EVALUATING OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT CURRICULUM FOR THE PROMOTION OF VERBATIM REPORTING IN HOUSES OF ASSEMBLY IN SOUTH-WEST ZONE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study evaluated Office Technology and Management Curriculum for the promotion of the verbatim reporting profession in South-West Houses of Assembly. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study comprises of all verbatim reporters in the Houses of Assembly and all the business educators in Universities offering business education in South-West, Nigeria made up of Seventy-eight (78) verbatim reporters and fifteen (15) business educators. One self-designed questionnaire titled "Evaluating Office Technology and Management Curriculum Questionnaire (EOTMQ) was used to obtain responses from the respondents. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested. The data gathered for this study were statistically analyzed by using Mean and Independent t-test statistics to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. The finding lucidly revealed that there was a relationship between Office Technology and Management Curriculum for the award of First degree in Office Technology and Management and Curriculum of Federal Training Centre for the award of Verbatim Reporting Certificate, thus, Office Technology and Management curriculum could be evaluated for the promotion of verbatim reporting profession in South-West Houses of Assembly. Sequel to the findings of the study, it was recommended that Nigerian University Commission or National Board for Technical Education come up with a policy for the training of verbatim reporters in Universities for a degree program in verbatim reporting so that the profession could be promoted and the dearth of verbatim reporters would be curbed. Organizing a "top-up" programme for HND in OTM and the serving verbatim reporters with verbatim reporting certificate from Federal Training Centres will also go a long way in enhancing the development of the profession.

Keywords: Verbatim reporting; Houses of Assembly; South West-Zone; Office Technology and Management Curriculum.

Introduction

Nigeria faces many educational challenges to which seeking solutions will be essential in securing the country's long-term social and economic prosperity. Nigeria does not lack graduates on the numerical surface of the matter. The industries require skilled artisans, management entrepreneurs, and professionals who are competent in business education vocations. According to the American Vocational Association (AVA) in Osuala (2009), business education is a programme of instruction which consist of two parts: (a) office education; a vocational education programme for office careers through initial, refresher, and upgrading education leading to employability and advancement in office occupation, and (b) general

business education; a programme to provide students with information and competencies which are needed by all in managing personal and business affairs and in using the services of the business world. Thus, business education helps individuals to acquire saleable skills that will enable them to fit into various business organizations or be self-employed in the absence of paid employment.

Employers continually demand skilled and knowledgeable workers but due to the new and increasingly complex technological challenges faced by the educational system, it is not preparing students adequately for the workplace. Thus, organizations are simultaneously experiencing increased demand to provide employees at all levels with adequate learning. A well-articulated business education, if properly implemented with efficiently deliverable teaching infrastructure can help bridge the skill gaps existing between the school graduates and the requirements of the corporate business organizations and thus, reduce the huge cost of human resource development in business organizations. At the inception of democratic dispensation, when Parliament was about to sit, very good and efficient Confidential Secretaries were drafted to the then parliament to undertake the duties of official reporting till the end of the Session after which, they would go back to their duties in the Ministries/Departments.

All the Reporters in the legislatures across the country were trained Confidential Secretaries, i.e. product of business education. The Federal Training Centres (FTC), in the main, has been the training institutions. The resource to draw trainee Reporters from the pool of Secretaries has a historical antecedent to as far back as 1959 when there was no organized training of Official Reporters, neither was a cadre of staff assembled for that purpose. It is from the pool of skilled secretaries that trainee reporters have largely been drawn over the years to undergo two sessions in reportorial skills. At the end of the two sessions, a trainee Reporter is expected to write at least 140/160 shorthand speed and obtain 70 typewriting speed, among other core courses like Legislative Duties, Law, communication Skill, etc. By the time the Confidential Secretary Grade-II (C.S.II) trainee officer emerges as a Reporter, he would have spent six years post-secondary training, if the training runs concurrently.

