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AVAILABILITY OF MODERN OFFICE EQUIPMENT AND STUDENTS' INTEREST TOWARD LEARNING OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

The study examined availability of modern office equipment and students' interest toward learning of Office Technology and Management. Office equipment and machines are inevitable to the teaching and learning or training of office technology and management students. The study adopted a survey research design. The population for the study comprised of six hundred and fifty students. Random sampling was used to select 20% across the levels given a total of one hundred and fifty (150) students used for the study. A structured questionnaire based on a 5 points Likert scale was used as an instrument for data collection. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. Data collected were analysed using mean statistics to answer the research questions. The data analysed revealed that if every necessary modern office equipment and machines were provided for office technology and management department it will enhance the students interest towards learning of office technology and management. Based on these findings, it was concluded that Office Technology and Management Department which is responsible for turning out secretaries or office managers lack some necessary office equipment and machines. Among others it was recommended that Office technology and management department in Polytechnics should be fully provided with modern office equipment and machines.

Keywords: Modern Office Machines, Office Technology and Management

Introduction

From time, man has been involved in the art of information processing of one kind or another to solve his problems or to serve his daily needs. In the search for better ways of gathering, collating, manipulating, storing, processing and disseminating information, man has invented and improved many equipment and machines from the old manual method to the new modern ones. The purpose for which is to help man gather, store, manipulate information and produce the answers he needs in a more convenient ways to meet the problems of everyday life.

As a result, the old manual office equipment and machines have paved way for new modern office equipment and machines due to advancement in technology. Therefore, the office setting of today is adorned with convergence

of modern technological equipment, machines, devices and gadgets such as word processors, e-mail, facsimile, computers, digital telephone, internet, telex, telecommunication resources, electronic typewriter etc.

However, the technological development resulting in new equipment, machines and technological breakthrough brought changes in the new ways and techniques of performing office duties and functions by the secretary. Today computer has replaced typewriter which make typing and editing of document faster and neater. Digital phone has replaced analogue phone to make communication much easier and convenient. Photocopy machine has replaced manual duplicating machine in making copies of a document. Sending and receiving of messages can be made easy through GSM, electronic mail (E-mail), facsimile (fax) than the use of telegram. This implies that, office settings were not left out as technology continues to advance.

Hence, the introduction of modern office equipment and machines have changed old work habits thereby resulting in complete job re-designation and acquisition of new skills. Adekanbi (1992) noted that, secretary as the human element is the main personnel behind the execution and operation of all office machines, equipment and gadgets. She handles the telex, fax, telephone, typewriter, copier as well as the computer efficiently. These machines and equipment are the tools the secretary uses to accomplish her official functions as a professional.

Consequently, to enable the secretary to perform efficiently in the uses and operations of modern office equipment and machines, such machines, and equipment must be provided and made available for the training of secretary so that competencies and skills expected by the secretary to function in a technological office environment can be acquired. It is against this background that the paper focused on availability of modern office equipment and students interest towards learning of Office Technology and Management (OTM)

Office Technology and Management is a new nomenclature for Secretarial Studies. The changes in the name of the programme borne out of the review of the curriculum by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in 2004 in order to make Secretarial Studies programme to be more Information and Communication Technology compliant. Office Technology and Management previously known as Secretarial Studies was defined by Ohaegbulem and Nathaniel (2005) as the education or training given to a person to equip him/her with secretarial skills. These skills include information processing for example (analyzing, synthesizing, keyboarding, printing) etc. There is also reprographic skill (typing, duplicating, photocopying, scanning, manifold) etc.

Agoha (2011) asserted that, the contemporary skills expected of office technology and management graduates are those that would make them well-fitted, competent and independent in the technologies of the 21st Century. The new technologies are knowledge that will reflect in the effective use of modern office equipment and machines to perform varieties of office occupation. Examples of the technologies are computer, internet, e-mail, hand phone etc. Ohagbulem (2005) enumerated the following secretarial skills expected of office technology and management students in order to operate businesses that offer secretarial services as well as function effectively in any modern office environment:

- a.** Acquisition of keyboard dexterity, sufficient typewriting skills, adequate knowledge of word for accuracy, ability to operate duplicating machines, photocopy document, effective use of communication skills and good knowledge of records management.
- b.** Ability to interpret concepts, terms and abbreviations, effective filling, operate computer, effective use of telephone services and manners, browse the Internet and carry-out office functions.
- c.** Ability to index list of names, good knowledge of new technologies, etc.

