

# **ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS EXPECTED OF GRADUATES OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT (OTM) PROGRAMME FROM NIGERIA POLYTECHNICS**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examined the entrepreneurship skills expected of graduate of Office Technology and Management programme from Nigeria polytechnics. It discussed the concept of entrepreneurship, its characteristics and the concept of Office Technology and Management. The paper highlighted the socio-economic contributions of graduates of Office Technology and Management in various organizations for national development and x-rayed the hindrances and challenges of entrepreneurship development in Nigeria, particularly as it concerns Office Technology and Management programme. The paper recommends that Office Technology and Management programme be encouraged by both government and public as it a programme study, designed to equipped its participants with entrepreneurship skills for employment or self-reliance. The paper also recommended that institution offering the course should be well equipped with infrastructural and the right instructional materials for teaching and learning and also recommended the provision of soft loan facilities for potential OTM graduates and other entrepreneurs to enable them set up their own small business enterprises.

## **Introduction**

According to Esene and Mgbonyebi (2015) one of the national education goals is principally the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to leave in, and contribute to the development of the society. (FRN 20013) The National Policy on education (FRN, 2012) emphasized the role of entrepreneurship development education in National Development by stating that education is the most important instrument for propelling change, as no fundamental change can occur in any society except through educational revolution that impart on the intellect.

The system of education inherited from the colonial masters is a clear departure from the traditional or informal education where ethical principles, religious beliefs and various occupations were taught according to Ifemeje in Oduma (2012). Oduma posted that at independence, the country inherited a subservient type of education system meant only to provide and serve the needs of the colonial administration. Olu-obafemi and Onajinrin (2014)

and Akahuemonkhan, Raimu and Sofoluwe (2013) asserted that the colonial education policy centred on the production of literate nationals who were required to occupy position which would strength the colonial administration. According to Esene and Mgbonyebi (2015), our educational institutions, few as they were, remained factories for producing clerks, interpreters, forest guards and sanitary inspectors as no special professional nor entrepreneurial skills was envisaged in the educational system.

Consequently, the dysfunctional education that is devoid of entrepreneurial skill acquisition therefore laid foundations of militia agitation as unemployment dominates national discourse. Already, the rising unemployment rate in the last couple of years, particularly among graduates, is believed to be largely responsible for the rising violent crimes and widespread feeling of insecurity in the country. Today, kidnapping, advance fee fraud, otherwise called 419, armed robbery, prostitution, cultism, riots, protest, drug and child trafficking among others; have become the order of the day.

Worried by the high rate of graduate unemployment which has been put at 1.8millions yearly (Esene, 2015) the presidency in 2006, directed all higher educational institutions in Nigeria to include on its curriculum of studies, Entrepreneurship Development Education (EDE) as a compulsory course for all students with effect from the 2007/2008 academic session irrespective of students areas of study (Esene, 2014). This need of entrepreneurial education was equally emphasized by Oduma (2012), who asserted that “because of the unprecedented increasing number of graduates without corresponding vacancies, government felt that entrepreneurship education is very necessary to make the large scale number of graduate self-reliant. Presently, Entrepreneurship Development Education has been gradually accepted as unique courses now offered and taught among higher educational institutions in Nigeria aimed at equipping students with skills and competencies to make them self-reliant and employer of labour on graduation.

Entrepreneurship today is therefore enjoying a great deal of attention in various higher institutions in Nigeria. At the moment, in the department of Office technology and Management programmes run by some institutions in Nigeria, particularly polytechnics, Introduction to Business and Small Scale Business management are taught along with the three Entrepreneurship Development Education Courses, viz: EED 126 – Introduction to Entrepreneurship; EED 216 – The Practice of Entrepreneurship and EED 413 - Entrepreneurship Development. All these are aimed towards the acquisitions of practicable skills and office competencies for self-actualisation. Okolocha and Ile (2011) observed that the attempt of various governments in the past, to eradicate poverty and increase the standard of living of citizens through the establishment of Poverty Alleviation programmes have failed due to lack of entrepreneurship skills by graduates of the education system. The authors prudently observed that millions of jobs are awaiting to be done because people with the right education and training cannot be found. This corroborates the result of a study carried out by the National University commission (NUC) as reported in Mebane (2006). The findings of the study revealed that tertiary institutions in Nigeria do not sufficiently and adequately prepare graduates to be self-reliant. It is therefore in view of the above that this study is been carried out to find out what Office Technology and Management programme is and to x-ray the Entrepreneurship skills expected of its graduates for useful employment and self-reliance on graduation.

