EMERGING DIGITAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT SKILLS REQUIRED OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT GRADUATES FOR EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN EBONYI STATE

Constance Ifeyinwa Okoli
ci.okoli@unizik.edu.ng
Department Of Business Education
Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
&
Ndidiamaka Umekafor
ndidimary72@yahoo.com
Department Of Business Education
Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Abstract

The increasing rate of poor performance of Office Technology and Management (OTM) graduates necessitated this study. The study ascertained digital records management skills required of OTM) graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. The study adopted a survey research design with a population of 302 administrative heads from six public tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, studied without sampling. One research question guided the study, and two null hypotheses were tested. A validated structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The reliability of the instrument was established using trial-testing and data analyzed using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded a coefficient value of 0.77. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and determine the homogeneity of the respondents' rating, while hypotheses were tested using ANOVA at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed, among others, that digital records management skills such as archival of enduring (historical and legal) records are highly required for effective performance of OTM graduates in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi state. The result of the hypotheses showed that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative heads on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, based on years of working experience. It was also discovered that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative heads on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, based on the type of institution. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Office Technology and Management lecturers in tertiary institutions in Nigeria should be continuously retrained through in-service training, workshops, seminars, and conferences to update their digital records management skills. This is to enable them to transmit the emerging record management skills to their students during training for effective performance on graduation.

Keywords: Skills, Record Management Skills, Digital Records Management Skills, Performance, Office Technology and Management Graduates.

Introduction

Office Technology and Management (OTM) education is an aspect of business education that focuses on equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively manage and utilize technology in an office or business setting. Office Technology and Management, as a well-planned programme of courses and learning experiences, offers learners an opportunity to acquire relevant skills to either get paid employment or become self-reliant to create jobs and contribute to the development of society (Okoli, Elom, Osuji & Igwe, 2019). This implies that for Office Technology and Management graduates to perform their duties and make meaningful contributions to the success of the organizational goals, they need to acquire relevant office skills.

Skills, as viewed by Okoli and Ibe (2019), encompass the abilities, capabilities, aptitude, and expertise acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained training and are necessary to adaptively perform job functions effectively. Skills play a fundamental role in personal and professional development and are essential for success in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and daily interactions. Olatunde (2022) pointed out that the sensitive position of OTM graduates demands that they possess remarkable skills in order for them to be effective in performing their office duties. Mehrotra and Elias (2017) in their study provided some of the skills required of OTM graduates to include good communication, time management, interpersonal, and records management skills.

Records management, as conceptualized by International Standardization Organization (2016), is a field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records. The primary function of records management is to facilitate the free flow of records through an organization to ensure that information is readily available where and when it is needed (Umeokafor, 2021). To implement and achieve effective records management, there is a need for possession of records management skills by OTM graduates.

Record management skills refer to the ability to efficiently and systematically create, receive, use, maintain, and dispose of records and information within an organization. Records management ranges from manual to electronic/digital form due to information and communication technology (ICT). The proliferation of digital technologies has revolutionized the way organizations create, store, and manage records. With the advent of electronic document management systems, cloud storage solutions, and data analytics tools, the ability to effectively manage digital records has become indispensable.

Digital records management skills refer to the abilities and knowledge required to effectively create, maintain, organize, retrieve, and dispose of information within an organization electronically. John and Lawrence (2023) submitted digital records management as the practice of managing records with the use of electronic technology. These skills are crucial for ensuring that the organization's information is systematically managed, easily accessible, properly disposed of, and in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Records management skills are crucial for ensuring that records are properly classified, indexed, catalogued, and

archived (Zweeden, Mudhoo & Walton, 2023). Ibeh and Ezeabasili (2024) stated that improving skills needed to manage electronic records can significantly enhance the job performance of OTM graduates in offices.

