

# PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATORS AND THE UNEDUCATED OF THE NEW OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES OF NIGERIAN POLYTECHNICS

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigated the perceptions of educators and uneducated of the new Office Technology and Management (OTM) Programmes of Nigerian Polytechnics. The design of the study was a survey. Two hypotheses were formulated for the study. An instrument which consisted of eleven items was distributed to 240 respondents from tertiary institutions in Delta State. In analyzing the data generated from the field and testing the hypotheses, the researcher made use of analysis of variance. The findings of the study revealed that: OTM is education for people who have chosen their profession and require further skill development; it is 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; that occupational content of OTM can equip students with saleable skills; and that those who received OTM training can be easily employed or self-employed because of their skills and competencies. On the strength of these findings, the researcher made useful recommendations that would make ND and HND OTM graduates to be effective and productive in work situations.*

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), like the previous editions places high premium on the study of Vocational and Technical Education of which Office Technology and Management is a component. On its part, the federal education parastatal supervising polytechnics and other technological institutions in Nigeria – the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) came up in 1989 with a new curricula for National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) leading to the award of diplomas in Office Technology and Management.

Before now, the course of the study has had its name changed, from commercial education; secretarial science; office management; secretarial administration; secretarial studies to the present name which is Office Technology and Management. The current name reflects the functions and the roles of secretaries, office supervisors, and office managers and administrative secretary which the expanded curricula are meant to address and achieve.

Office Technology and Management is a course of study which entails vocational, computer, and general studies subjects. The course is designed to prepare graduates for employment in private and public sectors. The course of study is offered at ND and HND levels in Nigerian Polytechnics.

Office Technology and Management (OTM) is as old as the history of education in the country. The first Secondary School established in Lagos between 1859 and 1920 has as its curricula Bible Knowledge, English, History Geography and Book-keeping. The need for clerical and secretarial assistance forced the Colonial Officers of the era to introduce elements of office technology and management, thus the Bonny Government School and Hope Waddel Secondary School established about the same period had included in their curricula more OTM subjects like Shorthand, Typewriting, Commerce, Economics and Business Arithmetic (Ehiamentalor, 1990).

Office Technology and Management is a highly useful education because its occupational content offers the students the opportunity to acquire skills, attitudes, interests, and knowledge to perform socially and economically work that is beneficial not only to them, but to the society. However, OTM has not performed its potential role of economic and technological transformation of Nigeria because of certain factors bedeviling it. One of these factors is the general lack of the knowledge of OTM. This lack of awareness had set training in OTM behind general education despite the inadequacies of the latter.

Office Technology and Management has been so misconceived in Nigeria that one can hardly get a generally acceptable definition of it from the existing indigenous literature. However, OTM definition can be found in American books. In Nigeria, OTM has been taken to mean education for the mentally retarded, physically handicapped, and socially maladjusted students (Esene, 2001). In some instances, OTM has been given different interpretations because its content has been misunderstood by people. Whereas people see it as a combination of academic and skill course of study, others see it as an exclusion of academic programme. In the context of this study, OTM is concerned with a course of study in which students are exposed to academic, vocational and liberal subjects aimed at preparing them for employment as a means of useful living.

In this study, OTM educators refer to lecturers who teach typewriting, shorthand, secretarial studies, office practice and management subjects. On the other hand, general educators are persons who received formal education in secondary and primary level without specialization. The uneducated group describe people who have not received any formal education.

The purpose of this study was to find out the meaning of OTM as perceived by OTM lecturers, educators, general educators, and the uneducated with a view of

providing information for educators and policy makers on the directions to which efforts in OTM could be directed. The study also determined the reasons responsible for the three groups' perceptions OTM and whether differences existed between their perceptions.

### **Usefulness of the Study**

Basically, the knowledge of the direction of OTM as a course of study is fundamentally crucial to its quality. Any programme that is not understood or well conceived may not succeed in its implementation. The understanding of the meaning of OTM, the objectives of the course of study and the strategies for implementing the course will serve as basic avenues for government and institutional administrators to redirect their efforts for achieving its goals. This will contribute to solving the scarcity of trained lecturers who teach in the Department of Office Technology and Management. A proper understanding of the meaning of OTM will also help to stimulate the government's support for OTM programmes which have hitherto not enjoyed much support. Also, this study may lead to an increase in our school's curricula offerings thereby providing for individual development of potentialities. The knowledge of the components of OTM will encourage schools to include such courses or subjects that constitute OTM programmes in the school curriculum.

