CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER GAP IN OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated career development and gender gap in Office Technology and Management Education in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. Two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 52 lecturers and 102 students of office technology and management Education programmes in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.. There was no sample because of small manageable size of population. A structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection, the instrument was validated by three experts in Department of Technology and Vocational Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Reliability of the instrument was ensured by trial testing it and data collected were analyzed using Cronbach alpha and it yielded a reliability index of 0.82. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze responses to the research questions while t-test statistical tool was used to test the null hypotheses. Findings of the study revealed that students were motivated to choose career in office technology and management Education because the competencies in the programme would help them to be self-employed. Also, the study further revealed that students did not choose to study Office technology and management Education (OTME) because of their gender among others. It was recommended that School authorities should strengthen their relationship with private and public companies, thereby creating opening for the OTME students to practice what they learnt from school before graduation especially during their industrial training, Departments of Business education programme should organize Periodic workshop and seminars for orientation of the new admitted

students and as such expose them on objectives of all the options in the programmes with effect on office technology and management education option

Key Words; **Career Development, Gender Gap, Tertiary institutions, Office Technology and Management Education.**

Introduction

Gender dichotomy in career development has gained attention of scholars from diverse fields. This is because gender difference has been seen as one of the predictors for perceived difference in career profiles of male and female professionals. According to Ranitha and Suchira (2019), career advancement by women in contemporary society is surprising as women are achieving their targets even in career seen to be for men. In office technology and management education, this gender dichotomy seems to be evident as the society perceives career in the programme to be mostly for women. However, this societal inflicted perception seems to be a predictor for gender gap. Gender gap is difference in opinions or attitudes between boys and girls concerning a variety of careers. In all careers, students have the tools and opportunities to succeed, irrespective of those involved in the career. Career development is very important to individuals' advancement as it is a lifelong process which starts with gaining educational skills and getting employed. According to Sullivan and Baruch (2009) career is work related experience which individuals gain through getting involved in activities that are within and outside an organization. This experience contributes in forming unique pattern for the individual throughout his/her life span. By this definition, career is a long term process that shapes an individual's operations throughout his/her lifespan. Career development is considered to start with acquisition of necessary education skills then preceded by progression in learning and working experience that lasts for an individual's life span (Hedge and Rineer, 2017). Individuals make their career decisions before embarking on acquisition of educational skills as this shapes the nature of training or educational programmes they would be exposed to and proficiency to be attained. Shaito (2019) noted that in career development, education is crucial but how an individual invest the skills acquired is very imperative in achieving career success.

To be successful in any career requires determination and ability of the individuals to possess educational skills, needed social network and experience (Eze, 2017). These factors are imperative as career development cannot be efficient without combination of all of them. Owyang (2012) emphasized that education without other factors hinders career growth and adequate plans need to be put in place in integrating them towards achieving career success. Despite acquisition of educational skills, individuals need to possess other skills needed to complete tasks related to the chosen career and also have individuals in the same career that will always assist where necessary. Social network involves both superior and subordinate members of the society whose jobs are related to a specific career working as a team. Kumer, Syhma and Ramya (2017) remarks that career development encompasses adoption of different programmes that suits an individual's needs, career goals and abilities that generates efficiency in current and future job performance, career development prepares individuals for greater tasks as they grow in their choice area of specialization in tertiary institution study.