Performance refers to the level of effectiveness and efficiency with which an individual carries out his job responsibilities and tasks. The sensitive position of OTM graduates in any organization demands that they should possess remarkable skills for them to be effective in performing their duties (Olatunde, 2022). OTM graduates need a strong foundation in digital records management to excel in today's workforce, to be proficient in using various software and hardware tools, and to create, store, retrieve, and dispose of records.

OTM graduates are individuals who have completed a programme of study in office technology and management education at tertiary institutions. Okolocha and Baba (2017) viewed OTM graduate as an officer who oversees records, correspondence, minutes of meetings, and related affairs of an organization. In the context of this study, OTM graduates are employees of tertiary institutions who are working as administrative assistants, office managers or professional secretaries in tertiary institutions. The job performed by the OTM graduate is constantly changing to reflect the realities of the 21st century, and as most traditional office routines are going technological, modern OTM graduates need to acquire digital electronic records management skills to keep up with the changing business environment and secretarial functions (Olatunde, 2022). Having these digital abilities will provide OTM graduates with a competitive edge in the global market and allow them to be viewed as employable (Akpojotor, 2024).

Unfortunately, Okeke and Ifesi (2018) averred that the unsatisfactory performance of OTM graduates across the nation indicates that OTM graduates may not have been equipped with the performance skills required to meet modern office needs. Ukonu and Habu (2022) stressed the need to achieve the lofty objective of OTM programme by ensuring that the OTM curriculum emphasizes and inculcates in the students' skills that are relevant and required to function effectively in thie modern day technological world.

Tertiary institutions, which handle vast amounts of information ranging from student records to administrative documents, require skilled professionals who can navigate these digital landscapes effectively. To ensure that OTM graduates possess digital records management skills, Clarke (2018) held that developing these skills is not just the responsibility of the graduates alone, but also that of the employers and management of tertiary institutions. They should help the OTM graduates in developing the desirable skills. This can be done through training and retraining of OTM graduates' employees to enable them to acquire and remain-up to date with digital skills. Collaborating with the assertion, Ali, Othman, and Ahmad (2017) in their study reported that employers are putting a lot of attention on graduate skills, and this calls tertiary institutions to also focus more on equipping their students with skills that are needed in the job market.

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are institutions that provide education to students who have completed their secondary school education. They include universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education. The major aim of tertiary institutions includes the acquisition, development, and inculcation of the proper value orientation for the survival of the individual and society, through the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills, which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). Umoru and Oluwalola (2022) perceived tertiary institutions as the engine that drives the economy through the provision of necessary skills and knowledge used to develop income-generating activities.

Acquisition of digital records management skills provides OTM graduates with the opportunity to manage records of the organization effectively. To ascertain digital records management skills required of OTM graduates in tertiary institutions, the opinion of the administrative heads is crucial since they are the ones responsible for overseeing the operations and management of the specific offices where employed OTM graduates perform their duties and are in a better position to give an account of their job performance. Administrative heads in the context of this study are heads of various divisions, departments, and units within the tertiary institutions.

The influencing factors on digital records management skills required by OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State could be years of working experience and the type of institution. Working experience refers to the number of years one spends as an administrative head. This could be attributed to exposure and long-term experience gained over the years. Ile and Okafor (2023) averred that differences in training experiences may lead to the acquisition of different competencies. Similarly, the type of institutions may influence the employability skills required by OTM graduates for effective job performance. It could be that employability skills required in universities may differ from those required in the polytechnics, while those required in the polytechnics may differ from those required in colleges of education. Oussama and Abdelkader (2019) stated from their observation that employability skills may differ from one employer to another.

In today's challenging and competitive workplace, the role of tertiary institutions is not merely to churn out graduates with certain areas of qualification, but more importantly to produce graduates with digital skills that are needed by employers, even though the skills needed by each employer may differ from one employer to another. As such, administrators (stakeholders) of tertiary institutions have a critical role in helping OTM graduates to develop specific and desired digital record management skills by organizing training and retraining programmes such as seminars and workshops for them. Regrettably, Okeke and Ifesi (2018) averred that the unsatisfactory performance of OTM graduates across the nation indicates that OTM graduates may not have been equipped with the performance skills required to meet modern office needs. Okeke and Ifesi added that the difficulty of OTM graduates to utilize various computer-based technologies, and the outcry of supervisors about the inability of graduates of the OTM programme to use various ICT applications in carrying out office functions, is worrisome.

