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## A Study of the NBTE New Office Technology and Management Curriculum for Nigerian Polytechnics: An Analysis of Entrepreneurship Development

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### Abstract

*This study investigated entrepreneurship development subject topics as contained in the NBTE New Office Technology and Management Curriculum for Nigerian Polytechnics. The design of the study was a survey. A sample size of 57 respondents made up of 35 OTM lecturers and 22 OTM graduate entrepreneurs supplied the relevant data. A structured questionnaire which consisted of 54 items was used to collect data from the respondents. Data collected were analysed using mean statistics. The results of the study showed that the Nigerian Polytechnics offer courses in all the specific subject areas contained in the new OTM curriculum; that the general objectives of the programme are achievable; that the reasons for OTM graduates going into entrepreneurial business was to generate profits for themselves and to get away from the problems of employment and politics; that OTM graduates need entrepreneurial skills and competencies for successful entrepreneurial opportunities and that the graduates can hold positions as secretaries, office supervisors and managers, administrative assistants and secretaries and computer operators in both private and public sectors of Nigerian economy. On the basis of the results, the researcher made some recommendations that will make the new OTM curriculum stand the test of time.*

The desire of most developing countries, including Nigeria, is to have a self-reliant and resilient economy capable of generating an internally self-sustaining growth. For many decades, developing countries were exporters of raw materials and importers of finished manufactured goods from the developed countries.

However, having gained political independence, these countries want to transform their economies quickly in order to achieve economic independence as well.

Nigeria for example, has vast mineral, agricultural and human resources most of which have not been tapped. It's internal market is larger than those of most developing countries in Africa and elsewhere. Apart from the brief period of the civil war, Nigeria has enjoyed a long period of relative peace and political stability. Also, public policies have been directed towards the creation of suitable economic and social environment for the establishment of business operation. Under such favourable conditions, theories of economic development suggest that a rapid growth would occur provided the available resources are competently harnessed and utilized for the production of goods and services. In a free enterprise economy, the creation and distribution of goods and services are assigned to the entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurship, according to Esene (2010) is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully. The concept of entrepreneurship has been associated with several activities concerned with the establishment and operation of business enterprises. The activities include identification of investment opportunities, decision-making as to the opportunities to exploit, promotion and establishment of the business enterprises, aggregation of the scarce resources required for production and distribution, organization and management of the human and material resources for the attainment of the objectives of the enterprises, risk bearing, and innovation. Obviously, an effective performance of the above activities is critical to the birth, survival and growth of the business enterprises. Thus, entrepreneurship is a vital factor.

The whole essence of a functional educational system is to provide the recipients with the relevant and desirable skills and competencies to make meaningful and useful contributions to their immediate environment and the larger society either by way of taking up employment and/or by being employers of labour.

Section 1, sub-section 3 of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) stated that every citizen should be given equal opportunities to live and function intelligently in the society.

From the above, it is expected that every citizen - young or old has to be fully sensitized to see the need to work towards achieving this goal. Furthermore, this requires that the educational programmes should be structured to enable graduates acquire employable skills needed for gainful and self-employment in the society. It is not a surprise that one of the nation's educational aims and objectives as contained in the National Policy on Education (NPE) by FRN (2004) is the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both intellectual and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society. By implication, any student who leaves school at any stage should be able to fit into the world of work, as an employer of labour or a self-employed individual.

Office Technology and Management, according to Okoro and Amagoh (2008) is an efficient, effective, productive and functional education, which leads to self-

employment, self-reliance, paid-employment, and consequently self-actualization. OTM, by its nature, scope and contents, help the recipients of the course-programme to acquire relevant knowledge and skills in order to satisfy themselves for self-development and self-reliance. Akinola (2001) noted that the desire for self-development in the face of high rate of unemployment in the country today that is forcing school leavers to look to themselves rather than to the government for a means of making a living. Research studies conducted by Agomuo (2007) and Onyekonwe (2008) show that OTM graduates have been so enterprising as to set up secretarial/business institutes, employment bureaus which liaise with employers and link job-seekers with available suitable openings and more recently, what could be regarded in modern parlance, as information and communication centers.

