Mitigating The Effects of Covid-19 on Unemployment Through Sustainable Office Technology and Management Programme

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Abstract:- **Office technology and management (OTM) programme is an integral part of Business Education programme in Nigeria. The programme is expected to provide occupational skills for its recipients in business or office related occupations either as employees or self-employed. However, it has been observed that covid'19 has a negative effect on the educational system which may cause unemployment for graduates of Office Technology and Management programme if appropriate skills are not acquire. In view of this, the study sought to examine the effect of covid-19 on employment through sustainable Office Technology and Management programme in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Thus, two research questions are raised and answered. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the research and the population of the study consist of OTM lecturers in Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti, The Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti and Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti. The sample of the study is made up of lecturers randomly selected across the three institutions. The results reveal that covid-19 crisis has a negative effect on different aspect of the world of work and has led to sharp drop in the employment of workers and the weapon needed to salvage the situation is Office technology and management skill which provide recipients with modern information technology based knowledge and skills that empowers them to provide services efficiently and comfortably from any location regardless of the restrictions of covid-19 protocols. Thus, the study concluded that the skills acquired through the programmed OTM puts its graduates at advantage over the present situation of the pandemic. It is therefore recommended that government should provide needed instructional facilities for this programme and sponsor OTM lecturers for training and retraining on the use of ICT packages relevant in the teaching and learning process of OTM programme.**

Keywords: Office Technology and Management, Employment, Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

Office technology and management (OTM) programme is an integral part of Business Education programme in Nigeria. The programme is expected to provide occupational skills for its recipients in business or office related occupations either as employees or self-employed. However, it has been observed that covid'19 has a negative effect on the educational system which may cause unemployment for graduates of Office Technology and Management programme if appropriate skills are not acquire. The Office Technology and Management education offered in the Polytechnics emphasizes the acquisition of skills needed to manipulate office machines and serve as

supporting staff to management of organizations where they are employed. (Igbinedion2012). Government in collaboration with UNESCO reviewed the secretarial education curriculum in polytechnics with a view to keeping pace with modern realities with emphasis on technology revolution thereby renaming the course from Secretarial Studies to Office Technology and Management. Office Technology and management is an efficient, effective, productive and functional education which leads to self employment, self reliance, paid employment and consequently, self actualization (Okoro and Amagoh (2008).

Office Technology and Management is a programme designed to equip students with secretarial skills for employment as office managers in various organizations. Students in the programme will be offered professional, foundation and general education courses, which will enable them, acquire vocational and interpersonal skills in Office Technology and Management for effective work competencies. (UNESCO – Nigeria Project 2008)

Unfortunately, Office Technology and Management programme in the Polytechnics have not been given the recognition it deserve over the years because many parents still consider it as one which is meant for under-achievers. (Sanusi 2011). The Department of Office Technology and Management was established to train and lead students to the acquisition of effective technical skills and work competence as well as general work skills which are very paramount to the beneficiary's business and social interactions with others. Thus, the programme is designed to equip students with secretarial skills for employment in diverse fields of human endeavors including being self-employed after graduation.

(http://www.federalpolyede.edu.ng/otm.htm.   Therefore, one can infer that successful Office Technology and Management graduates are equipped and thus encouraged to develop a desire for self-employment rather than dependency on white collar jobs.

The education system has for a long time been producing graduates who leave school depending on acquiring white collar job. The federal government however mandated the study of Office Technology and Management education in tertiary institutions (FGN 2004) as a result of the importance of pragmatic and effective education for self-reliance. It carries with it, the pride of being one's own master and the singular ownership of the fruits of one's enterprising initiatives (Ezeahurukwe, 2015). Self-employment and self-reliant are two concepts that currently enjoy pride of place in the pandemic situation.

Furthermore, Udo (2008) OTM is a comprehensive activity-based educational programme that is concerned with the acquisition of office technology and management skills, understandings, attitudes, work habits and competencies that are requisite to success in secretarial and office management occupations. Grant and Vidler (2003) defined unemployment as a situation where people are out of work but are willing and able to work. Indeed, many secretarial graduates in this nation suffer structural unemployment which is of two main kinds namely regional mismatches which can occur where unemployed secretarial graduates are resident in particular regions of the country while job vacancies exist elsewhere. The next kind of structural unemployment involves skills mismatches that are common with secretarial graduates who are looking for work but not possessing the necessary sufficient vocational skills to fill the jobs available. This explains the rationale behind this write-up but the purpose of it is about how the OTM graduates could acquire the level of vocational skills that would enable them to be self-reliant. Covid-19 pandemic has turned the world into a global economic crisis, this has put almost everything at risk such as health, jobs, education and incomes of millions of people around the world. The strict containment measures adopted by many countries first half of 2020 to flatten the rise in contagion put a substantial brake on most economic and social activities. There are signs that the trough of the sharp and deep unemployment and global economic recession has been reached in many countries' economies. According to Hussain (2020) the spread of the coronavirus initially spared in Nigeria, like many other African countries, with zero recorded case as of January 2020. The luck, however, did not last by 28th of February, 2020, Nigeria reported its first case which is a Nigerian UK returnee. The spread of the virus prompted the Federal Ministry of information announced the close-down all schools in Nigeria, effective March 23rd, 2020 and subsequently all the other sector of the country's economy in a bid to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Considering the state of Nigeria's economic sector, pertinent questions arose: do the graduate of Office technology and management have the skills to survive the menace of covid-19? How would they survive the hardship that came with the lockdown measures and the increase in the loss of jobs particularly in the private sector? These are questions that needed answers. Looking at these questions we realized that the answer is negative; Nigeria is lacking behind when it comes to measure to mitigate the economic down turn of covid-19. Hussain opined that unlike other countries, the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Information directive did not come with any clear-cut policy measures on how to mitigate or address the economic effect of covid-19 on it populace.

