

**EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS NEEDED BY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND
MANAGEMENT GRADUATES FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND GAINFUL
EMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated employability skills needed by Office Technology and Management graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment as perceived by stakeholders in South-Western, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. Two research questions guided the study. The population comprised 120 OTM lecturers, 69 directors and 10,339 registered entrepreneurs, totaling 10,528 respondents. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 78 OTM lecturers, 34 directors and 115 registered entrepreneurs, totaling 227 respondents. The instrument for data collection was a 20-item structured questionnaire based on four-point modified Likert rating scale format. The instrument was validated by three experts. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents with the aid of research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that most of the communication and ICT skills identified in the study were indispensable to entrepreneurship success and gainful employment in contemporary world of business and work. The study recommended that curriculum developers should incorporate more elements of communication and ICT skills into OTM curriculum, in order to equip graduates with the skills needed to secure gainful employment and succeed in contemporary world of business and there should be periodic curriculum updates to accommodate new skills needed by OTM graduates to excel in a dynamic technological world.*

KEYWORDS: employability skills, OTM graduates, entrepreneurship and gainful employment

INTRODUCTION

The alarming rate of graduate unemployment in recent years has engendered considerable anxiety among graduates and great concern in society at large. Many higher institutions of learning in Nigeria and in the developing countries continue to produce millions of fresh graduates annually even as old ones roam the streets of their countries searching for elusive opportunities. In spite of the high rate of unemployment and glut of applicants, many organizations continually complain that they have been unable to fill some vacancies with Nigerian graduates because they realize many Nigerian graduates lack certain requisite skills needed for sustainable employment (Ademiluyi, 2019). It appears that there is a gap in the

training process, which needs to be bridged. This suggests that many graduates lack employability skills needed in today's technological world of work and business environment.

Employability refers to the capability to gain and maintain employment. The employability of an individual depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities an individual possesses. Employability can also be defined as a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment and obtaining new employment if required (Asuquo & Agboola, 2014). In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. Also, employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realize potentials through sustainable employment. Employability skills are skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job and very important for all employees to be an asset to the labour market. These skills include attitudes and actions that enable workers to get along with their fellow workers and supervisors and to make sound and critical decisions (Brown & Hesketh, 2012). While most people view employability in absolute terms, focusing on the need for individuals to obtain credentials, knowledge and social status, employability can also be seen as subjective and dependent on contextual factors. Employability does not only depend on whether one is able to fulfill the requirements of specific jobs, but also on how one stands relative to others.

Aina (2013) defines skill as the knowledge that enables an individual to meet established performance criteria. It is the ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic and sustained efforts to smoothly and adaptively perform functions involving ideas, things and people (Adigun, 2015). Therefore, employability skills required in the labour market may include: personality qualities, communication skills, interpersonal skills, ICT skills, critical and creative thinking, integrity and ethical conduct, teaching competence, societal and civic responsibilities, leadership, managerial skills, knowledge mobilization and knowledge translation and career management among others (Ibrahim, 2014). Some of the skills identified are invaluable to Office Technology and Management graduates. It should be noted that skills needed for employability are not significantly different from those needed for entrepreneurship. The skills are flexibly adapted, applied and transferred under different contexts necessary for entrepreneurship and gainful employment. Ahmed (2010) opines that requisite for job skills involve depth of specialized knowledge needed in the labour market.

There is no doubt that the greater the entrepreneurial prowess among citizens, the greater the opportunities for economic development. Entrepreneurship is the life blood of any economy. Entrepreneurship education was introduced into educational curriculum as a compulsory course in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria over a decade ago. Today, on the Federal government's directives, all universities, polytechnics and colleges of education have made entrepreneurship education a general course for students, irrespective of discipline and level. This was aimed at reducing the rate of graduate unemployment, endemic poverty and the

numerous social vices associated with poverty. Bakare (2015) explains that unemployment has become a major concern among graduates, contributing to the high rate of poverty and insecurity in the country. Okafor (2014) observes that many unemployed graduates do not possess many of the skills needed to secure paid jobs or establish their own businesses. Even, when they establish their own businesses, such businesses may not succeed because the founders rarely possess the entrepreneurial and employability skills needed to manage businesses and secure jobs. The acquisition of employability skills has therefore become imperative for individual success and national development. Entrepreneurship is defined as the process of creating business. It is the process of developing and managing a business venture in order to gain profit by taking risks in the corporate world. Badi and Badi (2012) perceive entrepreneurship as functions of seeking investment, production, opportunities, organizing an enterprise to undertake new production process, raising capital, hiring labour, providing resources and introducing new organization. Entrepreneurship therefore is the process of using available capital in any form for business endeavors in an open and free market economy, for the sole purpose of making profit. It involves taking advantage of available opportunities before it becomes apparent to everyone.