Ekpenyong and Ojo (2008) reported that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme of 1999 is comprehensive in content and is well equipped to inculcate in the young all the necessary attributes that will ensure their acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, manipulative and life skills, competencies as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for long learning.

The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) acting on behalf of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) designed and released a new Office Technology and Management which has two years each for both the National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND).

The subjects are divided into (a) special areas which include Secretarial Studies, techniques in office management control; and (b) Information and Communication Technology Application which includes ICT, Word Processing, Computer Appreciation and web page design; and (c) General Education relating to contemporary problem usually called general studies. The new OTM curriculum as opposed to the old one consists of five (5) main components of the course-programmes viz:

- General Studies/Education
- Foundation Courses
- Professional Courses
- Entrepreneurship Development
- Supervised Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES).

Ovbiagele and Amiaya (2008) and Osuala (2004) posited that the development and significant improvement brought about by the 2004 edition of the Curriculum and Course Specification by NBTE. The expansion and inclusion of ICT and entrepreneurship development subjects marked a critical turning point in the history of education in Nigeria with reference to unemployment reduction and preparing graduates for self-reliance.

The Board which spelt out the objectives of each course programme realizes that the objectives of the programme are formulated to serve as a guide and direction to the implementation of the programme. The general objectives, according to NBTE are:

- (a) To equip the students with the knowledge, competencies and specific skills that will enable them to successfully hold positions as secretaries, managers and administrative assistants in both private and public sectors of the Nigerian economy;
- (b) To expose students to industrial experience thereby affording them an opportunity to practicalize their skills;
- (c) To develop in them an occupational intelligence that will make them versatile and adaptable to the changing situation in the business world; and
- (d) To develop their potential for further academic and professional pursuits.

Ehiamentalor (1990) and Okoro and Amagoh (2008) unanimously when noted that the specification of the objectives of the new OTM would help the curriculum designers and the teachers to channel their energy towards the direction where effective teaching and learning will take place.

The new OTM curriculum is specifically designed by NBTE to enable Polytechnic graduates to be useful to themselves, their immediate families and the larger society. It is on the strength of this and bearing in mind the roles of the individuals in the society that the graduates go into entrepreneurial investments as a means of generating profits, doing what they love to do, attempting to get away from the problems of paid employment, politics, and career constraints and preparing for self-retirement (Iheonunekwu, 2003).

Before now, the old secretarial studies curriculum was entirely dominated by typewriting, shorthand and management subjects – a situation Ovbiagele and Amiaya (2008) described was not good and healthy for the growth and development of the graduates. However, as part of its revision, review and adjustment of the old secretarial studies curriculum, NBTE came up with a new name called OTM curriculum to reflect what is obtainable in the developed countries of the world. Under the new OTM curriculum, less emphasis was given to typewriting and shorthand subjects while more emphasis was laid on ICT and entrepreneurship subjects in line with the country's policy of achieving millennium development goals.

The OTM graduates, as potential entrepreneurs require specific skills and competencies to be successful in their entrepreneurial endeavours. Okoro (2008); Onyekonwe (2008); Adidu and Olannye (2006); and Esene (2001) agreed that the OTM graduates require entrepreneurial skills and competencies in the following areas: ICT, Office Practice; Data Processing; Word Processing; Managerial; Accounting and Financial; Marketing and Sales; General Business; Technical; Business Management and Personal Entrepreneurship. In addition to the above, Esene (2010) noted that the entrepreneurs need personal qualities such as self-reliance, ability to identify and

exploit opportunities, creativity; willingness to take chances, even if it means to expose oneself to risk and finally, personal drive. According to Esene (2008), Polytechnic students who have successfully passed through their course-programme must have acquired the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies to hold positions in both private and public sectors of the Nigerian economy as Secretaries, Office Supervisors, Office Managers, Administrative Managers, Administrative Assistants, Administrative Secretaries, Computer Operators, Computer Analysts, Computer Programmers, Sales Managers, Sales Supervisors, Sales Representations, etc.

