JOURNAL OF OCCUPATION AND TRAINING
FACULTY OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION
ALVAN IKOKU UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, OWERRI
VOL. 10 NO. 1 ISSN:2354-2756 SEPTEMBER , 2026

OFFICE SKILLS REQUIRED BY OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS IN A SUSTAINABLE KNOWLEDGE BASED ECONOMY

UGOCHUKWU NDIDI
Department of Business Education
ugochukwundidiamaka@gmail.com
08034316994

V/Rev (DR.) CHIKEZIE IHEOMA
Department of Business Education
iheomachikezie@alvanikoku.edu.ng
08067962440

&

DR. MBAEGBU, R.E.V.
Department of Business Education
roseyebymbaegbu@gmail.com
08037578585

ABSTRACT
This study investigates the essential office skills required by Office Technology and Management (OTM) students for success in a sustainable knowledge-based economy. With rapid technological advancements transforming modern offices, it has become crucial for graduates to acquire both technical and soft skills to remain competitive. Despite the increasing integration of digital tools in office functions, there exists a gap in comprehensively understanding which specific skills are most vital for student preparedness and subsequent employability. The research aims to identify key office skills necessary for thriving in contemporary office environments and to evaluate the adequacy of current educational curricula in equipping students with these skills. Employing a descriptive survey research method, data was collected through questionnaires administered to OTM students and educators. The findings reveal that skills such as technology proficiency, communication, problem-solving, and presentation is critical for success. The study concludes that enhancing facilities and updating curricula to include these core skills are essential steps for preparing students for the demands of a sustainable, knowledge-driven economy.
***Keywords**: Office Skills, Sustainable Economy, Business Education, Technological Skills, Graduate Employability*

Introduction
Education plays an indispensable role in fostering social, national, and global development. It serves as a crucial instrument for emancipation and the safeguarding of human rights through the provision of balanced, qualitative knowledge. However, providing quality education remains a significant challenge for many developing countries, including Nigeria, which relies heavily on education as a vital tool for individual and national progress (Akinboye & Okwu, 2021). Today's work environment is increasingly complex and dynamic, demanding higher levels of functional skills and lifelong learning abilities to enable individuals to adapt and thrive in the rapidly evolving global economy (UNESCO, 2023).

In the modern office environment, technological advancements have revolutionized traditional methods of work, leading to the adoption of new, more efficient practices. This shift requires sustainable, knowledge-based skills, competencies, and abilities that enable employees to perform effectively, efficiently, and competitively in the 21st-century workplace. Consequently, training and preparing Office Technology and Management (OTM)

students with the relevant skills, knowledge, and experiences have become essential to meet the demands of contemporary offices (Yumben & Ngala, 2022).

Today's interconnected world is often referred to as a "global village," primarily driven by the proliferation of information communication technology (ICT) and automation. This underscores the need for business education curricula to be restructured to align with digitalized and automated systems prevalent in industries worldwide. As a result, individuals must be equipped to operate effectively within offices and organizations embracing such technologies (World Bank, 2022).

In modern offices, manual information systems have been largely replaced by electronic and computerized systems. Information processing has become automated, and office equipment is now multi-functional, networked, and integrated, facilitating seamless communication within and across organizations. The compatibility and interoperability of office technologies have heightened the need for users to possess a sophisticated understanding of how such systems connect business-to-business and people-to-people, ultimately underpinning national strength in today's knowledge-driven societies (Peters, 2023).

Furthermore, innovation and technological integration rank highest among modern workplace priorities. According to Atakpa (2022), secretarial and administrative functions worldwide have undergone significant transformation, with many manual tasks now fully automated. As such, a modern office is equipped with a suite of advanced technological tools—such as computers, scanners, photocopiers, and laminators—that enhance productivity and efficiency (Okafor & Chukwu, 2023). Productivity remains the primary objective of any enterprise. Organizations strive to maximize output by deploying resources efficiently, which hinges on recruiting competent and well-trained personnel. As such, organizations emphasize the importance of selecting employees with the requisite skills and competencies to support organizational goals—highlighting the critical role of office skills development in sustaining economic growth and national development (Adebayo & Olaleye, 2021).