It was against this background that this study was conceived and carried out to determine emerging employability skills required of OTM graduates for effective job performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi.

Statement of Problem

In today's technological-driven work environment, the management of records has evolved from traditional paper-based systems to digital formats that require advanced technological competencies. OTM graduates are expected to possess the necessary digital records management skills to navigate this shift.

Despite the growing importance of digital records management, many graduates enter the workforce without adequate training or proficiency in essential digital tools and techniques. This gap in skills not only hampers the efficiency of office operations but also poses risks related to data security, compliance, and information retrieval.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to ascertain emerging digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State.

Research Question

The study was guided by the following research question:

What are the digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative heads on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective experience (below 5 years, 5 to 10 years, above 10 years)performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, based on their years of working
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative heads on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, based on the type of institution (Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education).

Methods

The study was conducted in Ebonyi State using a descriptive survey research design. The state has six public tertiary institutions. The population of the study comprised 302 administrative heads in public tertiary institutions. The entire population was studied. An instrument titled "Digital Records Management Skills Required of Office Technology and Management Graduates (DRMSROTMG)" developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The instrument contains items structured on a four-point rating scale of Highly Required (HR), Required (R), Lowly Required (LR), and Not Required (NR), which were weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The validation of the instrument was determined using three experts. The data used for establishing the internal consistency of the instrument were a single administration of copies of the instrument administered to 302 respondents, made up of administrative heads in public tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. Using the data obtained, DRMSROTMG was subjected to test for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha. A coefficient value of 0.80 was obtained from one cluster. The researcher and three research assistants, who are OTM graduates in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, collected data for the study. A direct approach was employed in the data collection to ensure that copies of the questionnaire administered were properly filled out and successfully retrieved. A total of 302 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 300 copies were successfully retrieved, indicated 99% return. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions and determine the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' opinions.

Results

What are the digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State?

Table 1

Respondents' mean ratings and standard deviation on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance.

S/NO	Items on the records management skills required Proficiency in:	$\overline{X}$	SD	Remarks
1.	records creation	3.43	.70	Required
2.	records classification	3.25	.66	Required
3.	storage of records systematically for easy retrieval	3.21	.71	Required
4.	protection of records against unauthorized users	3.25	.76	Required
5.	back up of records in various devices	3.44	.74	Required
6.	records maintenance based on retention schedules	3.30	.81	Required
7.	archiving of enduring (historical and legal) records	3.50	.74	Highly Required
8.	disposition of records systematically	3.38	.65	Required
9.	use of a database	3.48	.72	Required
10.	cloud computing management	3.48	.80	Required
11.	Metadata usage	3.47	.70	Required
	Cluster Mean	3.38		Required

Data in Table 2 shows that out of 11 items on digital records management skills listed as required of OTM graduates for effective performance, respondents rated item 7 as highly required with a mean score of 3.50. The remaining 10 items are rated as required of OTM graduates with mean scores that ranged between 3.21 and 3.48. The cluster mean score of 3.38 shows that overall, digital records management skills are required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. The standard deviation, ranging from .65 to .81, indicates that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative heads on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, based on their years of working experience.

