

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF FUNDING ICT RESOURCES FOR OTM PROGRAMME IN POLYTECHNICS IN OSUN STATE

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Abstract

This study sought for possible alternative sources of funding of ICT resources for OTM programme in polytechnics in Osun State. Research question was raised and self developed questionnaire with 17-item was distributed to 26 respondents in the two selected Polytechnics in Osun State. Frequency and mean methods were used in analyzing the data. Findings from the study reveal that government and managements of institutions alone cannot adequately provide ICT resources needed to effectively deliver the contents of OTM curriculum. For the students to acquire necessary skills, as well as to achieve the aims and objectives of introducing the new curriculum, alumni associations, corporate organizations, wealthy individuals and indeed every stakeholders' assistance are urgently needed to fund OTM programme.

Keywords: ICT resources, funding, OTM programme, capital intensive.

Introduction

OTM programme is an academic course of study offered in many tertiary institutions in Nigeria, especially Polytechnics. The curriculum for the programme was introduced in 2004 by the National Board for Technical Education in response to the yearning of stakeholders to replace the old secretarial studies curriculum in line with global changes in the business and work environments, to meet new technological and socio-economic trends as well as demands of the world of work.(Azuka, 2000, Makari, Gami and Otoiwo, 2005).

Roderick (2000) in Bolarinwa (2015) noted that for office system education to prepare students who will be effectively and efficiently useful in workplace, the integration of information technologies into curriculum is needed no matter what form they take. Conversely, office system education practitioners without the integration of

IT will either face decline in the discipline or be prepared to experience mass exodus of students from the programme. The new curriculum is ICT based with many computer courses required for utilization in workplaces and for possible entrepreneurship activities.

NBTE designed the OTM program for both National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma levels in Nigeria's polytechnics. At ND level, graduates are expected to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills to enable them to properly fit into the office of any organization and perform professionally, the functions of the modern secretary. At the HND level students are to be equipped with advanced secretarial skills for employment in various organizations and to acquire higher vocational and inter-personal skills for effective work competencies. Graduates of the programme are also to be skilled in office concepts and procedures, ICT Office Applications, Management Information Systems, Webpage design, Database Management, Desktop publishing, Office Administrative and Management, Entrepreneurship development, Professional career, Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility, (NBTE, 2004, Ugwanyi, 2012 & Festus 2014).

OTM is all about knowledge and skill acquisition in business and office operatives which can manifest itself through gainful employment regardless of the size of the establishment, self reliance and nation's development occasioned by entrepreneurship practices, as well as chances for further studies. Many parents and candidates now look on the programme as the principal assurance of opportunities for themselves against unemployment and poverty. The qualities and importance of the programme have changed peoples' perception positively about the secretarial practice and practitioners (Adebayo 2010).

OTM curriculum emphasized more on psychomotor domain (i.e. practical work). Folorunso (2006) posited that courses in OTM are not about theories, but on the ability of the students to practice that which has been imparted into them. Training in OTM programme belongs to two backgrounds – classroom and office. The classroom is expected to prepare the students for the office through adequate and practically oriented training with the use of various ICT training equipment and instructional resources. But when the classroom aspect is bad, practice in the office will be bad. In other word, where the training had been undertaken without adequate equipment and facilities, such trainees would have nothing to show at workplace and may not be employable without further training.

ICT facilities are the most important aids needed for implementing and achieving the objectives of the programme in the polytechnics. Festus (2014) defined ICT equipment and instructional resources as those tools that the teacher requires to be used directly or indirectly in the performance of his teaching function. Instructional resources as educational inputs are of vital importance to the teaching of any subject in the school curriculum. For this study, the definition of Amiaya (2014) is modified and sees ICT instructional resources as any electronic or modern resource that can be utilized to enhance teaching and learning as well as the administrative activities required for implementation of the OTM programme in public Polytechnics in Osun

State.

Relevant ICT resources for effective implementation of OTM curriculum include: hardware, software and telecommunications in the form of personal computers, scanners, digital camera, phones, faxes, modem, teleconferencing, compact disk, projectors, digital video disk player recorders, radio and television and various software programmes such as database systems used in education. Others are digitalized laboratories, workshops, internet connectivity and model offices. (NBTE, 2004, Onah and Okoro, 2010). These ICT resources needed for effective instruction should timely and adequately provided and be a replica of what is obtained and used in offices.

