

Ensuring Quality Assurance in the Teaching and Learning of Office Technology and Management in Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract

Office Technology and Management is a new academic programme in the Nigerian tertiary institutions that replaces Secretarial Studies. This study is undertaken to access whether the standards set in the teaching and learning of office technology and management are maintained in tertiary institutions. Three research questions guided the study and three hypotheses were formulated for the study. The study covers tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The instrument used was a 30 item questionnaire which was validated by experts in the field. The mean and standard deviation was used for the analysis of the data and chi-square was used for the hypotheses formulated. The findings revealed that facilities needed for effective teaching and learning of office technology and management in ensuring quality delivery are inadequate. The implication is that standards are compromised as a result of inadequate facilities. It was therefore recommended among others that relevant facilities should be made available for the teaching and learning of office technology and management so as to ensure quality delivery of the programme.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Teaching and Learning, Office Technology and Management

DOI: 10.7176/JEP/11-18-17

Publication date: June 30th 2020

1. Introduction

The role of quality education in nation building cannot be over emphasized. In the view of Idih and Umunnah (2013), for qualitative education to be achieved in a nation, the three principal actors of learning – teachers, learners and the environment must be properly organized. Quality assurance according to Vlasceanu, Grunberg and Parlea cited by Idih and Umunnah (2013) is a planned and systematic process of assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving the programme of an institution to determine whether acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being met and maintained. They asserted that as a regulatory mechanism, quality assurance focuses on both accountability and improvement providing information and judgement through an agreed upon and consistent process and well established criteria. The following range of factors according to Idih and Umunnah (2013) affects quality in tertiary institutions

- ✓ their mission and goals
- ✓ the talent and expertise of the teaching staff

- ✓ the quality of the library, laboratories and workshops
- ✓ access to the internet
- ✓ government, leadership and relevance

In the view of Ezeani and Eze (2013), for Office Technology and Management education which is part of business education to fulfill its promises to society, attain its objectives and meet the expectation of various stakeholders such as individuals, government, establishment, conglomerates and parastatals, it should join the race for continuous strive for excellence and quality in all ramifications. According to them, this will amplify its advantages over general education, justify the capital intensive nature of this field of study and enhance its sustainability especially in view of the various technological challenges of the 21st century and diverse implications it has on the world of work. Ehindero cited in Idih and Umunnah (2013) stresses that quality assurance should focus on

- ✓ Learner's entry behaviours, characteristics and attributes including some demographic factors that can inhibit or facilitates learning.
- ✓ The teacher's entry qualifications, values, pedagogical skills, professional preparedness, subject background, philosophical orientation etc.
- ✓ The teaching/learning processes including the structure of the curriculum and learning environment.
- ✓ The outcomes, which are defined for different levels in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes including appropriate and relevant instruments to assess these objectives.

2. Quality Assurance and Office Technology and Management Education Programme

Oladipo, Adeosun and Oni cited in Uteh and Iheukwumere (2013) viewed that quality is the ability or degree with which a product, service, or phenomenon conforms, to an established standard and which makes it to be relatively superior to others. Citing Oderinde, they enumerated two aspects of quality in education, which are both internal and external. The internal aspect is the implementations of the school objectives while the external aspect deals with the implementation of national objectives which are pre-requisite to the achievement of quality in any educational institution. Uteh and Iheukwumere (2013) further citing Middlehurst in Oladipo, Adeosun and Oni pointed out that the scope of quality assurance in Office Technology and Management includes the following dimensions:

- ✓ Regulation (legal frameworks, government, responsibilities and accountabilities)
- ✓ Educational process (admissions, registration or enrolment, curriculum design and delivery, support for learning, assessment, etc)
- ✓ Curriculum design and content (validation and approval frameworks, levels and standards, etc)
- ✓ Learning experience (consumer protection, students' experience, complaints and appeals, etc)
- ✓ Outcomes (qualifications, certificates, transcripts, security, value etc)

Quality in Office Technology and Management education according to them means the relevance and appropriateness of the programme to the needs of modern office for which it is provided. They further opined that quality assurance in Office Technology and Management means bringing together such variables as general pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of student, knowledge of strategies to sustain learning and knowledge to use technology to produce a competent graduate.

