Competency Based Curriculum for Office Technology and Management Education in the North Western Nigerian Colleges of Education: From Office Technology and Management Lecturers and Human Resource Managers Perspective

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Abstract

Competency based curriculum (CBC) is centered towards demonstrating the ability of applying skills, attitude, knowledge, cognition and values towards achieving performance. The purpose of this study is to establish the importance of CBC activities on the performance of office work. The study was conducted in Kano State, north-western Nigeria. Qualitative method was adopted.Purposive sampling using snowball technique was adopted to select sample of the study. Four (4) experts participated in the study. Thematic data analysis was employed using Nvivo 10 to facilitate the analysis. Findings of the study revealed that, the office technology and management education (OTME) curriculum is due for review which should consist virtual competencies courses to be in line with the global new normal and COVID-19 pandemic protocols. The paper recommends that the national commission for colleges of education (NCCE) should ensure adequate funding to enable smooth implementation of recommendations made.

Key words: Computer Based Curriculum (CC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), National Certificate in Education (NCE), Office Technology and Management Education (OTME).

1. Introduction

Nigerian colleges of education were designed to train and provide teachers with the technical skills and knowledge for effective teaching in the primary and secondary schools as well as produce competent personnel that could work in the public and private organisations. The establishment of these colleges was aimed at combating dearth of qualified teachers and prospective personnel. For a very long time a number of colleges of education were established by both the state and federal government of Nigeria. This paper focus is on the North-western part of Nigeria

which consist of 7 States of Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States.

In this seven (7) northern States, there are 16 colleges of education, 9 colleges are owned by the federal government of Nigeria, 7 are owned by the States and 1 is privately owned. Nine (9) colleges of education offers business education programme were office technology and management education is offered as a course under the school of business education. Business education programme is being offered by colleges of education in order to enhance national development by offering skills acquisition courses for self-reliance and employment opportunities.

Primary educational foundation is very critical to educational development, without which, it would be impossible to achieve a purposeful development orientation. It was in recognition of the importance of national development that since the end of colonialism in Nigeria, subsequent governments devised various educational strategies and indeed established colleges of education with the aim of laying solid teacher education foundation for a cohesive national development.

However, colleges of education play an important role in enhancing national development through courses offered by these institutions.

2. Competency Based Curriculum

Competency based curriculum (CBC) is a concept which enables students to learn how to work independently in order to demonstrate command in competencies required for their chosen area of study (Gruber, 2018). Jallow (2011) reported that, when students display a required competency during studies, they are demonstrating their ability to do something positive during and after their studies. However, among the numerous outcomes of CBC as regards the OTME, an increase in students practical class engagements is be envisaged. These practical engagements would be beneficial in strengthening student's dexterity and improve their output. This is because the OTME program is a practice oriented course that needs students to be optimally engaged on practical classes during training, hence CBC would promote individual learning and harbour variety of learning styles that makes the process a truly personalised learning process (Gruber, 2018).

Curriculum is any criteria, element or an aspect that aids in teaching and learning, it is also what is taught within each discipline as outlined in the system of teaching. Curriculum give teachers focus on what to teach at a varying stages of learning. Therefore, educators need must be concerned about the choices of teaching contents and method to be followed in performing their teaching obligations. Educators and experts in particular should be consulted from time to time in order to tap from their wealth of expertise in the review and upgrade of curriculum (Johnson, 2011).

Educational systems have always being leveraged with technological advancements by investigating new research fields and improve the current teaching and learning processes (Raja &Nagasubramani, 2018). However, it is evident that in recent years, there has been increase in embedding competencies into various

educational curriculum in order to ensure that their teaching meets industrial requirements. Therefore, a competency based curriculum that is focused on outcomes of learning by defining goals and procedure to achieve them is desirous in the teaching and training of secretaries in our institutions (El Faddouli, El Falaki,Idrissi, &Bennani, 2011). Thesekind of competencies contribute to the development of students career because the objectives of acquiring the competency is to enable students to progress at their own pace and measure their achievements towards a standard of performance.