Integrating Technology into Learning

With the incorporation of information technology courses, OTM graduates are expected to be equipped with necessary office skills. Secretaryship has metamorphosed from the old economy to the digital economy where most of its activities are done electronically, today's secretaries should be in a position to analyze, synthesize and evaluate situation in office by using technology to solve problems and complete tasks efficiently and effectively. Students utilize ICT to manipulate data, explore relationships, intentionally and actively process information, construct personal and socially shared meaning and reflect on the learning process. With ICT resources as teaching and learning tools, students are adequately prepared to face the challenges the current waves and trends may pose on their ways. (Jonassen, Peck & Wilson, 1999).

Research outcomes by various authors have however, indicated inadequacy of modern ICT resources for office technology and management programmes in Nigerian Polytechnics. As a result large numbers of students involved cannot acquire the skills and competencies as envisaged in the National Policy on Education, OTM curriculum and as needed in the modern day work environment. Amiaya (2014) found that, many institutions lack the required resources. Also, Innocent (2014) reported that facilities available for OTM in Rivers State are grossly inadequate and in poor condition. According to Zakka & Prescilla (2009) ICT facilities required for teaching in OTM departments in North Central Zone of Nigeria are grossly inadequate, hence OTM teachers adopt lecture methods which has been found inappropriate and ineffective in teaching skilled based courses, (Randall 1978).

Effects of the inadequacies manifest in the performance of OTM graduates in workplaces which has gone from bad to worse inspite of the high profile diploma certificates they possess. The inability of OTM graduates to attain an acceptable level of competencies in the use of ICT has been disheartening and of great concern to both the teachers and the society at large. Irene (2009) confirmed that 'there have been reports about the refusal to employ the products of OTM programme by many corporate organizations.' This is so as many of the graduates have little or no practical content, and unsuitable without further training owing to lack of practical skills.

Funding of education, and indeed OTM which is capital and cost intensive has

always been a problem. Finance represents a very important factor that determines the quality and quantity of ICT resources and facilities that can be made available for OTM programme. Financial resources to meet up with the cost intensive facilities, usually through government budgetary allocations, are always delayed and inadequate for acquisition, installation and maintenance. Akinnusi (2013) declared that when vocational training institutions are dependent solely on public funds they have the chance of becoming stagnant with deterioration in their planning and efficiency. When public financing is the major source of support to OTM department, the programme may experience fluctuations in budget allocations, leading to shortage of essential resources and low quality output. While lamenting the dearth of finance in institutions of learning in Nigeria (Oke in Folorunso, 2006) says that: having been informed by the highest authority in the land i.e. the Federal Government that educational institutions among others, should generate funds internally to cater for a number of their needs, it is pertinent to involve every stakeholders (students, parents, host communities, etc).

Elizabeth (2015) reiterated the fact that education remains the backbone of every society and for the sector to thrive and deliver on its promises, sufficient funding and institutional supports are needed. But rising cost of education made it difficult for government to single handedly fund the sector. She emphasized that government alone cannot muster enough funds for education but needs the backing of all stakeholders to get the sector up and running. Therefore, OTM programme with ICT based needs be strengthened with complementary funds from other sources.

Statement of the problem

Graduates of OTM programme are expected to be modern office managers, effectively managing human, material and office resources. The OTM programme requires practical with costly equipment and consumables. The funds available from public sources are always inadequate and most institutions cannot meet up with the huge financial involvement in funding the programme (Esene 2013). Consequently many OTM departments in Nigerian polytechnics are inadequately equipped and under-stocked with ICT educational resources. It is then imperative to search for alternative means of financing to support and improve upon what the government and the institutions can afford in OTM programme in Nigerian Polytechnics. This study investigated innovative ways to support and improve upon what the owners and managements can afford in the adequate and timely provision of ICT resources for OTM programmes in the Nigerian polytechnics.

Research Question

What are the alternative sources of funding for the provision of adequate ICT resources in OTM programme in the Polytechnics in Osun State?

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted because it involved eliciting information from the respondents. The population comprised 26 lecturers from the Departments of Office Technology and Management, Federal Polytechnic, Ede and Osun State Polytechnic, Iree. The population constituted the sample, because of its manageable size.

Significance of the study

As the outcome of this study will show alternative sources available for funding OTM programme, administrators of the Institutions will be able to tap into the identified sources for more funds. Stakeholders (ex-students, private organizations, industries etc) would also see how they can assist in funding the programme.

