

Employers' Perception on Extent of Utilization of Technical Skills by Office Technology and Management Graduates for Contemporary Office Functions Within Polytechnics in Taraba State

Odesanya Temitope Alaba  
Department Of Office Technology And Management  
Federal Polytechnic Bali Taraba State, Nigeria  
E-Mail= [Odesanya.Tope@Yahoo.Com](mailto:Odesanya.Tope@Yahoo.Com)

And  
Dr Frank Okoro  
Department Of Office Technology And Management  
Federal Polytechnic Bali Taraba State, Nigeria  
E-Mail = [Okoro.Frank@Yahoo.Com](mailto:Okoro.Frank@Yahoo.Com)

**Abstract**

*This paper examined employers' perception on extent of utilization of technical skills by Office Technology and Management (OTM) graduates for contemporary office functions within polytechnics in Taraba state. The study adopts descriptive survey design. Two research questions guided this work and one null hypothesis. The population for the study comprised of 30 employers from Federal Polytechnic Bali and 30 employers from Taraba State Polytechnic, Suntai in Taraba state, making the total number of 60 employers as the population. All OTM graduates from both polytechnics were used for the study, hence there was no sampling technique adopted for the study. The instrument was face-validated by two experts while reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability techniques which yielded a coefficient of 0.89. Mean and Standard Deviation were used for analyzing data from the research questions while t-test was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. There was no significance difference in the mean responses of employers of labour from Federal Polytechnic and State Polytechnic on the extent of utilization of technical skills by OTM graduates for contemporary office functions. The finding revealed the relevance of social media and technical writing skills of OTM graduates for contemporary offices, and these skills are highly relevant for the survival of any modern office today. It was concluded that contemporary offices today in which OTM graduate's works cannot function effectively without the combination of social media and technical writing skill. It was recommended among others that good communication and proofreading skills are tools that sustain contemporary offices, hence OTM graduates should made deliberate effort to improve in that aspect as they are seen as the image makers of any organizations.*

**Keywords:** Extent of Utilization, Office Technology and Management Graduates, Technical Skills, Employers' Perception, Polytechnics

## **Introduction**

### **Background of the Study**

Secretarial studies with a new nomenclature known as Office Technology and Management is an aspect of vocational and technical education with more emphasis on skills acquisition (Orija & Jolaade, 2019). Komolafe and Ajayi (2010) explained Office Technology and Management (OTM) as work-centred educational programme with the aim of acquiring skills for white collar jobs, self-reliance or employer of labour. Office Technology and Management (OTM) graduates are majorly from the Nigerian Polytechnic, the Nigerian Polytechnic system was designed for the training of office managers and office personnel. Ogheneovo (2016) stated in his study that OTM was designed by the National Board for Technical Education to replace the Secretarial Studies programme. The new OTM programme was meticulously designed to cover various areas of study in several aspects of learning including humanities, management, social sciences, Information and Communication Technology related fields, financial studies etc. The whole essence was to ensure that the graduates match expectations of contemporary office. Through the OTM programme, office managers are equipped for industries and the business world. Contemporary developments in the work places resulting from enhanced business practices and technicalities gave impetus to the redesigning of the secretarial studies programmes.

The rate at which tertiary institutions in Nigeria produce many qualified graduates in different fields of study annually is at alarming rate. Virtually many of them become frustrated or despondent because they cannot secure jobs in the labour market. This accounts for the present upsurge of interest in technical and vocational education as it affords graduates the privilege of possessing technical skills. OTM as an aspect of technical and vocational education produce graduates with such utilized and laudable skills. Graduates of Office Technology and Management

*Received:* 12 April 2023

*Revised:* 1 May 2023

*Final Accepted:* 6 May 2023

Copyright © authors 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7903115>

of tertiary institutions in Nigeria have high expectations after the end of their studies. The view is that their acquired skills after graduation should be able to open employment doors for them and they should not struggle like those in other unskilled fields who often grapple with unemployment. Employers of labour from any field of endeavor feel that the return on employing graduates is low, given that graduates require substantial on-the-job training before they provide any returns to the firm. Graduates should have a more realistic view of what they can offer when employed and what they can expect from their first jobs, given their limited experiential training (Kelebogile 2014).

