

## RESEARCH IN OFFICE TECHNOLOGY: A VITAL TOOL FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

*Research in Office Technology has standard processes, techniques and information that are geared towards production endeavours. The objective of the study is to consider the importance and value of research in Office Technology. It is however believe that human resources development in any nation deserves a realistic approach. For this to be partly achieved, the desired quality research on emerging problems in Office Technology, processes and necessary facilities must be of the right quality and quantity in order to facilitate the effective delivery of the programme. The paper therefore advocate for the repositioning of Office Technology programme in the nation's tertiary institutions through quality funding and facilities for it to contribute effectively to national growth and development.*

**Keywords:** *Research, Office Technology, Economic Empowerment, National Development*

### Introduction

The success and survival of any nation depends on the dynamic qualities of continued and intensive research. The source and nature of our societal problems need to be discovered and addressed. The outcome of such discoveries will help to improve the quality of the lives of the citizenry. The ability of the researchers of any society to develop processes, gadgets, techniques and information that are geared towards productive endeavours is the foundation of any society development (Jimoh-Kadiri, 2010). Research is meant to seek out new ideas, new things or new ways of using or doing things with a view to making living easier. Research has been undertaken to discover and develop useful products, give a look into the past and determine what is to be done (Uzo-Onkonkwo, 2010). A viable educational system according to Jimoh-Kadiri (2010) is the fulcrum of research, since it provides the facilities and personnel needed for research activities. An academic programme that will solve societal problem therefore requires space in the form of buildings, equipment, libraries, funds, and research oriented teachers. Unfortunately, inadequate supply of these necessities for research has stood in the way of research efforts in many institutions of higher learning in Nigeria (Ike, 1995).

Office technology which is an aspect of vocational technical education is concerned with education that seeks to educate individuals for and about business. It is an aspect of educational programme which prepares students for careers in business. In the view of Olopete (2002), it is a vocational programme which prepares individuals for gainful employment through acquisition of skills and knowledge that affect the business world. Research in Office Technology has added a new dimension to the facilities and equipment for office education programme. Donwa (2006) submitted that Nigeria is not acclaimed for world class research because institutions which should be centres of research and knowledge creation are handicapped and therefore have not been able to tap into potential areas of research.

Research at the moment need to be majored on areas that could be of help to the lingering crises in the nation. In supporting this view, Nwachukwu (2003) viewed that for research to make reasonable impact in the society, a lot of things have to come into play; things like funding, motivation, infrastructure, equipment, good policies, organization and management. Coupled with this, is a programme of instruction with a capacity to build the recipient with necessary skills and knowledge that will make them relevant in the labour market. Office Technology is the type of education needed by an individual to enable him participate successfully in business as a producer and a consumer of goods and services. It makes an individual more efficient and it further develops understanding and skills necessary for him to enter the business world and earn a living. Olafare (2008) further averred that office technology which is a part of business education is the sum total of the knowledge, skills and aptitudes that is required not only for successfully promoting and administering a business enterprise, but also for entry into an advancement in jobs. Research in office technology therefore holds great promise for solving some of the problems facing the society and leading the society to a better and more satisfying life. This paper therefore discusses the importance of research in office technology that has the capacity to address the emerging challenges in the society.

### **Research and Office Technology and Management Education Delivery**

It has been established that education has its problems necessitating research activities. Nwanewezi (2010) agreed that there is a serious need for educational professionals to embark upon research as a way of finding solutions to numerous problems affecting the educational sector. Okeke (2004) while commenting on the various problems facing office technology research stated among others that facilities for educational research in the institutional and public libraries are generally inadequate, professional journals in the various educational disciplines, where available are not up dated, books published locally are rarely found at the shelves of the library, subject library are not properly equipped to direct the researchers and lack or general absence of data banks and research organizations. Office technology which is that programme of education that leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge might not be an exception to the above mentioned problems affecting research activities.

To overcome this problem however, Long (1999) admitted that the information society is adopting a new approach to seeking information and that the traditional approach

which involved finding print sources and then thumbing through them one by one has become cumbersome for today's researchers. A new environment powered by information and communications technology has therefore emerged. In the submission of Nwanewezi (2010), there is no doubt that the effective and efficient engagement in the new research environment would, in addition to hardware and software requirements, require learning of new skills, competencies and attitudes, updating of outdated skills and competencies, the structuring and institutionalizing of these skills and competencies and other necessary inputs.

It has been generally accepted that education is a veritable instrument for socio economic development of a nation. For this to be achieved, it has to be education in the right direction. In corroborating this, Okafor cited in Amahua (2010) viewed this type of education as a process of the development of potentialities of the individual and their maximum activation when necessary, according to right reason, and to achieve thereby his perfect self fulfillment. Supporting this view, Eyibe (1995) viewed that the main aim of modern education is to produce the kind of citizens with occupational skills, essential knowledge and enduring values that will enable the individuals to live meaningfully in a competitive modern society. From this view, office technology can be used as a tool for the integration of the individual into a society so that he can strive for social, economic, scientific and technological development. Citing Nolan, Amahua (2010) pointed out that research in office technology is necessary in order to determine not only how the teacher will teach, but also what he will teach. This according to him implies that office technology educators need to explore the field and know what is happening to office technology programme at all levels.

