



EFFECT OF PROPER PLACEMENT DURING INTERNSHIP ON OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION STUDENTS' ACQUISITION OF MODEL OFFICE TECHNOLOGIES SKILLS IN FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECH.), OMOKU, RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines the effect of proper placement during internship on office technology and management education (OTME) students' acquisition of model office technologies skills in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku, Rivers State. Two specific purposes, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A quasi-experimental research design was adopted for the study using a post-test, randomised group. The study population was made up of 41 OTME NCE I students during the 2018/2019 academic session. All the OTME NCE I students were used for the study and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group was properly placed in business centres where model office technologies can be found while the control group was allowed to select their internship place. A checklist titled "Model Office Technologies Utilization Skills Observational Checklist (MOTUSOC)" was used for data collection. The list was validated by two experts, one of measurement and evaluation and the other of OTME. Test-retest method and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) to obtain the r-value of 0.90 for the instrument's reliability. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean, grand mean and independent t-test to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings show a clear difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres from those allowed to choose their place of attachment for their internship. There is also no difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres. The finding also show that there is a significant difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those allowed to choose their place of attachment for their internship. There is also no significant difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by male and female OTME students properly placed. Recommendation made among others is that OTME department should canvass for the need to appoint departmental based internship programme coordinators who would work with College based internship coordinator to achieve the proper placement of students in workplaces where they can acquire important office technologies utilization skills.*

KEYWORDS: Placement, Internship, Office Technologies, Technology Management, Student, Education, Skills, Nigeria.



INTRODUCTION

Education has been recognised worldwide as the only means of empowering recipients to contribute meaningfully to themselves and their immediate environment. Through educational programmes, recipients are helped to develop the kind of knowledge, skills and attitude needed for performance in their respective selected field of specialisation. Office Technology and Management Education (OTME), as an educational programme according to Abimbola (2014), is an integral part of business education programme designed to equip the recipients with the knowledge, skills and competencies needed in the world of work to function as competent secretaries. Knowledge, skills and competencies required by graduates of OTME today as become dynamic because of the dynamic nature of the world of work resulting from rapid technological advancement. Therefore, to ensure that graduates of OTME programme from Colleges of Education are well equipped with knowledge, skills and attitude for modern office jobs, the minimum standard for the programme enshrined and emphasized the need for students to use the model office effectively and their performance in the use of the technologies therein must form part of their continuous assessment (National Commission for Colleges of Education, NCCE, 2012).

According to Jason (2008), the model office is a stimulated working environment prototype used to test the use of Information Technologies (IT) systems with business processes to satisfy their functional goals. Some of the model office Information Technologies (IT) systems which are specified in the minimum standard for Business Education (OTME) are: telephone, fax machine, internet facilities, word processor, computer and its applications, duplicating machine, binding machine, photocopier, shredding machine and scanning machines (NCCE, 2012).

A critical look at the model office IT systems required for OTME programme in Colleges of Education in Nigeria shows that most of these technologies are found in business centres for service delivery. However, it is also important to note that most of these technologies are not available in many Colleges of Education and where they are, they are insufficient or are not functioning effectively. To this end, where they are available but not in sufficient number, Business educators only use demonstration methods to demonstrate how the technologies are operated to students in groups. Aniemeka (2005) observed that this method is both teacher and students-centred. This was so when the students assumed the demonstrator's role after the teacher has shown them the steps involved in the task. This makes the teaching and learning process appear real and practicable. Nevertheless, when using the demonstration method to teach the utilisation of model office technologies, the researcher observed that students are mostly given little or no chance to demonstrate how to use the technologies due to large class size, insufficient time and an inadequate number of IT systems. This situation has seriously affected the students' skills acquisition relating to utilising the available model office technologies. Amahi and Ogben (2014) supported this observation when they noted in their findings that most Business education model office lack the required technological gadgets that can be used to make students acquire the needed skills which would make them perform satisfactorily if faced with similar technological related tasks elsewhere. To address the issue of model office skills acquisition amongst business education students, Amahi and Ogben recommended the need to use alternative methods that would allow students to have access to utilizing new technologies in order to bridge the gap between classroom theory and practices.