Instrumentation

Instrument used for data collected was a self developed structured questionnaire. It was developed from literature reviewed based on the research question and made up of 17-item questionnaire. Respondents indicated their opinions on a 4-point scale of 'Strongly Agree' = 4 points, 'Agree' = 3 points, 'Strongly Disagree' = 2 points, 'Disagree' = 1 point. The instrument was validated by three experts in OTM. A total of twenty six copies of the questionnaires were administered and all retrieved. The test-retest reliability method, which yielded a correlation of 0.84 coefficient of reliability was used to determine the stability of the questionnaire items. Frequency and mean methods were used to analyse data. The decision rule was that any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was taken as agreed while items with mean score below 2.50 were regarded as disagreed.

Table showing respondents responses to Questionnaire items

Alternative sources of funding	Responses				
	SA 4	A 3	SD 2	D 1	Mean
Use of public private partnership with students to pay minimal amount for the use of ICT resources installed by private ICT vendors.	10	8	8	-	3.08
Private internet service providers (IPS) be encouraged to provide internet facilities and resources to OTM dept.	9	9	4	4	2.88
Students be encouraged to have their personal computers before admission and registration	6	7	11	2	2.65
OTM Departmental students associations be encouraged to undertake the provision of some ICT resources from dues, levies, rag day collections and other funds received/collected.	15	5	4	2	3.26
OTM Dept to appeal to corporate organizations within and outside the host communities (Banks, GSM providers, Odua investment, oil companies, Dangote etc) to built, install and donate fully equipped ICT centres and name such sponsored provisions after them.	19	3	3	1	3.53
Individual wealthy philanthropists be approached by the department for ICT facilities to OTM Dept by management of each institution.	20	3	3	-	3.65
Students to pay ICT development levy.	0	6	19	1	2.19
Donation of ICT resources from alumni members of the dept.	4	17	3	2	2.88
Authorities of TEDFUND, NBTE, Technology Development Fund be convinced to give priorities to OTM programme in their areas of assistance in the provision of ICT resources	15	8	3	-	3.34
Establishment of linkages with overseas tertiary institutions offering the programme for financial and technical supports	19	3	3	1	3.53
Convocation of National Conference by OTM Depts in Nigeria Polytechnics to highlight funding problems of ICT resources and possible alternative ways of solution.	5	11	6	4	2.65
Short term ICT training/workshop/seminars be mounted to generate additional income to purchase ICT facilities.	16	5	2	3	3.30
Associations interested in secretarial profession like ABEN, APSSON, ASSNU be appealed to for donation of ICT facilities in OTM department.	15	4	4	3	3.19
Private ICT/Office equipment suppliers like Xerox, BEAM, Zinox etc be approached for donation of their products.	10	6	7	3	2.88
Consider supplementary admission for few qualified students whose parents/guardians/sponsors can donate ICT equipment for the dept.	3	3	11	9	2.00
All ex -students of the department be made to compulsorily join Alumni associations to enable them contribute their quota in the provision of ICT facilities.	4	9	6	7	2.38
Ex-students be used to link donors in governments, corporate bodies and highly placed individuals, especially employers of Office Technology and Management graduates to donate ICT resources.	14	6	3	3	3.19

Source: Field Trip (2015)

The table indicated alternative sources of funding ICT resources for OTM programme in polytechnics in Osun state. Only three items had mean responses below 2.50. The respondents affirmed the alternative sources as potentially good for funding OTM programmes in the two selected Polytechnics. The respondents disagreed that students to pay ICT development levy, (mean 2.19), consideration of supplementary admission for few qualified students whose parents/guardians/sponsors can donate ICT facilities (mean 2.00) and that all ex-students of the department to compulsory join Alumni associations to enable them private ICT facilities (mean 2.38).

Results and Discussions

The objective of this study was to identify alternative sources of funding ICT resources for OTM programme in Polytechnics in Osun State. The use of public/private partnership in the provision of ICT resources as well as encouraging private internet service providers' presence on the campuses accepted. These are in line with the stand of the Federal Government on the need for collaborative efforts between governments at all levels and the private sector in virtually every aspect of the nation's economy. Mudhai (2004) and Akinseinde (2012) revealed that cooperative funding works as a synergy to the success of any organization and that PPP strategy has no direct government involvement, yet improves availability of funds and facilities.