### **Statement of the Problem**

One of the functions of NBTE as contained in the law/edict that established it in 1977 was curriculum development. By 1989, NBTE came up with secretarial studies curriculum for ND and HND programmes. The curriculum was based on the training of professional secretaries with manual equipment. However, after due consultation, the Board came up with a new OTM curriculum to replace the old one. The contents of the curriculum have been expanded to include essentially ICT and entrepreneurship subjects. These subjects are to enable students acquire desirable and relevant skills and competencies needed for job markets and self-employment. There are allegations and counter allegations that the new OTM curriculum has no major difference in terms of appropriate skills and competencies acquisition. This study is therefore undertaken to find out the impact of the new OTM curriculum as regards employment and self-employment of graduates in the society.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of this study was to examine the NBTE new OTM Curriculum for Nigerian Polytechnics and specifically:

- a) determine the subjects taught in Nigerian Polytechnics.
- b) find out the general objectives of the new OTM curriculum.
- c) ascertain the reasons why only OTM graduates go into entrepreneurial activities.
- d) ascertain the skills and competencies needed by the OTM graduates for successful entrepreneurial programme.
- e) determine the job opportunities available for the OTM graduates.

### **Research Questions**

The study answered the following questions:

1. What are the subjects taught in Nigerian Polytechnics?
2. How adequate are the general objectives on the new OTM Curriculum of Nigerian Polytechnics?
3. What are the reasons why OTM graduates go entrepreneurial?
4. What are the skills and competencies needed by the OTM graduates?
5. What are the job opportunities available for the OTM graduates?

### Design of the Study

The study was a survey research. The population consisted of 57 respondents made up of 35 OTM lecturers and 22 OTM graduate entrepreneurs. A research instrument which consisted of 54 items was used for data collection. The instrument was based on five points responses.

The research instrument was subjected to face validation by three senior lecturers in OTM and in measurement and evaluation drawn from tertiary educational institutions in Delta State where the study was conducted. The instrument, after a face validation was subjected to test-retest in order to determine the stability of the questionnaire items. The questionnaire was administered to 10 OTM lecturers and five OTM graduate entrepreneurs. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, This yielded a correlation co-efficient of 0.72. The research questions were answered using the mean scores. The mean scores was arrived at as follows based on five point responses:  $5+4+3+2+1 = 15 \div 5 = 3.00$ . Any item having 3.00 and above was accepted while those items with 2.99 and below were rejected for the purpose of decision making.

### Research Question One

What are the subjects taught in the Nigerian Polytechnics? To answer this question, the data in Table 1 were used.

**Table I**  
**Specific Subject Areas in the New OTM Curriculum**

Q/Item	Subject in the Nigerian Polytechnics	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decisions
1	General Studies subjects	57	3.99	Accepted
2.	Foundation subjects	57	4.02	=ditto=
3.	Professional OTM subjects	57	4.32	“
4.	Entrepreneurship Development subject	57	3.88	“
5.	Supervised Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES)*.	NA	NA	“

**Source:** Field Studies Conducted 2010.

\*OTM students are excluded from the exercise.

Questionnaire items (1 - 4) show that the subjects are taught to the OTM students. This means that the OTM graduates are adequately and sufficiently prepared for the world of work.

### Research Question Two

What are the general objectives of the new OTM Curriculum? The data in Table 2 answered this question.