Udo, (2016) explains that entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to establish and run an enterprise successfully. Wushishi and Igwe (2013) link entrepreneurship to the process of generating ideas and venturing into business risks created by dynamic environment and making the best opportunities for profit purpose. It is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth (Otti, 2014). Entrepreneurship is the service that an entrepreneur renders in accepting the risk of establishing, running and sustaining a business (Atueyi, 2017). From the foregoing, it can be deduced that entrepreneurship involves the ability to sense opportunities where others see chaos, contradiction and confusion. It is the process of using available capital for business endeavours in an open and free market economy for the primary purpose of making profit.

Okpan (2010) identifies the benefits accruable from entrepreneurship to mankind as follows: Ease of unemployment problem; improvement in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a nation; economic development; agricultural development; reduction in crime rate among others. Entrepreneurship development will re-orientate Nigerians, especially youths by educating them from school about starting and running their own businesses after graduation, instead of searching for white-collar jobs. Osioma (2011) identifies several factors that can limit the development of entrepreneurship among graduates in Nigerian environment, as including: lack of business idea, lack of business skills, inadequate government support, few technical innovation, weak financial institutions, poor attitude to entrepreneurship, inadequate infrastructures, taxation, political instability, bad government policy, corruption and crime among others.

Communication skill has been identified as one of the employability skills which may be needed by students for employment and entrepreneurial activities (Alex, 2015). Communication is the means of exchanging information by speaking, writing or using other media. It deals with how and when to use utterances appropriately. Communication skill may be needed by students to understand communication ethics, to develop cultural awareness and to think critically. It should be noted that job opportunities and successful entrepreneurship depend heavily on someone's communication dexterity. Also, communication has been identified as one of the fundamental determinants of job opportunities, sustenance and security. Furthermore, Alex (2015) emphasizes that communication is not only innate in human beings, but is indispensable to all human transactions including entrepreneurship and gainful employment.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skill is among the skills which may be required for employability and entrepreneurship in today's technology driven world. ICT is probably one of the most important instruments for employment and entrepreneurship survival especially in today's world. It has become an important aspect of everyday life. Many countries now regard understanding ICT and mastering its basic skills and concepts as part of the core education, which can provide employment and enhance entrepreneurship success. Howell and Hundall (2014) refer to ICT as all forms of electronic technology used to create, process and store information in various forms. It is regarded as the potentials that one acquires that makes one capable of operating and using computer efficiently. Recent studies suggest that ICT skills may rank high among those skills required for employability and entrepreneurship in Nigerian environment. It may be even more indispensable to OTM graduates (Ohakwe, 2014).

Office Technology and Management programme is an aspect of business education programme which equips graduates with the right skills to engage in various work in the office as well as self-employment. Office Technology and Management programme was targeted at empowering students with employability and entrepreneurship skills, imparting knowledge and abilities necessary for gainful employment or self-reliant. Ideally, Office Technology and Management graduates can be gainfully employed into various fields. This suggests that Office Technology Management graduates should be able to conveniently work in any organization. Dibbbari, Dangata and Egere (2013) explain that Office Technology and Management programme occupies a reasonable space in Nigerian economy and permeates the entire life of a nation. This implies that Office Technology and Management touches all spheres of human endeavour.

In the context of this study, stakeholders refer to Office Technology and Management lecturers, registered entrepreneurs and directors of Labour and Productivity in South-Western, Nigeria. The acquisition of employability skills and knowledge have been identified as requisites for successful entrepreneurship and employment opportunity. There is a broad consensus that

entrepreneurship and employability skills acquisition are potentially the perfect panacea to the challenge of graduate unemployment and endemic poverty (Mcmanus, 2013). Therefore, the concern of this researcher is to identify those skills needed for entrepreneurship and gainful employment as perceived by stakeholders in South-Western, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The global unemployment crisis demands that greater attention be paid to the quality and content of the training being given to the Nigerian undergraduate. For Office Technology and Management programme especially, the issue of graduate unemployment is particularly embarrassing because Office Technology and Management graduates are expected to have all the knowledge and skills needed not only for paid employment, but also for self-employment, entrepreneurship and leadership. The fact that thousands of Nigerian Office Technology and Management graduates continue to wallow in unemployment and under-employment suggests that the quality and content of the programme should be continually reviewed.