## **The Concept of Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship has been conceptualised in different ways by various renowned authors. Atakpa (2006) in Ama (2014) defined entrepreneurship as the venture that involves taking up a business enterprise quite distinct from obtaining a paid job. Owelukwu (2008) described entrepreneurship as the ability to organize business opportunity and mobilize both human and material resources to exploit the identified opportunity. Badi and Badi (2005) sees entrepreneurship as the function of seeking investment, production opportunity, organizing an enterprise to undertake new production process, raising capital, hiring labour, arranging resources and introducing new organization. Agweda and Usman (2008) described entrepreneurship as a relentless pursuit of business opportunities regardless of resources currently controlled.

Osuala (1999) in Ndikanwu and Aninye (2014) described entrepreneurship as “the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coupling these with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, and other resources to meet an identified need and create wealth. In the same vein, Nwangwu (2007) opined that entrepreneurship is a process of bringing together the factors of production, which include land, labour, capital and time so as to provide a product or service for public consumption. Ndikanwu and Aninye (2014) described entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of a person or persons to acquire educational skills to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and management as successful business enterprise and in the process creating employment opportunities to would – be employees. Egboh (2009) sees entrepreneurship as the process of creating wealth by bringing together resources in new ways to start a venture that benefits customers and rewards its founders for their initiative and innovation. Also Umemezie (2003) in Oduma (2012) noted that entrepreneurship involves the capacity to find out and evaluate business opportunities, gather the necessary resources and implement actions to take advantage of the opportunities while guided by high achievement motivation.

From the above perspectives, it is evident that entrepreneurship is the apparent willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully. Therefore, the concept of entrepreneurship is associated with the establishment and operation of business enterprises. These activities include identification of investment opportunities, decision-making as to the opportunities to exploit, promotion and establishment of the business enterprise, aggregation of the distribution, organization and management of the human and material resources for the attainment of the objectives of the enterprises, risk bearing, and innovation.

## **Characteristics of Individual Entrepreneur**

The characteristics of entrepreneur are essential for the success of an enterprise. McClelland in Oduma (2012) stated the characteristics of a successful entrepreneur as an individual with technical competence, risk taking, high initiative, good judgment, intelligence to analyze and solve problem areas, leadership qualities, confidence, positive attitude, high level of energy, creativeness, honesty, integrity, emotional stability and fairness. Nwabufo (2013) however, posited that some of the positive characteristics of an entrepreneur include: Self-confidence, Risk taking, Task (result) orientation, Drive and energy, Leadership, Creativity, Taking initiative, Aggressive, Trusting, fair and honest, Delegation of authority, Loyal and supportive and Good planner and organizer

### **Definition of Skill and Competence**

The Dictionary of Management by Daniel (2006), defined skill as learned responses, often as a result of specific training which afford someone the ability to perform a particular task and achieve a particular objective. Also Bleak in Uzor and Ike (2010) described skill as ability to do something well, gained through training and experience. Uzor and Ike also defined skill as one's personal competencies in the performance of specific tasks acquired after a period of training or experience. In a similar vein, Achilike and Okwuauso (2001) defined competencies as those abilities of power and authority of knowledge, attitudes and facts necessary for accomplishing tasks. Ojukuw and Ojuwu (2002) stated that competencies are the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for accomplishing a given task.

Skill therefore is the rapidity, precision, expertise, dexterity and proficiency exhibited through mental and manual repetition of performance of an operation. Etonyeaku (2008) opined that skill is the capacity of a person to accomplish a task within desired precision and certainty. Skill involves a practical knowledge in combination with clearness, expertise, dexterity and ability to perform a function which could be acquired or learnt in the school or training centres through learning, experience. In the world of business those who possess relevant business skills and office competencies, coupled with entrepreneurial zeal have better gainful employment opportunities and business success than those who are deficient in such skills.