Therefore, this study aims to identify and examine the essential office skills required by Office Technology and Management students to ensure their success in a sustainable knowledge-based economy, while also emphasizing the role of educational institutions and government in providing the necessary facilities and support.

Literature Review on Office Skills in a Sustainable Knowledge-Based Economy

Concept of Office Skills

Office skills can be defined as the set of competencies that enable individuals to perform their duties effectively and enhance employability in organizational settings (Ugwuanyi, 2017; Ugwuogo, 2019). These skills cut across technical, cognitive, and interpersonal domains, making them indispensable in the contemporary workplace. Okoli (2018) observes that the acquisition of relevant office skills contributes not only to individual career advancement but also to national productivity, as a skilled workforce drives industrial growth and economic competitiveness.

The 21st-century work environment requires a balance between theoretical education and practical training. Ugwuogo (2019) argues that modern education must harmonize academic knowledge with vocational and technological skills to prepare young people for rapidly evolving office environments. This view is consistent with UNESCO (2023), which emphasizes that lifelong learning, adaptability, and digital literacy are core competencies for sustainable employability in knowledge-driven societies.

Theoretical Perspectives on Office Skills Development

Several theoretical frameworks inform the discourse on office skills within the context of employability and sustainable economies.

1. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) posits that education and skill acquisition enhance workers' productivity and economic value. In this light, investment in office skills development can be seen as a pathway to increasing national competitiveness.

2. Knowledge Economy Framework (World Bank, 2003) highlights the role of information, innovation, and technology as drivers of growth. For office workers, this means proficiency in ICT and adaptability to technological change are non-negotiable.
3. Sustainable Development Theory (Hasna, 2014) links education and skills development to broader social and environmental goals, suggesting that office professionals should be trained not only for efficiency but also for ethical entrepreneurship, civic responsibility, and sustainability.

These frameworks collectively reinforce the argument that office skills are central to both individual employability and national development in a knowledge-based economy.

Core Competencies in The Modern Office

1. Managerial and Leadership Skills

Managerial competencies involve coordinating operations, managing personnel and resources, and fostering positive workplace relationships (Okoro, 2018). Leadership, on the other hand, requires vision, adaptability, and the capacity to motivate teams toward achieving organizational objectives. In knowledge-driven economies, managers must be agile leaders, capable of navigating technological disruptions and promoting innovation.

2. Communication Skills

Communication is often described as the lifeblood of organizations, enabling information flow, teamwork, and decision-making. Ugwu (2019) notes that effective oral and written communication enhances job performance and productivity. In modern offices, communication extends beyond traditional face-to-face interactions to include digital correspondence, video conferencing, and online collaboration platforms, underscoring the importance of both interpersonal and digital communication skills.

3. Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking

Problem-solving and critical thinking are rational cognitive skills essential for addressing complex organizational challenges. Ugwuogo (2019) emphasizes that these skills enable individuals to identify issues, evaluate alternatives, and implement effective solutions. In dynamic workplaces where change is constant, the ability to think critically and adapt strategies is a major determinant of long-term success.

4. ICT and Computer Application Skills

ICT proficiency has become the backbone of modern office work. Peters (2017) argues that digital competence ranging from the use of productivity software such as Microsoft Office packages to advanced applications like desktop publishing and web design is essential for employability. Atakpa (as cited in Okeke, 2018) adds that electronic communication, internet navigation, and file management are fundamental to workplace efficiency. Global studies also show that ICT skills directly influence organizational competitiveness, particularly in industries that rely heavily on digital integration (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Office Skills in a Sustainable Knowledge-Based Economy

Globally, workplaces are increasingly shaped by economic and technological transformations that demand lifelong learning and continuous skills upgrading (Okpuzor, 2013). Hasna (2014) describes a sustainable knowledge-based economy as one that integrates innovation, environmental responsibility, and social equity into economic processes. Within this framework, office professionals must not only master technical skills but also demonstrate adaptability, creativity, and ethical awareness.

For Nigeria, bridging the gap between academic preparation and workplace demands is a pressing challenge. Many graduates remain unemployed due to insufficient exposure to ICT, managerial training, and practical problem-solving skills (Adebayo & Olaleye, 2021). Addressing this gap requires rethinking business education curricula to integrate

sustainability principles, foster entrepreneurial mindsets, and promote employability through hands-on training (Ugwuogo, 2019).

