

**Career Readiness of Office and Management Technology Graduating Students
in Universities in Rivers State**

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Abstract

The study investigated career readiness of office management and technology graduating students in universities in Rivers State. Two specific objectives, research questions and null hypotheses respectively guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 82 office management and technology graduating students in universities in Rivers State. The purposive sampling technique was employed to draw the entire population of the study as sample size. The instrument for data collection was a self-made questionnaire titled "Career Readiness of Office Management and Technology Graduating Students Questionnaire (CROMTSQ)". The instrument was designed on a four point rating scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The instrument was validated and the reliability index of 0.82 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha method. Mean and standard deviations were used in answering the research questions while the hypotheses were tested with z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students on office and managerial skills possessed by office management and technology graduating students for career readiness. The study concluded that office management and technology graduating students require office and managerial skills for career readiness. It was recommended among others that government should improve on provision of modern facilities for teaching of office skills in the universities; universities should strengthen their partnership with industry for work based training of their students in possessing managerial skills; regular retraining should be organized for office management and technology lecturers on how best to impart skills on students.

Keywords: Career Readiness, Office Management and Technology Education, Graduating Students, Office Skills, Managerial Skills

I. INTRODUCTION

Career education plays a prominent role in preparing an individual to make and advance in a career path and this justifies why the role of school in career readiness is absolutely unavoidable. Career education is seen as an aspect of education and training which helps an individual to develop his fullest capacity and potentials in order to utilize his capacity for the benefit of society. Career education is a comprehensive educational programme that focuses on an individual and prepares the person for industrial or commercial occupations. Morgan (2013) perceived career education as concerned with the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes through a planned programme of learning experiences, which will assist students to make informed choices about school, post-school options and enable effective participation in working life.

Office Management and Technology (OMT) formerly referred to as Secretarial Studies in Nigeria evolved out of a need to meet the technological and managerial demands of today's workplace. The current name Office Management and Technology was approved by the supervising body for Nigerian Universities, National Universities Commission (NUC).

According to Adelakin (2019), the office management and technology programme was designed for two major reasons: first, as a response to the yearnings of the secretarial studies students and practitioners on the need to change the name of the programme as the former contents was only suitable for the traditional office environment. Secondly, and most importantly, as a result of the change in curriculum with more emphasis on information and communication technology (ICT), managerial and entrepreneurial competencies so as to enrich the knowledge of the students, and equip them with necessary skills needed in today's modern office environment.

Career readiness as described by Integration of College and Career Readiness (ICCR, 2012) means that an individual has the requisite knowledge, skills and experiences in the academic, workplace and social domains to successfully complete an economically viable career pathway in the 21st century economy. Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE, 2012) described career readiness as involving a rigorous blend of academic, technical and employability skills. Career readiness for the graduating Office Management and Technology students is a measure of the extent to which the graduating students possess the skills and attitudes needed for advancing in career path and for a smooth transition from school to work. These skills include office skills, managerial skills, entrepreneurial skills, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, communication skills and socio-psychological skills.

Office skills are all the technical skills which are specific to carrying out the core duties of a secretary in the office. The technical skills associated with Office Management and Technology includes keyboarding skills and shorthand skills. The graduates of Office Management and Technology according to Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013), should possess office skills such as shorthand, typing and bookkeeping. They are expected to be able to write in shorthand for three minutes varied materials of 1.4 syllabic intensity dictated at 100 words per minute (WPM). Over the years, the office skills required as a secretary were mainly to take dictations in shorthand, type business letters, answer phone calls and book-keeping. With more sophistication of today's modern office, technology has reshaped the way offices are run and have also reshaped the skills required for practicing as a secretary. Today's offices requires more than the basic office skills of typing and shorthand to knowledge and skills in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

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, answering phone calls and processing of mails to Information and Communication Technology. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is the technology required for information processing, in particular, 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. 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 review of the secretarial studies curriculum to Office Management and Technology is not only to incorporate technology in the training of secretaries but also to provide training needed for building managerial competencies needed as secretaries in today's offices because the role of Office Management and Technology graduates in today's organizational framework goes beyond discharge of secretarial duties but involve managerial and administrative functions. Management is essentially the organization and coordination of the activities of a business to achieve defined objectives. According to Akpomi (2021), management is an activity essential to organized endeavours that performs certain function to obtain the effective acquisition, and utilization of human efforts and physical resources for accomplishing some goals. Management skills are not just innate they can be developed through training. It is very difficult to give a precise definition of the term management, different scholars from different disciplines view and interpret management from their own angle. Lundy (2019) defined management as the task of planning, coordinating, motivating and controlling the efforts of others towards a specific objective.