Tertiary institution is any type of education pursued beyond the secondary school level. In the context of this work tertiary institution is formal post-secondary education, which includes public universities, colleges and technical colleges of education, that offer business education, office technology and management education option. In tertiary institutions, students get admission with a focus on a specific area of specialization through offering different educational programmes. One of such programmes offered in tertiary institutions is office technology and management education. According Okoli (2020), office technology and management education is one of the programmes in tertiary institutions that prepare her recipients with skills for effective performance in their world of work. Office technology and management education programmes is offered in universities, colleges of education and other training centers and it aims at producing individuals who has high level of competence required to function effectively as secretaries, educationist, office managers, among other careers. Lending their voices, Oludale and Dosunnu (2013) explained that office technology and management Education involves deployment of competencies by individuals and utilization of resources that facilitate processing of information and effective management of an office. By the above definitions, office technology and management education prepares individuals in requisite competencies for office functions and capabilities in usage of devices and systems that facilitate efficiency in execution of office responsibilities. In recent time, technological innovations in modern offices have made Tertiary Institutions offering OTME to be reviewing their programmes towards preparing personnel that possess office skills to suit electronic driven offices. All these innovations and reviews aims at preparing individuals for career in offices. However, career development in office technology and management education is determined by willingness and readiness of the individuals after graduation are expected to gain employment and keep acquiring experience as career development is a continuum and last for a very long time. In this regard gender of these persons seems to become a predictor of the level of career success they could attain.

Gender is imperative in educational programmes as it influences pattern of students' enrolment and choices. This seems to be true as gender plays vital roles in career aspirations of students, their interest and attitudes towards any educational programme (Owodunni and Ogundola, 2013). There are education programmes that are seen in the society to be masculine and others feminine. In contemporary Nigeria education system, courses like office technology and management education is seen to be for female. According to Adebule and Aborisade (2014), there are prominent perceptions in the society that some education programmes are suitable for particular gender. This perception however, seems to serve as evident in office technology and management education programme as students in the programme are mostly females. The perception that office technology and management education evidently is female dominated programme is devastating as male students seems to be discouraged to study it.

Statement of the Problem

Office technology and management education refers to as secretarial studies started in tertiary institutions in Nigeria because of the need to prepare personnel's that meets up with managerial and technological demands of modern offices. This drive to prepare competent personnel for offices work seems to be bedeviled by declined number of male students enrolling into the programme. This worrisomely has made

the programme in various tertiary institutions in Nigeria to have large number of female students than their male counterparts. People see office technology and management education programme as a course only made to preparing people whose skills are limited to taking dictations in shorthand, answering phone calls for organizations, typing and processing mails. These skills are seen to be dominated by female while males have little or no need of studying courses related to the skills. Even in this era of technological advancement, people still perceive OTME to be mainly for female who are expected to sit in an office and serve people. This erroneous perception seems to be affecting number of students aspiring to take up office technology and managemen education as a career. In many tertiary institutions, low number of male students is obvious as many of them decline to major in office technology and management education on singular reason that OTME programme is for the female. However, this perturbing situation seems to be prevailing as it seems there is little or no effort towards finding out why people still sustain such erroneous perception about OTME. Persistence of this perception can make few of the male students already in the programme to lose interest and attitude to progress in the profession after graduation. It is no more news that many male graduates of office technology and management education declined taking up secretarial duties in organizations as they seem not to be convinced on reason to progress in the career. This makes it pertinent to find out student's motivations in choosing career in office technology and management education and ways of abridging gender gap in the programme.

Purpose of the Study

The study determined

32. Motivations for a choice of career development in office technology and management education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

33. Ways of abridging gender gap in career development in office technology and management education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Research Question

The study was guided by the following research questions:

24. What are the motivations for a choice of career development in office technology and management education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

25. What are the ways of abridging gender gap in career development in office technology and management education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

26. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the motivations for their choice of career in office technology and management education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

27. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female lecturers on ways of abridging gender gap in career development in office