This study found that OTM departments could appeal to corporate organizations within and outside the host communities (Banks, GSM providers, Odua investment, oil companies, Dangote etc) to built, install and donate fully equipped ICT centres and to name such sponsored provisions after them. This finding agreed with the activities of the United Bank for Africa in recent times. According to Afolake (2015), the bank in its contributions to the development of tertiary education in Nigeria had donated Ultra Modern Information Communication Technology (ICT) centers in institutions such as Adekunle Ajasin University, Universities of Benin and Ilorin, Federal College of Education Abeokuta, among others.

Wealthy philanthropists and ICT suppliers be approached to generously donated funds and equipment was favoured. A panel set up by the federal government on other sources of financing education had encouraged, among others, voluntary contributions through donations of equipment by philanthropists, organizations', clubs industrial bodies etc. (Esene 2014). Folorunso (2006) reported that Late Sir Bank Antohny, Late MKO Abiola, Chief Kola Daisi, Odua Groups to mention but a few, contributed financially and materially at different times to the development of education in Nigeria. Such wealthy individuals could be identified and reached on the need for their assistance in providing adequate ICT equipment to OTM departments in Nigerian Polytechnics in view of the importance of the programme to national development.

The convocation of joint National Conference by OTM Departments in

Nigeria Polytechnics to highlight funding problems of ICT resources and possible alternative ways of solution has been accepted by the respondents. Many people and organizations are aware of the general problem of under-funding being experienced in the education sector, but may be unaware of the specifics. The idea of a national conference of OTM departments in Nigeria polytechnics is a new innovation, which will show case the level at which inadequate funding is affecting the programme, bring to limelight the specific problems of ICT resources and identify the target audience or areas of possible solutions.

Assistance through Alumnus is a major source of alternative fund if well harnessed and engaged. But giving back to your Alma Mata campaigns need to be effected to meet alumni on their own turn. Alumni of OTM departments are usually secretarial personnel to highly placed individuals, or successful entrepreneurs, who may be used to link donors in governments, corporate bodies and individuals. Alumni can get adopt major initiatives sources of alternative funding like scholarship efforts, fund raising, luncheon etc

The statement that students to pay ICT development levy, (mean 2.19), was rejected. This negates the recommendations by the panel on finding strategies and other sources of financing education in Nigeria for the payment of special levies by students (Olaitan (2010). Consideration of supplementary admission for few qualified students whose parents/guardians/sponsors can donate ICT facilities (mean 2.00) was also rejected. This is to avoid commercialization of education or restricting access to OTM programme to only the wealthy individuals. That all ex-students of the department to compulsorily join Alumni associations to enable them private ICT facilities (mean 2.38) was rejected. Membership of any association is voluntary and ex-students could only be persuaded to join.

Conclusion:

The philosophy of OTM programme is basically to enhance human dignity and enthrone work competencies. It enables the recipients develop enough saleable and employable skills, competencies, attitudes as well as knowledge to enable them secure and maintain basic employment or self reliance for comfortable living. To achieve the objectives, each institution needs adequate supply and maintenance of ICT resources which literature indicated are currently lacking. However, there are various opportunities for OTM departments in Nigeria polytechnics to generate funds for the programme that need to be looked into and tapped. It is however important to educate the public on the benefits of the programme, the need for the programme to be supported for national development and individual advancement. All the communication channels of face-to-face discussion, direct email solicitation, social media, websites and cell phones need to be employed in creatively sourcing alternative funding for ICT resources in OTM departments.

Recommendations

Strong alumni are a veritable source of generating funds. This means that

OTM departments must give priority attention to students when in school with databases that could make periodic contact possible. Graduating students should also be encouraged to join alumni associations to enable them contribute meaningfully to the development of the department.

The problem of inadequacy of ICT instructional materials for the programme should be opened for possible assistance from the public. This could be done through OTM organized national conferences, seminars exhibitions of students' products.

Institutional managers/administrators and Heads of OTM should through adequate accounting system ensure that funds obtained is well utilized.

Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN), Association of Professional Secretarial Staff of Nigeria (APSSON) and similar organizations should encourage their members who are mostly ex-students of OTM departments in various institutions to come to the aid of their former departments.

Institutional managers/administrators in collaboration with heads of OTM Departments should make an special appeal to Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Federal Ministry of Education, as well as NBTE to include OTM programmes as priority areas for assistance, because OTM programme is capital intensive that deserves special consideration.

International donor assistance, establishment of linkages and collaboration with institutions and organizations should be encouraged. They are veritable sources of fellowships, funds, grants, loans and exchanges ICT resources

In all ramifications, the OTM departments all over the country, need honesty, sincerity of purpose and hard work to come out of the present predicament.

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