Evaluation is an integral component of all systems of education at all processes. It is what enables educators, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and the community to have an idea of what is missing and what is available. Evaluation can be defined as the systematic process of collecting and analyzing data to make a decision. According to Azuka, Nwosu, Kanu, and Agomuo (2006) evaluation is “the process of ascertaining the decision areas of concern, selecting appropriate information and collecting and analyzing information to report a summary of data useful for decision-makers in selecting among alternatives”.

The importance of curriculum evaluation in the promotion of Verbatim Reporters in Houses of Assembly in South-West Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. According to Malin (2014), the importance of rigorous and relevant curricula for achieving desired learning outcomes cannot be overstated. According to the Syllabus issued by the Federal Ministry of Establishment for Courses in its Federal Training Centres; for one to be qualified for the award of Professional Diploma in Verbatim Reporting Certificate (PDVR) one must pass the following Core subjects: Shorthand and Typewriting at a speed of 140/160 and 70wpm respectively in addition to subjects like Advanced Communication in English, Parliamentary procedure, Higher Information Technology, Element of Law, Government and Nigeria Constitution, Office Management, Human Resource management.On the other hand, for the award of First-Degree Certificate in Business Education (Office Tech), the following subjects must be passed for the last two years of the four years programme: Shorthand and Word processing at higher speed, Office Management, Entrepreneurship Education, Research method in business education, Company law, Office Management, Human Resource Management, Law and practice of meeting among others.

What makes the difference between a university graduate in Business Education (Office Technology) is the high speed of 140/160 and 70 wpm in Shorthand and Typewriting respectively but with the advent of information technology, these two key subjects are more or less no more relevant in the sense that voice recognition device is now available that can process spoken sound directly into typed letter on a computer. Because of the advantages of computer over the typewriter, the 70 wpm of typewriting speed has become a thing of the past. The use of a typewriter in any modern office is more or less an aberration.

To promote Verbatim Reporting Profession, systematic evaluation of Office Technology curricula is particularly important. The Verbatim Reporting Professionals want an enhancement of the profession for future success as a topmost goal. Moreover, policymakers and some educators often point to the centrality of these programs for society as a whole. The Country is in dire need of more Verbatim Reporters who are equipped to compete for a variety of reportorial jobs, and institutions of higher learning especially the Universities need to adjust their programming (and their curricula) accordingly. Business education is concerned with teaching the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed for success in a business career. Ogunmayi (2008) defined business education as a type of education that assists individuals to acquire skills, to solve problems in business and office education. This definition sees business education as education that provides skills to its recipients in business and office occupation for employment or self-reliance. Attempting a broad definition of the concept of business education. Aliyu (2006) stated that business education is education for the development of skills/competencies, attitude, and attributes which are necessary for the efficiency of the economic system. Etonyeaku (2009) stated that in this era of globalization, business education has contributed a lot to the economic development of every nation in the areas of provision of employment accountability among others. and has become an indispensable tool for development.

The demand for education is based on its ability to provide marketable skills that will help individuals to engage in meaningful occupations. Business Education having upheld this idea of providing marketable skills to learners has remained relevant in the world of study. Many factors are influencing the effort to make business education relevant today, one of which is the spate of technological advancements being witnessed. Technology has become the nexus of operation in the business world. Consequently, business education is affected in terms of instruction and delivery and in the skills and competencies needed to adapt to these evolving technologies used for operation in offices.

A completed or processed daily "Takes" by Verbatim Reporters is known as Hansard. The Chambers English Dictionary (2007) edition defines processed as produced by a special process. Indeed, Hansard production follows special processes, which among others include recording legislative debates or proceedings in shorthand or cassette tapes and producing it in printed form, grammatically, and procedurally. Processing Hansard grammatically seems to be a major task of a Reporter in the Nigerian legislatures, where the English language, though a second language, is constitutionally recognized as a medium of transaction in the Nigerian legislatures. Section 55 of the 1999 Constitution says: "The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English…… Section 97(1): The business of a House of Assembly shall be conducted in English…..