However, Eze (2014) maintained that assuring the quality of education provision is a fundamental aspect of gaining and maintaining credibility for programmes, institutions and national systems of higher education worldwide. According to him, education as a veritable tool for national development and higher education in Nigeria needs to be managed in such a way that quality is assured. In recent times, the quality of graduates produced in our tertiary institutions has been questioned. Adedeji cited in Eze (2014) admitted that among the issues in question are the standards of various programmes, quality of teachers and students, quality and adequacy of equipment and facilities, adequate funding, and management of school resources.

Asogwa and Okoro (2013) averred that courses offered in Office Technology and Management programme in the Nigerian Polytechnics were reviewed sequel to the change of the nomenclature of the programme from Secretarial Studies to Office Technology and Management. Following the change, course specification and guideline for Office Technology and Management in Polytechnics were put in place by the National Board for Technical Education in order to ensure minimum standard and to guide implementation of the curriculum with a view to inculcating quality. The current programme of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions is embellished with new and additional courses to prepare the students with competencies in information and communication technology. The new courses in the Polytechnic for instance include the following as adapted from NBTE (2004).

Table 1: National Diploma and Higher National Diploma Courses in the Polytechnic

| National Diploma | Higher National Diploma |
|---|---|
| Career Development | Advanced Desktop Publishing |
| Citizenship Education | Advanced Transcription |
| Desktop Publishing | Advanced Webpage Design |
| Information and Communication Technology | Business Communication |
| Introduction to Business | Business Law |
| Introduction to Entrepreneurship | Data Base Management |
| Modern Office Technology | Element of Human Capital Management |
| Office Practice | Entrepreneurship |
| People Communication Skills | Human Capital Management |
| Principles of Accounting | ICT Office Applications |
| Principles of Economics | Management Information System |
| Principles of Law | Nigerian Labour Law |
| Record Management | Office Administration and Management |
| Research Techniques | Oral Communication Skills |
| Project | Professional Career Development |
| Shorthand | Professional Ethics and Social responsibilities |
| Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme | Project |
| Use of English | Research Methods |
| Web page Design | Shorthand |
| Keyboarding | Social Psychology |
| Communication in English | Literary Appreciation and Oral Composition |

Source: NBTE (2004)

Quality assurance demands that the training process has to align with the conditions prescribed by the regulatory body, the body responsible for the accreditation of programmes in the various Nigerian tertiary institutions. According to Nwaosa, Okwuokenye and Olannye (2013), quality assurance as a matter of seriousness will be attained when the curriculum planners, the teachers (implementers) and learners work together towards the achievement of its primary objectives for effective changes. Citing Ugbor, they further viewed quality assurance as the managing of all the educational resources and processes to make sure that the educational output is kept in a high standard. The quality assurance mechanism and tools is as shown in the components in the model below