Employers of labour consistently complain that Nigerian graduates are unemployable. It was observed that some Nigeria-based multinational organizations source certain categories of personnel from neighbouring countries on the ground that Nigerian graduates lack certain skills which are indispensable to organization's growth. A government-owned national company, once complained that most applicants failed their employment tests. The study intends to find out those employability skills which Nigerian graduates lack for entrepreneurship engagement and also pinpoint the technical and personality demands of employers of labour. Therefore, the concern of this study is to identify skills needed by Office Technology and Management graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment in the South-Western states of Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined employability skills needed by Office Technology and Management graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment with focus on South-Western, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The communication skills needed by Office Technology and Management graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment.
2. The Information and Communication Technology skills needed by Office Technology and Management graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the Communication skills needed by Office Technology and Management graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment?
2. What are the Information and Communication Technology skills needed by Office Technology and Management graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment?

METHODOLOGY

The researcher employed descriptive survey design because the study sought the opinions of respondents on employability skills needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment. The study was conducted in the six states in South-Western, Nigeria: Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ondo, Ekiti and Osun States. The population comprised 120 OTM lecturers, 69 directors in the state ministries in charge of labour and productivity and 10,339 registered entrepreneurs with Chambers of Commerce, totaling 10,528. The researcher employed multi-stage sampling technique involving purposive and proportionate stratified random sampling techniques to select 78 OTM lecturers, 34 directors and 115 registered entrepreneurs, totaling 227 respondents. The first stage involved random selection of Lagos, Ogun and Osun States out of the six states in South Western, Nigeria. The names of all the six states were written on pieces of paper, folded and put in a bag. After careful shuffling, three children were requested to pick one each. They selected Lagos, Ogun and Osun States. The use of random sampling technique was considered appropriate because the states have similar social economic characteristics. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was adopted to sample the registered entrepreneurs in the three selected states. This is line with Saleh (2013) who states that when there is difficulty in studying the entire population of individuals or objects, the researcher should select sample by method that ensures the provision of unbiased, suitably close estimate of the relevant characteristics of the population. The entire population of lecturers and directors in the selected states were used in line with Olaofe (2012) who posited that whenever possible, it is ideal to study the entire population. The instrument for data collection was a 20-item structured questionnaire titled: Employability Skills Needed for Entrepreneurship and Gainful Employment Questionnaire (ESNEGEQ). The questionnaire consists of two parts: A and B. Part A seeks information on demographic characteristics of the respondents while part B contains items generated from the research questions and literature reviewed. The questionnaire was face-and-content validated by three experts from Kwara State University, Malete. The questionnaire was designed to elicit the ratings of respondents on four-point modified Likert rating scale of: Much Needed (MN – 4 points), Needed (N – 3 points), Slightly Needed (SN – 2 points), Not Needed (NN – 1 point).

A total of 227 copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researcher with the aid of six research assistants, two assistants in each state, out of which 201 copies were returned duly filled representing 86% return rate. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected. The research questions were adjudged on the following basis: 1.00 - 1.49 Not Needed (NN), 1.50 - 2.49 Slightly Needed (SN), 2.50 - 3.49 Needed (N), 3.50 - 4.00 Much Needed (MN). The decision rule was that any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as needed while any item with a mean score below 2.50 was regarded as not needed.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What are the communication skills needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment?

Table 1: Analysis of communication skills needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment

ITEMS	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. Ability to draft and process all types of business correspondence.	3.54	0.93	Much Needed
2. Ability to listen attentively to clients.	3.48	0.91	Needed
3. Ability to engage in polite conversation with customers.	3.16	0.89	Needed
4. Ability to speak fluently.	3.04	0.81	Needed
5. Ability to give information pleasantly to customers.	3.01	0.80	Needed
6. Ability to understand and interpret information correctly.	3.18	0.83	Needed
7. Ability to use body language to communicate.	2.44	0.72	Slightly Needed
8. Ability to pronounce words correctly.	3.07	0.79	Needed
9. Ability to use various business terminologies correctly.	2.95	0.77	Needed
10. Having good knowledge of grammar.	3.05	0.82	Needed
Grand Mean	3.09	0.81	Needed

The data presented in Table1 shows a grand mean of 3.09 and standard deviation of 0.81 which indicates that the listed communication skills are needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment. Item by item analysis shows that the respondents rated one item (6.67%) as much needed; eight items (86.67%) were rated as

needed while one item (6.67%) was rated as slightly needed. The standard deviation ranges from 0.72 to 0.93 which indicates that responses were close to the mean and not dispersed.