The Official Report i.e. Hansard was defined in 1907 by a Select Committee of the House of Commons as one - "……. Which though not strictly verbatim is substantially the verbatim report, with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected but which, on the other hand, leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or elucidates the argument." Ayedele (2013) submitted that the verbatim report of the proceedings of the parliament is not a mere narration of questions, adjournment motion, bills, and resolutions it is a rich source of contemporary history. It provides detailed information on all matters

affecting the lives of citizens. It brings to light the political, economic, and social conditions of the event in the remotest parts of the country and equally serves as a mirror of the hopes and aspirations, concern, and apprehensions of the Nation as voiced by its chosen representatives.

The reportorial profession has grown so tremendously that there is hardly any organization like the National, State Houses of Assembly, Supreme Court of Nigeria, Court of Appeal, High Court of justice that can perform without the use of reporters. This is attested to by Kawu, (2015) when he remarked that one of the factors that contribute to the slow pace of adjudication in Courts is "taking of notes in longhand by judges".

Hansard production ought not to be a matter of if it is convenient or if it is the wish of the legislature, as some legislators in the States asserted. Hansard is a tradition; it is a convention; it has life by the rules of the legislature. The rules governing its production should be rigorously invoked by legislators and enforced to ensure that Hansard is produced daily and its bound volumes produced periodically. The absence of legislature for many years, as a result of military interregnum, has no doubt created a vacuum in the development of Hansard, especially in the area of intellectual work. This, perhaps, is because practitioners are moved to other ministries whenever the legislature was suspended and so had no reason to spare a thought for the Hansard. Now that there is hope that democracy would be sustained in this country, and by implication the legislature, it is important that Hansard, described as the edited debates of the legislature, gets the attention it deserves in terms of manpower and material development.

For now, those connected with Hansard – the legislators, the public, and even the practitioners – are still somewhat in a state of inertia concerning its important place in the legislature. And that, perhaps, explains why Hansard suffered serious neglect in the last national and state legislatures. In this present phase of legislative and democratic experiments, there is a need to decidedly appraise the Hansard holistically to highlight its worth to the legislature, its usefulness to the legislator, and its relevance to the electorate, who are entitled to read the legislative proceedings, which translate into laws by which they are governed.

Going by the method of training Reporters by the Ministry of Establishment, Reporters from its pool may not always meet the manpower needs in the South-West Houses of Assembly. The manpower needs of the Department must be consciously articulated and handled in conjunction with relevant institutions. The Ministry of Establishment will no doubt continue to train Reporters for its pool of Reporters but the product of its training may not always satisfy the manpower need of the Department.

Umoru (2012), maintained that specialized workers will continuously be needed to perform various tasks required to keep organizations working smoothly and providing the products and services required by customers. In this age of skill competition, he maintained that workers must continue to obtain training in handling various types of activities. As technology explodes in one face, new ways of doing things become inevitable. Therefore, for Legislative organization to work smoothly, the Verbatim Reporters need quality training in line with the technological age. Quality education is the education that best fits the present and future needs of the particular learners in question and the community, given the particular circumstances and prospects.

Statement of the Problem

It is a known fact that no organization can meet its objectives without the right quantity and quality of the workforce. Reading through various write-ups on the reportorial profession, one would almost conclude that all is well with the profession, but most of these write-ups are foreign and therefore cannot be generalized for every country. With the recent trends in technological development and the use of modern office equipment which has become necessary for all offices, the reportorial profession has not attained the level of indispensability in Nigeria as claimed by these foreign textbooks. The Country does not have enough qualified Verbatim Reporters that are needed in the three arms of government for employment in the labour market. It, therefore, becomes worrisome that in a computer age as described above, a particular profession i.e Verbatim Reporting which is under the direct jurisdiction of Business Education is facing serious inadequate manpower challenge even though Business Education programmes are run in various Universities and Polytechnics in the country.