Skill is a specific form of learning and ability to be trained on a specified task until one become an expert or master in such skill. Uzor and Ike 2010 in Oyinlola, Asonibare and Oluwalola (2021) explained skill as an ability to do something well, gained through training and experiences. Technical skills are specified knowledge or skill and graduates in this field are required to perform specific tasks and use specific tools in real work situation. It is sometimes referred to as hard skills, involving the practical knowledge used in order to complete tasks like data analysis web development, bookkeeping, graphic design, writing, navigating social media platforms and so on (Gerencer, 2022). Supporting the view of the writer, technical skills in OTM graduates credit their ability to understand and use techniques, knowledge and equipment in their discipline or department. These skills usually refer to knowledge or certain abilities to use the processes, practice, techniques or tools in the OTM graduate's area of specialization.

Birt (2023) defined technical skills as digital tools required in performing multiple tasks varying from one job or industries. Technical skills in relation to OTM graduates' employability can also be seen as required skills often considered as a prerequisite to performing the job successfully upon being hired. Technical skills of OTM graduates include the ability to apply office application

*Received: 12 April 2023*

*Revised: 1 May 2023*

*Final Accepted: 6 May 2023*

Copyright © authors 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7903115>

skills like mail merge, designing of letterhead, surfing the internet and so on to daily office tasks. It showed that the graduates of OTM can apply, are able to demonstrate skills relevant to perform the job employed for (Tam, and Coleman (2009). The demonstration of all clerical tasks can only take place in a big, small or virtual office (s). Technical skills are determined by the knowledge and proficiency of an OTM graduate in a particular type of work or activity. Technical skills play a vital role in producing the actual products of any company (Arisha, Suleman, Rahima, Ali and Sami, 2022).

An office is the focus point for any business action. It is like the brain in human body, just like the human physical activities are controlled and managed by the brain, the activities of every unit in any organization are controlled from the office (Chopra,2015). Contemporary office refers to present day office that leverages on a combination of services and products ranging from office equipment and technology, business process outsourcing, digital communication and managed IT services. Contemporary office integrates technology as a business advantage in order to make day-to-day processes easier, faster and more sophisticated and improve efficiencies and outcomes (Young, 2021). Contemporary office is well-planned, well-laid out and well organized with widened spectacular development in science and technology. Contemporary office activities are performed not by general purpose clerks but by specialized clerks like receptionists, account clerks, stenographers and secretaries. It gives room for a greater and wider use of machines (Dictaphones, calculator, computer etc) and other techniques of personnel management are being practiced and used for rapid global communication (Chopra, 2015).

In order to ensure that contemporary expectations in the industries are met, various learning domains including cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains are meticulously explored and

*Received:* 12 April 2023

*Revised:* 1 May 2023

*Final Accepted:* 6 May 2023

Copyright © authors 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7903115>

included in the curricular of National and Higher National Diplomas. OTM graduates are expected to be very versed in generic and specific areas as they are expected to handle multitasking

Perception, according to Hornby (2015) is the way you notice things, especially with the senses. It has much to do with an idea, a belief or image you have as a result of how you see or understand something. Perception is the mean by which people select, classify, and interpret information to form a meaningful picture and conscious understanding of the world. People can form different perceptions of the same incitement because of three perceptual processes; selective attention, selective distortion, and selective retention.

