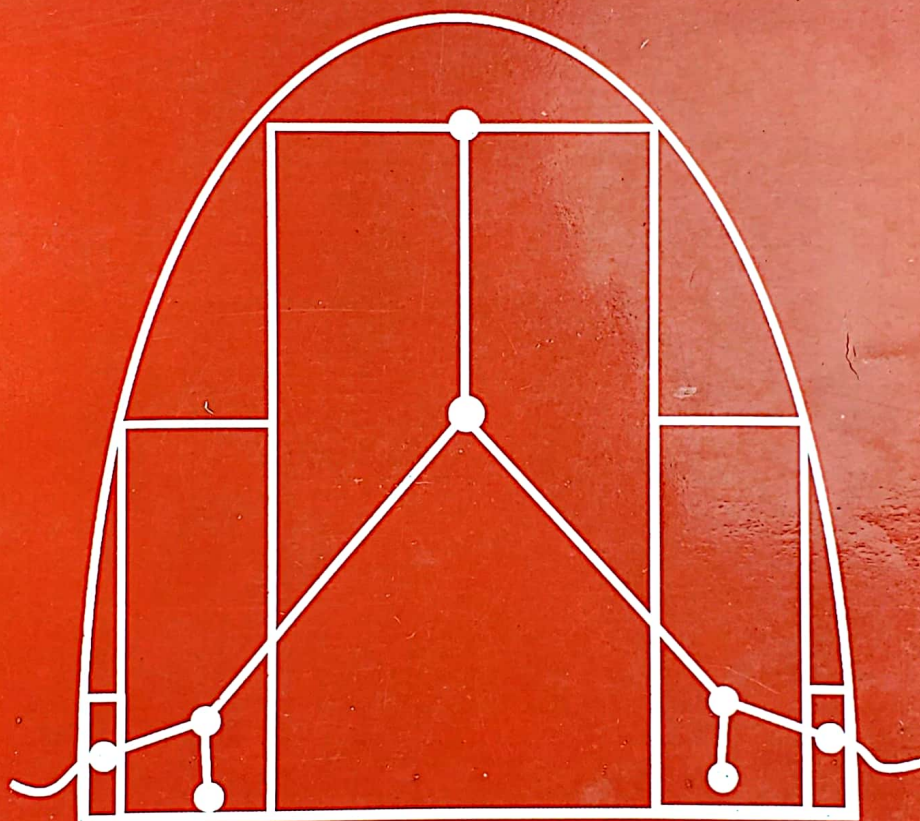


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# The Need for Quality Assurance of Lecturers in Office Technology and Management Programme in Nigerian Polytechnics

**OLUWALOLA, F. K. (Ph.D.)**

Department of Office Technology and Management  
Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin  
doctoroluwalola@gmail.com; +2348035997530

## Abstract

*This paper examines The Need for Quality Assurance of Lecturers in Office Technology and Management (OTM) Programme in Nigerian Polytechnics. This study also examines the concepts of quality assurance, quality assurance issues in office technology and management. It is believed that good quality assurance will bring about good performance of lecturers in OTM. It was recommended among others that the Federal and State Governments should make fund for professional development of lecturers and provision of necessary materials that will bring quality assurance in OTM and lecturers of good quality should be employed.*

**Keywords:** Quality Assurance, Office Technology, and Management Programme, Polytechnics

## Introduction

Quality refers to standard of something as compared to other things. That is the degree of goodness or excellence. No one will disagree that quality is good and sought after by people (Cole; 1996). The British Standard Institution (BSI) defines quality as “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs” (BSI in Ijaiya 2012). It is however a vague and subjective concept and has thus been considered from different angles.

1. in terms of exceptional (exceeding high standards and passing a required standard);
2. in terms of consistency (exhibited through “zero defects” and “getting it right the first time” making quality a culture;
3. as fitness for purpose (meaning the product or service meets the stated purpose, customer specification and satisfaction;
4. as value for money (through efficiency and effectiveness) and;
5. as transformative (in terms of qualitative change).

It is noted from the above definition that teachers of Office Technology and Management need to possess certain qualities before the stated objectives of Office Technology and Management programme could be achieved in polytechnics in Nigeria. With the review of OTM curriculum, it is expected that this brings a lot of changes on the part of the students. In addition, it will bring certain significant improvement on the part of the students and the national development as a whole but not all can be achieved in isolation without the contribution of the teachers in discharging the duties as expected for the programme to be achieved.

The goals of Office Technology and Management by polytechnics are designed to:

- i. Equip the student with the knowledge and specific skills that will enable them to successfully hold positions as secretaries, managers and administrative assistants in both private and public sectors of Nigeria economy.
- ii. Expose students to industrial experience thereby affording them an opportunity to practicalise their skills.
- iii. Develop in them an occupational intelligence that will make them versatile and adaptable to the changing situation in the business world, and develop their potentials for further academic and professional pursuits (NBTE, 2001)

From the above, the primary goal of Office Technology and Management is to produce competent, skillful, and dynamic secretaries, office administrators, businesspersons, and women that will effectively compete in the world of work, but as at now, the reverse is the case. This is because the caliber of students that are graduating cannot compete favourably with the present technological changes all over the world. The students have the problem of inadequate exposure to modern office technologies, information systems and the rudiments of office administration (Amoor 2008). Furthermore, lack of qualified and adequate teachers is responsible for this unfortunate trend.

