education levels leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as fundamental scientific knowledge. To Ukpai (2018), this types of education was aimed initially at evolving an educational system based on work and training. Polytechnic education plays a vital role in human resource development of a country by creating skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life.

In Nigeria, polytechnics run courses that lead to the award of National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) certificates. Polytechnic educating in Nigeria is a four-year programme which is divided into two: ND and HND programme.

Polytechnic education is regulated by the NBTE whose aims among others are to superice polytechnics and to provide standardized minimum guide curricula for the training of students. The polytechnic education in Nigeria is geared towards providing middle level manpower to man the various sectors of the Nigeria economy. The curriculum which is currently in use in some of the programmes for National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) were handed over to the polytechnics for implementation since 2004 and many of the curriculum used in various programmes have not been reviewed for the past 16 years (Ali, 2019).

This situation cannot enhance innovation in the polytechnic education since change is known as the only permanent thing. To meet up with the required standard, a review of the polytechnic curriculum which will bring additional innovation is advocated so as to achieve a curriculum that represents a world class curriculum. The curriculum should be leaner centered and competency based (Iredia, Oboh & Umokoro, 2018).

Concept of Business Education Curriculum in Polytechnics:

Business Education programme is the aspect of vocational education that assists individual to acquire skills, which they can apply to solve

problems in business and office occupation (Ndinechi, 2017).

Ntukiden (2012) also asserts that business education has a definite role in preparing and equipping students with skills that increases their chances of finding jobs across territorial boundaries after schooling. He also observes that business education equips the students with knowledge and skills they need to create their own employment.

Business education involves teaching students the fundamentals, theories and process of business. Business education typically prepares students for an occupation in business or a business - related field or a teaching career in academic (Dhaka, 2016). In like manner, Amor in Onwuchu (2018) affirms that business education is aimed at production of competent, skillful, dynamic and knowledgeable graduates that can work in the world of work or impact knowledge into others, and be able to handle sophisticated office technologies and information systems.

A review of the various definitions of Business Education curriculum under which OTM is an option has basic principles or rules in it that must be obeyed in designing its curriculum Aimiejhiefe and Aimehiefe (2017) outlined such principles to include the following:

1. Each curriculum should be explicitly organized to achieve the derived aims.
2. Each curriculum should be broad and have a balanced reflection of the whole range of stated aims and objectives.
3. It should ensure that it focus primarily on those things that are most important and what is considered essential is not omitted.
4. Selection of learning experiences should be based on the extent to which the knowledge and skill to be acquired will be usable in the various circumstances that the trainees are likely to experience in their future lives.
5. The curriculum should be achievable within the stipulated period of the programmes. Besides, the structure of the course content should have a general view and coverage of professional or core courses. In particular, the professional or core courses which must be emphasized should consist of all important subjects which provide skills to enable the students on completion of the programme be able to perform all the skills in their specialized field of study as well as prepare him or her to be able to adjust easily to technological charges.
6. Finally, practical work in the training of skilled personnel must be adequately emphasized.

Concept of Office Technology and Management Programme in Polytechnics
Office Technology and Management (OTM) under Business Education is one of the most dynamic programmes in Nigerian polytechnics. It was the formal secretarial studies that metamorphosed into office technology and management programme. The programme which came into effect successfully in 2004 as approved by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) has been facing enormous challenges as a result of new curriculum.

Office Technology and Management (OTM), programme came into being to replace the secretarial studies programme. The was found to be inadequate for the demand of the information age. According to Iredia, Oboh and Umukoro (2018) National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) basically design the OTM curriculum with the aim of producing graduate who would be able to effectively manage the electronic-driven office and who would be equipped with secretarial and office skills for employment in various fields of endeavor.

Umezulike, Anthonia, N. (Ph.D) and Anozie Patience Ukamaka

Ikelegbe (2020) added that graduates of OTM are equipped with effective work competencies and socio-psychological work skills which are very essential in everyday interaction with others. The OTM programme according to National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in Ikelegbe (2021), does not only provide the basis for the acquisition of qualification that entrances the employability of holders of certificates from the programme, but also prepares ambitious individual graduates for further academic pursuits and graduates on completion of their studies are expected to be abreast with knowledge based on decision making in-business situations they will encounter in daily office operations. The OTM programme is also concerned with- training students to acquire skills, understanding, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in office management occupations. With multifarious office innovation that are turnout daily due to the technological breakthrough, the need to be abreast with the current innovations and acquire useful skills in the 21st century cannot be over emphasized.