For employers of labour to have a proper perception of the graduates of OTM, the perception process must have held sway. Those observable qualities which will eventually determine the Graduate Secretaries' performance indices will thus be perceived and noted. Employers of labour in polytechnic includes: The Rector, Deputy Rector, Polytechnic Librarian, Bursar, Registrar, Director of Works, Deans of Schools and Head of departments within the polytechnics. They belong to the highest echelon of the employment cadre in the polytechnics.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Employability of graduates has become a topic of interest, the suitability of graduates together with their personal abilities and skills to the changing needs of the world of work has been a thing of concern. OTM graduates who possess technical skills needed in today's office are more likely to enjoy the office environment. Technical skills affect OTM graduates' performance in the work environment. It is assumed that technical skills are required to get the jobs done in the workplace

and employers of labour expect that OTM graduates by their training would have all technical skills for the work place.

The arrival of modern technology in recent decades has increased not only the number of interruptions experienced (through multimedia devices) but also raised expectations for higher levels of productivity (Lucas Jr, 2016). Office Technology and Management graduates of today are seen as multitasking personnels needed for achieving organizational goals. Duties undertaken by graduates of Office Technology and Management vary depending on the employer and level of education of the employee. Most duties of an office manager are performed through electronic means; and this require high level of technical know-how and technical skills in specialized area, in analytical thinking, ability to use proper tools and techniques, graphic design, designing web page, surfing the Internet and so on.

Technical skills possessed by Office Technology and Management graduates should tally with what the employers of labour want. Some employers of labour have tried to outline some of these skills they want from job seekers. There are certain technical skills that are peculiar to Office Technology and Management graduates, for instance, analytical thinking, graphic design, designing of web page, surfing the Internet, and office application skills are relevant in today's contemporary office. The degree to which Office Technology and Management graduates use technical skills go a long way to determine their relevance in the world of work and the degree to which they perform such skills, determine to a far extent the success of office preparations in any organization. It is on this note that the researchers seek to examine the employers' perception on extent of utilization of technical skills by Office Technology and Management Graduates for contemporary office functions in polytechnics within Taraba state.

### **Basic Components of Office Technology and Management Graduates Technical skills**

*Received:* 12 April 2023

*Revised:* 1 May 2023

*Final Accepted:* 6 May 2023

Copyright © authors 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7903115>

In the opinion of the researchers, components of technical skills mean having the necessary ability, knowledge, or skill to do something efficiently and the capability of such an employee to render acceptable and satisfactory services at any given time.

Regoniel (2014) listed the following as components of Technical Skills for Office Technology and Management Graduates:

### **Adept at Multi-Tasking**

An Office Technology and Management graduate should be flexible in his dealings with daily routine and other duties requiring attention. An OTM graduate should be adept at multitasking and should be able to easily shift from one task to another without any of such task suffering from negligence. Daily routine tasks are demanding so aspiring employees there must be skilled enough to handle such task. Office tasks range from waiting for the computer to boot, arranging files and waiting for instructions from the boss, for this to be successfully completed, OTM graduates must be well skilled, completely versed and thoroughly proficient in all aspects and in the use of all tools and techniques.

### **Plan to Reach a Goal**

Planning saves time. OTM graduate should be able to breaking tasks into manageable bits and keep the momentum going without being stressed. Preference should be given to work that is mostly urgent and important. Employers of labour expect OTM Graduates to be able to imagine, set goals of the organization and picture on how such goals would be efficiently reached. OTM graduates should be readily available to take decisions within the jurisdiction of duties as long as such decisions would help in achieving organizational goal.

### **Have a Keen Eye for detecting Mistakes**

OTM graduates should have a keen eye to notice mistakes, and every happening should not be taken for granted. Employers of labour are always interested in staff that can give rapt attention to what goes around and avoid any unnecessarily mistake. They are expected to be meticulous to see even a wrong punctuation, omission of commas, periods and semi-colons in their proper places. When it comes to display of office correspondences (letter, memos, circular) they are in the best position to make right judgements as they are seen as the image maker of any organization.