### **The Concept of Office Technology and Management**

According to Oyinkoye and Oluwalola (2010), Office Technology and Management is a new nomenclature that emerged to replace the former Secretarial Studies Programme and was introduced by the National Board for Technical education in 2004. They both emphasized that the change was meant to make the programme and its recipients more ICT complaint and to adequately fit into the world of work appropriately, especially in this modern age of globalization, where equipment and new machines are emerging daily. The Committee on Research and Publications of the American Vocational Association in Esene (2013) defined OTM (Secretarial Studies) as education designed to develop skills, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and appreciations encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis.

Nwabuona (2010) described the OTM programme as focusing on combination of office information technical skills with adequate and relevant business knowledge in solving organizational problems. He noted that the target is to produce hybrid administrative professionals to respond to the demands of a dynamic and intensely computerized work place. To Komolafe and Ajani (2010), Office Technology and Management is a work oriented educational programme that aims at skill acquisition which are useful and employable in the labour market. Komolafe and Ajani opined that the programme is designed to development participant's skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation of encompassing knowledge and information needed by individuals in order to enter and progress in employment on a useful and productive base. Office Technology and Management programme therefore, is an educational programme meant for the acquisition of knowledge, skills office ethics and competencies needed to prepare the individuals to enter gainful employment in specific business and office occupation. It is a veritable programme of study which builds its participants and graduates to be able to contribute meaningfully to National Development. It is a component of business education and indeed vocational and technical education. Graduates of the programme at the polytechnics in Nigeria are awarded

National Diploma after two years of studies and a Higher National Diploma certificate at the advance level coupled with an Industrial Training experience in between the two programmes of studies.

### **Entrepreneurship skills expected of Graduates of Office Technology and Management (OTM) from Nigeria Polytechnics**

According to Asuguo in Esene and Mgbonyebi (2015) Entrepreneurship education has been gradually accepted as unique courses now offered and taught among higher education institutions in Nigeria aimed at equipping students with skills and competencies to make the self-reliant and employer of labour on graduation.

In Office Technology and Management Programmes, one of the grand objectives at the National Diploma and Higher National Diploma levels in Nigeria Polytechnics as spelt out in the NBTE (2004) Office Technology and Management Studies Curriculum/Course Specifications is to create general entrepreneurship awareness in the student with a view to inculcating in him the spirit of self-reliance. Office Technology and Management is a work-oriented educational programme which aims at acquisition of skills, development of skills, competencies, attitudes and attributes to be able to function effectively in millennium offices. A cursory look at the curriculum content therefore revealed that the end of the National Diploma and Higher National programme, some entrepreneurship skills and office competencies must have been acquired or developed for effective and efficient job performances in the office.

In the view of Alademerin in Ihimekpen, Crossdale and Amaehule (2015) the following entrepreneurship skills expected of graduates of Office Technology and Management (OTM) Programme from Nigeria Polytechnics they are personal skills, technical skills and Professional skills.

#### **Personal Skills**

The personal skills of the graduates of OTM programme includes:

- (a) **Self-confidence:** Graduates of OTM programmes that is prepared for the world of work should have self-confidence skill. This skill is needed to energize the graduates to do what he thinks is right and continue doing it without minding distractions from outsiders, until he succeeds. Self-confidence is the ability to trust one's efforts and that one succeed in a chosen adventure. It is the skill of self-confidence that spurs the entrepreneur into taking risks in starting and operating a business. It energises him to forge ahead in the midst of odds. This skill is built during the period of formal school system training or through apprenticeship.
- (b) **Motivational skill:** Motivation is what prompts people to do what they are doing with success zeal in them. It is the inner mind that energizes. Motivation makes businessmen work day and night without feeling tired, hoping that "one day, it will be better". The entrepreneur can build on motivated skills for himself or acquire skills through the encouragement of other people such as parents, teachers, supports, professional partners, age group amongst others.
- (c) **Communicative skill:** This involves meeting people and making them buy business ideas, products or services, or meeting people and encouraging them to sell their business ideas, products or services. Communication skills involves visiting people,