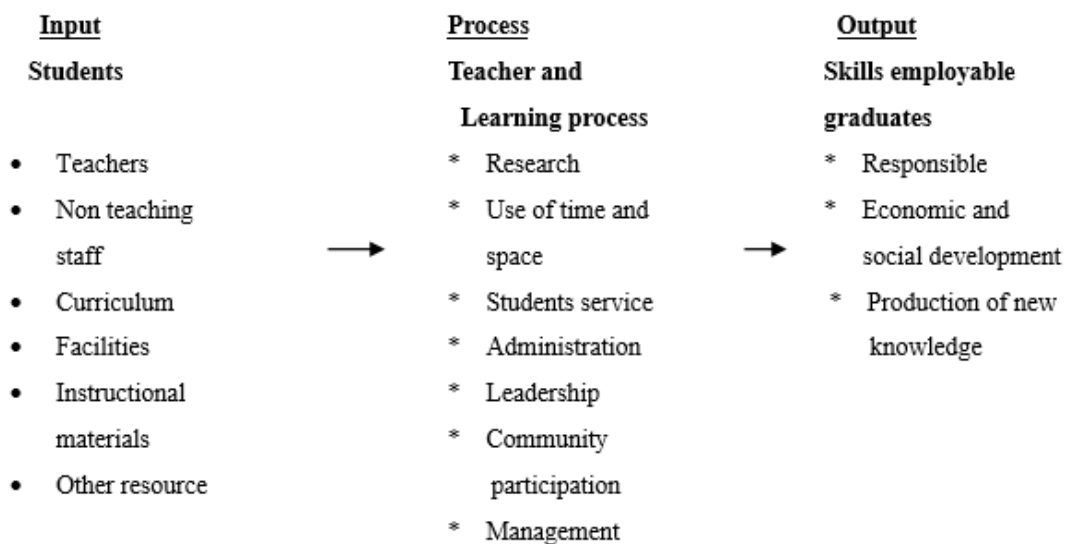


Figure 1: Quality assurance mechanism and tools as adapted from Okebukola in Ekwue cited in Nwaosa et al (2013)

Quality assurance is vital in order to ensure quality of teaching and learning in Office Technology and Management programme in higher institutions and on the basis of this, Adegbesan cited in Idih and Umunnah (2013) listed the major needs for quality assurance in Office Technology Management programme to include:

- ✚ Serving as indispensable component of quality control strategy in office education.
- ✚ Ensuring and maintaining high standards of education at all levels.
- ✚ Assisting in monitoring and supervision of office education at all levels.
- ✚ Determining the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control of office education.
- ✚ Determining the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control of office education.
- ✚ Determining how the final resources available could be prudently and judiciously utilized.

The role of Office Technology and Management education programme in developing students' skills, knowledge and competence resulting in national development must not be under-estimated. Qualitative education therefore according to Idih and Umunnah (2013) is measured in terms of quality of input, output, content and quality of process. This paper therefore examines whether the standards set in the teaching and learning of office

technology and management education programme by the regulatory body are maintained in tertiary institutions.

3.1 Statement of the problem

Achieving a programme objective becomes a mirage or herculean task when the implementation is deficient due to shortcomings or inadequacies which have been the bane of most educational programmes (Olawole and Abuya, 2011). Introducing a new programme in Office Technology and Management education will be meaningless if the implementation is not done effectively. It is obvious that authorities have good intentions but lack of necessary incentives for implementation of an effective programme calls for concern. There are various degrees of constraints in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in higher institutions and this include funding and this has equally resulted into lack of necessary facilities to obtain efficient and standard outcome. Inability to establish a proper preparation before a programme is established coupled with lack of internal evaluation of what is required and what is on ground posed a lot of challenges to establishing quality in office technology and management programme in tertiary institutions.

3.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine if the standards set in the teaching and learning of office technology and management are maintained in tertiary institutions. Specifically, this study sought to:

- Examine the state of the art in Office Technology and Management teaching and learning in tertiary institutions.
- Determine the level of compliance to the prescribed standard in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions.
- Determine the strategies for ensuring quality assurance in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions.

3.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- What is the state of the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions?
- What is the level of compliance to the prescribed standard in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions?
- What are the strategies needed for ensuring quality assurance in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions?

3.4 Null Hypotheses

- Ho₁: The state of the art in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions is not deplorable.
- Ho₂: The teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management does not comply with the prescribed standard.
- Ho₃: The teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management does not need any strategy for ensuring quality assurance.

4. Methodology

Survey design was used for the study. The population for the study consisted of all academic staff and final year students of Business/Office Technology and Management in various tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study made use of 100 randomly selected respondents. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection and was validated by experts in Business Education. The instrument was administered to the respondents in the sample frame. The 30 – item questionnaire was structured into a Likert type 4-point rating scale consisting of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire was organized into three sections in line with the three research questions developed for the study.