### **Manages Office Resources Effectively and Develop Passion for New ideas**

The rationale for being an office manager is the ability to manage the affairs of the office effectively and efficiently. An OTM graduate is required to manage important resources like time, money, inventory, office machines and equipment efficiently. Appointments are expected to be made and kept, files arranged for easy retrieval at any required times, they are expected to be seen as the boss' burden lifter when it comes to anything relating to the office. Employers of labour expect that they develop passion for discovering something new that would keep the office going and thus satisfying.

### **Physically and Mentally Fit**

Employers of labour expect that OTM graduates are physically and mentally suitable to take on the stress associated with office tasks. Emotional quotient and intelligence quotient should be balanced, personal problems should not be seen to overshadow office requirements and daily routines of the office. High level of emotional quotient is needed by OTM graduates because they would take to the blame when things go wrong while the boss takes the glory when things go on well.

Going by the opinion mentioned above, the researchers opine that the suitability of OTM graduates should be perceived as sine-quo-non their training. They should possess and exhibit all the traits when required.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to determine employers' perception of extent of utilization of technical skills by Office Technology and Management Graduates for contemporary office functions in polytechnics within Taraba state, Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out extent of utilization of Social Media skills by Office Technology and Management graduates for contemporary office functions within Polytechnics in Taraba state
2. Verify the extent of utilization of Technical writing skills by Office Technology and management graduates for contemporary office functions in Polytechnics within Taraba state

### **Research Question**

1. To what extent is the utilization of social media skills by Office Technology and Management graduates for contemporary office functions in polytechnics within Taraba state?
2. To what extent is the utilization of technical writing skills by Office Technology and Management graduates for contemporary office functions in Polytechnics within Taraba state?

**Ho:** There is no significance difference in the mean responses of employers from Federal Polytechnics and State Polytechnics on the extent of utilization of technical skills by Office Technology and Management Graduates for contemporary office functions within Polytechnics in Taraba state

### **Methods**

*Received:* 12 April 2023

*Revised:* 1 May 2023

*Final Accepted:* 6 May 2023

Copyright © authors 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7903115>

The study was descriptive survey design and was carried out in Taraba state, Nigeria. The population used for the study comprised of OTM graduates (Office Managers) from Federal Polytechnic Bali (30) and Taraba state Polytechnic (30), making total number of sixty (60) OTM graduates (secretaries). There was no sampling technique adopted because all were used for the study due to the manageable size of the population. Questionnaire was the instrument used to gather data for the study. The instrument consists of ten question items seeking information on the extent of utilization of social media skills, technical writing skills by OTM graduates for contemporary office functions. The Instrument was validated by experts in Office Technology and Management. For the purpose of analysis, values were assigned to the four options provided in the instrument as follows: Very High Extent (VHE)=4 points with boundary limit of 3.50-4.00, High Extent(HE) =3 point with boundary limit 3.00-3.49, Moderate Extent (ME) =2 points with boundary limit of 2.50-2.99 and Very Low Extent (VLE) =1 point with boundary limit of 1.50-2.49 for both research question 1 and 2. Arithmetic Mean was used in analyzing collected data. A minimum of 2.5 mean score was set as standard for relevance or otherwise of the research question raised on the study. Any research question scored below the set standard was not relevant. If t test calculated value is less than t test critical value, accept null hypothesis or otherwise reject.

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on responses on Extent of Utilization of Social Media Skills by OTM Graduates for Contemporary Office Functions**

S/N	Item Statements	X	SD	Remark
1	MS Office like Word, excel, PowerPoint, office outlook, Access, OneNote are relevant social media skills for contemporary office	3.42	1.15	High Extent
2	Email. Filters, folders, mail merge, rules are social media skills for contemporary office	3.24	1.19	High Extent
3	Ability to combine clear and concise deep technical knowledge are examples relevant social media skills.	3.02	1.24	High Extent
4	Mastery of various social media platforms like Facebook, Twiter, LinkedIn, Instagram make OTM graduates relevant.	3.12	0.91	High Extent
5	Excel, Google Sheet, comparative analyse, link to database are all relevant social media skill in workplace.	3.31	0.89	High Extent
6	Ability to sort through data and narrow it to what is needed for daily office work is relevant social media skill.	3.10	0.94	High Extent