The nature of the modern secretary's duties requires large amount of resourceful initiatives while handling official functions, this is because information is an important functional resource of the secretary, this made it necessary for the secretary to be part of information and communication development promoters (Kahirol, et al, 2017). By acquiring requisite competencies during school training, the secretary would be able to coordinate secretarial functions efficiently.

Among the functions of the secretary is organising and managing meetings and sundry official events (Onifade, 2009). The virtual competency would immensely assist the secretary in organising meetings and official events. The emergence of the present global pandemic of Covid 19 has necessitated organisations to embrace virtual meetings in Nigeria. However, official virtual interactions were not being practiced in Nigeria prior to Covid 19 pandemic, although there might be some few organisations that use their virtual channels for meetings and official interactions. However, the advent of Covid 19 has exposed the advantages of using virtual channels for meetings and other official interactions. Therefore, secretaries need to be trained to acquire virtual competency right from their school time so that they could organise good and effective virtual meetings. Therefore, educational programs based on CBC enhances human skills and capacities that individual want to achieve, therefore the programmes should be aligned with industry and academic standards (Johnstone& Leasure,2015). This is why stake holders in the area of secretarial job recruitment and academics that train the secretary were selected as participants in this study.

3. Office Technology and Management Education Curriculum

Office technology and management education (OTME), is a course that offers proficiency in office education which equips students with the required secretarial and office competencies, knowledge and interpersonal skills that students could delve into and advance their secretarial practice proficiency. The office technology and management education is a course offered in the school of business education in the Nigerian colleges of education.

The national commission for colleges of education (NCCE) is the regulatory body set up by the federal government of Nigeria under a Decree (now Act) on 3rd January, 1989 (Amended decree No. 12, 1993). The commission was mandated to make recommendations on national policy for development of teacher education and training. Among several functions of the commission is the provision of minimum

standards (curriculum) for all programmes offered in the Nigerian colleges of education and undertake accreditation of all courses of the Nigerian colleges of education. The minimum standard is a document which contains the minimum courses that students are supposed to undertake so that they could be able to demonstrate dispositions towards their work in order to remain relevant in their career (NCCE, 2012).

Several programmes are offered in the Nigerian colleges of education and office technology and management education is among the pioneer programmes offered.The programme was formally named secretarial education, but presently, due to the review of the program nomenclature, the name was changed to office technology and management education (OTME). Graduates of OTME after obtaining the national certificate in education (NCE), were expected to become teachers in primary and secondary schools or work in organisations as secretaries. The OTME curriculum contains courses offered from NCE 1 (one), NCE II (two) and NCE 3 (three). The NCE program courses are spread throughout the period of three (3) years for training students to graduate as secretaries or teachers that could teach business education in secondary schools.

4. New Technologies in OTME

Technologies, especially modern technologies has been found to be among the major instruments that drive organisational performance. Muller,Ayemhere&Mordi, (2012) describe technology as the application of scientific methods and materials to achieve a commercial or industrial objectives. Additionally, Ogueijiofor and Nwogu (2014) recounted that, technology is the collection of tools, machinery and procedures involved in achieving a set objective.

However, as reported by Nwazor (2019) that technology is the application of scientific knowledge and tools in order to solve practical problems. It is therefore worthy to consider that technology gave birth to virtual meetings that serve as a strategy the secretary would explore in the execution of secretarial tasks. The virtual meeting is seen as an information technology system where meetings were conducted regardless of distance, space or cost to solve variety of problems. It would certainly be advantageous if secretaries curriculum would be redesigned to capture learning the art of virtual meetings using networking technologies broadcasting through satellite Maria, Carlos, &Sandro,(2019).

Therefore, at this juncture, the secretary's knowledge capacities should be developed and also be equipped with modern office technologies in order to meet the present challenges of modernsecretarial practice (Kahiroll, Musa, Norlisa, 2017).