Research Questions

The following questions were set out to be answered in the course of this study:

1. What is the relevance of the Office Technology Curriculum in curbing the dearth of Verbatim Reporters in the South-West Houses of Assembly?
2. What is the relevance of the Office Technology Curriculum in enhancing the development of the Verbatim Reporting Profession in South-West Houses of Assembly?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{o1}: There is no significant difference in the responses of Business Educators and Verbatim Reporters regarding the relevance of the Office Technology curriculum in curbing the dearth of Verbatim Reporters in South-West Houses of Assembly.

H_{o2}: There is no significant difference in the responses of Business Educators and Verbatim Reporters regarding the relevance of the Office Technology curriculum in enhancing the development of the Verbatim Reporting Profession in Houses of Assembly in South-West Zone, Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design used for this study was a descriptive survey. The target population for the study comprised all the Business Educators in Federal and State Universities and the Verbatim Reporters in the Houses of Assembly in the South-West Zone which is 15and 78 respectively making the population of the study to be 93. For this study, there was no sampling because the population of the study was regarded as a captive audience, where all the business educators in the Universities and verbatim reporters in the Houses of Assembly in South-West, Nigeria participated in the study. The instrument that was used in gathering data for this study was a self-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled "Evaluating Business Education Curriculum Questionnaire" (EBECQ) The questionnaire comprised two parts which are Parts l and ll. Part l contained personal information about respondents while Part ll contained items that were used to elicit responses from the respondents. The questionnaire was answered by Business Educators and Verbatim Reporters. It is comprised of two sections. Section "A" supplied information about Curbing the dearth of Verbatim Reporters. Section "B" provided information on enhancing the development of Verbatim Reporting. The data gathered for this study on evaluating the Office technology curriculum for the promotion of verbatim reporters in Houses of Assembly in the South-West Zone was statistically analyzed by using Mean to answer the research questions and Independent t-test statistic to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the relevance of the Office Technology Curriculum in curbing the dearth of verbatim reporters in the South-west Houses of Assembly?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the relevance of Office Technology Curriculum in curbing the dearth of Verbatim reporters in the South-west Houses of Assembly $N_V = 78$ and $N_B = 15$

S/N	Item Statements	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	OTM curriculum can upgrade verbatim reporting which will lead to an increase in the number of verbatim reporters.	3.13	0.53	Agreed
2.	Incorporating Verbatim Reporting into the OTM curriculum can lead to a career prospect in Verbatim Reporting thereby curbing its dearth.	3.20	0.53	Agreed
3.	With the OTM curriculum, Verbatim Reporters can serve longer which will then increase their number.	3.18	0.57	Agreed
4.	OTM Curriculum is relevant to make Verbatim Reporting popular which will curb the dearth of reporters.	3.01	0.63	Agreed
5.	OTM Curriculum can make Verbatim reporting possible for freshers thereby reducing the dearth of reporters.	3.12	0.64	Agreed
6.	The present method of training of Official Reporters by FTC from the pool of Secretaries does not meet the Manpower need of the department.	3.38	0.57	Agreed
7.	A university degree in verbatim reporting can reduce the high turnover of reporters.	3.35	0.68	Agreed
8.	With a university degree, the terminating point of GL 14 for Verbatim Reporters will be a thing of the past.	3.29	0.56	Agreed
9.	With policy continuity, OTM Curriculum can improve the number of Verbatim Reporters.	3.26	0.72	Agreed
10.	A degree in verbatim reporting can eliminate Audio reporters that are now common in Legislatures.	2.94	0.75	Agreed
Weighted average		**3.19**	**0.62**	**Agreed**

Source: Field Survey, April 2016

Table 1 revealed that the respondents agreed that the present method of training of official reporters by FTC from the pool of Secretaries does not meet the manpower need of the department (mean = 3.38), the respondents also agreed that Business education can reduce the high turnover of reporters thereby reducing the dearth of the verbatim reporters (mean = 3.35). On the overall, it could be seen from the Table that the Office Technology Curriculum has great relevance in curbing the dearth of Verbatim Reporters (mean = 3.19; SD = 0.62). the mean is far above 2.50 which is the fixed decision value and very low standard deviation signifying the closeness of their responses.