Papula (2019) identified management skills needful for managers to include creativity, intuition, goal-oriented, responsibility, self-confidence, initiative, independence, cautiousness, scrupulosity, discipline, self-control and regulation of own behavior, persistence and optimism. The students of Office Management and Technology should have the basic skills in planning for the realization of the goals of an organization. They should have skills in keeping inventories, organizing office layout for effectiveness, skills for placement, induction and training of staffs among others. The secretary in today's office does not only type and take shorthand notes, but also serves as the engine room of the organization in management. The secretary in addition to managerial skills should have good communication skills.

Statement of Problem

Career education is an aspect of education and training which helps an individual to develop his fullest capacity and his potential in order to utilize his capacities for the benefit of society. It is a comprehensive educational programme that focuses on an individual and prepares him for industrial or commercial occupations. As such, career education focuses more on preparing OMT students for transition within school and the transition from school to work. This goes beyond choice of subjects, but includes the acquisition of skill necessary for performing the roles along ones career path (Abdulkadir, 2012). Career education for OMT students in the universities in Rivers State is to effectively prepare them for smooth transition from the school to work. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case as is evident in the incidences and cases of unemployment ravaging our society.

Office management and technology (OMT) graduates are found on the streets of major cities in Nigeria searching for white collar jobs. Given that career education is concerned with the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes through a planned programme of learning experience which will assist students to make informed choice about school, and post-school options and enable effective participation in working life, the question is put: have OMT graduating students possessed office and managerial skills, for career readiness? To address this problem, there is need to empirically study career readiness of the OMT graduating students in universities in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the career readiness of Office Management and Technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examine the office skills possessed by Office Management and Technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State for career readiness.
2. Identify the managerial skills possessed by Office Management and Technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State for career readiness.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the office skills possessed by Office Management and Technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State for career readiness?
2. What are the managerial skills possessed by Office Management and Technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State for career readiness?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) students on office skills possessed by Office Management and Technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State for career readiness.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) students on managerial skills possessed by Office Management and Technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State for career readiness.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for this study consisted of 82 undergraduate final year students offering office management and technology education in Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) for the 2022/2023 academic session. The breakdown of the population showed that Rivers State University (RSU) has 13 Office Management and Technology graduating students, while Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IUAE) has 69 graduating office management and technology respectively. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to use the entire population of the study. A self-structured questionnaire titled “Career Readiness of Office Management and Technology Graduating Students Questionnaire (CROMTGSQ)” was used to collect data. The questionnaire was structured on a four point rating scale response options of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The instrument was validated and the reliability index established at 0.95. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In scoring the questionnaire, the weighted points were added up thus $(4 + 2 + 1) = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$. The 2.50 became the criterion mean. Items above the criterion mean were tagged “Agreed” while those below the criterion mean were tagged “Disagreed”. In other words, the null hypotheses were accepted when the calculated z-value was less than the critical z-value of 1.96 and rejected when the calculated z-value was greater than the critical z-value of 1.96.

III. RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the office skills possessed by office management and technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State for career readiness?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on Office Skills Possessed by Office Management and Technology Graduating Students for Career Readiness

S/N	ITEMS	RSU (N= 13)		IAUE (N=69)		Mean Set \bar{X}_1 SD_2		Remarks
		\bar{X}_1	SD_1	\bar{X}_2	SD_2	\bar{X}_1	SD_2	
1.	Ability to write shorthand consonants.	2.98	0.11	2.87	0.93	2.93	2	Agreed
2.	Ability create word document on the computer by fixing my eyes on the keyboard.	2.86	0.20	2.94	0.90	2.90		Agreed
3.	Ability to open, save and close word document on the microsoft office.	2.99	0.19	2.81	0.90	2.90		Agreed
4.	Ability to use the cutting, copying and posting function when working on microsoft	2.99	0.18	2.82	0.91	2.91		Agreed
5.	Ability to set paragraph and align text on the microsoft office word.	2.96	0.70	2.85	0.68	2.91		Agreed
	Grand \bar{x} & SD	2.96	0.28	2.86	0.86	2.91		

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Data Table 1 shows the office skills possessed by office management and technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State for career readiness. The grand mean score of the office skills rated was 2.91. This indicated that the office management and technology students possess office skills for career readiness. The table further revealed that the students possess skills ability to write shorthand consonant; create word document on the computer; open, save and close word document on the Microsoft office; use the cutting, copying and pasting function when working on Microsoft; and set paragraph and align text on the Microsoft office word respectively, with weighted mean values of 2.93, 2.90, 2.90, 2.91, and 2.91, showing that respondents were not too far from one another in their ratings.