Of course, the use of alternative approaches to ensure that students gain adequate exposure to model office technologies to acquire skills related to them is the only option left for any serious Business educator. In light of the foregoing discourse, one approach that can be designed and used by Business educators to allow OTME students the opportunity to adequately use model office IT systems outside the school to acquire necessary skills is internship experiential learning. Internship experiential learning is also considered by Wurdinger and Carlson (2010) as workplace-based experiential learning. Whatever nomenclature one prefers to call it, the internship experiential learning approach is regarded as a critical approach in assisting students getting exposed to their career-related work experience for skills acquisition. According to Ashley (2014), this approach is a more economical and efficient solution to the inadequacy of model office technologies in schools, given that most of these office technologies required to facilitate the experience of students are provided for in the real workplace.

Internship is not new in Nigeria. In Colleges of Education, Business education students, OTME students inclusive, must go for a mandatory internship programme known as Students' Industrial Work Experience (SIWES) in establishments that carry out jobs relevant to their course of study. According to Okolocha and Okolocha (2012), this programme's objectives include but not limited to exposing students to techniques of handling technologies that may not be available within their institutions. SIWES as a work experience acquisition programme is a form of internship experiential learning because it places learners in the workplace related to their course of study to acquire real-life work experiences. The students are also required to reflect upon what they have learnt and present a report which they would defend with their institution based assessor. Therefore, it is believed that if Business Education students, especially of OTME options are well placed in workplace with modern office technologies related to the functions of secretaries, they should be able to acquire skills that would aid their performance in model office technologies utilization as well as empower them for self-reliance. However, with the increase in population of students (Business education students inclusive) and continuous decreased in the number of private establishments, Okolocha and Okolocha (2012) noted that institutions are becoming insensitive to the proper placement of students and most supervisors do not care much about the real performance of the students. This is worrisome given that the students' experiences in this programme can enhance their skills in utilising the various model office technologies in their future endeavour.

In light of the above, there is a need for proper placement of OTME students in offices or business centres where they can access the various model office technologies stated in the minimum standard. This is important, especially if the OTME students are to acquire skills that can enhance their performance in office technologies utilisation and empower them to be self-reliant in the face of increasing unemployment. However, it is worth noting that many Business educators in Rivers State these days do not show concern, nor appreciate the need to ensure their students' proper placement during the internship programme. They also care less about students reflecting on what they have learnt in the defence of their report before the end of the SIWES programme to develop new knowledge and skills for future performance. This can be seen in their indifference towards students' choice of SIWES place and the subsequent discussion and testing of students' skills acquired during the learning experiences (SIWES). To correct their disposition towards their students' internship programme, there is a need for empirical researches to provide evidence of the effect of proper placement and reflection during internship on students' skills acquisition in model office technologies utilisation.



Researchers have conducted many studies on internship, and the findings have not been the same. For instance, Gomez, Lush and Clements (2004) discovered that students who undergone internship performed better than other students in their final year. Madilaras (2004) also found that internship students in an economics class had the chance of achieving higher scores which aided their class of degree (first and upper second). Reddy and Moores (2006) also showed that internship significantly improved students' scores in human psychology degree in their final year. Ekeyi (2013) also found a significant difference in favour of female students against their male counterparts. However, Onwukwe and Ezemoyih (2012) found a non-significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students taught accounting using electronic media through the demonstration method. Thilakerathne and Madurapperuma (2014) also conducted an examination of accounting internship on subsequent academic performance. The study revealed a statistically significant better performance of internship students as measured by their average marks. The results also showed that gender negatively correlates with the students' performance which signals that male students performed better than female students.