5. Enriching the Office Technology and Management Education Curriculum

Office technology and management education is a segment of the business education programmes that prepare individuals to acquire skills that could be used in the working environment as well as skills that could offer self-employment. The

programme is aimed at preparing one to be versatile in general knowledge and understanding of the business environment.It is also designed to prepare graduates to become teachers that would teach in the primary and secondary schools or work as secretaries in public or private organisations (NCCE, 2012). However, the current OTME minimum standard which contains the OTME curriculum was long overdue. The last time the curriculum was reviewed was in the year 2012 (NCCE, 2012) and after this period many things have happened in the technology world.

According to Adekola (2002), a part from issues like curriculum review other related issues which are of interest should also be visited, issues like adequate funding of colleges of education as well as programmes that are consistent with current labour market needs, capacity building and lifelong learning mediums that would enhance and improve quality of teaching and learning.

It is on record that every year, OTME graduates join the rank and file in the labour market to gain employment. However, it is worthy to note that the labour market is now more saturated and more competitive than ever, therefore, secretaries need to be trained according to the dictate of the modern office needs in order to have an age over and above their contemporaries in the labour market.The obsolesce in the OTME curriculum would create doubt as to the relevance, functionality and adequacy in the teaching of modern technology competencies, this will affect the chances of graduates in gaining employment. Subsequently, the need for the review of the current OTME curriculum used in the Nigerian colleges of education is desirable in order to migrate the training of the secretary to the global needs.

However, in the light of the above, recommendations would subsequently be offered in order to serve as a guide which if implemented would enrich the OTME curriculum for the Nigerian colleges of education.

6. Methodology

Methodology of a study is explained as methods adopted in conducting a particular research work (Williams, 2007). Merriam (2009) also recounted that methodology is a systematic investigation with a view of finding solutions to problems. However, each study has its peculiarities, hence this study due its peculiarities in finding detailed experts opinions on the study problem adopted qualitative technique. This is with a view of getting in-depth experts views across the human resource managers and office technology and management disciplines.

The study adopted qualitative design. However, as mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the respondents for the study are human resource management and office technology and management education experts. The experts were selected based on their wealth of experiences in their fields. The experts were identified through snowball technique. The first expert introduce the researcher to the next up to the fourth participant. It is also worthy to mention that, the identities of participants is kept secret to ensure participants personality remained unanimous, therefore, pseudonyms were used to address participants throughout the study, this allows

participants privacy and their statements to be guarded according to the initial acceptance of the participants to partake in the study (Gordon, 1994; Skulmoski, Hartman, and Krahn,2007). Four (4) experts participated in the study and interview was used to collect data, thematic data analysis was employed using Nvivo 10 to facilitate the analysis. Interview protocols and ethical considerations as required in qualitative research was diligently followed.

Additionally, qualitative design was adopted in this study because the method is suitable for this kind of study in comparison with a research conducted by Barati, Sadeghi, Khammarnia, Siavashi, Oskrochi, (2016) and Velasco, Díaz-Barriga, Tójar, and Juan-Carlos. (2017).

However, these past studies were similar in context and have produced satisfactory outcomes. This justification has necessitated the adoption of qualitative design in the study.

7. Discussions

Interviews were conducted to experts were the expert's perspectives on the need for a competency-based curriculum for office technology and management education was received and discussed. Experts from both the office technology and management and human resource disciplines were desirous of having such a competency based curriculum. Experts were unanimous in their views as to the dire need for the review of the OTME curriculum. They gave their opinions which was found to be valid under the present global dispensation of emerging new office technologies coupled with the current global pandemic experienced throughout the world.