talking to people, writing business letters, telephoning, arranging for meetings and others. The graduate of OTM should have good command of English language, possess listening ability, possess intelligent perception and competent to make intelligent interpretations, be competent in use of body language, possession of friendly voice and ability to make intelligent selection of communication channels. These skills are learnt during period of apprenticeship, vocational or technical training, seminars, workshops and on-the-job-training. An entrepreneur who lacks communication skills would be using un-refined and uncomplimentary language on customers, workers, suppliers, and friends.

- (d) **Planning skill:** Planning involves patience and belt-tightening. This skill is about eating half instead of exhausting all so that one can move in the future. The skill of planning starts by setting aside amount from small income. Anyone who cannot save from the little he/she has would not be able to save anything from thousands and millions of naira. This skill is learnt by initiating successful entrepreneurs, businessmen and women.
- (e) **Saving and investment skills:** Saving is a skill, which can be acquired through practice or learnt under a successful businessman. It is the act of keeping aside an amount of one's income or profit at the end of a business cycle. The cycle may be on daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. Savings gives rise to investment and without savings there will not be any investment. The practice and prospective entrepreneur must learn, acquire and practice the skill of saving which leads to investment.
- (f) **Adaptive skill:** To adapt is to change according to changing conditions. "no condition", they say "is permanent". The entrepreneur operates in all kinds of changing environment, and must adapt to changes if he is to survive. Business environment is sometimes favourable and sometimes unfavourable. But he would not need to jettison his business even in an unfavourable condition. He must learn to adapt and continue the business using other skills of the entrepreneur. When he adapts to the changing economic, social and technological environment, he becomes a part of it and would eventually suppress or manage the environment and extract the much needed profit.
- (g) **Managerial skills:** The graduates of OTM programme needs to develop managerial skills in order to know how to take care of men and materials under his care. These men and materials are scarce or insufficient and need to be managed optimally. Some entrepreneurs regard human beings as machines but those who have managerial skills apply the principles of human relations in treating their workers.
- (h) **Human relations skill:** Human beings live and work together and they need some skills to encourage them to be highly productive. Human relations try to find out what behaviour and attitudes that encourage people to work and be productive. Nwosu (2002) affirmed that human relation is the interaction and integration of people into a work situation that motivates them to work together productively, co-operatively and with economic, psychological and social satisfaction. Human relations could be said to be the ability to get along with others. This skill is expected from office managers, directors, entrepreneurs, supervisors and foremen.

## **Technical Skills of the Entrepreneur (OTM Graduates)**

The technical skills of OTM graduate entrepreneurs are as follows:

**Vocational skill:** A vocation is an economic activity requiring the use of skills in an occupation or profession. The graduates of OTM entrepreneur must therefore be skilled and knowledge in the following areas of his vocation or profession.

### **(a) Computer skills or professional software skills**

Most employers demand “computer literacy” as a pre-requisite for employment on certain jobs. OTM products must therefore, be versatile with the use of the computer and information and communication technology. With the invention of computer and internet technology, the world has been reduced to a global village where people buy from the same market, the same computer language and travel on the same information “super-highway” (Ehirheme, 2014). The scopes of computer and information processing have widened technology with the introduction of electronic-business, e-payment, e-commerce, cashless society and paperless office among others. OTM graduates work typically centres around the office. It therefore behoves on them to be well skilled in the use of computer and information and communication technology.

Arising from the above, it becomes pertinent for OTM graduates to be competent in the use of computer packages such as Microsoft word, Microsoft excel package, PowerPoint package, competent in desktop publishing, webpage design, data base management package, CorelDraw usage, internet browsing packages and competence in the use of other office technologies.

### **(b) Basic professional competencies**

According to Oduma (2010), the business education graduates of which OTM option is its components should have the following basic professional competencies:

- skill of taking shorthand notes and transcribing same using the typewriter or computer;
- possess skill and competencies in preparing accounting information effectively, as accounting information and their uses are inevitable exercises in every establishment and organizations for monitoring financial transactions and analysis.