**Table 2**  
**General Objectives of the New OTM Curriculum**

Q/item	General Objectives	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decisions
6	To equip the students with the knowledge, competencies and specific skills that will enable them to successfully	57	4.30	Accepted
7	To hold positions as secretaries, supervisors, managers and administrative assistants in both private and public sectors of the Nigerian economy.	57	4.21	Accepted
8	To exposes students to industrial experience thereby affording them an opportunity to practicalize their skills. 55	57	4.03	Accepted
9	To develop in them an occupational intelligence that will make them versatile and adaptable to the changing situation in the business world.	57	4.21	Accepted
10	To develop their potential for further academic and professional pursuits.	57	4.11	Accepted

**Source:** Field Trip, 2010

Regarding items 6 – 10, the responses from the respondents reveal that all the items received over and above 4.00. The implication here is that all the general objectives are adequate to prepare the OTM graduates for useful living.

### **Research Question Three**

What are the reasons why OTM Graduates go Entrepreneurial? To answer this question, the data in Table 3 were used.

**Table 3**  
**Reasons for OTM Graduates Go Into Entrepreneurial**

Q/item	Reasons for OTM graduates going into Entrepreneurial ventures	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decisions
11	They see business ownership as a means of generating profits.	57	3.92	Agreed
12	They see it as opportunity to do what they love doing	52	4.16	=Ditto=
13	It seems to be the best way of getting away from the problems of paid employment, politics, and career constraints.	52	5.31	“
14	It is seen as the way of preparing for retirement.	54	3.61	“
15	They wish to emulate the career of successful businessmen who have acquired leadership in business	53	3.72	“
16	It is seen as an alternative when ready paid employment could not be secured.	52	4.34	“

Source: Field Survey Conducted, 2010

As regards questionnaire items 11 – 16, the data received from the respondents show a minimum mean score of 3.61, while the maximum mean score was 4.34. It is safe to conclude therefore that OTM graduates go into entrepreneurial programmes in order to keep the body, soul and spirit together in a competitive world of work.

**Research Question Four**

What are the skills and competencies needed by OTM graduates? The data in Table 4 were used to answer this question

**Table 4**  
**Skills and Competencies Needed by OTM Graduates**

Q/items	Skills and Competencies needed by OTM Graduates	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decision
17	Ability to use ICT equipment for communication.	57	3.91	Agreed
18	Ability to manage information at the right time.	57	3.61	Agreed
19	Ability to recognize office automation system.	52	3.94	Agreed
20	Ability to communicate effectively using oral and written skills.	53	4.03	Agreed
21	Ability to conduct meetings wisely.	57	4.30	Agreed



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22	Ability to plan for short, medium and long terms.	54	3.99	Agreed
23	Ability to purchase goods, tools and equipment.	57	4.01	Agreed
24	Ability to acquire management and supervisory skills	56	4.31	Agreed
25	Ability to recognize the need for employees growth and development.	52	4.35	Agreed
26	Ability to determine and fix personal salary.	53	3.77	Agreed
27	Knowledge of accounts, costing and preparing financial statements.	51	4.26	Agreed
28	Ability to understand payroll and the various deductions	53	4.28	Agreed
29	Ability to understand federal, state and local government levies, taxes and regulations.	54	3.98	Agreed
30	Ability to acquire the knowledge of business laws	57	3.74	Agreed
31	Knowledge of seasonal fluctuation of goods	57	3.67	Agreed
32	Ability to determine the extent of which products will sell.	53	4.92	Agreed
33	Ability to estimate, budgets and forecast.	53	4.22	Agreed
34	Knowledge of how to determine availability of goods/raw materials of production and storage of finished goods.	54	4.28	Agreed
35	Ability to determine what customers needs and advertise for them.	52	4.31	Agreed
36	Ability to assess facilities and equipment required	53	4.12	Agreed
37	Ability to judge performance of employees	57	4.23	Agreed
38	Know how to hire and fire employees	57	4.17	Agreed
39	Ability to recognize trends such as technological trends, and government action.	53	4.25	Agreed
40	Ability to thinks creatively and take appropriate decisions when necessary	57	4.35	Agreed
41	Ability to understand basic steps involved in starting a business	56	4.42	Agreed

**Source:** Field Studies, 2010.

With reference to items 17 – 41, the data collected and analyzed show that items 16,17, 18,21,25,28,29,30 and 31 received 3.61 and above but below 4.00, while questionnaire items 19,20,22,23,24,26,27,32,34,35,36,37,38,39 and 40 received minimum mean scores of 4.00 and above. The implication here is that the OTM graduates need special skills and competencies needed by being successful in their entrepreneurial ambitions.