Research Question Two: What is the relevance of the Office Technology Curriculum in enhancing the development of the verbatim reporting profession in South-West Houses of Assembly?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the relevance of Office Technology Curriculum in enhancing the development of Verbatim Reporting Profession in South-West Houses of Assembly $N_V = 78$ and $N_B = 15$

S/N	Item Statements	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remark
1.	Evaluation of the Office Technology curriculum can enhance the popularity of the Verbatim Reporting profession in Nigeria thereby leading to its development.	3.14	0.55	Agreed
2.	Through the evaluation of the Office Technology curriculum, Hansard will no more be an obscure thing despite its important place in the Legislative responsibilities.	3.28	0.71	Agreed
3.	Evaluating Office Technology Curriculum will prove whether or not the relevance of Shorthand in this technological era in the development of Verbatim reporting.	3.30	0.64	Agreed
4.	Office Technology curriculum evaluation will prove that Hansard is a legal and authentic record of transactions in the Legislature thereby enhances its development.	3.17	0.45	Agreed
5.	Through evaluation of the Office Technology curriculum, the development of Hansard Departments as one of the core departments in the legislature will be enhanced	3.28	0.65	Agreed
6.	Evaluation of Office Technology Curriculum will prove that Verbatim Reporters have always been a vital link between the Lawmakers and the management thereby enhancing its development.	3.34	0.49	Agreed
7.	Reporting in the Parliament is a highly specialized knowledge-intensive job carried out under great pressure this can be proved through evaluation of the Office Technology curriculum to develop the profession	3.35	0.55	Agreed
8.	For the quality of Verbatim Reporters to be guaranteed, emphasis should be placed on degree holders through evaluation of the Office Technology Curriculum.	3.11	0.81	Agreed
9.	Parliamentary reporting is a sine quo nun for verbatim reporters and should be included in the Office Technology curriculum to enhance the development of the profession	3.08	0.67	Agreed
10.	The job of Verbatim Reporters transcend beyond ordinary shorthand and computer skills, this can be proved through the evaluation of the Office Technology curriculum for the development of Verbatim reporting	3.47	0.57	Agreed
Weighted average		**3.25**	**0.61**	**Agreed**

Source: Field Survey, April 2016

Table 2 revealed that the respondents agreed that The job of verbatim reporters transcends beyond ordinary shorthand and computer skills, this can be proved through the evaluation of the Office Technology curriculum for the development of verbatim reporting (mean = 3.47), the same way they agreed that Reporting in the Parliament is a highly specialized knowledge-intensive job carried out under great pressure this can be proved through evaluation of Office Technology curriculum to develop the profession (mean = 3.35). Overall, it could be seen from the Table that the Office Technology Curriculum has great relevance in enhancing the

development of Verbatim Reporters (mean = 3.25; SD = 0.61). The mean is far above 2.50 which is the fixed decision value and very low standard deviation signifying the closeness of their responses.

Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the responses of Business Educators and verbatim reporters regarding the relevance of the Office Technology curriculum in curbing the dearth of Verbatim Reporters in South-west Houses of Assembly.