An OTME expert was quoted saying:

> *{"Yes, there is need to improve the curriculum to meet the minimumstandard,to meet the challenges of the present world, you know the world haschanged".} (P3 OTME).*

The above respondent who is an OTME expert reported that the OTME curriculum is due for review in order to meet the global standards. These global standards were identified as the emergence of new office technologies and the issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic(Ali, Farooq, Wasim, Ahmad &Hussain, Salman, Jahanzaib, 2016).

Another expert's view from the human resource management discipline was also in agreement with the above OTME expert. The expert views the global pandemic as a phenomenathat offer opportunities for improvements in many areas of endeavours. The expert assert that the pandemic has come to stay and many things that happens during the pandemic has come to stay, therefore the need to capture many things in the OTME curriculum is essential. The expert was quoted saying:

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{"There is the need for the review because what we have said before, many things are coming up and they need to be captured in the curriculum".} (P1 HRM).

This expert narrated that, many things have emerged during the pandemic and those things happen to have competitive advantages. The frequency of using virtual meetings, virtual conferences as well as using the virtual channels to perform many other official endeavours has being tested by many organisations and was found to be effective in terms of cost saving and time management because the channel has completely collapsed the barrier of space and time. Therefore, organisations would continue to explore advantages offered by virtual channels in doing their businesses.

Another expert who is an OTME expert agree with the submissions of the two experts above, the expert was quoted saying:

{"Of course, there is the need, because when we talked about the virtual meetings, conferences, zooms, generating letters, so secretaries have to be up to date, there are no provision of these competencies in the current curriculum. Because something would be missing secretaries do not have those kind of skill and it is very important".} (P3 OTME)

The above quotation has buttressed and is in conformity with the assertion of two experts above. The first expert is a human resource manager who work directly with the secretaries and by looking at his views, he has highlighted on the areas where the office work would be simplified and make responses to be rapid. This would contribute to overall growth of the organisation. Another added advantage is that, the secretary's professionalism would be exposed thereby placing their relevance highly in the organisation as well as ensuring the optimal utilisation of the secretary's competencies and this is a very good advancement for the secretary. The third expert mentioned that virtual competency is not captured in the current minimum standard (curriculum) used in the Nigerian colleges of education.

If introduced in the teaching of the secretaries, virtual competency will assist secretaries to use virtual channels to curtail operational expenditures as well as ensure prudence management of resources. This is the view of another human resource expert. He informed that the introduction of virtual competencies in the training of secretaries would immensely improve secretary's productivity and efficiency. He narrated that, this could be done by reviewing the current OTME curriculum to meet the current global standards. The expert reported that:

{"The OTME curriculum was long overdue for review especially at this critical time the world is facing. The financial capacities of organisations has diminished and organisations must find ways of curtailing operational expenditures through technology".}, (P2 HRM)

Another expert from the human resource management angle opined that:

{This kind of virtual competencies are most needed to be acquired by our secretaries because of the roles they would play in running of the office".} (P1 HRM).

This human resource manager has brought out the need for secretaries to acquire the art of manipulating virtual channels in order to organise virtual meetings.   This is because organising meetings is among the peculiar jobs of the secretary.   This competency when acquired would facilitate optimal utilisation of the secretary in the discharge of his or her secretarial functions.

Participants number one who is a human resource manager and participant 4 an OTME expert in answering interview question 2, were of the opinion that the OTME curriculum is due for review because as they lamented, many issues have happened between the period under review. A fundamental issue that happens is the current Covid 19 pandemic experienced throughout the world. The participants were quoted as follows:

{"Yes the OTME curriculum is due for review because many things have happened throughout the world, and also the period of 5 years for the review has lapsed since 2015 because the last review was made in 2012".} P1 HRM

The OTME experts asserts in the interview that:

{"The curriculum is long over due since 5 years back, many technological and environmental issues have occurred and with the recent developments if this kind of reviews are not done, the obsolete nature of the curriculum would allow producing qualified and competent secretaries".} P4 OTME

All experts have arrived at considerable agreement that there is the need for the review of OTME curriculum.