technology and management education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The design is appropriate for the study as it sought opinions of office technology and management education lecturers and students from four tertiary institutions that offer OTME in Anambra State. Choice of this design is in line with the position of Anikweze (2015) when he opined that survey design is applicable where a researcher source data to be used in assessing opinions, attitudes and perceptions of individuals. The population of this study comprised of office technology and management education lecturers and students from all the public owned tertiary institutions that offers the course in Anambra State. The Public Tertiary Institutions are Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu University Uli, Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe, Federal College of Education (technical) Umunze. Data from these institutions shows that population of OTME lecturers is 52 and 102 for third year OTME students. The entire populations were used for the study as the size was manageable. A structured questionnaire constructed by the researcher was used as instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts. Reliability of the instrument was ensured by trial tested. Ten OTME lecturers and students were randomly selected from one of the tertiary institutions that offer Office Technology Education and their responses were tested using Cronbach alpha and it yielded a reliability index of 0.82. Responses to the questionnaire items were patterned thus: Strongly agreed (SA)-4 points, Agreed (A)-3 points, Disagreed (D)-2 points and Strongly Disagreed (SD)-1 point. A total of 154 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. All the copies of the questionnaire administered to the respondents were correctly filled and returned. Mean and standard deviation statistical tools were used to analyze responses to the questionnaire items while t-test statistical tool was used in testing the null hypotheses. Any response to the questionnaire item with mean rating of 2.50 and above was adjudged to be agreed to by the respondents while any item with mean below 2.50 was adjudged to disagree to by the respondents. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance and the null hypotheses were retained as their calculated t-values were less than their critical t-values.

Result

Research Question 1

What are the motivations for a choice of career in Office Technology and Management Education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 1: Responses on the motivations for a choice of career development in Office Technology and Management Education

S/N	Items on OTME as a career	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1.	It is convenient for me	2.62	0.95	Agree
2.	The institution gave me admission to study it.	3.00	0.77	Agree
3.	Reputation of OTME professionals	2.84	1.04	Agree

4.	Competencies in OTME is very interesting	2.91	0.84	Agree
5.	Competencies in OTME is relevant to my daily needs	2.54	0.92	Agree
6.	The OTME Lecturers inspires me	1.98	0.76	Disagree
7.	It is a career suitable for females	2.05	0.90	Disagree
8.	There are job opportunities for OTME graduates	**2.88**	0.63	Agree
9.	It will equip me with competencies for self-employment	3.27	0.91	Agree
	Grand mean	**2.68**		Agree

Table 1 presents the mean score of responses on the motivations for a career in office technology and management Education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The grand mean of 2.68 indicates that respondents agreed that most of the items are their motivations for a career in office technology and management. Detailed analyses showed that items 6 and 7 were rated below 2.50 which indicate that the respondents disagreed to the items. This implies that students were not motivated to choose a career in OTME because of the gender and OTME Lecturers insistence for such choice.

Research Question 2

What are the ways of abridging gender gap in career development in office technology and management Education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean Responses on ways of abridging gender gap in career development in office technology and management Education

S/N	Items on ways of abridging gender gap in career development	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
10.	Societal orientation about competences in OTME	3.17	0.85	Agree
12.	Establishing privates- companies relationship	2.68	0.77	Agree
13.	Reviewing OTME curriculum in line with the contemporary demands of modern office functions.	3.01	0.69	Agree
14	Recognizing professionals in OTME with outstanding career success.	2.79	0.78	Agree
15.	Highlighting professionals who are accomplished secretaries during fresh students' orientation.	2.55	0.73	Agree
16.	Establishing career mentorship scheme for OTME graduate	3.11	0.81	Agree
17.	Increasing number of male students admitted to study OTME.	3.45	0.77	Agree
	Grand mean	**3.04**		Agree

Data in Table 2 show that the respondents agreed that all the items are ways of abridging gender gap in career development in office technology and management in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. A grand mean of 3.04 indicates that societal orientation in OTME, establishing private-companies relationship, reviewing OTME curriculum in line with the contemporary demands of modern office functions among others are ways of abridging gender gap in career development in office technology and management education programme.

Hypotheses

Ho$_1$ There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the motivations for their choice of career in office technology and management Education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis of student's responses on their motivations for a choice of career in OTME

Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DF	T-cal	T-crit	Decision
Female	71	3.09	1.05				
				100	0.20	1.96	Retained
Male	31	3.11	0.88				

The result in Table 3 reveals that calculated t-value of 0.20 is less than critical t-value of 1.96 therefore, the null hypothesis is retained. This means that mean responses of male and female students did not differ on their motivations for a choice of career in Office Technology and Management Education in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State.