7	Phone skills like voicemail, forwarding, hold and recording are relevant in contemporary office	3.87	1.10	Very High Extent
8	Graphic skills like Photoshop, Freehand, Corel Draw are all relevant for contemporary office	3.56	1.05	Very High Extent
9	Web page design like HTML, CSS and so on are social media skills relevant in today's work of work.	3.86	1.09	Very High Extent
10	Troubleshooting, assessment and system knowledge testing are relevant to social media skills	3.28	0.91	High Extent

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**

Seven (7) items out 10 (ten) in table 1 on the extent of utilization of social media skills by OTM graduates for contemporary office functions showed the extent of utilization of social media skills of OTM graduates for contemporary office functions. (Three) 3 items indicated that these social media skills are utilized to high extent by OTM graduates for contemporary office functions. The mean responses ranges from 3.87 – 3.02 and the standard deviation ranges form 1.09 – 1.24. This implies that all items are either utilized to a very high extent or high extent by OTM graduates for contemporary office functions.

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on responses on the extent of utilization of technical writing Skills of OTM graduates for contemporary office functions**

S/N	Item Statements	X	SD	Remark
1	Proofreading skill is an essential skill for technical writing in contemporary office	3.01	0.62	High Extent
2	Being good at single sourcing is a tool for technical writing	3.21	0.42	High Extent
3	Ability to combine clear and concise deep technical knowledge are examples of technical writing skills for contemporary office.	3.33	0.42	High Extent
4	Education is a basic tool for technical writing.	3.25	1.04	High Extent
5	Progress report is an example of technical writing.	3.40	0.06	High Extent
6	Simplicity and conciseness are components of technical writing.	3.41	0.61	High Extent
7	OTM graduates can do without technical writing skill in contemporary office.	2.29	0.43	Very Low Extent
8	Technical writing skill aims for clarity above all	2.30	0.42	Very Low Extent
9	Research skill is an aspect of technical writing for contemporary OTM graduates.	2.29	0.41	Very Low Extent
10	Extremely good communication skill is a tool for technical writing.	3.45	1.15	High Extent

**Source: Field Survey, 2023**

Seven (7) items out 10 (ten) in table 2 on the extent of relevance of technical writing skills of OTM graduates for contemporary office showed that they are relevant at high extent for contemporary office. (Three) 3 items indicated that these technical writing skills are at very low extent for contemporary office. The mean responses ranges from 3.45 – 2.29 and the standard deviation ranges form 1.15 – 0.41. This implies that all items are either relevant or highly relevant for contemporary office.

**H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significance difference in the mean responses of employers of labour from Federal Polytechnic and State Polytechnic on the relevance of Office Technology and Management Graduates technical skills for contemporary office within Polytechnics in Taraba state**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-cal	t- table	Decision
Federal Polytechnics	107	2.05	1.43	328	1.50	1.96	Not Sig.
State Polytechnics	123	2.55	1.60				

Source: Field Survey,2023

The table above showed that t-cal (1.50) is less than t-table (at 0.05 level of significance). Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the opinion of employers of labour from Federal Polytechnics and State polytechnics on the relevance of Office Technology and Management Graduates Technical Skills for Contemporary office within Polytechnics in Taraba state.

**Discussion**

Findings from research question one showed that all social media skills mentioned on the list are utilized either to a very high extent or high extent by OTM graduates for contemporary office functions in polytechnics within Taraba state. In contemporary offices, MS word, Excel and other social media platforms are used by OTM graduates because they are the bedrock for a surviving

work environment. This corroborate with the findings of Ladkin & Buhalis (2016) in that social media play a role in employers and employees' relationship and social media skills are of great relevance in labour market. Findings from Liu (2010) revealed that social media skills help employees communicate and build up relationship in contemporary office.

