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ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT (OTM) SKILLS AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This study assessed the relationship between Office Technology and Management (OTM) skills and sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria. A research question and two hypotheses guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised Business Education Postgraduate students in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. A total of 85 Business Education Postgraduate students were selected as sample size of the study from the two selected universities through the use of purposive sampling technique. A self-developed instrument titled: OTM Skills and Sustainable Economic Development Questionnaire (OTMSSEDQ) was used for data collection with 0.92 as reliability coefficient. Research question was answered using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation while hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The findings of the study revealed that management, risks management, information and communication technology (ICT), accounting, technical, communication, human relations, marketing, time management and innovativeness skills were among the required OTM skills for the attainment of sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria. It was also found that OTM skills, poverty and unemployment reduction directly related. It was recommended that Office Technology and Management students must embrace the provided opportunity in the programme and acquire requisite entrepreneurial skills needed for the attainment of sustainable economic development. Office Technology and Management undergraduates should embrace the provided opportunities in the programme and understudy the identified areas of entrepreneurial awareness for possible venturing towards their social and economic development.

Keywords: Assessment, OTM, Skills, Sustainable Economic Development, Poverty, Unemployment.

Introduction

The attainment of sustainable economic development is becoming paramount to the government and other stakeholders in Nigeria. Sustainable economic development is the process in which the exploitation of natural resources, the direction of investment, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change or reform are all in coordination and harmony and enhance both the current and future potential for meeting human needs. In this paper, sustainable economic development relates to issues such as ability

to reduce poverty, improved standard of living as well as ability to create employment. In some circumstances, an investment in sustainability may directly results in positive economic development outcomes or otherwise. Despite the abundant natural and human capital resources in Nigeria, the country is still faced with some challenges which, in the recent years have surged appreciably caused serious set-backs to economic development. Economic development is the key to higher living standards. It is connected to the developments in human capacity, the standard of living of the citizenry of a particular nation, the strength and buoyancy of its institutions and the overall societal well-being of its people. Evidence has shown that for a nation to attain development, its social, economic and political institutions must be in tandem with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and that within this framework, Nigeria is rated one of the developing countries with slow progress in education, gender equality, income equality, employment generation, wealth creation and poverty.

Attaining sustainable economic development is one of the SDGs to be attained by year 2030. According to Amoda, Adebayo, Kazeem and Babajide (2020), sustainable economic development is the key to higher living standards and connected to the developments in human capacity, the standard of living of the citizenry of a particular nation, the strength and buoyancy of its institutions and the overall societal well-being of its people. For a nation to attain development, its social, economic and political institutions must be in tandem with sustainable economic growth and that within this framework. Economic development measures the actual standard of living of the people and the level of freedom they have to enjoy a good living condition. Simply defined, economic growth is the process whereby the total supply of goods and services of the society increase leading towards improved living standards. Economic growth is a multi-dimensional process involving major change in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of eco-growth, the eradication of poverty and reduction of inequality of wealth (Kurotimi, Franklin, Aladei&Opigo, 2017). The end result of economic development is an increase in living standards, improvement in self-esteem needs and freedom from oppression, plus a greater choice.

Anyaehie and Areji (2015) defined economic development as a multi-dimensional process involving major change in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of eco-growth, the eradication of poverty and reduction of inequality of wealth. However, the end result of economic development is an increase in living standards, improvement in self-esteem needs and freedom from oppression, plus a greater choice. Measuring economic development is not as precise as measuring Gross Domestic Product (GDP), because it depends on what factors are included in the measurement. The most precise means to measuring economic development is the Human Development Index (HDI) which considers the educational level and pedigree of the people and their life expectancy which ultimately affects productivity and could lead to economic development. Anyaehie and Areji (2015) also opined that development involves the actualisation of human potentialities, proper grasp, management of the environment and natural resources for sustained human well-being. Thus, the main goal of development is to meet human needs and aspirations. Oguejiofor and Ezeabasili (2014) pointed out that the major tools for achieving sustainable economic development are improving the quality of education, re-orienting existing education programme to address skill gaps, developing public awareness and understanding,

and providing training for all students to acquire functional skills required for nation building.

Office Technology and Management (OTM) is part of the total programme of Vocational Business Education in Nigeria. It prepares individuals for specialized occupation in day-to-day administrative running of a business organization and provides general knowledge about business enterprises (Soyebi, Dasaolu&Edun, 2021). Office Technology and Management is a work oriented programme that aims at skill acquisition which are useful and saleable in the labour market. The programme is designed to develop its participants with skills, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and appreciation of encompassing knowledge and information needed by individuals in order to enter and progress in employment on a useful and productive level. In essence, OTM is an educational programme meant for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, office ethics and competencies needed to prepare the individuals for gainful employment in specific business and office occupation (Soyebi, *et. al.,* 2021). Skills acquired in Office Technology and Management is a panacea for graduates' economic development in Nigeria, especially during this period when white collar job seems to be in the oblivion. A skill is the ability which can be developed, not necessarily inborn and which is manifested in performance, and not merely in potential. Skill is an established habit or attitude for performing a task in an acceptable way. According to Etonyeaku, Kamu, Ezeji and Chukwuma (2014), a skill is the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in performing an act or habit of doing a particular task competently. Abel ((2019) classified the skills that are necessary for successful managerial work into technical skill, human skill and conceptual skill. Skills acquired in any of the areas of Business Education programme, especially Office Technology and Management, promote training for entrepreneurial awareness for graduates' economic development (Abel, 2019).