Curriculum Implementation in Polytechnics:

Implementation of curriculum according to Peck (2018) is possible if the implementation reflects the intended or official curriculum as defined by the frameworks and guidelines that specifies what students should be taught and learn, this depends on whether those to implement understood what is expected of them and this, equally depends on available instructional materials provided for effective teaching and learning.

Curriculum implementation according to Mkandewire (2010) cited in Oludel and Donsunsumu (2020), is a network of varying activities involved in translating curriculum design into classroom activities and changing people's attitudes to accept and participate in these activities. Implements the new OTM curriculum threw up serious new challenges. This is as a result of almost all professional courses in office technology and management curriculum for both ND and HND are computer-based carrying high practical units. The worst of these challenges is the de-emphasis of the keyboarding. Keyboarding as a subject, is in actual fact, the pivot on which secretarial practice rotates.

For instance, no one can claim to be professional secretary without the efficient skills in keyboarding. The simple ability to manipulate the computer keyboard by keying in information is seriously different from secretarial typesetting or computing. Apparently, this is the missing link in the OTM curriculum being run by many Nigeria Polytechnics and other similar training institutions today. This is why the Need for reviewing the Office Technology and Management (OTM) can no longer be delayed if the aims and objectives of the programme are to be achieved and realized.

To achieve the objectives of the polytechnic curriculum, the national aim, institution aim and the objectives in the classroom must complement each other. The teacher who is the agent is curriculum implementation must work in tandem with the general objectives in order to impact meaningfully on the learners.

Challenges of Curriculum Implementation in Polytechnics

There are challenges in the implementation of curriculum inspite of the tremendous historical trends in Nigeria curriculum and reviews at various times. These includes:

a. **Overloading of Already Comprehensive Curriculum:** There is problem associated with overloading of the already comprehensive curriculum and content coupled with overcrowded classes. The recommended and modified teacher-pupil ratio 1:40 notwithstanding.

Available evidence lamented that an average classroom in the primary or J.J.S in Nigeria contains 70 to 120 pupils at any given time. This puts additional stress on school personnel, material resources, school scheduling, teacher work load, classroom management and the maintenance of order and discipline,

b. **Lack of Fund:** Curriculum implementation, despite the applauded reviews to a great extent till date, is taught with limited amount of high-quality instructional materials. There is also an acute shortage of funds to sustain some good materials developed in recent times. Thus, technological literacy in Nigeria is struggling to survive among a broad Nigeria audience.

c. **Lack or Scarcity of Books:** Paucity of textbooks and other learning aids is another challenge to Nigeria curriculum in various levels. There is relevant books scarcity. The problem of book scarcity and the cost have hindered the successful implementation of many laudable educational programmes and curriculum projects (Ivowu, 2018). The true picture is that the input factors are not sufficiently available for the kinds of curriculum innovations brought about by curriculum reviewers over the years. As a result, most of the innovations in the Nigeria policy of Education have not been fully implemented. The question is where do we go from here? Is hope lost? There is the need to revisit curriculum policies and modes of implementation in Nigeria.

Concept of Quality Assurance

The term quality assurance refers to mechanisms and processes used to lead to the maintenance and improvement of quality. It also has come to mean a guarantee or certificate that particular standards are being met.

Onyesom and Ashibogwu (2020), opined that Quality Assurance (AQ) refers to performance measures designed by the learning authorities for assessing -the performance of educational institutions with a view to ensuring that the learning outcomes meet the needs of each society.

Bewaran, Moris and Sokyes (2014) viewed quality assurance as a planned and systematic process of assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing and improving the programme of an institution to determine whether acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being met and maintained. From another viewpoint, Quality Assurance refers to established procedures, processes and standard systems that support and ensure effective delivery of educational services (Kantio, 2016).

Notwithstanding, the Quality Assurance put in place by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the Polytechnics for effective skill acquisition of OTM, little evidence exists to show that the QA practices in OTM is meeting its expectations and therefore associated with many challenges. Ezeani (2018) observed that the Office Technology and Management (OTM) programme is a productive and functional form of education which leads itself to self-employment, self-reliance' and consequently self-actualization. The OTM programme is strutted to equip its recipients with the necessary knowledge, attitude and skills to be self-reliant economically. Unfortunately, lapses and inadequacies have plagued the process of skill acquisition in the OTM programme in Nigeria, so that the desired quality in OTM graduates is not achieved. The present OTM programme has failed to equip its recipients with the needed knowledge, attitude and skills to be able to live in and contribute to the development of the nation due to decay in system brought about by inadequate functional equipment, inadequate infrastructure, dearth of

Umezulike, Anthonia, N. (Ph.D) and Anozie Patience Ukamaka

qualified staff inadequate textbooks, inadequate funding etc. therefore OTM programme is a vital instrument for nation building and for achieving government developmental objectives, especially the question for sustainable national development.