Table 3: Summary of t-test of the difference between the mean ratings of verbatim reporters and Business educators on the relevance of the Office Technology curriculum in curbing the dearth of Verbatim Reporters

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Df	p-value	Decision
Verbatim reporters	78	3.14	0.47	0.764	91	0.447	NS
Business Educators	15	3.23	0.20				

Source: Field survey, April 2016

H_{03}: There is no significant difference between the responses of Business Educators and verbatim reporters regarding the relevance of Office Technology curriculum in enhancing the development of verbatim reporting Profession in Houses of Assembly in South-West Zone, Nigeria

Table 4: Summary of t-test of the difference between the mean ratings of verbatim reporters and Business educators on the relevance of the Office Technology curriculum in enhancing the development of Verbatim Reporting Profession

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	Df	p-value	Decision
Verbatim reporters	78	3.28	0.26	1.36	91	0.174	NS
Business Educators	15	3.37	0.26				

Source: Field survey, April 2016

Discussion of Findings

The study was conducted to evaluate the Office technology curriculum for the promotion of verbatim reporting in Houses of Assembly in South-West, Nigeria. This discussion is based on three research questions and the three hypotheses presented in Chapter one and statistically analyzed in this chapter. Consequently, the result as shown in Table 1 revealed that Office technology curriculum is relevant in curbing the dearth of verbatim reporters in the Houses of Assembly because all the 10 items for this research question received a mean rating of 3.01 and above which means that respondents were of the view that office technology curriculum can curb the dearth of verbatim reporters. This finding aligns with the claim of Ayodele (2013) that the manpower needs of verbatim reporters department must be consciously articulated and handled in conjunction with relevant institutions. Overall, it could be seen from the table that the office technology curriculum has great relevance in curbing the dearth of verbatim reporters with a grand mean of 3.19 and a standard deviation of 0.62.

The result of the next analysis revealed that the office technology curriculum is of great relevance in enhancing the development of the verbatim reporting profession in South-West Houses of Assembly. The whole 10 questionnaire items in this table received a mean rating of 3.08 and above and a standard deviation of 0.81 below. Hansard is a tradition; it is a convention; it has life by the rule of the legislature, hence, the need to develop the profession. Overall, it could be seen from the table that the office technology curriculum has great relevance in enhancing the development of the verbatim reporting profession with a grand mean and standard deviation of 3.25 and 0.61 respectively.

All two Hypotheses tested using a t-test to determine the mean ratings. As shown in Table 5, the test was conducted to determine the mean ratings of Verbatim Reporters and Business Educators regarding the influence of the office technology curriculum in curbing the dearth of verbatim reporters. The table revealed that there was no significant difference, ($t91 = 0.76$, $P>0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

The last test was to determine the mean ratings of Verbatim Reporters and Business Educators regarding the relevance of the office technology curriculum in enhancing the development of the verbatim reporting profession in South-West Houses of Assembly. The table revealed that there was no significant difference, ($t91 = 1.36$, $P>0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is evident that the Office technology curriculum can be used to curb the dearth of verbatim reporters as the present method of training of Verbatim reporters by FTC from the pool of secretaries does not meet the manpower need of the department.

Lastly, the finding revealed that the Office technology curriculum can enhance the development of the verbatim reporting profession because a degree in verbatim reporting will popularize the profession and Hansard will no more be an obscure thing despite its important place in the legislative responsibilities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Since Nigeria is one of the countries that accord more respect to certificate than experience, to curb the dearth of verbatim reporters in South-West Houses of Assembly, the Office technology curriculum should be reviewed by the Nigerian University Commission to accommodate a degree in Verbatim reporting to promote the profession through a University degree in verbatim reporting.
2. The dearth of verbatim reporters as a result of high manpower turnover is occasioned by the training of reporters from the pool of secretaries, this problem can only be solved through a university degree that will allow young secondary school leavers to pursue the course.
3. To assist the HND and First-degree holders in OTM secure a job as a verbatim reporter, University can organize a “top-up” programme in verbatim reporting. Also, the serving verbatim reporters with verbatim reporting Certificates from Federal Training Centres (FTC) could be considered for the “top-up” programme to enable them to move beyond level 14 which is presently the terminating point for verbatim reporters with FTC’s Certificate.

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