8. Discussion of result

At the time of this study, it is not certain whether there is a research on competency based curriculum for office technology and management education in the colleges of education in north-western Nigeria. While the office technology and management education has a long history of producing secretaries, it is worthy to mention that modern secretaries should go beyond what is now obtained in the NCCE minimum standard.   This is because the world is changing and many technologies are emerging.   The current Covid 19 pandemic the world is witnessing is an indicator of an inevitable change that must occur to the teachings and training of secretaries.

Below is the discussion of results presented in table 1 and 2 respectively:

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9. Interview Question 1

The world has now change due to the Covid 19 pandemic, do you have any suggestion as tohow the secretary would be trained in order to be able to effectively coordinate virtual meetings, briefings, seminars and conferences?

Respondent	Responses	Interpretation
P1 - HRM	There is the need because what we have said before, many things are coming up things like this pandemic, you know we need to improve on the teachings and competencies like virtual should be taught to OTME graduates, very important	Consensus was reached to the fact that all participants have agreed that the art of virtual competencies is needed to be taught to the secretaries during training.
P2 - HRM	The OTME curriculum was long overdue for review especially at this critical time the world is facing. The financial capacities of organisations has diminished and organisations must find ways of curtailing operational expenditures through technology. This kind of virtual competencies would assist organisations towards achieving their goals at this time	
P3 - OTME	Of course, there is the need, because when we talked about the virtual meetings, conferences, zooms, generating letters, so secretaries have to be up to date, there are no provision of these competencies in the current curriculum. Because something would be missing secretaries do not have those kind of skill and it is very important.	
P4 - OTME	Yes, there is need to improve on it to meet the minimum standard, to meet the challenges of the present world,especially the virtual competencies you know the world has changed.	

Table 1: Question 1 responses and interpretation

10. Interview Question 2

Do you think there is the need for review and upgrade of the current OTM(E) curriculum used in the Nigerian colleges of education?

Respondent	Responses	Interpretation
P1 - HRM	Yes the OTME curriculum is due for review because many things have happened throughout the world, and also the period of 5 years for the review has lapsed since 2015 because the last review was made in 2012	A considerable experts consensus wasestablished to the fact that all participants opinion is
P2 - HRM	The OTME curriculum was long overdue for review especially at this critical time the world is facing. The financial capacities of organisations has diminished	

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	and organisations must find ways of curtailing operational expenditures through technology.	consistent that the OTME curriculum should be reviewedto contain competencies needed by modern organisations.
P3 - OTME	Yes, there is need to improve it to meet the minimum standard,to meet the challenges of the present world, you know the world haschanged	
P4 - OTME	The curriculum is long over due since 5 years back, many technological and environmental issues have occurred and with the recent developments if this kind of reviews are not done, the obsolete nature of the curriculum would allow producing qualified and competent secretaries.	

Table 2: Question 2 responses and interpretation

Below are two hierarchical models indicating frequency ofparticipants responses on the need to include virtual competency in the teaching of OTME students and the need for the review of the OTME curriculum:

Figure. 1 showing frequency and relationship of participants responses on the need for introducing virtual competency
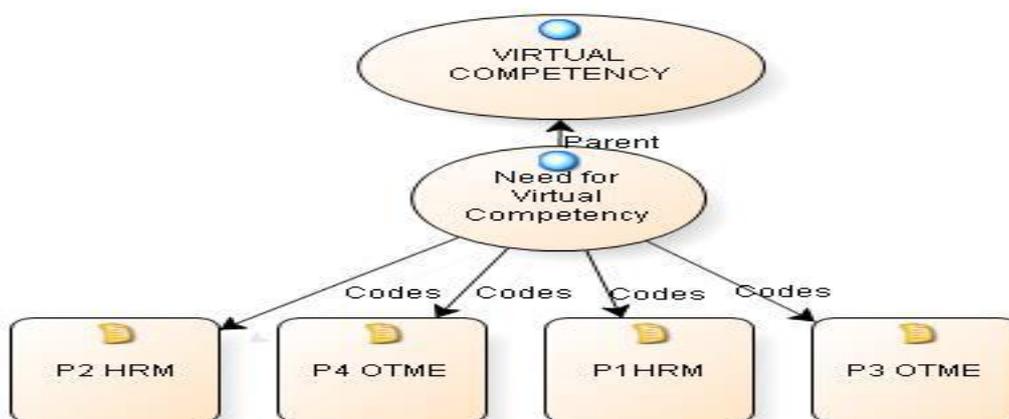
Hierarchical model showing frequency of participants responses on the need for the introduction of virtual competencies in the teaching of OTME in the Nigerian colleges of education.