From the foregoing therefore, quality assurance can be seen as the mechanism put in place to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and maintain the degree of excellence of the educational programme and products or services in relation to their context, mission and stated objectives. Quality assurance mechanisms can be categorized into two viz: External quality assurance mechanism and internal quality assurance mechanism.

i. **External:**
This is a situation whereby there is a review by an external agency (eg. The NBTE or any professional body) which evaluates the operation of an institution or its programmes to find out the level of compliance within the set standards (Okae-Adjei 2016). It is carried out through the instrumentality of accreditation which involves a self-study or self-evaluation, peer reviews by panel of experts and reporting system. In this case, the NBTE accreditation.

ii. **Internal (Institutional)**
Internal quality assurance is the internal policies and mechanisms of an institution or programme which ensures that the institution is fulfilling its purposes and is in conformance with the standards that apply to higher education and in general or to the profession or discipline in particular (Okae-Adjei 2016). Both external and internal approaches to quality assurance are important in relative proportions for a successfully QA in the OTM programme, while internal quality assurance may lead to continuous quality improvement, external quality assurance system plays a supportive and facilitative role to the internal practices.

Urgency Need for Review of Office Technology and Management (OTM) Curriculum in Polytechnics

Office technology and management (OTM) came into effect with a board new curriculum in 2004 as approved and released by the National Board for technical Education (NBTE). Although it derived its source from the formal secretarial studies of old, its curriculum is 80% diffident from the secretarial studies curriculum; for instance, the keyboarding (former typewriting) carries 2 credit units with 4 contact hours as against 4 credit units with 8 contacts hours in the former secretarial studies. The aspect with the negative effect is the omission of keyboarding from the Higher National Diploma (HND) programme, while in the National Diploma Programme (ND), keyboarding is only taught in the first year (NDI).

Office Technology and Management (OTM) curriculum was designed to replace that of the old secretarial studies curriculum when the former was found to be inadequate for the demand of the information age, Adem'iluyi and Akgbola (2008) cited in Ojudele and Dosunmu, (2019). The new OTM curriculum consists of four main components as follows:

1. General studies/education
2. Foundation courses
3. Professional course (core courses)
4. Students Industrial Work Experience: scheme (SIWES)

General education components included courses in citizenship education, communication, social psychological, literacy and oral composition. These account for not more than 15% of the total contact hours for both ND and HND programmes. The foundation courses include courses in Economics, Business Administration, Nigerian labour law, accounting, human capital management, Business law and

Entrepreneurship, which accounts for 10 - 15% of the contact hours.

The professional courses which gives the students the theory and practical skills needed to practice as secretaries or office managers are ICT I and II, office application 1 and II, Modem office Technology, Office Practice I and II, Record Management, Desktop publishing, and we-page design. These accounts for 60 -70% of the total contact hours. Again, a crucial look at the components shows that keyboarding is grossly silenced in the curriculum.

Basically, OTM curriculum was aimed at producing graduates who would be able" to effectively manage the electronic-driven office and who would be equipped with secretarial and office skills for employment in various fields of endeavor. The graduates should fit properly into the office of any computerized organization and perform professionally the functions of a secretary (NBTE, 2004). This explains the reason why the professional courses account for 60 - 70% of the total contact hours for both ND and the HND students.

It is anticipated that the curriculum of OTM programme would equip the graduates sufficiently with information and communication technology skills for office work. Hence, training is expected to equip students with world processing, electronic spreadsheet and internet technology skills among others with word processing skills, graduates would be used to word processor to create files and folders, use impute devices to enter and edit texts accurately; manipulate information (opening, copying and cutting pasting, saving and deleting files); preview, print and save documents among others. Word processing skills are required for almost every office function of the secretary. Similarly, electronic spreadsheet processing skills enable them to organize and analyse data into lists and tables. With spreadsheet application such as Microsoft

Excel (MS-Excel), information is easily displayed and people can insert formulas to work with.

The vacuum, or lacuna in the new curriculum for OTM has created a lot of problems Tor students under training. Students being human beings capitalized on this lacuna to be lackadaisical in learning keyboard which has resulted in very poor performance of students in keyboarding both in examination and in the office as graduates. A recent empirical study carried out by Oborah and Eze (2021) revealed that acquisitions of keyboarding skills fell far below the standard for examination and for the labour market. According to the findings; a large number, of students have demonstrated poor performance in keyboarding skills. This corroborates with the work of Attah (2020) which revealed that it is regrettable to discover that several graduates are mere shadows of themselves as they lack both the theoretical and practical knowledge of the equipment they are supposed to handle. This can be attributed to the reduction of both credit units and contact hours to teaching and learning keyboarding. Also, this short falls has led to a non-uniformed implementation of Office Technology and Management (OTM) curriculum. Hence nowadays, one is not surprised to see Polytechnics in Nigeria running different curriculum of OTM in the name of adjustment and enrichment of curriculum.