Research Question 2: What are the managerial skills possessed by office management and technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State for career readiness?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Managerial Skills Possessed by Office Management and Technology Graduating Students for Career Readiness

S/N	ITEMS	RSU (N= 3)		IAUE (N=69)		Mean Set \bar{X}_1 SD_2		Remarks
		\bar{X}_1	SD_1	\bar{X}_2	SD_2	$\frac{\bar{X}_1 + \bar{X}_2}{2}$		
6.	Ability to lead a team	2.99	0.54	2.87	0.60	2.93		Agreed
7.	Ability to listen and respect opinion of others when deliberating in a team.	2.96	0.90	2.89	0.50	2.93		Agreed
8.	Ability to confidently engage people or team members in a difficult conversation.	2.94	0.11	2.87	0.61	2.91		Agreed
9.	Ability to set goals and establish a long-term vision.	2.94	0.60	2.87	0.48	2.91		Agreed
10.	Ability to manage human and material resources.	2.94	0.26	2.85	0.63	2.90		Agreed
	Grand \bar{x} & SD	2.95	0.48	2.87	0.56	2.92		

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

Data on Table 2 shows the managerial skills possessed by office management and technology graduating students in public universities in Rivers State for career readiness. Data presented on table 2 revealed that the office management and technology students possess managerial skills with a grand mean of 2.92. The students possess skills ability in leading a team, listen and respect opinion of others when deliberating in a team, confidently engage people or team members in a difficult conversation, set goals and establish a long-term vision, and manage human and material resources with weighted mean values of 2.93, .93, 2.91, 2.91, and 2.91 respectively, showing that the respondents were not too far from one another in their ratings.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) students on office skills possessed by office management and technology graduating students for career readiness.

Table 3: Mean Ratings of RSU and IAUE Students on Office Skills Possessed by Office Management and Technology Graduating Students for Career Readiness

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Level of sign.	z-cal	z-Crit.	Decision
RUS	13	2.96	0.28	80	0.05	0.77	1.96	Ho ₁
IAUE	69	2.85	1.68					Accepted

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

The result on Table 3 for hypothesis one revealed the grand mean of 2.96 and 2.86, and grand standard deviation of 0.28 and 0.86 respectively for the responses of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) graduating students regarding the office skills they possessed. At degree of freedom (df) of 80 and 0.05 level

significance, z-critical value of 1.96 was greater than the calculated z-value of 0.77. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) students on office skills possessed by office management and technology graduating students for career readiness.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) students on managerial skills possessed by office management and technology graduating students for career readiness.

Table 4: Mean Ratings of RSU and IAUE Students on Managerial Skills Possessed by Office Management and Technology Graduating Students for Career Readiness

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Level of sign.	z-cal	z-Crit.	Decision
RUS	13	2.95	0.48	80	0.05	0.54	1.96	Ho ₂
IAUE	69	2.87	0.56					Accepted

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024

The result in Table 4 for hypothesis two revealed a grand mean of 2.95 and 2.87, and grand standard deviation of 0.48 and 0.56 respectively for the responses of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) graduating students regarding the office skills they possessed for career readiness. At degree of freedom (df) of 80 and 0.05 level of significance, z-critical value of 1.96 was greater than the calculated z-value 0.54. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of Rivers State University (RSU) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) students on managerial skills possessed by office management and technology graduating students for career readiness.

Discussion of Findings

The findings on Table 1 provided answer to research question one. The Table showed that office skills possessed by office management and technology graduating students are ability to write shorthand consonants; create word document on the computer by fixing their eyes on the keyboard; open, save and close word document on the Microsoft office; use the cutting, copying and posting function when working on, Microsoft; and set paragraph and align text on the Microsoft office word. In collaboration with this finding, Emeti (2009) noted that shorthand writing is a key course or subject in the study of office management and technology and Ahukannah and Chukwumezie (2008) also noted that much priority is given to learning shorthand in the universities. Furthermore, Udo (2014) noted that many

students are only able to operate the typewriter or computer keyboards with two or three fingers instead of their nine fingers and can hardly take their eyes off the keyboard when performing typing tasks.

The result on Table 2 provided answer to research question two. The findings provided on the table showed that the managerial skill possessed by OMT graduating students include the ability to lead a team; ability to listen and respect opinion of others when deliberating in a team; ability to confidently engage people or team members in a difficult conversation; ability to set goals and establish a long-term vision; and ability to manage human and material resources. This finding supports the study of Soludo (2012) who made a case for the need for graduates to possess more than just technical skills in their field of study. Akpomi (2021) posited that management is an activity essential to organized endeavour that performs certain function to obtain the effective acquisition, and utilization of human efforts and physical resources for accomplishing some goals.

IV. CONCLUSION

Office management and technology graduating students require office and managerial skills for career readiness. They are expected to possess office and managerial skills such as shorthand, typing and bookkeeping, the ability to plan, coordinate, motivate and control the efforts of others towards a specific objective. These skills are central and needed to make a career of office management and technology.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. The body regulating university programmes in Nigeria, National Universities Commission (NUC) should conduct re-evaluation of the programme to ascertain the possible strategies for effective teaching and learning of office management and technology courses.
2. Regular retaining should be organized for office management and technology lecturers on how best to impart skills on the students.
3. Government should improve on the provision of modern facilities for teaching of office skills in the universities.
4. Universities should strengthen their partnership with industry for work based training of their students in possessing managerial skills.

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