### **Hypotheses for the Study**

The following hypotheses are tested by the study:

- (a) There is no significant difference between the perception of general educators, OTM educators and the uneducated of the meaning of OTM.
- (b) There is no significant difference between general educators, OTM educators and the uneducated group in their perception of the reasons that responsible for their perceived meaning of OTM.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

There are varying definitions of Office Technology and Management in the literature. While many of these definitions narrowly conceive OTM, some are too broad and can easily be misinterpreted to be general education. A review of some of these definitions are therefore necessary. The Committee on Research and Publications of the American Vocational Association (2000) defined OTM as education designed to develop skills, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits, and appreciations encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make process in employment on a useful and productive basis. This committee therefore see, OTM as a work-oriented education, a means whereby the individual acquires occupational education to enable him function creatively and productively in his job. In the views of Maduka (1990) and Olaitan (1994), OTM is a type of education deliberately designed for the development of skills and knowledge which can be useful for both the individual concerned, the immediate family and the society. Maduka's definition reflects the utilitarian idea of OTM. It can be inferred from the definition that the skills acquired by an individual through the study of OTM will not benefit him alone, but also the society

at large. Chester (1998) defined OTM as that aspect of education that aims at the development of human abilities and understandings so that the individual may serve happily, usefully and efficiently in carrying on the activities in the pursuits of his choice. What Chester is emphasizing here is the acquisition and development of skills necessary to carry on one's chosen vocational pursuit.

Ehiameetalor and Ogunsaju (1994) saw Office Technology and Management, so conceived to have two purposes: (1) to provide training for specific jobs and (2) to develop ability to use these skills in the environment of business. The latter is often called the ability to utilize their skills and intelligence problem solving. According to the authors, it is an aspect of social intelligence or social adaptability applied to office and business occupations. FRN (2004) opined that the present OTM curriculum is encompassing, enabling its graduates to acquire office technology skills, management and vocational skills required for the complex world of work.

Popham, Schrag and Blockhus (2001) posited that OTM prepares students for entry into and advancement in jobs within business, and equally important, it prepares students to handle their own business affairs and to function intelligently as consumers and citizens in a business economy. According to these authors, to the student with career objectives, Office Technology and Management is vocational, that is education to enter or advance in a job. It includes development of technical competencies required by Office Technology and Management graduates. In addition, the learner acquires an understanding of the office system commensurate with the level of instruction. The third component is adjustment to the work environment as students begin to understand how their skills are used in business; how workers relate to each other and to supervisors; how work is assigned and controlled; what constitutes acceptable office appearance, decorum, and speech; how jobs are interrelated; what time and quality standards are adhered to and how responsibility relates to job success.

The OTM curriculum covers topics in accounting and computing; business data processing systems; filing, office machines; clerical; information communication and technology application; materials support, transporting, storing, and records management; personnel training, stenographic, secretarial, supervisory and administrative; typing and other office occupations. Apart from these major topics, Igbino (2008) and Erume and Okoro (2008) were in agreement when they noted that Office Technology and Management is incomplete without general studies and computer and information technology courses and subjects, hence all students in the polytechnics, irrespective of their areas of specialization offer service courses. Osuala (2004) has also formulated the purpose for OTM. In his view, the controlling purpose of OTM programme at the tertiary institution level is to develop skills for useful employment. This programme relates school-work to a specific occupational goal but involve more than training for specific job skill.

Expanding on the meaning of office technology and management, Osuala wrote that OTM is not offered in lieu of general academic education, but it grows out of it, supplementing and enhancing it.

In his contributions to the definitions and meaning of Office Technology and Management, Esene (2001) felt that:

the guiding purpose of OTM is to develop the competencies needed to enter or advance in a vocation. Education should aid individuals in discovering their office systems problems and in developing the specific abilities needed by office supervisor and manager's success – for the sake of the individuals and the society. This is the business of Office Technology and Management

A summary of the definitions of office technology and management presented so far revealed that it has been defined in terms of:

- programme utility
- the people who enroll
- the economic needs of a social system, and
- the manpower needs of the nation.

