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Influence of Students' Interest and Peer Groups on Learning of Office Technology and Management Courses in Tertiary Institutions in Ondo State Nigeria

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Abstract
This study investigated the influence of students' interest and peer groups on learning of Office Technology and Management courses in tertiary institutions in Ondo State. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The sample size of the study consisted of the entire population of 167; and since the population size is small, there was no sampling. From the result of this study, it was found that students' interest in OTM programme influenced their learning to a high extent. Similarly, it was discovered that peer group influence students' learning of OTM courses to a high extent. It was also found that peer group influence students' learning to a high extent. It was concluded that students' learning is highly influenced by their interest and their peer groups. From the findings and conclusion drawn, it was recommended that excursion/field trip, workshops and symposia should be organised for students where they will be exposed to well-equipped /automated offices and thereby, enhancing their interest and improve their learning habit as students.
Keywords: Students' interest; Peer Groups' Learning of OTM

1. Introduction

Qualitative and functional education at all levels of education has been clamoured by education policy makers and Office Technology and Management (OTM) stakeholders. OTM is a practical oriented and skill acquisition programme designed to equip students with work skills, effective work competencies and socio-psychological work skills which are needed in every interaction with others and in various fields of endeavour.

Learning is a major activity in a country's educational system. This implies that learning is an important activity in educational enterprise. Gidado, Abdullahi and Adamu (2015) supported this fact when they stated that learning contributes toward generation, transmission and application of knowledge which is the focus of skills acquired by the learners. Learning also determines the quality of a country's educational system and may also be used in categorizing the standard of a country's education as being high or low. Based on this, Aliyu (2013) stated that learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour and it is manifested by an ability of the teacher to motivate the learners to pick interest in learning using strategic methods.

Interest is a significant non-school factor that may have influence on the choice and learning of OTM courses. There are two types of interest, intrinsic and extrinsic interest. Intrinsic interest is the personal love or conviction in the heart of a person in a particular thing or idea. Extrinsic interest is such that is coming from outside or not directly relating to something opposite intrinsic. Students' interest is an intrinsic one which could play crucial role in choice and learning of OTM courses. According to Ughamadu and Okoye (2006), a learner is interested in a particular activity worthwhile to him and is for his advantage. The learner's interest must be considered while teaching, because interest and ability are highly related. It can be aroused by discovering the best method of teaching that enhances the child's learning process by making him an active participant in the class.

Owie (2003) advanced the position that the most important reason why a student chooses a particular course and career is that the student must have intrinsic vocational interest in the field while this may be highly influenced by prior academic achievement, it is however expected that intrinsic interest remains a primary factor for the effectiveness and satisfaction of an individual in the course and career. In a situation where the intrinsic interest is lacking, there is no amount of motivation that will be able to increase the student's learning ability.

Peer group influence is another non-school factor that may influence the choice and learning of Office Technology and Management courses. Peer pressure may be defined as a small group of similar age, fairly close friends, sharing the same activities. Peer pressure may also be defined as when people of one's own age encourage or urge the people to do something or keep from doing something else, it does not matter if the person personally wants to do it or not. According to Burns & Darling (2002), the more subtle form of peer pressure is known as peer influence, and it involves changing one's behaviour to meet the perceived expectation of others.

This change in behaviour may provide or cause positive or negative element in learning of Office Technology and Management courses. It is also important to note however that peer influence can potentially have a deadly influence or negative influence especially on students' mode of behaviour value system, emotion expression, interaction and interest which may similarly influence their studies.

Peer group influences the child's study habit and academic development (Wentzel & Caldwell 1997). Goethe (2001) observed that weak students do better when grouped with other students. It shows students' performance improves if they are with the students of their own kind. Sacerdote (2001) also observed that students' grade tend to be higher when students have unusually strong academic peers.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It is an established fact that OTM programme was designed to equip students with secretarial/office skills for employment in various fields of endeavour, However, it is observed that employers in the labour market are not satisfied with the secretarial/office skills and competencies of some OTM graduates from tertiary institutions. What could be responsible for this is not immediately known? Could it be that OTM graduates are shy and would not want to be identified with the programme and as a result, begin to exhibit some kinds of nonchalant and poor learning habit towards their studies, despite the added advantage of employment opportunities upon graduation? This poor learning habit worries the researcher and it is based on this premise that this study is set to assess the extent to which students' interest and peer groups influence learning of OTM courses in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine influence of students' interest and peer groups on learning of OTM courses in Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Ondo State. The study specifically determined:

1. The extent to which students' interest influence learning of OTM courses in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.
2. The extent to which peer groups influence students' learning of OTM courses in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does students' interest influence their learning of OTM courses in tertiary institutions in Ondo State?
2. To what extent do peer groups influence students' learning of OTM courses in tertiary institutions in Ondo State?

1.4 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance:

HO_1: There is no significant difference between male and female students learning of OTM courses in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.

HO_2: There is no significant difference between Polytechnic and Colleges of Education in learning of OTM courses in Ondo State.

2. Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used to carry out the study. The population consisted of One hundred and twenty-five (125) HND II OTM students of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo and Forty-two (42) NCE III OTM students of Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo. As a result of the small size of the population, the entire population of 167 formed the sample size for the study. Questionnaire was used as the instrument was validated and tested for reliability and a coefficient of 0.69 was obtained. 167 copies of the questionnaire were administered and all were duly filled and returned. The decision rule was that any mean value more than 2.5 and above were rated high extent, while any value below 2.50 and below were rated as low extent

2.1 Data Presentation

Table 1:

Percentage Distribution by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	92	58.2
Female	66	41.8
Total	158	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2017

Table 1 shows the sex distribution of the respondents. The table shows that there were 92 male which represented 58.2 percent, while the female respondents were 66, representing 41.8 percent.