Office technology research involves huge sums of money and such funds are hard to come by. It is necessary therefore for the government and educational institutions to embark on research or to grant adequate research funds to office technology programme for research on emerging problems in office technology. Both the instructors and beneficiaries of the programme stand to gain from useful research findings in office technology as this will result in quality education.

### **Value of Office Technology and Management Research**

The objective of office technology is to produce highly qualify professionals that will be able to adjust to the changing needs of the modern society. Ogunfunminiye and Adedijo (2010) viewed that vocational programmes (including office technology) requires tenacity and constant practice with tools and facilities especially during practical and experimentation. They further posited that research product is the engine of national development and it is brought about among other things by adequate facilities.

Uzo-Okonkwo (2010) however gave the following as some of the value of research in office technology

1. Textbook and curriculum materials are designed and written taking into consideration the result of vocabulary and work usage studies.
2. Research has pointed out that students learned new words and concepts through being exposed to them several times within the context of the subject matter.
3. In the field of shorthand and dictation, it has been found that students learn relatively little by copying line after line of shorthand symbols and that they learn more rapidly

through reading a great deal of well written shorthand and taking repeated dictation of new and familiar material graded for difficulty.

4. The research skills and understandings developed is used in identifying, attacking and solving problems that arise in the line of professional duties and activities.

### **Office Technology Education and National Development**

The economy of most developing countries in the world is moving towards a direction where only those individuals with self sustaining and saleable skills can really survive. This has made it imperative for individuals to think of ways to be self employed and to be self reliant rather than waiting for non existing jobs. According to Okoro (2010), unemployment is a common phenomenon which every nations strives to eradicate, hence, educational policies are formulated to provide relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for individuals to secure self paid employment rather than being employed by other persons. It is not surprising therefore that one of the nation educational aims as contained in the national policy on education emphasizes the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical for the individuals to live in and contribute immensely to the development of the society. The introduction of business education with office technology as an integral part is a blessing with an emphasis on entrepreneurship education.

Anao cited in Ikudayisi (2008) asserted that the goal of business education (office technology) is the production of manpower, which possesses the requisite knowledge, skill and bringing them into cooperative relationship, yielding the goods and services demanded by society for the satisfaction of their wants and needs. Okoro and Amagoh (2008) described office technology as part of business education that is a productive and functional education which leads to self employment in order to be self reliant. According to them, it enables the individual to possess office education skills required to perform effectively which include information and communication technology, office practice skills, data processing skills, word processing skills, technical skills, business communication skills, human relations skills, records management and office machines operating skills. These skills enhance entrepreneurial success for office technology graduates and make them to contribute to national development in areas which include

1. Being self reliant and deriving personal profits from self grown business.
2. Establishing small and medium sized businesses with the opportunities to employ others.
3. Possessing required training and support necessary to establish their business and train others.
4. Possession of required skills needed to meet the manpower needs of the nation.
5. Stimulating industrial and economic growth of rural and undeveloped areas.
6. Identifying and exploring new business opportunities and employing others thereby stimulating economic growth.

### **Office Technology Curriculum for Economic Empowerment and National Development**

The challenges in the education system in the nation has to do with producing relevant manpower capable of meeting the domestic challenges and the increasing global

competitiveness which has translated into the grim of unemployment crisis we are witnessing in the country today. Economic empowerment goes along with acquiring functional business education that will enable the individual to be self reliant or self sustained through self employment, government employment and any education that fails this acidic test has failed all (Akintonde, 2008). According to him, to be economically empowered, one must possess the requisite knowledge, skill and attitude for harnessing other resources and bringing them into a relationship that yield goods and services demanded by society. Office technology programme makes its beneficiaries to be competent, knowledgeable, creative and skillful.

An important aspect of office technology and management education towards national development is in the area of manpower training and development. The revolution in modern technology that spread across all sectors of life has resulted in most occupations to become complex and technically oriented, hence, to be successful in such occupation, one requires considerable technical knowledge, skill and understanding of the job and clusters of jobs involved (Enijuni and Aina, 2013). The purpose of office technology and management education was to ensure the provision of basic training which will provide and equip the students with the kind of skills and attitudes that would encourage them to be self reliant rather than seeking for white collar occupation. Therefore, office technology and management education trains manpower in occupational areas requiring skills and also provides supplements to the old apprenticeship system and may eventually replace it in future as long as the nation embraces technologies. It is therefore viewed that office technology education can be used as part of the weapon for national development if the recipients are properly trained to acquire the necessary skills and abilities needed in to steer the economic ship of the nation.