Asuquo (2005) saw Secretarial education as an integral part of vocational business education which is a programme for office careers through initial refresher and upgrading education leading to employability and advancement in office occupations. He further stated that, the programme prepares the students with knowledge and skills to function effectively in any office situation (private or public), with the ability to discharge all the functions of an office.

Based on the above, one can deduce that, the primary purpose of Office Technology and Management programme is to prepare individual students for gainful employment in office occupations. Whether paid employment or self employment, the emphasis is on exposure to and acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant and adequate for employment in specific office occupation. To this end, for students to acquire this pre-requisite knowledge, skills and competencies in office occupation there is need for the provision of adequate office equipment and machines which will be useful in the teaching and learning/training of the students. This will enable the students to acquire the expected skills, exposures and competencies needed in a modern office while in school.

Office equipment and machines are very essential to effective and efficient teaching and learning/training of office technology and management students. Office equipment and machines as defined by Oyinloye (2012) are those tools or instruments used in carrying out office functions. They are

various labour saving devices and technological products that can be found in today's offices. This involves the manual, mechanical and electronically machines, equipment, devices or gadgets used in carrying out secretarial and office functions. They serve as intermediary between secretary and their work which enables him/her to accomplish more work in few hours with greater accuracy, speed and better quality.

Office equipment and machines are the basic tools through which OTM students can acquire necessary skills, attitudes, knowledge and competencies with which to function effectively in a technological modern office environment. It can be seen as instructional materials which could be used as tools for instruction. This may include equipment, machines, devices, gadgets and other materials that can be seen, manipulated, heard or read with the aim of enhancing the teaching and learning process of OTM students. These materials will make learning to be more practical, motivating and enhance students understanding. Ivowi (1999) strongly affirmed that, until equipment, machines and laboratories are adequately available in schools, teaching, learning and training of students may continue to be defective.

In view of the above, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) (2004) suggested the minimum standard of various types of equipment, machines and devices that should be made available for teaching and learning/training of Office Technology and Management students as follows:

1. One manual keyboarding laboratory with 35 manual typewriters. One typewriter per student and five as standby during practical.
2. One electric/electronic laboratory with 35 electric/electronic typewriters. One typewriter per student and five as standby during practical.
3. One computer laboratory equipped with 35 computers and their accessories. At least six of these computers must be internet ready.
4. Shorthand laboratory is expected to be equipped with a central transmitting unit and transistor and receivers or any other suitable media with 3 - 4 multi-selection channels, 31 headphones and 31 microphones. The laboratory should have at least 30 cubicles to accommodate 30 students at a time. It should be furnished with rug and air-conditioners.
5. Modern Office Technology Laboratory is expected to be equipped with one number of varieties of equipment and machines such as ink duplicator, photocopier, filing cabinet, shredding machine, telephone and handset, fax machine, franking machine, letter opening machine, guillotine, scanner, addressing machine, multimedia projector, slides, microfilming and digital camera, CDs and flash drive, Internet, and any other latest equipment relevant to office technology and management programme can be added.

From the above, one can see that, Office Technology and Management as a course of study is office equipment and machines based. Nanassy, et al (1970) quoted by Oyedele (1992) said, just as textbook must be selected and made available, adequate equipment, machines and proper maintenance is necessary for an effective Office Technology and Management programme. Schools offering office technology and management programmes must provide laboratory where training in the use of modern business equipment and machines can be effectively disseminated to the students. That is, schools must have adequate office equipment and machines in which they intend to give the instruction that will meet today's business needs to the students. Therefore, the paper looked at availability of modern office machines and students interest towards learning of Office Technology and Management.

Statement of the Problem

It was observed that, there is inadequate availability of modern office equipment and machines for teaching and learning/training of Office Technology and Management students. This may have an effect on students' interest towards learning of Office Technology and Management as a course of study. Hence, may result to inadequate and ill-preparation of the students for the labour market or office occupation due to the fact that, they were not provided for or exposed to the required competencies and knowledge that will make them to be equipped for efficient performance in office occupation and other technological modern office environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to:

1. Determine the availability of modern office equipment and machines towards students' interest in learning office technology and management.
2. Determine the condition and functionality of the office equipment and machines towards students' interest in learning of office technology and management.
3. Determine how office equipment and machines enable students' to acquire the skills and competencies needed to function as secretaries in a modern technological office environment.