Table 2:
Percentage Distribution by Institution

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Polytechnic	116	73.4
College of Education	42	26.6
Total	158	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2017

Table 2 shows the institution distribution of the respondents. The table shows that there were 116 Polytechnic students which represented 73.4 percent, while College of Education students respondents were 42, representing 26.6 percent.

2.2 Data Analysis for the Research Questions

The data analysis for the research question was done using mean and standard deviation. The results are presented in Tables 3 – 5

2.3 Table 3:
Mean and Standard Deviation of respondents on the influence of students' interest on learning in Office Technology and Management Courses

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Easy job opportunities for OTM graduates encourages me to work hard as a student in the programme.	3.70	.615	HE
2	As OTM student, I like the attachment Of secretary to manager (boss) in office Occupation.	3.50	.656	HE
3	The possibility of becoming self-reliant acquiring the necessary skills in OTM programme encourages me to be serious with my studies.	3.53	.674	HE
4	As an OTM student, I like key-boarding.	3.30	.665	HE
5	My interest in OTM assists me in making progress in my studies.	3.34	.745	HE
6	My early exposure to shorthand in secondary school helps my interest in OTM programme.	3.01	.867	HE
7	My knowledge of computer strengthen my interests in OTM programme.	3.38	.745	HE
8	The fact that OTM programme provides lucrative jobs attracts my interest in the programme	3.22	.690	HE
9	The command of English expressed by secretaries in the world of work attracts and encourages me in the programme.	3.15	.813	HE
	Grand Mean/SD	**3.35**	**.384**	**HE**

Source: Field Study, 2017

Table 3 shows that the mean responses range from 3.01 to 3.70, while the standard deviation range from .615 to .867. The mean responses show that all the items responded high extent. The cluster mean (3.35) shows that the students' interest in OTM programmes influence their learning to a high extent.

2.4 Table 4:
Mean and Standard Deviation of respondents on influence of peer groups on learning in Office Technology and Management Courses

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remark
16	Encouragements from peer group Improve my.	3.32	.749	HE
17	The success of my friends/mates who have made it in OTM encourages me to put in my best in the programme.	3.28	.713	HE
18	My attachment to strong study group Improves me on my studies.	3.19	.724	HE
19	Associating with friends who have positive affection toward OTM programme enhances my interest in the course.	3.20	.804	HE
	Grand Mean/SD	**3.24**	**.492**	**HE**

Source: Field Study, 2017

Table 4 shows that the mean responses range from 3.19 to 3.32, while the standard deviation range from .713 to .804. The mean responses show that all the items responded high extent. The cluster mean (3.24) shows that peer group influence students learning of OTM courses to a high extent.

2.5 Table 5:
The t-test of male and female respondents.

Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	92	3.27	.294	156	.085	.932	NS
Female	66	3.27	.309	-	-		-

Note: NS = not significant.

Table 5 shows that the aggregate mean responses of male and female students are 3.27 each. The t-value is .085 at df = 156, while the p-value is .932. Testing at alpha value of .05, the null hypothesis is retained since the p-value is greater than the alpha value. Thus, there is no significant difference between male and female as regards the students' interest and peer groups influencing their learning in OTM courses in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.

2.6 Table 6:
The t-test of Polytechnics and Colleges of Education respondents.

Institution	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Polytechnics	116	3.30	.293	156	1.89	.061	NS
Colleges	42	3.20	.307	-	-	-	

Note: NS = not significant.

Table 6 shows that the aggregate mean responses of Polytechnics and Colleges of Education students are 3.30 and 3.20 respectively. The t-value is 1.89, while the p-value is .061. Testing at alpha value of .05, the null hypothesis is retained since the p-value is greater than the alpha value. Thus, there is no significant difference between Polytechnics and Colleges of Education students in terms of the students' interest and peer groups influencing their learning in OTM courses in Ondo State.

3. Discussion Findings

The findings among others revealed that students' interest influence learning of OTM courses to a high extent. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Owie (2003) which asserted that the most important reason why a student chooses a particular course and career is that the student has intrinsic vocational interest in the field while this may be highly influenced by prior academic achievement.

The findings also revealed that peer groups influence learning in OTM courses. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Ryan (2000) that peer groups are influential regarding changes in students. He also found that associating with friend who has a positive affection toward school enhances students' own satisfaction with school, whereas, associating with friends who have negative affection toward school decreased it.

4. Conclusion

The study established that students' learning is being highly influenced by students' interest and peer groups

which have influence on their learning of OTM courses in tertiary institution. However, there is no significant difference between male and female as regards students' interest and peer group influencing their learning of OTM courses in tertiary institutions in Ondo State. Therefore, there is no significant difference between Polytechnic and Colleges of Education students in terms of students' interest and peer groups that influence learning of OTM courses in Ondo State.

5. Recommendations

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

1. Students should be taken on excursion/field trip to various establishments with well-equipped/automated offices.
2. Workshops and symposia should be organized where the importance, usefulness, benefits and future prospect that OTM has for those who embraces it, be communicated to students and this will eventually change their orientation about the profession. The positive mindset they have will help them to embrace OTM, appreciate OTM students and encourage their other peers to opt for the programme.

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