There is no doubt that new businesses have increased tremendously and are more sophisticated in practice. To cope with the ever increasing areas of business and technologies involved, good numbers of entrepreneurs endowed with related skills are needed to keep the nation in line with development. Office technology education provides entrepreneurial training to those who need them to manage their businesses. Graduates of office technology education programmes are at a vintage position to establish small businesses like sole trading, business centre, make a call centre, word processing centre, establishment of computer training centre etc. It should be noted that the curriculum of office technology programme is designed towards skill acquisition which should enable recipients to contribute meaningfully to national growth even without seeking for white collar job.

### **Constraints to National Development and Economic Empowerment**

For an economy to function effectively, some variables must be put in order. The non availability of these variables poses an obstacle to national development and empowerment. Babat (2007) gave the following as part of the constraints.

1. **Poverty:** This is more than palpable; it is visible, evident and manifest in widespread hunger, diseases, malnutrition and illiteracy. The consequences of poverty according to Ayagba (2006) include scaring pains, frustration and dejection which translate to all manners of conflict, violence and rebellion as being witnessed today in the country.



2. **Insecurity and violence:** A situation whereby the freedom of the citizens is not guaranteed is an obstacle to economic development. Other forms of insecurity include robbery, kidnapping, high rate of ethnic, political and religious crises.
3. **Illiteracy or ignorance:** An illiterate society cannot be a productive society. The consequences of this are the breeding of the army of unemployed youths which can easily be manipulated to cause political, religious and ethnic crises.
4. **Lack of adequate information:** This stands as a constraint to development. Most Nigerians are not adequately informed. Better programmes by government, especially the economic reform programme are not properly communicated to the people.
5. **Unemployment:** This is a situation where skills and knowledgeable people are not able to find paid jobs. A significant number of the Nigerian populace is unemployed. A good number of graduates that are ready and prepared to contribute to the economic development of the nation are jobless.
6. **Corruption:** Dishonesty and acts of doing illegal things in return for money or personal gain are still the order of the day in Nigeria. Effort being made to combat this epidemic is yet to yield the desired result.
7. **Low industrialization and productivity:** Industrialization is the surest and most direct route to economic and national development of a nation. The economy of the country is characterized with low industrialization and productivity because of faulty policies.
8. **Attitudinal problem:** Attitude is a variable that helps to explain an individual's state of character. Most Nigerians believe that no one gets rich without stealing government money or getting into politics and they want to make it quick. The get rich quick syndrome has led many into corrupt practices and mismanagement of public funds.

However, Osuntuyi (2013) observed that obstacles to national development in less economically developed countries include

1. The priorities of government and individuals are often short term.
2. Corruption makes it difficult for priorities to withstand the test of time.
3. Lack of fund for developmental initiatives.
4. Lack of qualified people to develop and implement alternative technologies due to poor educational system.
5. Imposition of economic sanctions on developing nations that may hinder the exchange of technologies.

Also, ignoring and insensitivity to functional education that could make the citizenry to be self reliant will hamper national development

### **Repositioning Office Technology for National Development and Economic Empowerment**

Office technology programme, if rigorously implemented can be an important tool to enhance national development and empower the beneficiaries for self sustenance. However, the present office technology programme according to Goteng (2007), though well articulated on papers suffers from several defects, some of which include the following:

1. Inadequate equipment for the proper impartation of necessary business skills to students. Most tertiary institutions do not have the requisite equipment.
2. The number of institutions offering office technology programme are not adequate considering the number of tertiary institutions in the country.
3. Apart from equipment, facilities such as workshop, laboratory etc that would enhance effective learning of office and business skills are also inadequate.
4. There is a dearth or in most institutions shortage of qualified staff in office technology programme.
5. The present curriculum was reviewed in 2004 and need to have been revisited to accommodate new changes and programme that will enhance self sustenance of the beneficiaries.

### Conclusion

Research in office technology has added a new dimension to knowledge creation in office education programme. Office technology is a functional education programme that has the capacity to equip the beneficiaries with knowledge, skills and ability needed for economic empowerment. The challenges of funding, inadequate facilities and equipment with the shortages in manpower are some of the impediments that need to be addressed. An investment in office technology programme if well pursued is a right step in the right direction that could contribute meaningfully to national development.

### Recommendations

1. Government should emphasize more on research in education policy. Investment in office technology research should be viewed not just as academic exercise but as a development issue.
2. Facilities, materials and equipment necessary for meaningful research in office technology should be made available by government and other stakeholders in education.
3. There is need for constant review of the curriculum of office technology programme. This will give room for the accommodation of programme that will enhance the productivity and creativity of the beneficiary of the programme.
4. There is need to address the shortage of qualified staff in office technology programme in order to facilitate effective delivery of the programme. This along with other provisions will create conducive working conditions and allow researchers in this area to perform effectively.
5. The number of institutions offering office technology programme need to be increased considering the potentials inherent in the programme.

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