The entrepreneurship aspect of the OTM is structured to achieve the following objectives: offers functional education for the youth that will enable them to be self-employed and self-reliant; provides the youth with adequate training that will enable them to be creative and innovative in identifying novel business opportunities; serves as a catalyst for economic growth and development; offers tertiary graduates with adequate training in risk management; provides the young graduates with enough training and support that will enable them to establish a career in small and medium sized businesses; inculcates the spirit of perseverance in the youths and adults which will enable them to persist in any business venture they embark on; creates a smooth change from conventional to a present-day modern economy; provides both small and medium business enterprises with opportunity of recruiting graduates who are trained and tutored in the skills relevant to the management and operation of small businesses (Soyebi, *et. al.,* 2021). The entrepreneurship aspect of the OTM programme enables students to acquire adequate skills related to creativity, innovation, invention, time management, marketing, personal-reliability skills, persistence and perseverance and advertising. These skills are also known by several other names, such as key skills, core skills, life skills, essential skills, key competencies, necessary skills, entrepreneurial skills and transferable skills, which when acquired, lead to sustainable economic development in the society and the nation at large. The main goal of sustainable development is to satisfy human needs and aspirations. This is evident in the objectives of OTM as it is meant to promote desired economic development.

According to Adenekan and Clement (2021), Office Technology and Management was established with an emphasis on vocational skills to produce graduates with vocational skills so that they can contribute to the development of the nation. Quality in Office Technology and Management programme is the relevance and appropriateness of the programme to the needs of graduating students for which it is provided. Nwada and Seyi (2017) asserted that it has to do with the establishment of standard in various processes and activities that lead to the attainment of quality result. The theoretical framework for this paper is skill acquisition theory propounded by Robert Dekeyser in 2007. The theory postulated that development in knowledge has three stages: declarative, procedural and automatic. Declarative knowledge refers to explicit knowledge about a topic; procedural knowledge is implicit knowledge that refers to behaviour. And automaticity occurs towards the end point of extensive practice; towards the point at which one has become completely expert in performing a task. From the perspective of skill acquisition theory, the sequence of these stages is crucial as is appropriate combination of abstract rules and concrete examples at the declarative stage. The theory relates to this study in the sense that skill acquisition is task oriented and there is need to diagnose a task and break it down into its components in order to provide effective feedback. When it is not possible to conceptualize a task, then feedback becomes considerably less effective. The theory if adopted when OTM undergraduates learning skill subjects will be helpful to them as it follows the stages of learning a skill. The cognitive phase requires the identification and development of component parts of the skill which involves formation of a mental picture of the skill. Then through practicing the various components of the skill will be linked together. And constant practice will make the skill become automatic.

Statement of the Problem

The attainment of sustainable economic development in Nigeria seems to be eroded by current evidence of poverty circle and high rate of unemployment among the graduates of tertiary institutions in the country. It is believed that graduates of any tertiary institutions should possessed twin chances vis-à-vis, ability to secure white collar job or ability to be self-employed. However, the current situation of graduates including OTM graduates in Nigeria in terms of high unemployment and poverty level is pathetic and alarming. Government and other stakeholders in the economy have taking steps towards addressing the ugly situation through the introduction of compulsory Entrepreneurship Education into the curriculum of tertiary institutions with the aim to curb rate of graduates' unemployment. Despite that, the attainment of sustainable economic development remained a mirage in Nigeria as poverty and unemployment rates continue to increase among graduates. Based on this, this study attempted to examine the likely relationship between Office Technology and Management (OTM) skills and sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was toassess the relationship between Office Technology and Management (OTM) skills and sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify required OTM skills for the attainment of sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the relationship between OTM skills and poverty reduction in South-West, Nigeria.

3. Examine the relationship between OTM skills and unemployment reduction in South-West, Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study:

1. What are the required OTM skills for the attainment of sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were stated and tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance:

$H_0$1: There is no significant relationship between OTM skills and poverty reduction in South-West, Nigeria.

$H_0$2: There is no significant relationship between OTM skills and unemployment reduction in South-West, Nigeria.

