OFFICE TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT AND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AS ANTIDOTES FOR UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined office technology management and agricultural education as antidotes for unemployment challenges in Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. A correlational research design was adopted. The population comprised all the postgraduates of Business Education and Agricultural Science Education in Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED), Ijagun and Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ago-Iwoye. The sample size comprised ninety (90) postgraduates of Business Education and Agricultural Science Education. Purposive sampling technique was used. Two researchers developed questionnaire tagged: 'OTM and Unemployment Reduction Questionnaire (OTMURQ)' and Agricultural Education and Unemployment Reduction Questionnaire (AEURQ)' were used for data collection with 0.89 and 0.92 as reliability coefficients. Mean and standard deviation were used for answering research questions. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The findings revealed that there was significant relationship between office technology management and unemployment reduction (r = 0.845, P<.05). There was significant relationship between agricultural education and unemployment reduction (r = 0.871, P<.05). The study recommended that the identified skills in this study should be incorporated into the programme of the skills acquisition centers in the state so that it could be used for retraining the unemployed OTM and agricultural education graduates for self-employment.

Keywords: Antidotes, Office Technology Management, Agricultural Education, Unemployment Challenges, Nigeria.

Introduction

Unemployment has been a major problem confronting Nigeria since independence. A situation where Nigeria remains a consuming nation is not good for the attainment of sustainable economic growth. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023), Nigeria's unemployment rate surged to 5.0 per cent in the third quarter of 2023 from 4.2 per cent in the previous quarter. The labour force participation rate measures the share of a country's working-age population that is in the labour force. The working age population refers to people aged 15 years and above who are actively engaged. The labour force is the combination of individuals who are employed and those who are unemployed. The report

from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the labour force participation rate among the working-age population declined to 79.5 per cent in Q3 compared to 80.4 per cent in Q2. According to a new methodology adopted by the National Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate in Africa's biggest economy, with more than 200 million people, fell from 5.3 percent in Q4 2022 to 4.1 percent in Q1 2023. The unemployment rate increased significantly in Q3 2023 at 5.0 per cent. This is an increase of 0.8 per cent from Q2 2023. In Q3 2023, the labour force participation rate in Nigeria was 79.5%, having been 80.4% in Q2 2023. There are opinions that graduates unemployment are the major factors fueling unemployment rate in Nigeria. A situation whereby thousands of higher institutions graduates where been produced yearly without commensurate job vacancies to absorb them both in public and private sectors is a source of concern to collective authority and stakeholders in the economy.

Ukata (2021) stated that unemployment has reached such an alarming situation today that is perhaps considered the most serious of the problem affecting Nigeria. In the underdeveloped countries such as Nigeria however employment benefits are not available to the unemployed. The income level of the great majority of families makes the provision of unemployment benefits virtually impossible thus those unable to find jobs or these discharged from their previous employments are left to fend for themselves. In underdeveloped countries like Nigeria, majority of job seekers are therefore forced to create employment for themselves. Unemployment is defined briefly as the negative aspect of the economic process for an unemployed person is one who despite his willingness and capacity to work is unable to do so for reasons inherent in the organization of the commodity production (Ukata, 2021). Udo (2014) contended that some of these graduates' lack skills to be self-employed, if white-collar job is not available.

OTM programme is designed to offer students training in different skills for employment in various fields of endeavour. Moreover, in these modern economies, continuous innovations have led to major transformations in workplaces, giving rise to pervasive skill gaps and skill mismatches. In order to bridge the skill gaps, OTM programme is investing significant effort and resources in training of students in different skills taught in OTM programme include soft skills. Digital skills often referred to as generic, non-technical, or employability skills are skills that facilitate the creative and productive application of disciplinary skills and knowledge in the workplaces (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). Soft skills are the traits and abilities of attitude and behaviour rather than of knowledge or technical aptitude. Soft skills include ICTs, problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, conflict management, and ethical skills. Self-improvement, interpersonal relations, communications, career preparation, leadership, teamwork, self-discipline, self-confidence, good work ethic, and showing courtesy are viewed as soft skills. Additionally, listed soft skills to include honesty, team building, problem solving, critical thinking, and communication skills (Jackson & Chapman, 2012).