Purpose of the Study

This study's major purpose is to examine the effect of proper placement during internship programme on Office Technology and Management Education (OTME) students' acquisition of model office technologies skills in Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku, Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Determine the difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those allowed to choose their place of attachment during their internship programme.
- ii. Determine the difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres during their internship programme.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. What is the difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those allowed to choose their place of attachment during their internship programme?
- ii. What is the difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres during their internship programme?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses would be tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

- H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those allowed to choose their place of attachment during their internship programme.



H₀₂ There is no significant difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres during their internship programme.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Situated-Learning Theory by Jean Lave (1988)

Lave's (1988) situated learning theory states that learning is unintentional and situated within an authentic activity, context and culture. Lave argued that learning is situated; that is, it occurs within the normal activities carried out within the context and culture of the workplace where the topic under consideration would be utilized in the future. Therefore, the theorist suggested that knowledge has to be presented in an authentic environment where it will be applied in the future. In doing this, learners would develop the ability to utilise, interact and share knowledge with others as they collaborate to carry out the real-life activities related to the course content in the environment it would be used. This would enable them to also establish networks for success in an authentic work environment. Lave further explained that as the novice learner moves from the periphery of the work community activities to its mainstream, through this process, the learner becomes more active and engaged with the work culture and eventually becomes an expert of the activities.

Lave's theory defines how an ideal environment of learning affects the learner's competencies. The learning activities based on this theory is far in contrast with the normal classroom environment learning activities that mostly involves abstract knowledge, which is out of context. The learning activities based on this theory are to be carried out within the working environment's context and culture where the knowledge will be utilised in the future. Therefore, this theory provides educators with an understanding of the effect of an authentic learning environment on learners' mastery of the workplace's tools, culture, and ethics.

This theory is related to the present study because it provides the researcher with an understanding of the need for proper placement during the internship programme. Therefore, the researcher would ensure the experiment group is placed in an authentic environment where they can have access to model office technologies and use them for skills acquisition.

Method

This study adopted a quasi-experimental research design with post-test, randomised groups. This research design is deemed appropriate for the study because it helped the researcher determine the effect of the independent variable on dependent variables. The design is diagrammatically represented as:

Control group:		O ₁
Experimental group	X	O ₂

Where: X represents treatments (proper placement during internship)



The population of the study consisted of 41 N.C.E. I business education (OTME) students during the 2018/2019 academic session from Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku-Rivers State, The NCE I students were selected as the target population of this study because they are required to undergo internship programme (SIWES) at the end of their second semester. The sample of the study consisted of 41 N.C.E. I Business education (OTME) students made up of 19 who choose the place of attachment on their own and 22 who were properly placed in business centres for their internship from Federal College of Education (Tech.), Omoku-Rivers State. Those placed in their place of internship are made up of 14 female and 08 male.

An instrument was developed by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The instrument was an observational checklist for assessing the students' skills in relation to model office technologies utilisation. The instrument was tagged: Model Office Technologies Utilization Skills Observational Checklist (MOTUSOC).

Responses	Rating Scale
Very High Extent (VHE)	4points
High Extent (HE)	3points
Low Extent (LE)	2points
Very Low Extent (VLE)	1point

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation. The reliability of MOTUSOC was ascertained using the test-retest method. The test-retest method was used to test the instrument's stability in measuring what it wants to measure. The test-retest was done at an interval of two weeks using a group of 15 NCE III Business Education (OTME) students from FCE, Obudu during 2018/2019 who were not used for the study. The correlation between the two administrations was computed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to obtain r-value of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) of 0.90.

The data collected for the study were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and grand mean scores to answer the two research questions. The t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses. All computations were done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20.0. Mean or Grand mean of 3.5 – 4.00 was regarded as Very High Extent (VHE), 2.5 to 3.49 was regarded as High Extent (HE), and 1.5 to 2.49 was regarded as Low Extent (LE) and 1 to 1.49 was regarded as Very Low Extent (VLE). The null hypotheses were accepted where p value of the calculated t-test is greater than or equal to 0.05 level of significance. Otherwise, they were rejected.



