



Need for Quality Assurance in Office Technology and Management in Colleges of Education of Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examined achieving quality assurance in office technology and management programme in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. It has been observed that specified guidelines and course specification has not been duly followed in Colleges of Education and other Institutions. The effect of this is that most of the graduates of such institutions lacks the required skills, knowledge and competencies necessary to fit into the world of work. The study however highlights that OTM programme is meant to help its entrant acquire the relevant knowledge in office skills and competencies for self actualization and sustainability. This paper concludes that teaching must be according to the school minimum standard for the realization of its goals and to a large extent improve the quality of instruction in the classroom. It recommends amongst others that there is need for constant retraining of lecturers and instructors in order to imbibe current knowledge and experience in ICT and other relevant fields to enable them achieve this quality assurance in teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematic training and instruction designed to transmit knowledge and develop skills in individuals. It is also a process of changing the behavior pattern of individuals in the desired direction (Vin-Mbah, 2012). It also involves a continuing development of relevant knowledge, skills and habits whose broad understanding and application enables the growth of their society. Vin-Mba (2012) says that the success or failure of any educational endeavour depends ultimately on the method adopted by the teacher. This implies that learning in our institutions have to be geared towards inculcating values, acquisition of skills and competences necessary for social, cultural economic and technological development. This is where quality assurance in office technology and management programme in Nigerian Colleges of Education comes in. In any field of human endeavour, quality is of utmost importance. This paper therefore highlights the needs for quality assurance in office technology and management to enable guidance of the programme to compete favourably in the world of work. Hornby (2001) defined quality as the standard of something when it compared to other things like it, how good or bad something is. Ijaya (2001), viewed quality as something everyone considers good and would want to have. Bisong (2000) described quality as relating to standard and that standards constitute the essential yardstick for the assessment of values and comparability, interpretability and harmonization.

Thus quality in Nigerian Colleges of Education is a multi-dimensional concept which should embrace illicit functions and activities; teaching academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, service to the commonly and academic environment (UNESCO, 1998). Quality assurance on the other hand, is about consistently meeting product specification. It is the ability of educational institutions to meet the need of the users of manpower in regulation to the quality of skills acquired by their products, that is, students. Okebukola (2007), sees quality assurance in



Nigerian tertiary institutions as a process of continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning activities which will be achieved by pathways of employing mechanism, internal and external to the institutions. It is ensuring that at least the provision of minimum academic standard are attained, maintained and enhanced. In summary, quality assurance is viewed as a planned and systematic review processes carried out by organization, institution or programme to determine if acceptance standards are being met, maintained and enhanced. It guarantees confidence in a programme of study given by an institution that standards and quality are being maintained and enhanced (UNESCO, 2009).

THE CONCEPT OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT

Office technology and management is the application of scientific knowledge, devices and systems to facilitate and enhance the information processes and delivery of same. It is also viewed as a concept that is associated with office automation, electronic technology and office globalization. Office technology and management is a new academic programme in Nigeria tertiary institutions designed to replace the secretarial studies programme. According to NBTE, Office Technology and Management programme is designed to equip students with secretarial office skills for employment in various fields of endeavour by equipping the students with effective work competencies and socio psychological work skills, which are very essential in everyday interactions with others. According to Oluidele, office technology and Management (OTM) was aimed at producing graduates which would have acquired intellectual and professional skills to be able to effectively manage the electronic-driven office. The Commission on Research and Publications of the American Vocational Association (2002), defined OTM (Secretarial Studies) as education designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciates encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on on a useful and productive basis.

Amagoh (2008) described OTM as an efficient and effective productive and functional education which leads to self-employment, self-reliance, paid-employment and consequently self-actualization. Essene (2013) described OTM programme as a type of Education deliberately designed for the development of skills and knowledge which can be useful for the both the individual concernment, the immediate family and entire nation. According to Oyinkoye and Oluwalola (2010) Office Technology and management is a new nomenclature that emerged to replace the former secretarial studies programme in Nigerian Colleges of Education and was introduced by the National board for Technological education in 2004. According to the due, the replacement was meant to make the programme and its recipient fit into the world of work appropriately, especially in this modern age of globalization where new equipment and machines are emerging daily. Thus, office technology and management programme is aimed towards the acquisition and development of skills, competencies, attitudes and attributes to be able to function effectively and adequately in the millennium office.