The data were analyzed using mean ratings, standard deviation and chi-square. Each of the items in the questionnaire consisted of four response categories. Values were assigned to the four response categories as follows: Strongly Agreed (4 points), Agreed (3 points), Disagreed (2 points) and Strongly Agreed (1). Consequently, any factor with a mean score of 2.80 and above was considered an important factor while any response below 2.80 was regarded as not important for the study.

5. Data Analysis

Research Question 1

What is the state of the art in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions?

Table 2:State of the Art in the Teaching and Learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions

| S/No | Item Statement | X | SD | Decision |
|------|---|------|------|----------|
| 1. | Problem of under-funding and research development | 2.90 | 0.88 | Accepted |
| 2. | Enrolment explosion | 2.83 | 0.79 | Accepted |
| 3. | Inadequate facilities/instructional technologies | 3.14 | 0.86 | Accepted |
| 4. | Excess workload and deficiency in curricular provisions | 2.94 | 0.77 | Accepted |
| 5. | Fraudulent practices in accreditation exercises | 2.88 | 0.89 | Accepted |
| 6. | Lack of teaching qualifications and experiences by teachers | 2.56 | 0.94 | Rejected |
| 7. | Inadequate manpower and supervision | 2.86 | 0.95 | Accepted |
| 8. | Disparity between HND/B.Sc graduates | 3.10 | 0.88 | Accepted |
| 9. | Poor accreditation preparation by institutions | 2.94 | 0.91 | Accepted |

The analysis of the result presented in the table above shows that the state of the art in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions is deplorable. This can be deduced from the response of the respondents which has a mean of not less than 2.80 in all the items except that it was agreed that teachers have teaching qualifications and experience.

Research Question 2

What is the level of compliance to the prescribed standard in the teaching and learning of office technology and

management in tertiary institutions?

Table 3: Compliance to the prescribed standard in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management

| S/No | Item Statement | X | SD | Decision |
|------|---|------|------|----------|
| 1. | Adequacy of recommended equipment | 2.50 | 1.15 | Rejected |
| 2. | Well equipped staff offices | 2.97 | 0.88 | Accepted |
| 3. | Recommended number of teaching staff | 2.83 | 0.85 | Accepted |
| 4. | Sufficient computer for learning and connectivity to internet | 2.71 | 1.12 | Rejected |
| 5. | Adequate classrooms | 2.48 | 1.07 | Rejected |
| 6. | Functional shorthand laboratory | 2.78 | 1.03 | Rejected |
| 7. | Well equipped computer laboratory | 3.02 | 0.96 | Accepted |
| 8. | Availability of recommended model office | 2.81 | 1.01 | Accepted |
| 9. | Teachers/Students ratio | 2.89 | 0.92 | Accepted |
| 10. | Adequacy of office and classrooms furniture | 2.61 | 1.07 | Rejected |

In the above table, the data presented shows that a large number of the respondents believe that the level of compliance to the prescribed standard in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management is still low in some key areas while compliance seems to have been seen in some areas also. This is clear from the response of the respondents with a mean of not less than 2.80 in some important items.

Research Question 3

What are the strategies needed for ensuring quality assurance in the teaching and learning of office technology and management in tertiary institutions?

Table 4: Strategies for ensuring Quality Assurance in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management

| S/No | Item Statement | X | SD | Decision |
|------|---|------|------|----------|
| 1. | Regular scrutinizing of accredited programme in various institutions | 3.2 | 0.77 | Accepted |
| 2. | Improving skills, knowledge and competence of teachers and other professionals through seminars/workshops and other developmental programme | 3.33 | 0.65 | Accepted |
| 3. | Integration of key competencies into OTM curricula and developing appropriate means of assessment | 3.25 | 0.70 | Accepted |
| 4. | Adequate funding by government and other stakeholders | 2.84 | 1.00 | Accepted |
| 5. | Adherence to quality recommendations | 3.01 | 0.84 | Accepted |
| 6. | Effective monitoring to access the level of performance | 3.20 | 0.76 | Accepted |