**Research Question Five**

What are the job opportunities available for the OTM graduates? To answer this question, the data in Table 5 were used.

**Table 5**  
**Job Opportunities Available for the OTM Graduates**

Q/items	Job Opportunities for OTM Graduates	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decision
42	Secretaries	57	4.35	Agreed
43	Office Supervisors	57	4.22	=Ditto=
44	Office Managers	57	4.21	“
45	Administrative Managers	55	4.11	“
46	Administrative Secretaries	54	4.16	“
47	Administrative Assistants	53	4.37	“
48	Computer Operators	57	4.30	“
49	Computer Analysts	54	4.05	“
50	Computer Programmers	55	4.02	“
51	Sales Managers	56	4.16	“
52	Sales Supervisors	57	4.19	“
53	Sales Representatives	52	4.26	“
54	Business Managers	53	4.05	“

**Source:** Field survey conducted, 2010

All the questionnaire items (see 42 - 54) received mean scores of 4.02 and above. It is safe therefore to conclude that the OTM Curriculum contents are adequate and sufficient to prepare OTM graduates to hold positions in the private and public sectors of Nigerian economy.

**Discussion of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to examine NBTE new OTM curriculum for Nigerian Polytechnics to see how it prepares OTM graduates for gainful and self-employment in the private and public sectors of the Nigerian economy. The findings reveal that the new OTM Curriculum offered five major areas that prepared the graduates for the world of work. This finding was supported by the earlier studies by Ovbiagele and Amiaya (2008) which noted that the new OTM Curriculum has brought significant improvement in the unemployment reduction as well as self-reliance and self-actualization. The results of the study also reveal that the general objectives of the course of study are achievable. The studies by Okoro and Amagoh (2008) and Ehiametalor (1990) supported this finding when they noted that the objectives would serve as useful guide to the teachers whose duties are to implement the new OTM curriculum.

The findings of the study show that the OTM graduates need entrepreneurial skills and competencies for successful entrepreneurial opportunities. This finding was supported by earlier studies by Esene (2001), Adidu (2006); Okoro (2008); and Onyekonwe (2008) when they stated that the OTM graduates need special entrepreneurial skills and competencies for them to succeed either in paid-employment or in self-employment. Finally, the results of the study reveal that the OTM graduates have the ability and aptitude to hold positions in both the private and public sectors of the Nigerian economy. This finding was supported by Esene (2008) when he posited that polytechnics students who have successfully completed their course of study are prepared to hold position in private and public sectors

### **Conclusion**

The NBTE new OTM Curriculum is an improvement of the old secretarial studies curriculum. The new curriculum has injected many ICT and entrepreneurship development subjects. The expansion in it, particularly in the areas of ICT and the inclusion of entrepreneurship development subjects is designed to adequately and sufficiently prepare the OTM graduates for gainful employment, self-employment and self-reliance in the competitive world of work. It is therefore hoped that with consistent implementation of the new OTM curriculum, the burden of unemployment placed on the Nigerian graduates and the inability to become self-employed would be drastically reduced to the barest minimum level

### **Recommendations**

On the strength of the findings of the study, and the conclusion arrived at, the researcher recommends:

1. that there is the need to continually review, revise and adjust the OTM Curriculum to enable the OTM graduates face the changes and challenges posed by the era of automated office.
2. that the general objectives of the OTM curriculum should be up-dated from time to time in order to properly direct and guide the lecturers and students in the teaching and learning environments.
3. that the entrepreneurial skills and competencies needed by the OTM graduates should be emphasized and practicalized by exposing the students to the world of work while in schools.

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