Quality Assurance in Office Technology and Management Programme

Quality assurance in office technology and management means the relevance and appropriateness of the programme to the needs of modern office for which it is provided. Uteh and Iheukwumere (2013) asserted that quality assurance in OTM means bringing together such variables as general pedagogical knowledge, subjects matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of students, knowledge of strategies to sustain learning and knowledge to use technology to produce a competent graduates. They defined OTM programme as effective response by OTM programme to the challenges posed by global, local and technology related forces in producing OTM graduates.

Objectives of OTM Programme in Nigeria Colleges of Education

The OTM programme was structured to achieve the following,

1. OTM programme is designed to equip students with secretarial/ office skills for employment in various fields of endeavours. Akwa citing NBTE asserted that in addition to the acquisition of vocational skills in office technology and management, the students are equipped with effective work competencies and socio-psychological work skills which are very essential in everyday interaction with others.
2. OTM programme is also aimed and producing graduates who would be able to effectively manage the electronic drawn office and who would be equipped with secretarial and office skills for employment in various field of endeavour. OTM curriculum developers envisage existence of solid internal evaluation for ensuring minimum standard and quality assurance.
3. The OTM programme is however geared towards providing students with in-depth administrative office preparation to meet the demands and challenges in the business environment.
4. Through the programme, students can obtain marketable skills applicable to various careers and industries as well as cognitive skills transferable to other employment situations and life experience.
5. The objective of OTM programme components appears to be responsive to a global initiative with an objective that portends new academic direction in favour of ICT. The theoretical and practical contents of the programme in the new curriculum are geared towards integrating graduates of OTM into the evolution of technology.
6. It is also structured to create general entrepreneurship awareness in the student with a view to inculcating in them knowledge for productive purposes. Ahukannah (2008) further added that owing to the development in information and communication technology and information technology, teaches in OTM education are expected to equip students with the following competencies to assure quality in OTM education are expected to equip students with the following competencies to assure quality in OTM and produce graduates that can
 1. Produce office documents and reports using word processing.
 2. Produce numerical information using spread sheet.
 3. Produce office information in graphic form.



4. Manipulate access and retrieve information from computer based system.
5. Access a wealth of information in internet through the knowledge of web pages etc.

The Need for Quality Assurance in Office Technology and Management Programme

Quality assurance is very important in order to ensure qualitative teaching and learning in Office Technology and Management programme. Adegbe Sam in Idih and Umunnah (2013) outlined the following major relevance of quality assurance in Office Technology and Management programme

1. To serve as indispensable component of making control strategy in office education.
2. To ensure and maintain high standards of education at all levels.
3. To assist in monitoring and supervision of office education at all.
4. To determine the quality of teachers input.
5. To determine the number of classroom needed based on the average control of office education.
6. To determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control of office education.
7. To determine how the final resources available for quality education could be prudently and judiciously utilized.

STRATEGIES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN OTM PROGRAMME IN NIGERI COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

The following are some of the strategy that is established for quality assurance in OTM programme.

1. Computer aided instructional strategy in quality assurance of OTM. The computer aided instructional strategy in OTM will enable the students to learn and acquire the knowledge, skills, ability and attitude necessary to function successfully in the global business and economic environment. This is done by integrating the appropriate technology to support practices that link learning objectives and high levels of achievement.

Consequently, for this strategy to be effective, the institution must provide the technological environment, the curricular must be designed to suit the environment and students must be mindfully engaged in the teaching-learning process.

2. Concept Mapping Instructional Strategy in Quality Assurance of OTM programme
Concept mapping is a learning strategy that many students find useful in understanding complex ideas and clarifying ambiguous relationships. According to Ajaja (2009), concept mapping instructional strategy is creating a graphic representation of a topic to help the students visualize the key concepts and organize their knowledge more clearly than other strategies of study. A concept map is a two-dimensional representation of the relationship between key ideas. It shows we think and suggest affinities and associations that might not otherwise be obvious. At first glance, a concept may look like a flow chart in which key terms are placed in boxes connected by directional arrows. These boxes and directional arrows are meta cognitive tools that empower the learner to take charge of learning in a highly organized and meaningful manner.