Table 2

Summary of one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the ratings of administrative heads on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance based on years of working experience

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	58.36	2	29.18	4.73	.01	Significant
Within Groups	599.03	297	6.18			
Total	657.39	300				

Table 2 shows f-ratio of 4.73 at 2 and 297 degrees of freedom with a p-value of .01 which is less than the p-value of .05 (.01 <.05). This means that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative heads on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State based on years of working experience. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3

Post Hoc Tests

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Digital Records Management Skills Required

Scheffe

(I) Years of Working Experience	(J) Years of Working Experience	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1-5 years	6-10 years	.77332	.60739	.448	-.7367	2.2833
	Above 10 years	-1.29078	.60010	.104	-2.7826	.2011
6-10 years	1-5 years	-.77332	.60739	.448	-2.2833	.7367
	Above 10 years	-2.06410*	.68282	.013	-3.7616	-.3666
Above 10 years	1-5 years	1.29078	.60010	.104	-.2011	2.7826
	6-10 years	2.06410*	.68282	.013	.3666	3.7616

Table three shows that the significant difference, as provided by Post Hoc (Scheffe) tests, lies between 6 – 10 years of working experience and above 10 years of working experience.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative heads on digital records skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, based on the type of institution.

Table 3

Summary of one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the ratings of administrative heads on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance based on the type of institution

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	12.14	2	6.07	.91	.61	Not Significant
Within Groups	645.26	297	6.65			
Total	657.39	300				

Table 3 shows f-ratio of .91 at 2 and 297 degrees of freedom with a p-value of 61 which is greater than the p-value of .05 (.61 >.05). This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative heads on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State based on type of institution. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that OTM graduates are highly required to have an archive of enduring (historical and legal) records management skills, while they require records creation, records classification, storage of records systematically for easy retrieval, among others for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. The findings concur with Okolocha and Baba (2017), who noted that OTM graduates need to possess digital records management skills to fit into modern organizations. In the same vein, John and Lawrence (2023) pointed out that OTM graduates must acquire digital records management skills to ensure that electronic

records are easily accessible, properly maintained, and compliant with legal and regulatory requirements. Zweeden, Mudhoo, and Walton (2023) disclosed that OTM graduates need a strong foundation in digital records management to excel in today's workforce, to be proficient in using various software and hardware tools, to create, store, retrieve, and dispose of records digitally.

The findings of the study disclosed that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative heads on digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State, based on years of working experience. The significant difference as provided by Post Hoc (Scheffe) tests lies between 6 – 10 years of working experience and above 10 years of working experience. It could be that administrative heads with more years of working experience may have a more traditional view of records management, inspired by manual procedures. Likely, the administrative heads with more years of working experience may recognize the need for digital record management skills, but their understanding of the specific depth and breadth of these skills required of OTM graduates may differ from other administrative heads with less experience, who may have had more recent exposure to a highly digital office environment. These administrative heads with less working experience mostly started operating in the digital era, in which digital records management technologies are integrated into regular office operations. This could lead to varying perspectives on the precise digital records management skills required of OTM graduates for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. In support, Omorojie (2018) noted that experienced administrative heads had a different understanding of digital record management skill evolution compared to less experienced ones, leading to differing perceptions on digital record management skill requirements of OTM graduates for effective performance in offices.

This variation in rating suggests that seasoned administrative heads have a more nuanced understanding of the digital records management skills required for effective performance of OTM graduates. It means that educational programmes need to consider the feedback from experienced professionals when designing the curriculum. This will enable integrating advanced topics in digital records management that reflect the complexities encountered in the workplace. However, failure to emphasize digital records management skills as required and agreed by the administrative heads in all the tertiary institutions may lead to a significant skills gap among the OTM graduates, and this can hinder their ability to perform effectively in administrative roles, particularly in institutions that rely heavily on digital documentation and data management.

Conclusion

The study highlights the critical role digital records management skills play in the contemporary educational and professional landscape. As digital records management continue to evolve, OTM graduates must possess a robust set of competencies that enable them to utilize the various digital record management tools effectively in offices. The findings of this study concluded that digital records management skills are required for effective performance of OTM graduates in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Office Technology and Management (OTM) graduates working in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State should be constantly retrained through in-service training, workshops,

seminars, and conferences to enable them up-date their digital records management skills for effective performance.