### **(c) Record management skill**

Oduma pointed that effective record management skill is another entrepreneurial skill needed by OTM graduates for optimal records keeping. He buttressed that records management is an inevitable activity in modern establishment that guarantees the safety of documents and their retrieval in times of need and that for now, there is no establishment or organization that outlaws the use of written documents. This OTM graduates must possess the competence in the management of essential official documents. Oduma concluded that it is equally important for OTM graduate to be competent in preparing official reports, coverage of official meetings by taking down minutes, be knowledgeable in law and practice of meetings, knowledgeable in office staff training and orientation methods, coupled with proficiency in form design.

### **(d) Psychomotor skill**

This is the ability to operate machines tools, machinery and also manipulative technical objects. This is one of the most important skill expected of OTM entrepreneurs for effective office operations. It involves the use various office machines, including

keyboarding machines and making use of various copiers and processors for reproduction of documents.

(e) **Analytical skill**

Business needs critical analysis to separate successful businessmen from unsuccessful ones, to separate 419 businessmen from genuine businessmen. An OTM entrepreneur must possess the skill to analyze the business environment which is friendly in some regions, volatile in other ones and full of uncertainty in other areas. The analytical skill is developed during training and is applied to environment scanning, business appraisal and offer to bid.

(f) **Creative skills**

This is one of the skills which OTM graduates must possess. The skill enables him to create ideas, services and products which he sells to people and as such, he is said to be creative. The skill helps him to generate business ideas, imagine new products, packages, services among others. Creative skills assist him to engage in imaginative thinking which can bring innovations in any sector of entrepreneurial activities.

**Professional skills of the entrepreneur**

According to Ihimekpen, Crossdale-Ovwido, and Amaefula (2015), professional skills are competencies which assist the entrepreneur to enrol, be acceptable and also practice in a profession. To be recognized by a professional body, OTM graduate must be technically and educationally qualified and must possess the right ethics of the profession. When he is admitted into the profession, he can practice as a professional, having an obligation to protect the professional ethics and enjoy the privilege of this profession.

**Socio-economic contributions of Graduates of OTM in Organizations for National Development**

Graduates of OTM programmes are called Office Technology Managers, Professional Secretaries or Administrative Assistant Officer (Esene, 2014). With the possession of vibrant entrepreneurship skills listed above, the graduates are able to contribute meaningfully towards the success of virtually all organizations where they are engaged. Secretarial services are of great importance in any nation's economic development. It is therefore, not surprising to find that secretarial services are rendered in the army, air force, navy, the civil service and in industries, universities, college of technology, schools, hospitals, social welfare and a host of others. These bodies cannot function adequately without that key position of the secretary which is a link between the executives, board, panel or committee charged with a particular responsibility.

Their functions in various organizations ranges from information management; information processing, information storage and retrieval, office management and organization, reprography, information dissemination, resources management and control amongst others. Other areas according to Shyllon (2006) where graduate of OTM can contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of the nation is through self-employment and self-reliance which involves: establishing and managing personal business centres, cyber cafes, secretarial/computer institutes, writing and publishing of books and articles in the discipline for other professionals. Others are organizing of workshops and seminars for office workers, providing consulting services for organizations in the recruitment exercise, sales and distribution of GSM, computers and its accessories, office machines e.t.c. From the above, it is obvious that graduates of OTM programme with



entrepreneurship skills and competencies can immensely contribute towards the socio-economic development of the nation.

### **Hindrances and challenges of Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria**

Nigeria as a growing economy is not exempted from the challenges peculiar with growing economics as a nation. Consequently, entrepreneurs or small business are faced with daunting but surmountable challenges (Ihimemekpen, Cross Dale and Amaefula, 2015). Ihimemekpen et al and Oduma (2012) averred that entrepreneurship ventures are saddled with lots of challenges and they include:

#### **1. Inadequate working capital**

Oduma posited that the availability of capital is central to the establishment and sustainability of any enterprise irrespective of the size, focus and objective. For any entrepreneur in Nigeria to start a business, adequate fund is required. When the desired working capital is inadequate or unavailable, it becomes difficult to start or continue a business. In terms of loan facilities, the procedures for accessing such credits are often rigorous and dependent on the provision of collaterals which the potential entrepreneur may not possess. Again, the financial institutions charged outrageous interest rates to the detriment of the applicant or borrowers.