RESULTS/DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What is the difference in the extent of the model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those allowed to choose their place of attachment during the internship programme?

Table 1: Summary of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those who choose placed of attachment during their internship programme

S/N	Model Office Technology	Not Placed			Placed in Business Centre		
		N ₁	Mean	Decision	N ₂	Mean	Decision
1.	Computer word processing package skills.	19	2.10	LE	22	2.57	HE
2.	Duplicating skills	19	1.25	VLE	22	1.93	LE
3.	Photocopying skills	19	1.36	VLE	22	2.70	HE
4.	Scanning skills	19	1.23	VLE	22	2.50	HE
5.	Spiral Binding skills	19	1.13	VLE	22	2.59	HE
6.	Printing skills	19	1.70	LE	22	2.85	HE
	Grand mean		1.46	VLE		2.52	HE

Source: Field Work, 2019

Table 1 shows that OTME students who choose their place of attachment during their internship to a very low extent acquired skills for model office technologies utilisation with a grand mean score of 1.46. This is because they to a very low extent, acquired duplicating skills, photocopying skills, scanning skills and spiral binding skills with mean scores of 1.25, 1.36, 1.23 and 1.13, respectively. However, those properly placed in business centres during their internship to a large extent acquired skills for model office technologies utilisation with a mean score of 2.52. This is because they to a large extent, acquire computer word processing package skills, photocopying skills, scanning skills, spiral binding skills and printing skills with mean scores of 2.57, 2.70, 2.50, 2.59, and 2.85, respectively.

Research Question 2: What is the difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres during their internship programme?

Table 2: Summary of male and female OTME students' model office technologies skills acquired when properly placed in business centres

S/N	Model Office Technology	Male			Female		
		N ₁	Mean	Decision	N ₂	Mean	Decision
1.	Computer word processing package skills.	08	2.54	HE	14	2.59	HE
2.	Duplicating skills	08	2.35	LE	14	2.45	LE



3.	Photocopying skills	08	2.62	HE	14	2.54	HE
4.	Scanning skills	08	2.49	LE	14	2.53	HE
5.	Spiral Binding skills	08	2.55	HE	14	2.50	HE
6.	Printing skills	08	2.72	HE	14	2.86	HE
	Grand mean		2.55	HE		2.58	HE

Source: Field Work, 2019

Table 2 shows that both male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres during their internship to a high extent acquired model offices technologies skills with grand mean scores of 2.55 and 2.58, respectively. This is based on the fact that both the male and female OTME students to a large extent acquired computer word processing package skills, photocopying skills, spiral binding skills and printing skills with mean scores of 2.54, 2.59, 2.62, 2.54, 2.55, 2.50, 2.72, and 2.86 respectively. In addition, the female OTME students to a large extent acquired scanning skills with mean score of 2.53.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those allowed to choose their place of attachment during internship programme.

Table 3: Summary of independent t-test analysis of the difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those allowed to choose their place of attachment

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Equal variances assumed	3.58	.07	-2.41	39	.02	-3.67	1.52	-6.74	-.59	
Not Placed Equal variances not assumed			-2.53	31.12	.02	-3.67	1.45	-6.63	-.71	

Source: Field Work, 2019

Table 3 shows that for equal variance assumed, Leven's test for equality of variance (f) is 3.58, p value (sig.) of 0.07, t ratio of -2.41, degree of freedom (df) 39, p value 0.02 (sig. for 2-tailed), mean difference of -3.67, standard deviation error of difference of 1.52, lower and upper



confidence interval of -6.74 and -0.59, respectively at 95% certainty. Therefore, since the p-value of the Leven's test is greater than 0.05 alpha, the t-ratio of the equal variances assumed was used to test the hypothesis stated. This also shows that the p-value of the equal variances assumed is less than 0.05 at 0.02, which means that the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those allowed to choose their attachment place during their internship programme.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres during internship programme.