| | | | | |
|-----|---|------|------|----------|
| 7. | Proper classroom management | 2.83 | 1.11 | Accepted |
| 8. | Adequate infrastructural facilities | 2.96 | 1.04 | Accepted |
| 9. | Strict adherence to students' entry qualifications | 3.14 | 0.74 | Accepted |
| 10. | Qualifications of training teachers | 3.32 | 0.65 | Accepted |
| 11. | Effective supervision in the quality of content and input | 3.11 | 0.72 | Accepted |

The result of the data presented in the above table shows that the entire item raised stand as strategies for ensuring quality assurance in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions. This can be inferred from the response of the respondents which has a mean of not less than 2.80 in all the items.

Testing of Hypotheses

Table 5: Chi-Square test for state of the art in office technology and management teaching and learning in tertiary institutions

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 48.406 ^a | 24 | .002 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 48.443 | 24 | .002 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .002 | 1 | .965 |
| N of Valid Cases | 900 | | |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.11.

A close observation of table 4 revealed that the P-value (0.002) is less than the level of significance of 0.05. It shows that the result is highly significant. Therefore, H_{01} is rejected. That is, the state of the art in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions is deplorable.

Table 6: Chi-Square test of the level of compliance to the prescribed standard in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 65.223 ^a | 27 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 66.705 | 27 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .699 | 1 | .403 |
| N of Valid Cases | 1000 | | |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.30.

Table 5 shows that the P-value (0.000) is less than 0.05 level of significance. With this value, it is therefore evident that the result is highly significant. The hypothesis that states that the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management does not comply with the prescribed standard is not accepted.

Table 7: Chi-Square test of the strategies needed for ensuring quality assurance in the teaching and learning of office technology and management in tertiary institutions

| | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 117.653 ^a | 30 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 108.318 | 30 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .552 | 1 | .458 |
| N of Valid Cases | 1100 | | |

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.73.

A critical examination of table 6 indicated that the P-value (0.000) is less than the level of significance of 0.05. It is very clear therefore that the result is highly significant. The H_{03} is therefore rejected. That is, the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management needs various strategies for ensuring quality assurance.

6. Discussion

This study centres on ensuring quality assurance in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions. The result of the study shows that the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management is bewildered with the problem of underfunding and research development, inadequate facilities, deficiency in curricular provisions, fraudulent practices in accreditation exercises, inadequate manpower, disparity between HND and B.Sc graduates and poor accreditation preparation by institutions. In the view of Olawole and Abuya (2011), the teaching of Office Technology and Management depends on the availability of equipment that should be practically used in the course of teaching and learning. According to them, the programme requires that students admitted should be tailored to match the number of functional equipment available. They submitted that office technology and management which is a practical oriented programme in institutions offering Office Technology and Management should admit students into the programme in accordance with the number of available functional equipment, otherwise, such an institution would end up producing ill-equipped, unskilled and half-baked graduates which the world of work does not require and may never be employed in any reputable organization. This view was corroborated by Nnorom and Gaius-Oke (2013) who posited that recent development in business education system and office technology and management in particular, seems to indicate that all is not well as expected with regards to quality assurance in the system. According to them, such challenges of quality in the administration of office technology and management include under funding, enrolment explosion, inadequate physical facilities, inadequate staffing and fraudulent qualification and practices.

Ediagbonya, Agbaje and Suberu (2013) agreed that quality assurance geared at positively transformation of the educational system is indeed confronted with numerous challenges which include the absence of adequate manpower or teaching and non-teaching staff in various institutions, the sharp practices accompanying accreditation exercises in schools and also, the absence of adequate teaching or instructional technologies in our

institutions, the absence of required teaching qualifications and experiences by teachers and lack of supervision of teachers. This view was corroborated by Osahon (2013) who citing Perekpo and Isichei opined that Technical and Vocational Education of which Office Technology and Management is inclusive is characterized with inadequate fund to procure modern prescribed facilities and machines for instruction, inadequate number of qualified teachers, non implementation of modern technology for instruction and government inability to address the issue of supervision.