Population and Sample

The population for the study comprised of six hundred and fifty (650) students of the Department of Office Technology and Management, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin. Random sampling was used to select 20% across the

levels given a total of one hundred and fifty (150) students in the department distributed as follows: ND I sixty (60) students, ND II forty (40) students, HND II twenty (20) students and HND I thirty (30) students. This was done to enable the researcher make a fair representation of students' at every level.

Instrument

The instrument used for this study was a structured questionnaire consisting between 11- 13 items in respect of each research questions which were administered to the students after it has been validated by experts. All the distributed questionnaires were returned and only one hundred and ten (110) were found useful. The students were requested to indicate their opinion on a five (5) Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 5 points, Agree (A) = 4, Undecided (U) = 3, Disagreed (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. The data collected were analyzed using measure of central tendency (mean) to answer the research questions. The weighted mean here is 3.00 but since this value coincides with the value for undecided, the upper limit of 3.00 is used which is 3.50. Any mean above 3.50 was accepted as agreed while any mean below 3.50 was accepted as disagreed.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated based on the purpose of the study:

1. To what extent does the availability of modern office equipment and machines affect students' interest towards office technology and management learning?
2. To what extent are the conditions and functionality of the available office equipment and machines influence students' interest towards office technology and management learning?
3. To what extent have the office technology and management students acquired the skills and competencies needed to function effectively in a modern technological office environment?

Results

Research question One: To what extent does the availability of modern office equipment and machines affect students' interest towards office technology and management learning.

The data to answer research question one were analyzed in Table 1

Table 1 Mean rating of availability of modern office equipment and machines affect students' interest towards Office Technology and Management learning

S/N.	Equipment, Machines and Devices	Scores					
		5	4	3	2	1	x
1.	Manual typewriters	40	20	25	15	10	3.59
2.	Shorthand laboratory with necessary gadgets	35	35	10	15	15	3.54
3.	Electronic typewriters	50	30	10	13	07	3.94
4.	Computers/word processors	50	34	18	05	03	4.12
5.	Photocopier and Ink duplicator	38	30	15	17	10	3.90
6.	Internet facilities (I.S.P./Modem)	34	45	18	17	04	4.02
7.	Digital Telephone and handset	48	30	22	08	02	3.94
8.	Shredding Machine	48	28	20	09	05	3.95
9.	Fax, Telex and E-mail	45	38	17	06	04	3.90
10.	Scanner and Laminating Machine	33	30	32	10	05	3.69
11.	Floppy Diskette, CDs, Flash Drive	30	40	28	07	05	3.75
12.	Franking and Letter Opening Machines	35	25	38	05	10	3.58
13.	Multimedia Project System	28	42	22	10	08	3.65

The result on table 1 above showed that, adequate provision of modern office equipment and machines will affect student's interest positively towards office technology and management learning. This is based on the mean scores of 3.5 and above for all items in the table. The result was premised on the fact that the acquisition of office skills, knowledge and competencies can only be achieved through adequate exposure to office equipment and machines which cannot be acquired by merely reading from the textbooks.

Research Question Two: To what extent are the conditions and functionality of the available office equipment and machines influence students' interest towards office technology and management learning?

The data to answer research question two were analyzed in Table 2

Table 2 Mean rating of the conditions and functionality of the available office equipment and machines influence students' interest towards office technology and management learning.

S/N. Equipment, Machines and Devices	Scores					x
	5	4	3	2	1	
1. Manual typewriters	20	25	20	15	30	2.90
2. Shorthand laboratory with necessary gadgets	20	30	27	10	23	3.12
3. Electronic typewriters	45	30	20	10	05	3.90
4. Computers/word processors	40	28	22	17	03	3.70
5. Photocopier and Ink duplicator	10	15	25	20	40	2.40
6. Internet facilities (I.S.P./Modem)	10	17	20	28	35	2.44
7. Digital Telephone and handset	35	30	25	12	08	3.65
8. Shredding Machine	10	10	20	40	30	2.36
9. Fax, Telex and E-mail	15	12	18	25	40	2.42
10. Scanner and Laminating Machine	10	15	10	35	40	2.27
11. Floppy Diskette, CDs, Flash Drive	40	25	15	18	12	3.57
12. Multimedia Project System	39	31	10	10	20	3.53

From table 2 above, the result showed that, the conditions and functionality of the available office equipment and machines in office technology and management department was not encouraging enough towards enhancing student's interest in learning office technology and management. These are reflected in items that are less than 3.50 mean scores which included items 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 while items 3, 4, 7, 11 and 12 had mean scores between 3.53 and 3.90 respectively. This implies that, manual typewriters, shorthand laboratory, photocopier and ink duplicator were available but not in good condition. Internet facilities, shredding machines, fax, telex, scanner, and laminating machine were not even provided for the department.