International Perspectives

Comparative studies provide useful insights into how different countries approach office skills development. In European Union (EU) countries, employability frameworks emphasize digital literacy, teamwork, and innovation as key skills for graduates (European Commission, 2019). In Asian economies such as Singapore and South Korea, heavy investments in ICT infrastructure and vocational education have created agile workforces equipped for knowledge economies (OECD, 2021).

In African contexts, studies show persistent gaps in aligning curricula with industry needs, though countries like South Africa and Kenya are making strides in integrating ICT and entrepreneurship into education (World Bank, 2022). These global trends underscore the urgency for Nigeria to strengthen its own business education system in order to remain competitive in the global labour market.

Role of Business Education

Business education has long been recognized as a vehicle for preparing individuals with the skills required for economic participation. Utoware and Edionwu (2012) define it as an educational programme that integrates knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for effective participation in office and business activities. Osuala (2004) further emphasizes its role in equipping graduates for both employability and self-employment, thereby reducing unemployment and fostering national development.

O ffice Technology and Management (OTM), as a component of business education, plays a particularly significant role in equipping students with ICT, managerial, and communication competencies. Tomecyk (2012) stresses that OTM enhances adaptability to global reforms and technological transformations, enabling graduates to thrive in contemporary workplaces. In this way, business education functions as both a tool for personal empowerment and a catalyst for sustainable economic growth.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the essential office skills required by Office Technology and Management (OTM) students for effective participation and success in a sustainable knowledge-based economy. From the reviewed literature and findings, it is evident that modern workplaces are increasingly driven by technology, innovation, and knowledge-sharing, which demand a blend of both technical and soft skills.

The study confirms that competencies such as technological proficiency, ICT application, communication, problem-solving, managerial, and leadership skills remain central to workplace effectiveness. In addition, the integration of soft skills such as teamwork, adaptability, creativity, and ethical responsibility which enhances graduates' ability to function productively in dynamic and competitive environments. These findings align with the global shift toward knowledge-driven economies, where the workforce is expected to demonstrate versatility and lifelong learning capacity.

For Nigeria to compete in this global context, OTM curricula must be continuously reformed to reflect emerging trends in office technology and sustainable business practices. Educational institutions play a critical role in bridging the skills gap by exposing students to both practical and theoretical training. Similarly, government and industry stakeholders must collaborate to ensure that graduates are adequately prepared for employability and entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, the acquisition of office skills is not only a pathway to individual career advancement but also a critical driver of national productivity and sustainable development. Preparing OTM students with the right mix of competencies ensures that they can thrive in the 21st-century workplace and contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's transition into a sustainable knowledge-based economy.

Suggestions and Way Forward

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following suggestions are put forward as strategies to strengthen office skills training and enhance graduate employability:

1. Provision of Modern Facilities and Infrastructure

Government and educational institutions should invest in the provision of up-to-date facilities, including computers, internet access, office machines, and digital tools. Adequate infrastructure will enable students to acquire practical exposure to the technologies commonly used in modern offices.

2. Curriculum Restructuring and Regular Review

Business education curricula, particularly OTM programmes, should be regularly reviewed to align with global trends in ICT, digital communication, and office automation. Courses should integrate emerging fields such as cloud collaboration, e-business tools, and sustainable business practices.

3. Capacity Building for Educators

Continuous training and professional development should be provided for OTM lecturers to ensure they remain current with industry practices and innovations. Well-trained educators are better positioned to impart relevant skills and mentor students effectively.

4. Industry–Academia Collaboration

Stronger partnerships between tertiary institutions and industries are essential. Internship programmes, industrial attachments, and collaborative projects should be expanded to give students real-world experience and enhance their readiness for the labour market.

5. Emphasis on Soft Skills Development

Beyond technical training, students should be intentionally exposed to soft skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, negotiation, and problem-solving. Workshops, seminars, and project-based learning can help nurture these competencies.