Table 4: Summary of independent t-test analysis of the difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those allowed to choose their place of attachment

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper	
Not Placed	Equal variances assumed	8.88	.01	-1.65	20	.12	-4.18	2.54	-9.48	1.12
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.17	13.96	.05	-4.18	1.92	-8.31	-.05

Source: *Field Work, 2019*

Table 4 shows that for equal variance assumed, Leven's test for equality of variance (f) is 8.88, p value (sig.) of 0.01, t ratio of -1.65, degree of freedom (df) 20, p value 0.12 (sig. for 2-tailed), mean difference of -4.18, standard deviation error of difference of 2.54, lower and upper confidence interval of -9.48 and 1.12, respectively at 95% certainty. Therefore, since the p-value of the Leven's test is less than 0.05 alpha, the t-ratio of the equal variances not assumed was used to test the hypothesis stated. This also shows that the p-value of the equal variances not assumed is equal to 0.05 at 0.05, which means that the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres during their internship programme.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings relating to the first specific objective show that there is a clear difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in



business centres from those allowed to choose their place of attachment during their internship programme. This is because those allowed to choose their place of attachment to a very low extent acquired skills for model office technologies utilisation while those properly placed in business centres during their internship to a large extent acquired the same skills. The finding of hypothesis relating to this specific objective shows that there is a significant difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by OTME students properly placed in business centres and those allowed to choose their place of attachment during their internship programme. This means that proper placement in business centres where office technologies can be found during internship has effect on OTME students' acquisition of model office technologies utilization skills. The findings are supported by the findings of Gomez, Lush and Clements (2004) when they discovered that students who undergone internship performed better than normal students. The findings are also supported by Thilakerathne and Madurapperuma (2014) findings when they discovered a statistically-significant better performance of internship student as measured by their average marks. However, it is worth noting that all the supporting findings were not on OTME students' acquisition of model office technologies skills.

The findings relating to specific purpose two show that there is no difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres during their internship programme. This is because both male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres during their internship to a large extent, acquired model offices technologies skills. The finding of the hypothesis relating to this specific objective shows no significant difference in the extent of model office technologies skills acquired by male and female OTME students properly placed in business centres during the internship programme. This means that irrespective of gender OTME students properly placed in business centres where office technologies can be found during their internship are capable of acquiring model office technologies utilization skills. The findings are supported by the findings of Onwukwe and Ezemoyih (2012) when they discovered a non-significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students. The findings are contrary to the discovery of Ekeyi (2013) who found a significant difference in favour of the female students as against their male counterparts. Nevertheless, the earlier studies were not directly on gender difference on the effect of proper placement during internship on OTME students' acquisition of model office technologies skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that proper placement of OTME students in business centres where model office technologies can be found would significantly enhance their acquisition of model office technologies skills. It can also be concluded that irrespective of the students' gender, they would benefit from model office technologies utilization skills acquisition if properly placed in business centres where model office technologies required for their training can be found. Therefore, it can be concluded that the current practice that see most of the OTME students submitting places of internship where office technologies cannot be found should be highly discouraged by Business educators in colleges of education in Rivers State and Nigeria at large.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are put forward for implementation:

- i. Business educators serving as institutional based internship supervisors should discourage placement of OTME students in business environment where model office technologies cannot be found in order to help the students acquire skills related to the utilization of model office technologies that cannot be found within their institution.
- ii. OTME department should canvass for the need to appoint departmental based internship programme coordinators who would work with College based internship programme coordinator to achieve the proper placement of students in workplaces where they can acquire important office technologies utilization skills.
- iii. OTME students should be educated by their office practice and ICT lecturers to appreciate the relevance of proper placement during their internship in order to benefit from the knowledge and skills related to their future endeavours.

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