Ho$_2$ There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female lecturers on ways of abridging gender gap in career development in office technology and management in tertiary institutions in Anambra State.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis of lecturers responses on ways of abridging

Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	DF	T-cal	T-crit	Decision
Male	19	3.22	0.77				
				50	1.54	2.01	Retained
Female	33	2.85	0.91				

gender gap in career development in OTME.

Result in Table 4 shows that calculated t-value of 1.54 is less than critical t-value of 2.01 at 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on ways of abridging gender gap in career development in OTME in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained.

Discussion

The findings of this study in table one reveals that there are many motivations for a choice of career in Office Technology and Management in Tertiary Institutions that offers in Anambra State. The study reveals that students are motivated to choose career in office technology and management because it is convenient for them, tertiary institutions gave them admission to study Business Education (OTME,) OTME professionals has high reputations, competencies in OTME are very interesting, competencies in OTME are relevant to their daily needs, there are job opportunities for OTME graduates among others. This finding is in line with the position of Aninye-Ranor (2020) when he emphasized that competencies in OTME boost student's interest as they are equipped with skills that facilitates effective handling of resources and also adequately manage time. With such competencies,

students will be motivated to develop career in office technology management Education for self-sustenance and inclusive societal development. Enyi (2020) explains that students are motivated to study courses that will enhance their employability and make them to be self-reliant and contribute inclusively to societal development. As an option in Business education, office technology and management Education helps individuals to harness their potentials by gaining employment or creating jobs for themselves and as such become employer of labor. All these help in motivating individuals to start developing career in office technology and management Education.

The findings also reveal that some of the factors that were not their motivation to choose a career in Office Technology and Management Education are OTME Lecturers'. The students also agreed that gender influence was not a motivation to their choice of career in office technology and management. This finding is contradicting popular perception in the society that office technology and management is feminine programme as it involves use of technical skills. Ifejika (2015) reported that a graduate of office technology and management Education is expected to be able to analyze situations, make good judgment and proficiently handle office functions. Finding of this study agrees with that of Blattman, Fiala and Martinez (2014) when they found that educational programmes that equips students with technical skills are not gender biased, therefore, competencies offered by office technology and management Education in tertiary institutions are for all the gender and does not prioritize any of the gender. Analysis of hypothesis one shows that male and female students did not differ significant in their responses on their motivations for a choice of career in office technology and management Education.

Findings of this study in table two reveals different ways of abridging gender gap in career development in office technology and management Education in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The study reveals that some of the ways of abridging gender gap in career development in OTME is review of its curriculum in line with contemporary demand of modern office, recognizing OTME professional with outstanding career success, establishing career membership scheme for OTME graduates among others. This finding is supported by that of Elin (2011) when he found that school utilization of different approaches over a period helps in changing their perception about an educational programme. This implies that societal perception that OTME programme is feminine based could be changed if schools organize orientation programmes for the members of the society. Also, establishing private-companies relationship will bring companies Directors, Managers, and others closer to understand more about OTME programmes. The study also reveals that highlighting OTM professionals who are accomplished secretaries, managers, Educationist during fresh student's orientation will help in abridging gender gap in office technology and management Education. This finding is in consonance with Alexitch and Page (2001) when they reports that students tend to change their perceptions about educational programmes as a result of information provided to them during orientation. Therefore, school authorities need to periodically organize orientation programmes where both male and female would be exposed to information that will motivate them for career development in office technology and management Education.

Conclusion

Gender gap in career development in OTME is very evident and has far leading implication in number of male that are interested to choose such career, though OTME student agreed that they were motivated to choose a career in OTME not because of gender but societal perception about the programme is gender biased. This biasness has created gender gap and requires being bridged before its escalation. Abridging this gap become pertinent and need collaborations between schools, private and public companies

Recommendations

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

xxiv.   School authorities should strengthen their relationship with private and public companies, thereby creating opening for the OTME students to practice what they learnt from school before graduation especially during their industrial training.

xxv.   Departments of Business education programme should organize Periodic workshop and seminars for orientation of the new admitted students and as such expose them on objectives of all the options in the programme avaliable in OTME programme.

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