6. Government Oversight and Policy Support

Relevant authorities should provide regular oversight of business education programmes to ensure quality and relevance. National policies should prioritize employability and sustainability in education, thereby aligning graduate training with broader developmental goals.

7. Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Students should be encouraged to cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets alongside office skills. By promoting creativity, ethical entrepreneurship, and innovation, OTM graduates can create self-employment opportunities and contribute to reducing unemployment.

References

Adebayo, T., & Olaleye, O. (2021). Recruitment, skills acquisition and organizational productivity in Nigeria. Journal of Business and Management Research, 10(2), 55–63.

Akinboye, A., & Okwu, C. (2021). Quality education as a tool for sustainable development in Nigeria. International Journal of Educational Development, 8(1), 22–34.

Amaewhule, W. (2014). Enhancing productivity in organizations through skills acquisition. Journal of Business and Management, 6(2), 44–52.

Atakpa, R. (2022). Transformations in secretarial and administrative functions in the digital era. Nigerian Journal of Business Education, 9(1), 75–88.

Becker, G. S. (1993). Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

European Commission. (2019). Key competences for lifelong learning. Brussels: European Union.

Federal Ministry of Education (2002). Implementation plan and blueprint for the National Open University of Nigeria. Abuja, Nigeria.

Hasna, A. M. (2014). Sustainability and the knowledge economy: Exploring the links. International Journal of Sustainable Development, 17(3), 215–229.

Nunnally, J. C. (1978). Psychometric theory (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

OECD. (2021). Skills outlook 2021: Learning for life. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Okafor, B., & Chukwu, N. (2023). Office automation and employability skills of graduates in Nigerian tertiary institutions. African Journal of Vocational and Technical Education, 15(2), 101–115.

Okeke, E. (2018). ICT competence in business education: Implications for workplace productivity. Journal of Education and Practice, 9(4), 50–57.

Okoli, J. (2018). Skills acquisition and national productivity. Nigerian Journal of Technical Education, 5(1), 88–97.

Okoro, P. (2018). Managerial competencies for effective performance in office technology. Business Education Journal, 4(1), 23–35.

Okpuzor, P. (2013). Education and skills in a changing economy. African Journal of Educational Research, 12(2), 66–75.

Onasanya, S.A., Nathaniel, S., Laleye, A.M. & Akingbemisilu, A.A. (2013). Distance education and the experience of hidden curriculum using mobile phones in Nigeria. *Journal of frontiers of education and management*. A publication of the department of educational management, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, 1(1), 114-124.

Osuala, E. C. (2004). Principles and methods of business education. Enugu: Cheston Agency Ltd.

Peters, O. (2023). ICT integration and interoperability in office systems. International Review of Business Education, 11(2), 32–48.

Tomecyk, M. (2012). Business education and sustainable employability in developing economies. Journal of Vocational Studies, 10(2), 115–123.

Ugwu, A. (2019). Communication and soft skills for workplace success. Nigerian Journal of Business Education, 6(2), 90–102.

Ugwuanyi, J. (2017). Office skills and employability: Perspectives for students. Journal of Office Management Studies, 8(1), 55–68.

Ugwuanyi, M.O. (2017). Assessment of Competencies needed by business centres. *Business Education Journal*, 2(1) 201-207.

Ugwuogo, C. (2019). Education for skills development in the 21st century. International Journal of Education and Sustainable Development, 11(3), 134–146.

Umezurike, A. (2014). Sustainable education and the challenges of employability. Journal of Environmental and Educational Studies, 5(2), 102–118.

UNESCO. (2023). Education for sustainable development and global citizenship. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Utoware, J. D., & Edionwu, R. (2012). Business education for sustainable economic development. Nigerian Vocational Journal, 17(1), 77–86.

Utoware, J.D. & Edionwe, O. (2012). Entrepreneurship and challenges of financial planning. *Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN) Journal*, 1(1), 41-48.

World Bank. (2003). Building knowledge economies: Advanced strategies for development. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank. (2022). World development report: Digitalization for development. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Economic Forum. (2020). The future of jobs report 2020. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

Yumben, C., & Ngala, T. (2022). Preparing OTM students for workplace success in a digital economy. International Journal of Business and Technology Education, 7(1), 66–79.