Research question two on the extent of technical writing skill utilization by OTM graduates for contemporary office functions, it can be seen that skills like proofreading, good communication, progress report writing and so on are skills are utilized to high extent by OTM graduates in contemporary offices. This corroborate with the findings of Ohiwerei & Okosun, (2021) that for OTM graduates to be effective in today's office, they must have skills in general office automation, communication as well as editing and proofreading of documents. In the same vein (Onoh, 2018) in his opinion stated that communication skills increase the opportunity to compose content and review communication, while editing and proofreading skills help in dealing with random and errors made that can change the meaning and syntax of words.

## **Conclusion**

The contemporary offices today in which OTM graduate's works cannot function effectively without the combination of social media and technical skill. Skills are fundamental to effective use of social media, and technical writing because skills are the only tools that make OTM graduates perform better and efficiently in the world of work.

## **Recommendations**

The followings recommendations were made from the findings.

1. OTM graduates in Polytechnics within Taraba state should be versatile in the used of all social media relevant to their duties so as to perform effectively in contemporary office.
2. OTM graduates in polytechnics within Taraba state should develop a high level in technical writing, because the contemporary offices centered around technicality.
3. Employers in polytechnics within Taraba state should make it part of their obligation to organize, or send OTM graduates for seminar, workshop that would broaden their horizon on the use of social media.
4. OTM graduates should make deliberate effort to improve their communication and proofreading skills as these are tools that sustain contemporary office. This is necessary because OTM graduates are seen as the image makers of any organization.

## References

- Arisha, Suleman, N., Rahima, Ali, S. S. and Sami, (2022). How skills influence students' employability in developing Economy?
- Birt, J (2023). Technical Skills: Definition and Examples for a Resume. Career Guide
- Chopra, R.K (2015). Office Management. Himalaya Publishing house, New Delhi.
- Gerencer, T. (2022). Technical skills for a resume (Tech Domain skill example)
- Hornby, A.S. (2015). *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*. Oxford. Great Clarendon Street, Ox2 6DP

- Komolafe, I.A & Ajayi, S.T (2010). Office Technology and Management Curriculum: Issues, Strategies and Rationale. *Secretarial Forum, Journal for the Promotion/Advancement of secretarial profession*
- Ladkin, A. & Buhalis, D. (2016). Online and social media recruitment: Hospitality employer and prospective employee considerations. *International journal of contemporary hospitality*
- Liu, Y. (2010). Social media tools as a learning resource. *Journal of educational Technology Development and Exchange*. 3(1), 8
- Lucas Jr, H. C. 2016. *Technology and the Disruption of Higher Education*. World Scientific
- Ogheneovo, A.A. (2016). Availability and Utilization of New Technology for Teaching Office Technology and Management in Delta State Polytechnics. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*. 3(2) 64-88
- Ohiwerei, F.O.& Okosun, C. (2021). The relevance of secretarial staff in utilization of ICT in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Nigerian University. *World journal of Innovation and Modern Technology*, 4(1)
- Onoh, N, O., (2018). Enhancing Secretarial Practice in Emerging Nigerian Offices through Phonetic Language Skills, Business Communication and Recording Competences. *Ebonyi Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. Maiden edition
- Orija, J.I & Jolaade, I.A (2019). Relevance of Office Technology and Management Skills Acquisition to National and Manpower development. *Nigerian Communication & information Technology Journal* 1(1)
- Oyinlola, O.T., Asonibare, E.M. and Oluwalola K. (2021). Office skills required by office technology and management students for effective performance in modern office. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education* 8(1), 86-93
- Regoniel, P.A. (2014). Qualities of a Successful Graduates. *Education Research*.
- Young, R. J. (2021). What is the modern office?