Abdullah, Muhammad and Nasir (2019) stated that digital skills are crucial skills required by future workplace in the corporate world. Acquisition of these skills could influence employment prospect of Office Technology and Management students for wealth creation. ICTs skills have become more pervasive in society that led to a concern about the need for ICT skills in everyday life of learners. These include the use of variety of ICT tools such as email, learning platforms, desktop conferencing, online programmes such as web, video

conferencing, social media platforms, web cam, internet, all hardware and software which impart the necessary ICT skills to students for gainful employment after graduation (Abdullah et. al., 2019). Problem-solving skills can influence employment prospect of OTM students. Problem solving skills involve the ability to find the cause of a problem, understand it, and establish a solution to it. The ability to solve problems in a range of learning context is essential for the development of knowledge, understanding and performance in the labour market (Griffin &Annulis, 2013). They encompassed flexibility, adaptability, cooperativeness, and respectfulness. Ann-Marie (2015) stressed the need to equip students with teamwork skills because employers are seeking to recruit graduates who pay due attention to relations with co-workers and superiors. Possession of OTM skills by the graduates of higher institutions could help them venture into secretarial business like Cyber-Café, business center among others.

However, economy of the world today is going greener revolution; a situation where there are going to be food security and ability to commercialize the outputs production remain a challenge (Omene, 2021). Agricultural education is a vocational education programme that provides skills and competence for teaching in areas of agriculture for self-reliance and unemployment reduction (Ngbongha&Akaa, 2020). Agricultural education revolves around job skills, employability and self-dependency. Agricultural education is a course that very practical and comprehensive in nature. Agricultural education in Nigerian universities has a significant role of producing individuals who will use their skills and abilities acquired during training to actively participate in the economic growth and development where ever they find themselves (Ngbongha&Akaa, 2020). According to William (2000)in Ngbongha and Akaa (2020) agricultural education is a double edge sword which provides graduates with needed competent knowledge as an Agric educator and equip with necessary skills to be self-reliant. Agricultural education is an aspect of vocational and technical education which encompasses many study areas like agricultural economics, agronomy, soil science, animal science, crop protection, agricultural extension, plant science and agricultural engineering.

Theoretical Framework
The theoretical framework for this study was Schumpeter Effect Theory propounded by Audretsch and Fritsch in 1994. This is a theory that provides logical explanation that vocational education and unemployment are negatively or inversely related, that is, increase in vocational activities in the economy douses and sustainably reduces unemployment situation (i.e. facilitating employability). The process of vocational education leading to gainful employment is termed Schumpeter effect. Audretsch and Fritsch (1994) provided empirical justification for the theory in two different studies, stating that unemployment is negatively related to new-firm start-ups, that is, as new businesses are established, the level of employability in the society is stimulated and unemployment reduces sustainably in the economy. The implication of the above theory is that when people or graduates are provided qualitative vocational education with hands-on training, they tend to establish their own business later on.

Statement of the Problem
Among the daunting challenges facing individual, organization and even nations today is unemployment. Unemployment problem which is virtually on the lips of every Nigerian has

got out of control along with its attendant social and economic effects. Most of the people affected by unemployment in Nigeria are the Youths particularly graduate. The fast pace of development recorded in nations such as Malaysia, Brazil, China and Indonesia, among others have clearly shown that development is driven by the innovativeness, creativity and enterprise of the people through the acquisition of practical skills in vocational education. Unfortunately, Nigeria has not been able to enact similar feats owing to poor linkage between knowledge and practical application. This may have been due to lack of appropriate skills and entrepreneurial culture in the educational system. It is pertinent to note that vocational and technical training which are mainly skill acquisition oriented can be a means to an end. It can simply be a tool for securing employment and emancipation of people (graduates) through the provision and acquiring of necessary knowledge and skills to make lives more flourishing. Thus, this study was an attempt to examine office technology management and agricultural education as antidotes for unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study
The main objective of the study was to examine office technology management and agricultural education as antidotes for unemployment reduction in Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined the:
1. Office technology and management skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria.
2. Agricultural education skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria.
3. Relationship between office technology management and unemployment reduction in Nigeria.
4. Relationship between agricultural education and unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

Research Questions
    The following research questions guided this study:
1. What are the office technology and management skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria?
2. What are the agricultural education skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria?