The result of the study shows that the level of compliance to the prescribed standard in key areas in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management is still very low. Eze (2014) asserted that assuring the quality of education provision is a fundamental aspect of gaining and maintaining credibility for programmes, institutions and national systems of higher education worldwide. According to him, the quest for standards informed the Federal Government to establish minimum academic standards for higher institutions of learning in the country. He further opined that among the items contained in the minimum standards are objectives of the programme, philosophy, personnel, equipment vis-à-vis number of students, curriculum, and examination and admission requirements. Citing Makoju, Nwangwu, Abolade and Newton, Eze (2014) further highlighted the quality assurance checklist in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management to include institution mission and objectives, teaching programmes, students' selection, course structure, teaching arrangement, students, assessment/evaluation, monitoring of outcomes, staffing issues and infrastructure/resources. Ibe and Nwosu (2013) however, noted that to achieve a better assurance in the Office Technology and Management programme is possible provided certain precautions are taken coupled with other factors, such as facilities which include modern equipment, classroom, library and other instructional materials. Nwaosa et al (2013) also maintained that mechanism for quality assurance in the teaching of business education which include office technology and management in tertiary institutions include adequate funding, provision of spacious classrooms, adequate training of teachers, adequate infrastructural facilities and adherence to specified requirements.

The result of the study also revealed that there are potent strategies that can be adopted in ensuring quality assurance in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions. This agree with the view of Olawole and Abuya (2011) who viewed that for effective delivery, all the necessary equipment meant for the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management must be available for students use if practical learning is to take place. They further submitted that it is imperative for the government and the management of the institutions offering the programme to make adequate fund available at the right time for the running and sustenance of the programme. Since Office Technology and Management is evolving and developing, it is necessary for the teachers of the programme to keep track and receptive of current evolution and development. However, Afolabi and Oru (2013) submitted that part of the several instruments that can be used to ensure the quality of education include quality of syllabus, discipline of students and teachers, selection in admission of students, infrastructure and facilities and good governance. Ediagbonya et al (2013) also admitted that part of the way forward for ensuring quality include adequate supply of manpower, regular and objective accreditation exercise in ensuring that the institutions meet up with the prescribed standards, adequate supply of

teaching aids and regular supervision of academic programmes and institutions.

This was also in line with the view of Ezeani and Eze (2013) who opined that a tertiary institution is only as good as the quality of its teaching staff, graduates, research products and its service to the community and nation. For quality to be assured therefore, they viewed that Business Education of which Office Technology and Management is an integral part, needs strategies which include quality accreditation of programmes, quality inputs, up- dating competence of teachers and funding for quality assurance.

7. Conclusion

Office Technology and Management can play an enviable role in the development of the nation if strict adherence to the prescribed standard is maintained. However, the present state in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management in tertiary institutions is worrisome and one of the major problems of Office Technology and Management is that of quality. It is saddening to note that many of the indices that can guarantee quality in the teaching and learning of Office Technology and Management programme are not taken into consideration in the nation's quest to meet the qualitative target in tertiary institutions. To ensure that quality is maintained, there is the need for adherence to quality recommendations and constant evaluation of the programme for effective delivery.

8. Recommendations

- Universities and Polytechnics offering OTM education should ensure the provision of adequate facilities that can assist the students acquire practical skills as entrenched in the programme.
- The government and other education stakeholders should ensure sustainable funding of the programme for optimum delivery.
- There should be constant improvement in the skills, knowledge and competence of OTM teachers through training and retraining programme to keep them abreast of the modern techniques in education delivery.
- The supervisory body of the various tertiary institutions should embark on constant evaluation and monitoring of Office Technology and Management programme to ensure quality delivery.
- Institutions should be made to adhere strictly to students entry requirements and effective supervision in the quality of content and input.

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