This summary provided a guide for the direction of this study.

## **Method**

The population of this study consisted of all the 361 lecturers who teach OTM subjects in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

## **Sample**

The sample used for this study comprises three major categories of people viz:

- (i) OTM Educators: Twenty Lecturers in the Department of Technical and Business Education, Delta State University, Abraka; sixty OTM educators from 6 post-secondary institutions (3 colleges of education and 2 colleges of technology (all in Delta State) offering OTM courses.
- (ii) General Educators – randomly selected 80 lecturers from the Delta State University, Abraka and Colleges of Education in Delta State.
- (iii) The uneducated group – those who have not received formal education. The group consisted of 80 respondents.

## **Research Procedure**

A preliminary survey of the meaning of Office Technology and Management was carried out to enable the researcher obtain information that will help in the development of the final instrument for the study. The preliminary study involved collecting information from a sample of 50 participants selected among the three groups involved in the study – OTM educators, general educators and the uneducated. These respondents were asked to give free response to the following questions. (i) What is Office Technology and Management? (ii) What factors influence your perception of the meaning of OTM?

Oral information were taken from those who could not write. The free responses collected and clustered to similarities or sameness in ideas to arrive at the questionnaire after much rewriting to enable the respondents understand the content or ideas expressed without much difficulty. The questionnaire was on a four point rating scale of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD)

### **Validity**

The completed questionnaire was administered on three OTM educators at the Delta State University Abraka to check for its validity. Any item that was declared

ambiguous was re-written while those that scored less than a mean of 2.20 through their rating were discarded from the instrument.

### **Reliability**

The test-retest reliability method was used. Fifteen identified respondents were requested to respond to the items of the instrument again three weeks after the first administration. The Spearman Rank Order correlation Coefficient was employed and correlating responses. A coefficient of .0.81 was obtained which compared favourably with Crombach Alpha of 0.70

### **Description of Data Gathering Technique**

The collection of data was through the use of questionnaire. A total of 240 copies of the questionnaire were distributed as follows: 80 to lecturers of Office Technology and Management; 80 to the general educators and 80 to the uneducated group. The questionnaire was designed in such a way as to find out the level of agreement or disagreement with suggested definitions of OTM. The section B of the questionnaires was designed to find out the level of agreement or disagreement with possible reasons that have accounted for their responses in section A of the instrument. The questionnaire copies were distributed to the respondents by hand and after going through, they were filled and were later collected by the investigator.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, the researcher made use of mean, standard deviation, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). A system of analysis was sought which would determine the degree of an acceptance to each statement in the questionnaire. Values were assigned to each response category as follows: Strongly Agree (4); Agree (3); Disagree (2); Strongly Disagree (1). The cut off point was determined by finding the mean of the values assigned to the options. Using the interval scale, the upper limit of the cut off point is 2.50, while the lower limit is 2.49. The sample mean was calculated on each statement and any statement with a mean rating of 2.55 or above shows that the group concerned agreed with the statement, while an item that had received a mean rating of 2.45 or below is an indication that the group disagreed with the item.

Mean responses were calculated by multiplying the frequency of response under each response category and divided the sum of the value obtained under each response category with the number of respondents as follows:  $4+3+2+1=10 \div 4=2.50$ .

**Results**

**Table I**

**Mean Responses of Office Technology and Management Educators (A), General Educators (B), and Uneducated (C) on their Perception of the Meaning of Office Technology and Management**

Q/I	Items	$\bar{X}$ A	$\bar{X}$ B	$\bar{X}$ C	Remarks
1	Office Technology and Management is education for the handicapped	1.20	1.67	2.69	Con
2	OTM is education for people who have chosen their occupation and require further skill development.	3.42	2.24	1.65	Var
3.	OTM is education designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding and attitudes of individuals	3.71	3.48	2.78	Con
4.	OTM is education for those with low intelligence	1.01	1.66	2.42	Con
5.	OTM is education for training people for work	3.59	3.36	2.64	Con
6.	OTM is education for the school drop out.	1.00	2.10	2.50	Con
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13.95</b>	<b>14.56</b>	<b>14.66</b>	
	Mean of the mean	2.31	2.42	2.44	

Con = Consensus.