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Figure.2 showing frequency and relationship of participants responses on the need for reviewing the OTME curriculum
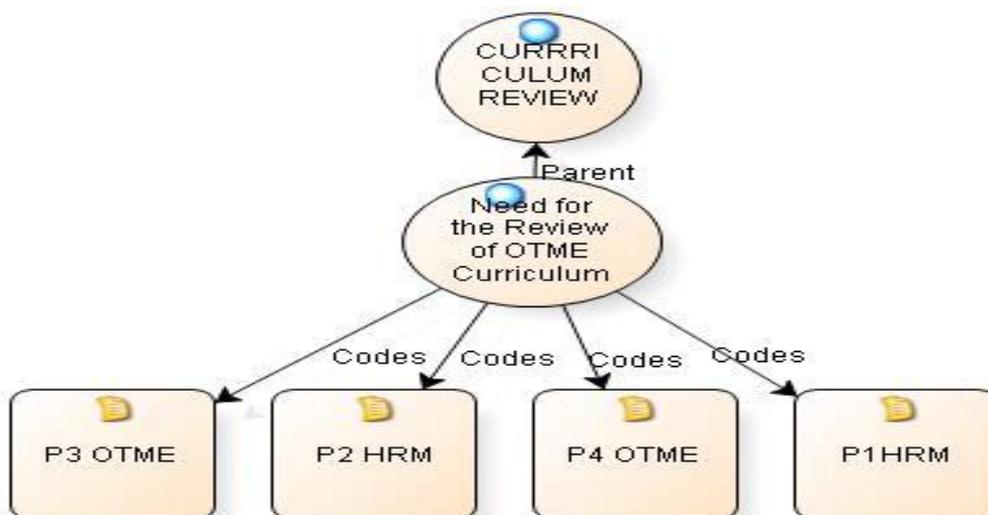
Hierarchical model showing frequency of participants responses on the need for the review of OTME curriculum.

11. Findings

Findings from interview question 1 has revealed that all experts both from the human resource management and office technology and management education, were unanimous that the art of virtual competencies should be taught to secretaries during training. Experts believe that this competency is necessary to be taught to the secretaries because of present changes of organisational operations which brought to limelight the relevance of virtual competency to the operational activities of organisations.

However, findings from interview 2 also revealed a unanimous views of experts that office technology and management education curriculum should be reviewed,based on the reason that the curriculum was last reviewed in 2012 which made it eight (9) years as at now against the regulatory 5 years interval of its review.

12. Conclusion

It is worthy to note that experts general consensus has established that virtual competencies should be taught in the training of secretaries. Accordingly, an urgent need for the review office technology and management education minimum standard become necessary for the Nigerian colleges of education to be abreast with technological changes in their teaching and learning processes.

13. Recommendation

Based on the discussions and findings of the study, this paper recommends as

follows:

1. The review of the OTME curriculum is necessary and should be carried out timely

andon regular basis so as to be in line with modern day global technological changes.

2.Modern technology competencies skills such as the virtual competencies which has

become crucial to modern employment requirements should be embedded in the reviewedOTME curriculum

2. It is also recommended that NCCE and other stakeholders should ensure adequate funding for the speedy implementation of the aforementioned recommendations.

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