Methodology

A correlational research design was adopted in this study. The reason for using this design was because it helps the authors to examine the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. The population of the study comprised Business Education Postgraduate students in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye and Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. A total of 85 Business Education Postgraduate students were selected as sample size of the study from the two selected universities through the use of purposive sampling technique. 39 postgraduate students were selected from Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye and 46 from Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun. A self-developed instrument titled: OTM Skills and Sustainable Economic Development Questionnaire (OTMSSEDQ) was used for data collection. The questionnaire was apportioned into 3 sections. Section A focused on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section B examined items on relating to sustainable economic development in terms of poverty and unemployment rate while section C embraced required OTM skills for the attainment of sustainable economic development. The questionnaire required responses on a four (4) – point scale format which was a modification of 5-point Likert scale. The responses rating scales ranging as follows: Very Highly Level (VHL), High Level (HL), Low Level (LL) and No Level (NL). Face and contents validity were carried out on the instrument by 3 experts from Business Education Departments in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. The reliability of the questionnaire was done among 10 Business Education postgraduate students from Lagos State University (LASU). Cronbach's alpha was adopted in analyzing the data collected and the reliability coefficient was reported as 0.92. The authors and 2 research assistants participated in questionnaire administration of the instrument and this lasted for 4 weeks. However, only 79 copies of questionnaires out of 85 were retrieved. Retrieval rate was 92.3%. Research question was answered using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation while hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Results and Discussion

Research Question: What are the required OTM skills for the attainment of sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on the required OTM skills for the attainment of sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria

Items	**Mean**	**SD**	**Decision**
Management skills	2.78	.673	Agreed
Risks management skills	2.61	.782	Agreed
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills	2.92	.691	Agreed
Accounting skills	2.59	.599	Agreed
Technical skills	2.83	.711	Agreed
Communication skills	2.81	.705	Agreed
Human relations skills	2.55	.829	Agreed
Marketing skills	2.99	.800	Agreed
Time management skills	2.84	.784	Agreed
Innovativeness skills	2.73	.594	Agreed
Cluster Mean	**2.77**		

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 revealed that cluster mean was 2.77 and the bench mark mean of 2.50. Since, 2.77 > 2.50, it implied that management, risks management, information and communication technology (ICT), accounting, technical, communication, human relations, marketing, time management and innovativeness skills were among the required OTM skills for the attainment of sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria.

$H_0$1: There is no significant relationship between OTM skills and poverty reduction in South-West, Nigeria.

Table 2: Relationship between OTM skills and poverty reduction in South-West, Nigeria

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	df	r-value	p-value
OTM skills	96.5732	6.77819	3	.146**	.000
Poverty reduction	6.7866	1.17885			

Source: Field Survey, 2024

FromTable 2, it was revealed that there was a relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the order of (r = .146, P<.05). On this premise, the authors concluded that there was a significant relationship between OTM skills and poverty reduction in South-West, Nigeria.

$H_0$2: There is no significant relationship between OTM skills and unemployment reduction in South-West, Nigeria.

Table 3: Relationship between OTM skills and unemployment reduction in South-West, Nigeria

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	df	r-value	p-value
OTM skills	96.5732	6.77819	3	.228**	.000
Unemployment reduction	12.4167	2.17454			

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From Table 3, it was observed that there was a relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the order of ($r = .228$, $P<.05$). On this premise, the authors concluded that there was a significant relationship between OTM skills and unemployment reduction in South-West, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that management, risks management, information and communication technology (ICT), accounting, technical, communication, human relations, marketing, time management and innovativeness skills were among the required OTM skills for the attainment of sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria. It was also found that OTM skills, poverty and unemployment reduction directly related. These findings corroborate with Soyebi et. al., (2021) who examined skills in office technology and management programme for graduates' economic sustainability in Nigeria and found that management skills, risks management skills, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, accounting skills, and so on were among required skills needed for graduates of OTM for economic sustainability. Musa (2022) revealed that effective management practices are viewed as pivotal in promoting sustainable development because it promotes and nurtures employee engagement and awareness programs, implementing recycling initiatives, and adopting eco-friendly procurement processes which are crucial steps. This to a greater extent enhances the overall sustainability performance of organizations. Adenekan and Clement (2021) stated that quality of office technology and management programme is a determinant for self-empowerment of its graduates for the attainment of sustainable economic development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Having assessed the relationship between Office Technology and Management (OTM) skills and sustainable economic development in South-West, Nigeria, the following conclusion was drawn based on the findings that possession of OTM skills are the steps for the attainment of sustainable economic development vis-à-vis poverty and unemployment reduction among graduates. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Office Technology and Management students must embrace the provided opportunity in the programme and acquire requisite entrepreneurial skills needed for the attainment of sustainable economic development.
2. Office Technology and Management undergraduates should embrace the provided opportunities in the programme and understudy the identified areas of entrepreneurial awareness for possible venturing towards their social and economic development.
3. Lecturers of OTM must exploit beyond academic and technical curricula experiences by integrating the knowledge, skills, values, and competencies needed to function in multi-culture environments and labour.
4. Curriculum planners of tertiary institution in collaboration with the employers of labour should carry out a review of the OTM curriculum to incorporate emerging workplace technologies and new employability skills into the curriculum in order to improve the employability opportunities of the OTM students and ability to be self-reliance.

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