Var = Variation

**Source:** Field Survey, 2010

From the data in the table above, it is seen that OTM educators, general educators and the uneducated regard questionnaire items 3 and 5 as the meaning of Office Technology and Management. OTM educators accepted items 2,3, and 5 as the meaning of OTM: The general educators accepted items 3 and 5 as meaning of OTM, while the uneducated group accepted items 1,3 and 5 as definitions of OTM.

**Table 2**

**Analysis of variance (ANOVA) Table on the Mean Responses of OTM Educators, General Educators and the uneducated on the Meaning of OTM.**

	$\bar{x}$ A	$\bar{x}$ B	$\bar{x}$ C
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.98</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>14.69</b>
<b>Mean (x)</b>	<b>2.31</b>	<b>2.42</b>	<b>2.44</b>
Grand mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) = 2.40			

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F cal Value	Level of Significance
Between Columns	0.0498	2	0.0248	0.03	P < 0.05
Between Row	13.24	15	0.87		

E2 = 0.8.

Since F0.05 cal at df2, 12 which is 0.03 is less than F0.05 DF2, 15 which is 6.93, we then do not reject the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the perception of OTM educators, general educators and the uneducated on the meaning of OTM.

The correlation ratio (E2 of 0.8) is an indication that the relation between the perceptions of OTM educators, general educators and the uneducated is strong.

**Table 3**

**Mean responses of OTM educators. (A), General Educators (B) uneducated (C)**  
Reasons that influenced the perceptions of the meaning of Office Technology and Management.

Q/I	Items	$\bar{X}_A$	$\bar{X}_B$	$\bar{X}_C$	Remarks
7	Only the handicapped can benefit from OTM	1.10	1.56	2.64	Con
8	The occupational content of OTM can equip students with saleable skills	2.71	3.05	2.64	Con
9	OTM does not require much academic work	1.43	2.11	2.70	Var
10	Those who received training in OTM can be easily employed or self-employed because of their skills.	3.60	3.30	2.69	Con
11	OTM can meet the critical need for highly skilled stenographers, secretaries and administrative secretaries.	3.82	3.05	2.40	Var
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12.66</b>	<b>10.07</b>	<b>12.87</b>	
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>2.60</b>	<b>2.60</b>	

**Source:** Field survey conducted, 2010

From the table above, it is revealed that Office Technology and Management Educators, General Educators and the uneducated group considered items 8, 10, and 11 as reason that have influenced perception of the meaning of OTM.



**Table 4**

**Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of OTM educators, General Educators and the Uneducated on the reasons that influenced their meaning of OTM.**

	$\bar{X}$ A	$\bar{X}$ B	$\bar{X}$ C
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>13.10</b>	<b>13.06</b>
<b>Mean (-)</b> <b>X</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>2.61</b>	<b>2.62</b>

Grand mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) = 2.40  
Grand M

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F cal Value	Level of Significance
Between Columns	0.051	2	0.0250	0.02	0.02
Between Rows	2.50	12	0.78	0.78	P < .05
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.55</b>	<b>14</b>			

E2 = 0.9

Since F cal at df2, 12 and (P0.05 which is 0.02 is less than F df2, 12 at P0.05 which is 6.93, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the opinion of the OTM educators, general educators, and the uneducated on the reasons that influenced their perception of the meaning of OTM is not rejected.

The correlation ratio ( $E^2$ ) of 0.9 is an indication that the relationship between the three groups is strong.

Below are the specific findings derived from the study.

- (a) OTM educators, general educators and uneducated accepted the following as the definitions of OTM.
  - (i) Office Technology and Management is education designed to develop skills, abilities, understandings and attitudes of individuals
  - (ii) OTM is education for training people for work:
  
- (b) In addition to the above definitions, OTM educators and general educators agreed that OTM is education for people who have chosen their occupation and require further skill development.
  
- (c) OTM educators and general educators rejected the following as definitions of OTM.
  - (i) OTM is education for the handicapped.
  - (ii) OTM is education for the low intelligence.
  - (iii) OTM is education for the school drop outs.

- (d) In addition to the generally accepted definitions of OTM given in the above, the uneducated group accepted OTM as education for the handicapped. They, however, rejected the following as definitions of OTM.
  - (i) OTM is education for people who have chosen their occupation and require further development.
  - (ii) OTM is education for those with low intelligence.
  - (iii) OTM is education for school drop outs.
  