Research Question Two: What are the ICT skills needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment?

Table 2: Analysis of ICT skills needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment

ITEMS	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. Ability to source for information online.	3.34	0.87	Needed
2. Ability to send and receive e-mail.	3.02	0.83	Needed
3. Ability to use different computer applications.	2.46	0.75	Slightly Needed
4. Ability to buy and sell online.	3.18	0.84	Needed
5. Ability to use different social media platforms for business activities.	2.97	0.81	Needed
6. Ability to use different search engines to search for information online.	2.42	0.71	Slightly Needed
7. Ability to save and retrieve information online.	2.47	0.73	Slightly Needed
8. Ability to make online transactions.	3.05	0.84	Needed
9. Ability to conduct electronic meeting.	2.92	0.81	Needed
10. Ability to use Microsoft word to process different correspondence.	3.22	0.86	Needed
Grand Mean	2.91	0.81	Needed

The data presented in Table 2 shows a grand mean of 2.91 and standard deviation of 0.81 which indicates that the listed ICT skills are needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment. Item by item analysis indicates that eight items (80%) were rated as needed while two items (20%) were rated as slightly needed. The

standard deviation ranges from 0.71 to 0.87 which shows that responses were close to the mean and not dispersed.

From the findings of the study, it is evident that unemployment could be reduced to its barest minimum, if Nigerian graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to secure gainful employment and excel in contemporary world of business.

The acquisition of employability skills is indispensable, if the nation is to ameliorate the national crisis of graduate unemployment. The study discovered that the global unemployment crisis demands that greater attention be paid to the quality and content of the training being given to Nigerian graduates especially in the aspect of skill acquisition.

The researcher is of the view that OTM department in particular and institutions of higher learning in general should collaborate with stakeholders to ensure students acquire the necessary employability skills especially in the areas of communication and ICT skills which will enable them fit into the modern offices and excel in contemporary world of business.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are discussed in line with the research questions. Findings from the respondents on communication skills needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment in the selected states in South Western, Nigeria reveal that ability to draft and process all types of business correspondence, ability to listen attentively to clients, ability to engage in polite conversation with customers, speak fluently, give information pleasantly, understand and interpret information correctly, pronounce words correctly, ability to use various business terminologies correctly and possession of knowledge of grammar are needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment. The data revealed that only one out of the ten listed items was not needed. This study supports the earlier study of Alex (2015) which concluded that communication is not only innate in human beings, but is indispensable to all human transactions particularly in entrepreneurship and gainful employment.

Findings from the respondents on ICT skills needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment in the selected states reveal that ability to source for information online, ability to send and receive e-mail, use different computer applications, buy and sell goods online, use different social media platforms for business activities, ability to make online transactions, conduct electronic meeting and ability to use Microsoft Word to process different correspondence are needed by OTM graduates for entrepreneurship and gainful employment. The data revealed that only two out of the ten listed items were not needed. This study is in agreement with the study of Ohakwe (2014) who

explains that ICT skills may rank high among those skills required for employability and entrepreneurship in Nigerian environment.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the findings of this study that unemployment could be reduced to its barest minimum, if Nigerian graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to secure gainful employment and excel in contemporary world of business. From the responses obtained, it was concluded that most of the communication and Information and Communication Technology skills identified in this study are needed by graduates to secure gainful employment and succeed in entrepreneurship in today's technological world. This implies that most of the skills identified should be taught and learnt in higher institutions of learning and should be incorporated into polytechnic OTM curricula.

Recommendations

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

1. Curriculum developers should incorporate more elements of communication and ICT skills into Office Technology and Management curriculum, in order to equip graduates with the skills needed to secure gainful employment and succeed in contemporary world of business.
2. Office Technology and Management curriculum should be constantly reviewed and updated to accommodate new skills needed by OTM graduates to excel in a dynamic technological world.
3. Polytechnic entrepreneurship curricula should focus on imparting necessary skills on students, so as to equip students with skills that will enable them become job-creators rather than job-seekers.
4. All polytechnic students should offer ICT-related courses. This may be necessary to achieve progress in ICT skills.

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