2. Management of tertiary institutions should ensure they provide adequate and up-to-date digital technologies, ICT infrastructure, modern office tools, and integrate them into office operations as well as training programme on the use of the technologies.
3. Office Technology and Management lecturers in tertiary institutions in Nigeria should be continuously retrained through in-service training, workshops, seminars, and conferences, to update their digital records management skills. This is necessary to ensure they impart the emerging digital skills to their students for effective performance in offices upon graduation.

References

Akpojotor, B. E. (2024). Digital technology skills for employability and global competitiveness required of business education graduates from Delta State tertiary institutions. *FUO- Journal of Educational Research, 3*(1),43 – 53.

Ali, F. M., Othman, R. and Ahmad, B. (2017). Graduate's marketable skills: an empirical investigation of its effect on perceived marketability of Yemeni graduates in the Arab Gulf States. *Asian Journal of Science and Technology, 8(11), 6497 – 6509.*

Clarke, M. (2018). Rethinking graduate employability: the role of capital, individual attributes and context. *Studies in Higher Education, 43*(11), 1923 -1937.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National policy on education*(6th edition). Lagos: NERDC

Ibeh, O. B. & Ezeabasili, A. C. (2024). Electronic records management skills requirements by librarians for effective job performance in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria. *African Journal of Education management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies, 11*(2), 155 – 166.

Ile, C. M. & Okafor, E. C. (2023). Database/Risk management competencies required of office technology and management (OTM) graduates of polytechnics in Gombe State, Nigeria for Electronic records management. *International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning, 10*(3), 1 – 10.

International Standard Organization (2016). *Information and documentation* – records management Part – 1: Concept and Principles. ISO.

John, C. D. & Lawrence, P. (2023). Electronic records management skills required of office technology and management students in the contemporary office. International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research, 11(3), 119 – 125.

Mehrotra, A. & Elias, H. (2017). Employers' feedback on business graduates. *US-China Education Review 7* (4), 190-199.

Okeke, A. U. & Ifesi, C. (2018). The extent office technology and management graduates in Bauchi possess office application skills for modern office needs. *UNIZIK Journal of Educational Management and Policy, 2*(1), 118 – 130.

Okoli, C. I. & Ibeh, F. G. (2019). Employers' rating of skills needed by business education graduates for employability in Enugu State. *African Journal of Stability and Development, 7*(3), 185 – 196.

Okoli, U. C., Elom, E. N., Osuji, C. U., & Igwe, P.A. (2019). Improvement needs of Nigerian technical college teacher in teaching vocational and technical subjects. *International Journal of Training and Research, 17*(1), 21 -34.

Okolocha, C. C. & Baba, E.I. (2017). Assessment of skills possessed by OTM graduates for effective electronic records management in polytechnics in North Central, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research, Administration and Management, 17*(1), 117-128.

Olatunde, A. M. (2022). Electronic records management skills needed by secretaries for effective job performance in public universities in Southwest, Nigeria. *Kwasu International Journal of Education, 5*(1), 42 – 53.

Omorojie, S. (2018). *Skills needed by office technology and management graduates for effective performance in modern offices*. Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, Department of Vocational Education, Delta State University, Abraka.

Oussama, A. J. & Abdelkader, S. (2019). Understanding employers' perception of employability skills and career development in Morocco. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies, 7*(2), 134 – 138.

Ukonu, E. E. & Habu, J.U. (2022). Sustainable technological skills: the key for unlocking office technology management students' potentials in the 21st century workplace. *African Scholar Journal of African Innovation & Advanced Studies (JAIAS-2), 24*(2), 267 – 276.

Umeokafor, N. (2021). *Assessment of records management practices by administrative assistants for effective administration of tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State*. Unpublished Masters Thesis, Department of Technology and Vocational Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Umoru, T.A. & Oluwalola, F. K. (2022). Quality assurance mechanisms for promoting employability skills in business education programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. *Kwasu International Journal of Education, 4*(1), 1-14.

Zweeden, W. V. Mudhoo, H. & Walton, M. (2023). *What skills you need to be a successful records management professional.* Retrieved from: https://www.linkedin.com-advice.