- (e) OTM educators, general educators and the uneducated group unanimously agreed that OTM is meant for the academically inclined students. They also tend to agree that the occupational content of OTM can equip students with saleable skills.
  
- (f) OTM educators, and general educators in addition to the above agreed that the following influenced their perception of the definition of OTM.
  
- (g) OTM can meet the critical need for highly skilled Stenographers, Secretaries, Computer Operators, Office Supervisors and Managers, and administrative assistants. However, the two groups rejected the following reasons as having influenced them.
  - (i) Only the handicapped can benefit from OTM
  - (ii) OTM does not require much academic work
  
- (h) Apart from the generally accepted reasons, the uneducated agreed that the following influenced their perception of the definition of OTM.
  - (i) Only the handicapped can benefit from OTM
  - (ii) OTM does not require much academic work
  
- (i) The uneducated group, however, rejected the reason that OTM can meet the critical need for stenographers, secretaries, computer operators, office supervisors, office managers, and administrative secretaries.

### **Discussions of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to find out the perceptions of OTM educators, general educators and the uneducated of OTM programmes in Nigerian Polytechnics. It was revealed that the development of skills is perhaps the foundation on which OTM is laid. This assertion has been authenticated by the unanimous agreement of the three groups sampled to the fact that OTM is designed to develop skills, abilities, understandings and attitudes of individuals. This agrees with the definition of the Committee on Research and Publications of American Vocational Association (2000) and the Olaitan (1994). The primary purpose of embarking on skill development is to enable someone to do some work. Little wonder then that the three groups consented on the definition of OTM as education for training people for work. Having established the fact that OTM is for skill development which is useful for doing work, academic scope

and the clients of OTM seem to have generated some controversy as manifested in the findings. While the uneducated group level of education like polytechnics and universities. However, the uneducated feel that OTM does not require much academic work hence they assert that OTM cannot meet the critical need for highly skilled stenographers, secretaries, computer operators, office supervisors and managers as viewed by Popham (2001).feel that the clients of OTM are mainly the handicapped, the OTM educators and the general educators held to the belief that OTM is not for the handicapped. One cannot but believe the latter assertion comparing vocational background and orientation with the uneducated group. Considering the academic scope of OTM, OTM educators and general educators believe that OTM is not for those with low intelligence, and that it requires much academic work. They supported this claim to the effect that OTM can meet the critical need for highly skilled stenographers, secretaries, computer operators, office supervisors and mangers. This is an indication that OTM extends to higher

The study also found that the ability of OTM to develop or equip students with saleable skill which can enable them to be employed or self employed have been confirmed from the reason given by the three groups sampled. The believe of OTM educators that OTM is the education for people who have chosen their occupation may be a demonstration of their acquisition of a deeper meaning of OTM. The findings of the study have revealed the need for grassroots enlightenment of the people about the meaning of OTM to influence the society' s attitudes towards it. Also government educational efforts should be directed towards planning programmes in respect of the expressed meaning of OTM as contained in this study. Programme objectives should reflect the expressed meaning of OTM and the present OTM educators because of their background should be given preference in the recruitment of resource persons for planning OTM programmes and developing policies for OTM. The present findings were supported by Esene (2001) and Ehiamentalor and Ogunsaju (1994) when they noted that unless OTM is thoroughly understood, government and others charged with the responsibility of planning education for the Nigeria youths might be misled.

### **Conclusion**

Office Technology and Management programme is not a new programme of studies; it is as old as education in this country. It is purely a part of vocational and technical education, because it prepares students mainly for occupations requiring manipulative skills or non-technical occupations. Such education covers a wide range of OTM like office delivery system, work and methods study, office procedures, ICT applications, management, vocational skills, leading to the production of efficient and effective stenographers, secretaries, computer operators, office, supervisors, managers and administrative secretaries needed for the complex world of work. Indeed, the new OTM programme is carefully 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.

### **Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings of the study, and the conclusion reached, the researcher recommends that:

1. Governments, institutional administrators and lecturers should embark on grass root enlightenment of people and students that OTM is not a course of study designed for dropouts and never-do-wells.
2. Mass media should help to publicize the activities of OTM in the society.
3. Programme of objectives of OTM should influence curriculum experts in the design and planning of OTM curricula for ND and HND programmes in Nigeria.

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