Aimiehefe and Aimiehiefe (2019) observed and pointed out some emerging challenges of OTM curriculum review to include:

a. **The Credit Load for Keyboarding:** The keyboarding as a subject should carry 4 credit units with 8 contact hours. This would afford the students under training to be fully groomed as they will definitely have enough time to practice the art of keyboarding. It will also afford the keyboarding teachers enough time to

Umezulike, Anthonia, N. (Ph.D) and Anozie Patience Ukamaka

teach and interact with their students on the subject matter.

b. **Provision for Adequate Computers for Keyboarding Practice:** It should be emphasized tha.t every polytechnic or other similar institutions that offer Office Technology and Management (OTM) should as a matter of utmost seriousness equip computer laboratories with enough pieces for continuous practice of students. This would go a very long way to enable the students master the art of typesetting.

c. **Sincere Implementation of OTM Curriculum:** The idea of window-dressing being currently done by most of the Nigerian. Polytechnics, should be discarded. The supervisory body known as the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should be up to their responsibility in regulating OTM curriculum implementation. Also the idea of sentiments, and negative politics or unnecessary leniency granted to some polytechnics to let them scale through accreditation should as a matter of fact be discontinued. In this wise, any polytechnic, or similar institution that has to do with training of secretaries should be made to have all what it takes to train secretaries. Failure to meet up with the standard, such an institution should have the OTM programme closed down, pending when she is able to meet up with the standard,

d. **Sustaining Quality Assurance:** The issue of keeping and sustaining standard by the various institutions should be so embedded in curriculum. For instance, a situation whereby students are allowed to graduate in the name of "let my people go" should be discontinued. Afeidia (2019) stressed that Nigeria runs a school system that is certificate-oriented; and

that too much emphasis is placed on higher education to acquire certificate at the expense of knowledge. In the same vein, Magaji (2018) says, for education to be self-reliant and productive, it has to be looked into factors that will help the teachers and all stakeholders to be practical and not only theoretical on their approach to making vocational education meaningful and lifelong. This can only be possible when students of OTM are exposed to the real standard that will make them saleable and enjoyable in the labour market at the end of their training.

Conclusion

There is a common saying the only thing that does not change is "change" itself. In other words, science, technology, system, knowledge and even life itself are dynamic as they change from time to time. Therefore, from the above analysis on the deficiency in OTM curriculum, it is very necessary to effect a serious evaluation and review in the area of content hours for key boarding. This will make the programme to be more functional, productive and make our OTM product saleable, employable and even self-relevant. It was finally concluded that curriculum holds an outstanding place when seeking to promote innovation in education.

Recommendations

Having mirrored the OTM curriculum and analyzed the deficiency in keyboarding, the following recommendations are made:

1. A committee should be put in place without delay to evaluate and carry out a serious review of the current OTM curriculum as regards to the contact hours allocated to keyboarding.

2. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should as a matter of urgency rise up to its responsibility in harmonizing the OTM curriculum being

Umezulike, Anthonia, N. (Ph.D) and Anozie Patience Ukamaka

run by various polytechnics and other similar institutions.

3. The idea of window-dressing by some polytechnics and other similar institutions during accreditation should be discarded. For instance, a situation whereby an institution goes to borrow equipment and lecturers for few days just to get a programme accredited should be discouraged. In fact, such an institution should be sanctioned.

4. Polytechnics/schools offering OTM programme should as a matter of commitment pay serious attention to adequate funding of the programme. This is because OTM programme is capital intensive based on the equipment involved. For instance, the purchase and maintenance of computers and its accessories are expensive.

5. Curriculum planners should recognize and appreciate the trend in technology and to examine local, global and intercultural issues that may be of benefit to training students in order to include them in the curriculum for training OTM students.

6. Workshops and seminar should be organized to intimate lectures in OTM of current trends in technology and competences required to manage today's and tomorrow's office. The lecturers trained should in-turn transfer the knowledge to their students before graduating.

7. The NBTE should be more proactive in order to refocus polytechnic education to meet international standard and that management of polytechnics should endeavor to provide the right manpower, instructional materials, laboratories, workshops and other instructional amenities that will aid learning.

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