Hypotheses
    The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_01: There is no significant relationship between office technology management and unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

H_02: There is no significant relationship between agricultural education and unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

Methodology
A correlational research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised all the postgraduates of Business Education and Agricultural Science Education in Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED), Ijagun and Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ago-Iwoye. The sample size comprised ninety (90) postgraduates of Business Education and

Agricultural Science Education. Sixty (60) postgraduates of Business Education and Agricultural Science Education were selected from TASUED while only thirty (30) selected from OOU using purposive sampling technique. Two researchers developed questionnaire tagged: 'OTM and Unemployment Reduction Questionnaire (OTMURQ)' and Agricultural Education and Unemployment Reduction Questionnaire (AEURQ)' were used for data collection. The questionnaires requested responses on a four (4) – point scale format which was a modification of 5-point Likert scale. The two questionnaires have two sections each of A and B. Section A focused on demographic characteristics of the respondents, and section B examined items relating to the OTM and agricultural skills required for unemployment reduction. The initial draft of the questionnaires was subjected to face and contents validity by experts at the university education level. In order to ensure the reliability of the instrument, a test-retest study was carried out among 5 Business and Agricultural Education postgraduate students at Delta State University, Delta State. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used for testing the reliability coefficient with the view to ascertaining whether the instrument is reliable or not. The reliability coefficients yielded 0.89 and 0.92 for OTMURQ and AEURQ respectively. The data for the study was collected through the use of primary method of data collection. The instrument for the data collection was questionnaire; meanwhile, the instrument was validated before subjection to data collection. Data was collected using the validated instruments. Thereafter, the authors personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents with the help of research assistants. The researcher ensured that respondents are adequately briefed on the content and procedure for filling the questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation were used for answering research questions. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Results and Discussion
Research Question 1: What are the office technology and management skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on the office technology and management skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria

| Items	Mean	SD	Remark
Digital skills	2.99	.903	Agreed
Analytical skills	3.04	.594	Agreed
Effective time management skills	2.67	.857	Agreed
Interpersonal skills	2.89	.899	Agreed
Entrepreneurial skills	2.95	.821	Agreed
Distributive marketing skills	2.78	.856	Agreed
Communication skills	3.15	.644	Agreed
Prudency skills	3.11	.603	Agreed
Cluster mean	2.95		

Source: Field Survey, 2024
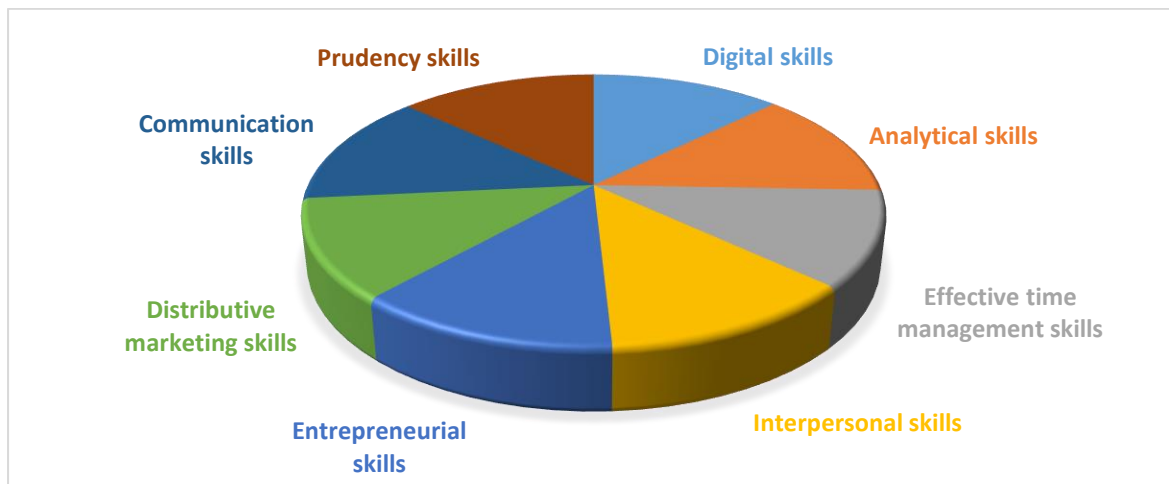
Figure 1: Pie-chart showing office technology and management skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria

Table 1 revealed that cluster mean was 2.95 which greater than the bench mark of 2.50. Since, 2.95 > 2.50, this implied that digital, analytical, effective time management, interpersonal, entrepreneurial, distributive marketing and prudency skills were among the office technology and management skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What are the agricultural education skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on the agricultural education skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria

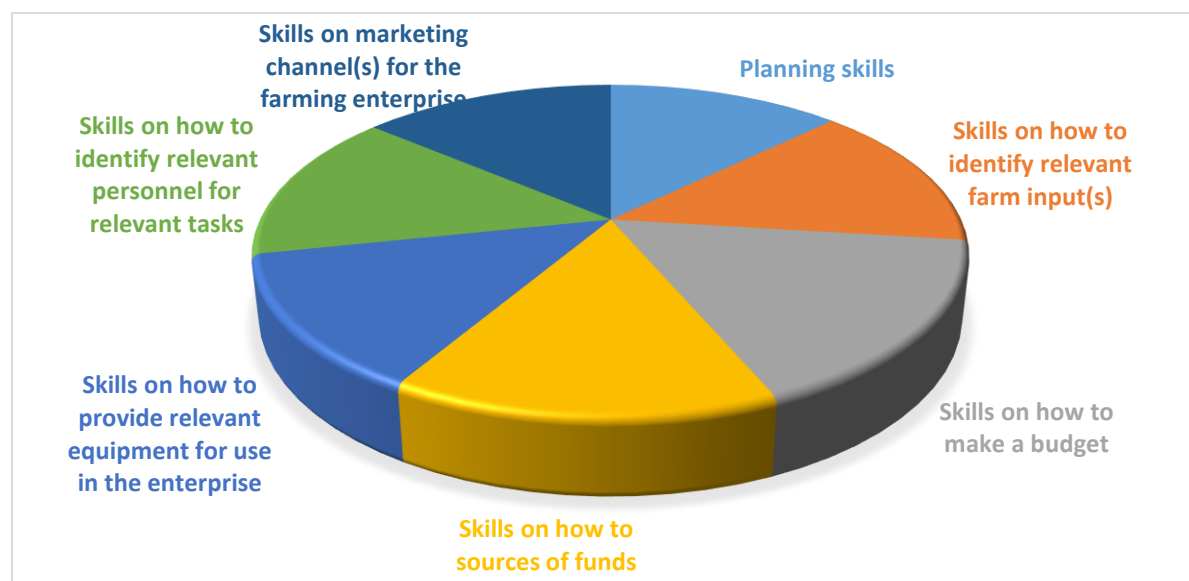| Items	Mean	SD	Remark
Planning skills	2.55	.885	Agreed
Skills on how to identify relevant farm input(s)	2.87	.805	Agreed
Skills on how to make a budget	3.34	.653	Agreed
Skills on how to sources of funds	2.99	.876	Agreed
Skills on how to provide relevant equipment for use in the enterprise	2.65	.799	Agreed
Skills on how to identify relevant personnel for relevant tasks	2.92	.811	Agreed
Skills on marketing channel(s) for the farming enterprise	2.77	.854	Agreed
Cluster mean	2.87		