Research Question Three: To what extents have the office technology and management students acquired the skills and competencies needed to function effectively in a modern technological office environment?

The data to answer research question three were analyzed in Table 3

Table 3 Mean rating of office technology and management students acquired the skills and competencies needed to function effectively in a modern technological office environment?

S/N. Equipment, Machines and Devices	Scores					X
	5	4	3	2	1	
1. Use manual typewriter to produce documents.	35	38	27	05	05	3.84
2. Operate electronic typewriter	28	40	22	12	08	3.61
3. Use photocopy and ink duplicator to make copies of documents.	25	05	20	32	28	2.70
4. Use computer to manipulate various application program such as Ms-Word, Ms-Excel, Corel Draw	25	48	17	10	10	3.61
5. Use Internet to get information like research, interact with people, e-commerce, e-business.	20	10	15	25	40	2.50
6. Use telephone to book appointments and make contacts.	38	32	20	15	05	3.75
7. Use shredding machine to destroy confidential and secret documents.	05	20	20	30	35	2.36
8. Store and retrieve data using electronic storage devices like Flash drives, CDs	40	25	15	20	10	3.59
9. Send and receive messages using fax machine, e-mail and telex	15	20	15	25	35	2.59
10. Scan document into the computer	20	10	20	32	28	2.65
11. Use multimedia project system.	35	28	27	15	05	3.66

The result in table 3 showed that, office technology and management students have not been adequately taught how to use most of these modern office equipment and machines they are most likely going to meet in the offices. The students are well taught how to use the manual, and electronic typewriter to type documents, computer to manipulate different application program, use telephone, flash drive and CDs very well, and operate multimedia projector as shown in items 1,2,4,6,8 and 11 which have mean scores between 3.59 and 3.84. However, they have not been taught how to use many of these equipment and machines simply because they are not available, functional or not in good condition. Such are photocopy and ink duplicator, internet, shredding machine,

fax, E-mail, telex and scanner. This is as shown in items 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10 with mean scores between 2.36 and 2.70 respectively.

Discussion of Findings

The data presented in table 1 shows that, adequate provision of modern office equipment and machines have positive effect on students' interest towards learning of office technology and management. This was revealed in all the items on the table. This finding is supported by Agoha (2011) who stated that when necessary equipment for teaching and learning are available, students are always motivated to learn and vice versa. This means that availability of equipment helps students to learn.

Table 2 revealed that the conditions and functionality of available office equipment and machines were not encouraging to the students. Most of the office equipment and machines such as manual typewriters, shorthand laboratory, photocopies, and ink duplicator were already broken down while many others that were very important such as Internet, fax, telex, scanner, shredding and laminating machine were not provided for the department for students use.

The responses on items 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 11 in table 3 showed that the students acquired basic skills in the use of manual, and electronic typewriters, computer, telephone, flash drives, CDs and multimedia projector system. However, basic skills and competencies have not been taught the students in other equipment and machines such as photocopier, ink duplicator, Internet, shredding machine, fax, telex, e-mail and scanner. This is because these equipment and machines were not made available in the department. If these students are not taught how to effectively use all these office equipment and machines stated above and many more, then they would have problems coping with activities in the modern office environment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that Office Technology and Management Department which is responsible for turning out secretaries or office managers lack some necessary office equipment and machines. Most of the available ones are not in good shape. Since this is the case, it means that students are not exposed to the necessary office equipment and machines like photocopier, fax machine, telex, e-mail and scanner which are common in modern office. This creates lack of interest in students towards the learning of office technology and management and modern office as a result, the graduates of Office Technology and Management department would have problem coping with modern office environment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

Office technology and management department in Polytechnics should be fully provided with modern office equipment and machines. This can be provided by the management and government. Philanthropists, well meaning individuals and alumni association can also donate equipment and machines to the department.

Adequate fund should be made available for office technology and management department for proper maintenance and repairs of office equipment and machines. Lecturers and students should ensure that they take good care and handle these equipment and machines with good care.

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