3. **Industrial Collaboration Instructional Strategy in Quality Assurance of OTM.**
According to Oduma (2008), industrial collaboration instructional strategy is the means of partnership with other bodies on something for mutual benefit. In Universities, polytechnics and Colleges of Education, industrial collaboration are effective way of technology transfer and it is of mutual benefit to the school and industry. According to Frankie Dolor (2002), the relationship between OTM and industry is necessary for helping schools for adequate placement of students in industry for industrial attachment, reviewing the training context area with the aim of designing effective curricula that is related to industrial human resources demand and improving the quality of skilled manpower being turned out. In line with this aspiration, follows then that educational institutions offering OTM should collaborate with industry in all phases of the training programme. These will assist OTM recipients to acquire knowledge and skills of the technologies that are not found in the classroom.
4. **Laboratory-centred Instructional Strategy in quality assurance of OTM.**
Laboratory-centered strategy according to Oduma (2008) connotes that all instructions requiring the acquisitions of skills and use of instructional facilities should ensure that there is a well-equipped laboratory in the institution of learning to enable students learn and acquire appropriate skills and knowledge for them to be functional in the world of work. Simulation instructional strategy in teaching and learning of OTM is a role play strategy. Individual acts apart to express his/her own perception of the roles or functions worker perform while discharging office routine or duties.
According to Farrant (1999) in Vin-Mbah (2012), play can be regarded as the experimenting stage of learning where the students tries out his newly acquired knowledge and skills with the activities of people and things. Hence, play encourages the students to stimulate creative imaginations, provide opportunity for experimentation beyond the real level of development, exercise learning competencies, engage in independent learning and gain experience as well as expose himself freely with confidence. Stimulation Strategy therefore is fundamental in OTM because it enables the students to play the role of a secretary or managers if he is in real working environment during teaching-learning process.
5. In order to ensure quality assurance, external and internal measures are employed to assure quality in the Colleges of Education. The internal measures include moderation of examination questions and results by competent academic in relevant field outside the staff list of the College of education. Academic board perusal, moderation and confirmation of examination. The external measure of quality assurance is required. i.e the national body (NCCE) system of measuring quality therefore are through routine re-accreditation of programme and accreditation of new programme. The routine re-accreditation of programmes has five year duration. A programme accreditation would enjoy that clearance until the fifth year when such programme would be re-accredited. In the same vein, a programme given interim accreditation would have to be fully accredited after the first year. However, a programme denied accreditation would not admit new year students.



CONCLUSION

The paper made an inclusive x-ray of office technology and management programmes, with a view to examining how quality assurance in the programme can be obtained, maintained and sustained. The study revealed that office Technology and management in Nigerian Colleges of Education is a new name for the former secretarial studies and this was approved in 2004 by the national body. The objectives, theoretical and practical contents of the office technology and management curriculum are geared towards integrating graduates of office technology and management programme is designed to develop in students, skills, abilities, understandings, work habits, competencies and appreciations of encompassing knowledge needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive bases. This paper is of the opinion that quality assurance in office technology and management programme is achievable through constant monitoring of the programme, programme evaluation, supervising inspection, quality control and reporting, provision of adequate number of academically qualified lecturers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, use of functional instructional methods, fund provision and admission of only qualified candidates into the programme. All these put together would make the programme a high success in virtually all Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are put forward to ensure quality assurance in OTM programme in Colleges of Education in Nigeria..

1. Federal and State government in Nigeria should be given adequate funds to Federal and State Colleges of Education to procure teaching and learning facilities for meaningful learning.
2. There is the need for continuous and effective supervision of the educational activities of OTM department by both internal and external supervisory bodies for efficient academic delivery.
3. Admission of students above the carrying capacity recommended by NCCE should stop to avoid over stretching the available facilities.
4. A review of NCCE operational strategies. The NCCE should evolve such internal checking mechanism that would make its assignment on colleges of education devoid of any nepotism and corrupt tendencies. Since the verdict of NCCE is taken as sacred as to what institutions is qualified to run NCE programme, compromise to any form is a great disservice to the nation because of the implications of half-baked graduates. NCE should device means that would make its accreditations thorough, fair and impartial.
5. There is need for constant retraining of lecturers and instructors in order to imbibe current knowledge and experience in ICT and other relevant fields which was recently introduced in the programme.
6. Alternative source of power generation should be provided to supply light where there is failure in the national grid.

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