#### **2. Absence of infrastructural facilities**

It is unequivocal that certain basic infrastructures like good roads, good water supply, constant power, access to uninterrupted access to information and communication technology and other tools of trade aid the development of the mind and body. It also assist productivity and encourages entrepreneurship. When these facilities are lacking in a country, the growth of the economy will be adversely affected. In Nigeria, these basic facilities and working tools as well as the enabling environment are either lacking or malfunctioning if in existence. This has brought untold hardship as well as frustration to be entrepreneurs. A typical example is the case of the power sector. In Nigeria, power supply is epileptic and has caused most organization to fold up or relocate to other countries that are business friendly. Most often, business organizations resort to alternative source of power by using generator plants. This add extra cost to production thereby eroding whatever profit or capital an entrepreneur has put aside for his business.

#### **3. Lack of adequate security**

Nigeria according to Ihimekpen et al averred that Nigeria has a porous security system where lives and property are not safe. The current security challenges facing the country include the wanton killing through bombing of innocent citizens in the name of religion and politics by some disgruntled individuals. Again, kidnapping of foreigners and indigenes with heavy ransom is almost becoming the order of the day. Theft, stealing, looting during political unrest and broad day light robbery is almost a recurring decimal. Invariably, no right thinking individual, foreigner or citizen would like to invest in an insecure country or environment.

#### **4. Lack of adequate training and low standard of education**

The lack of adequate training for students such that would enable them meet the challenges of the future as leaders of business and change agent is another hindrance. Coupled with this, the low standard of education in the recent years, resulting from lack of incentives for teachers, inadequate funding of schools, inadequate equipment and laboratories for teaching and learning, dearth of adequate, qualified teachers, absence of conducive

learning environment and so on. Education is the key to knowledge and it plays a strong role in forming burgeoning entrepreneur (Oduma, 2012). The absence of solid educational foundation for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and office competencies would result in half-baked workforce whose activities would be inimical, retrogressive and unproductive in a society.

### **Conclusion**

Office Technology and Management Programme is an educational studies designed to develop skills, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and appreciation encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to centre and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. One of the grand objectives of the programme as specified by NBTE (2004), is to create general entrepreneurship awareness in the student with a view to inculcating in him, the spirit of self-reliance. This study revealed that some of the entrepreneurship skills expected of graduates of OTM programmes in Nigeria Polytechnics includes; managerial skills, professional and personal skills. These entrepreneurial skills if put together would make OTM graduates better prepared to take up jobs in organizations and contribute meaningfully to its success or be self-employed by establishing small and medium businesses.

### **Recommendations**

Arising from this study, it is therefore recommended that:

1. The study Office Technology and Management Programmes be encouraged by both the government and the public, as it is geared towards skill acquisition, knowledge development and entrepreneurship.
2. Institutions where OTM courses are offered should be well equipped with adequate infrastructures and adequate lecturers and instructors, while the right instructional methods and materials should be used in the teaching and learning processes.
3. Adequate infrastructural facilities should be made available in the society, to encourage potential entrepreneurs to invest their resources.
4. Adequate security measures should be in place to ensure a smooth and enabling environment for business ventures.
5. Loan facilities should be provided for potential entrepreneurs willing to invest without stringent measures (collaterals) being attached to such loans and
6. There should be stability in the polity, sustenance of reliable and applicable government policies, while efforts should be made to curtail the high rate of corruption within the government circles in government business. Finally, tax relief should be extended to potential new entrepreneurs in the field as a source of motivation.

It is therefore recommended that the government should accord adequate attention to entrepreneurial development in the country through the provision of good economic environment to encourage individual; particularly OTM graduates with entrepreneurial skills to engage in entrepreneurial ventures and live a fulfilled life.

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