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Figure 2: Pie-chart showing agricultural education skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria

Table 2 indicated that cluster mean was 2.87 and is greater than the bench mark of 2.50. Since, 2.87 > 2.50, this implied that planning skills, skills on how to identify relevant farm input(s), skills on how to make a budget, skills on how to sources of funds, skills on how to provide relevant equipment for use in the enterprise, skills on how to identify relevant personnel for relevant tasks and skills on marketing channel(s) for the farming enterprise were among agricultural education skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

$H_0 1$: There is no significant relationship between office technology management and unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

Table 3: Relationship between office technology management and unemployment reduction in Nigeria

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Remark
Unemployment reduction	25.4503	2.62105			
Office technology management	25.4241	3.36909	.845	.000	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From Table 3, it was observed that there was significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the order of (r = 0.845, P<.05). This implied that null hypothesis was rejected and the authors concluded that there was significant relationship between office technology management and unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

$H_0 2$: There is no significant relationship between agricultural education and unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

Table 4: Relationship between agricultural education and unemployment reduction in Nigeria

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Remark
Unemployment reduction	29.9267	2.86997			
Agricultural education	25.4241	3.36909	.871	.000	Significant

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 revealed that there was significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable in the order of (r = 0.871, P<.05). This implied that null hypothesis was rejected and the authors concluded that there was significant relationship between agricultural education and unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings
The findings of the study indicated that digital, analytical, effective time management, interpersonal, entrepreneurial, distributive marketing and prudency skills were among the office technology and management skills required for unemployment reduction. Planning skills, skills on how to identify relevant farm input(s), skills on how to make a budget, skills on how to sources of funds, skills on how to provide relevant equipment for use in the enterprise, skills on how to identify relevant personnel for relevant tasks and skills on marketing channel(s) for the farming enterprise were among agricultural education skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria. There was significant relationship between office technology management and unemployment reduction and also there was significant relationship between agricultural education and unemployment reduction in Nigeria. These findings corroborate with Ukata (2021) examined digital skills of OTM students in Rivers State owned polytechnics as a solution to Nigerian economic challenges and indicated that ICTs and problem-solving skills of OTM students serve as a high solution to Nigerian economic challenges of unemployment and poverty through generating employment and wealth creation. James, Amonjenu and Agbulu (2020) examined skills required by agricultural education graduates in grass cutter farming for self-employment in Kaduna State, Nigeria and they found that 10 skills in planning, 10 skills in housing construction and 10 skills in breeding of grasscutter are required respectively for success in grasscutter farming.

Conclusion and Recommendations
Having examined office technology management and agricultural education as antidotes for unemployment reduction in Nigeria, the following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study that digital, analytical, effective time management, interpersonal, entrepreneurial, distributive marketing and prudency skills were among the office technology and management skills required for unemployment reduction. Planning skills, skills on how to identify relevant farm input(s), skills on how to make a budget, skills on how to sources of funds, skills on how to provide relevant equipment for use in the enterprise, skills on how to identify relevant personnel for relevant tasks and skills on marketing channel(s) for the farming enterprise were among agricultural education skills required for unemployment reduction in Nigeria. There was significant relationship between office technology management and unemployment reduction and also there was significant relationship between agricultural education and unemployment reduction in Nigeria. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are provided:

1. OTM lecturers should lay more emphasis on practical by giving students ICTs and problems to solve and taking them to field trips to industries to gain firsthand experience of how job functions are performed. This will give them added advantage in the labour market world when they embark the search for jobs.
2. OTM department in higher institution most especially in university should collaborate more with industries to support OTM programme through continuous industrial training activities and encourage industrial work scheme to sharpen soft skills of their students for success in the labour market.
3. The identified skills in this study should be incorporated into the programme of the skills acquisition center's in the state so that it could be used for retraining the unemployed OTM and agricultural education graduates for self-employment.

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