According to Aina (2019) Office technology and management (OTM) education is an integral part of business education programme in Nigeria. The course is expected to provide occupational skills for its recipients in business or office related occupations either as employees or self-employed. Chigbuson, Durtur & Nimfel (2016) viewed Office Technology and Management program as skill acquiring discipline, remains a relevant channel for the transmission of the appropriate ICT skills and knowledge in order to make its graduates ICT compliant to embrace globalization and meet the demands of today's work place. This fact has propelled both Federal and State Governments to give students fair access to equipment and software that can directly increase their employability in their field of study. Baba & Akarahu (2012) asserted that Office Technology and Management programme is used as a comprehensive term referring to aspects of the education process, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Baba & Akarahu (2012) submitted further that the design of the OTM programme components also appears to be in response to a global initiative with an objective that portends new academic direction in favour of new technologies for teaching Office Technology and Management (OTM). Amiaya (2014) opined that new technologies are especially invaluable in skills-related education programme such as OTM where graduates are required to demonstrate skills and competencies demanded in the highly competitive and technologically-driven 21st century.

MITIGATING THE EFFECT OF COVID'19 THROUGH OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN IT CONSULTANCY

The OTM programme through training in managerial and ICT courses equips graduates with skills which can enable them establish and manage consultancy companies to assist growing firms to establish electronic office, records management procedures, and supply ICT and other office facilities/equipment to such firms. This is another self employment opportunity created through the study of Office Technology and Management.

Office Technology and Management opportunities in HTML Coding: Office Technology and Management students are taught about HTML coding, CSS, JavaScript, etc. (Lisbeth 2007). These enable them design attractive web pages.

The knowledge of web page design enables OTM graduates acquire skills which lead to specialization in the structuring and organization of visual information to aid communication and orientation. Web page design process which is a problem solving process requires substantial creativity, innovation and technical expertise. Those who possess this expertise can venture into web site design, online advertisement, online publication, web development, database administration and IT consultancy.

OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN DATABASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Database administration according to Haigh (2006) is the function of managing and maintaining database management systems (DBMS) using software like Ms Access, Oracle, My Structured Query Language (SQL), IBM DB2, Microsoft SQL server, etc. Graduates of OTM can venture into this enterprise to offer database management services to companies in the areas of installation, configuration, upgrading, administration, monitoring and maintenance of databases. Database administrators apply database software to store and manage information. They ensure that the database stored are backed up regularly, stored effectively, and secured from unauthorized access. The course Database Management System offered at the HND level exposes OTM undergraduates to skills in Database Administration and Management.

OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

The concept of the virtual office has to some extent come to stay. Virtual office according to Agomuo, (2014) is the capability of performing office functions in non-traditional office setting and telecommuting which is an office work practice where the worker does not travel to the office or meet with clients or customers daily in the office but receives and gives information using varieties of telecommunication resources. The success of the virtual workplace and telecommuting depends on the entrepreneur's ability to carry out business electronically. Agomuo (2014) defined electronic commerce as a modern methodology that addresses the use of information technology as an essential enabler of business, supporting both internal and external business activities. External electronic commerce is concerned with the use of information technology to support business interaction with the market place while the internal electronic commerce deals with the use of information technology to support internal processes, functions and operations of business. Electronic commerce is the xchange of goods and services through the use of internet resources. This includes any business transaction that takes place via digital process over the network (Osuala 2004). The author went further to say that since it holds that production of goods and services is not complete until they get to the final consumer, the speed required to reach the consumers scattered all over the local and international markets can only be achieved through the use of modern electronic information technologies. Dissemination of today's marketing information relies heavily on electronic commerce for effective reaches.

Electronic commerce therefore, comprises primarily of the distributing, buying, selling, marketing and servicing of products or services over electronic system such as internet and other computer networks hence the various acquired acronyms of online commerce like e-commerce, e-service, e-market, e-sales, e-business, etc. Agomuo, (2014) identified the services conducted through e- commerce to include, retail businesses that sell products to consumers, service providers that provide and sell services to consumers, auctioneers that create a market place for products and services, and business-to-business commerce. Retail transactions make up the largest part of e-commerce in that consumers can now find computers, automobiles, clothing, books, music, airline and event tickets, food, and just about anything else on the internet. The author further went on to classify types of e-commerce into three as follows:

a. Product transactions

b. Service transactions

c. Business-to-business transactions.

The challenges the accompanied covid 19 such as lock-down, suspension of social gathering, physical and social distancing, loss of jobs and increased rate of unemployment among others has paved way for OTM graduates who possess skills in electronic commutation to venture into this enterprise through knowledge and skills acquired during their OTM training.

CONCLUSION

From the literature reviewed, various skills and opportunities exist through the study of education. These opportunities are found in the areas ICT desktop publishing, website design and management, electronic commerce, among others. The OTM programme also equips graduates with vital skills required for self-employment and self-reliance. These skills include; human relation skills, risk management skills, time management skills etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature reviewed, the following recommendations were made.

1. Office Technology and Management departments should be provided with adequate equipment and facilities like computers, scanners, photocopiers internet facilities to enable the youths upon graduation, be equipped with adequate skills to run entrepreneurial ventures of their own.

2. Office technology and management programme should be introduced in all the tertiary institutions in the country to ensure its accessibility to all eligible students who are willing to take advantage of the opportunities inherent in the programme.

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