### **Concepts of Quality Assurance**

Quality assurance is the main pillar of any business or organization. Whatever is the business, finance, education or any service, quality is the most important aspect that affects the level of success of the business or objectives. Being an educationist, one should never or ever compromise with quality aspect. Osinulu and Amusa (2010) observed that quality products and services are essential in the competitive capitalist economy. Manufacturers and service providers are deeply involved in producing products and services in order to control their share of the market, the demand for quality by consumers lead to the establishment of standard of organizations, locally and internationally. Quality

standards have been introduced into the manufacturing, healthcare, education services, and government in Nigeria. Most goods produced locally or imported carry the stamp of certification.

Borahan and Ziarat [2002] affirmed that quality assurance is all planned and systematic actions, deemed as necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product or service will fulfill specified requirements for quality.

Adebayo (2006) considered quality assurance as a way of measuring, improving, and maintaining the quality of any human activity that have value. This activity may be academy, sports performance, business, economy, etc. He defines it as a means of ensuring that the best practices are encouraged in a social system.

However, organizations involved in quality assurance try to take responsible actions in their production processes and professional practices. Quality assurance is concerned with control of quality, the people who control quality, and continuous change and innovation.

Echajuere (2006) identified four major reasons for implementing quality assurance:

- ❖ Quality assurance is in the long run a cost-cutting mechanism, although good quality is expensive, the cost of poor quality outcome is even higher.
- ❖ Human beings generally act rationally; they would normally prefer good quality to poor quality.
- ❖ Good quality products show competence on the part of the producer and enhance its prestige nationally and internationally.
- ❖ Poor quality education gives rise to poor economic condition.

Moreover, the cost of retaining poor quality graduates is enormous. Quality assurance process involves setting up standards and ensuring that the standards established are kept and reviewed periodically. This process entails identification of crucial elements that require evacuation, establishment of the procedure for assessing quality perimeters, quality standards, regular quality assessment, and periodic review of set standards.

### **Quality Assurance Issues in Office Technology and Management**

A set of acceptable standard serves as guides in evaluating the quality of services. The followings are the quality assurance issues in office technology and management:

- ❖ Teacher education;
- ❖ Funding for quality assurance;
- ❖ Staffing/shortage of teachers and
- ❖ Leadership/Supervision.

## Teacher Education

Although Quality Assurance Mechanisms(QAMs), aboard in education including teacher quality, funding, parental role, instructional resources such as books and other instructional materials. There is nothing denying the unique position of the teachers in bringing about achievement of educational goals. As important as curriculum materials are, the outcome is dependent on what the teachers make of then while the research has shown that teachers are the “key components of the instructional process” (Reynolds and Cuttance, 1992, pg 60). The management of a classroom contributes to the success of a lesson but this again depends largely in the teacher's ability. It is not the teacher per se that matters in the teaching and learning connection, but his qualities (Ijaya 2003, Ijaya 2012, Arinde 2010).

While several studies have confirmed the relationship between teaching facilities and students' academic performance. It cannot be said that such a correlation is linear but that there are intervening variables and the teacher remains the most important in this relationship (Reynolds and Cuttance 1992, Arinde 2010). Teachers use their expertise to guide learners to the curriculum, give them assistance and feedback when necessary, motivate them and promote positive change of behavior. All over the world, it is generally acknowledged that no nation can rise above the quality end of course the quality of its teachers, (Ijaiya 2005, FGN 2004). That is, teachers cannot give what they do not have. Teachers constitute “the foundation of quality in education” (Isyaku, 2002 pg 65)

Lecturers are the most changing agents in inculcating the relevant skills in the students, and for students to acquire the necessary skills and abilities, the lecturers who teach Office Technology course should be academically and professionally qualified. These lecturers should possess the relevant teaching qualifications to teach both the skilled and non-skilled Office Technology and Management courses. It is necessary that lecturers must be available in good numbers. Essene (2006) noted that the complexities of any modern society demand that students of Office Technology and Management in polytechnics should be equipped in the skilled and non-skilled areas in order that they can function properly in the world of work.

Ekpenyong and Nwabuisi (2002) opined that inadequate manpower has been recognized as a major factor militating against the successful and effective implementation of the curriculum for Office Technology and Management. This is because the new OTM for secretarial studies emphasized the acquisition of traditional skills such as shorthand and typewriting. Therefore, it should be noted that the performances of the students depend to a large extent on the competence of the teacher.

Amoor in Leigh (2008) stressed that teachers' quality means ability of the teacher to raise students' performance on tests as well as skills, and also work well with other teachers and school administrators for the purpose of raising the performance of the students. Nevertheless, teachers' quality is an important determinant of students' outcome.

Essene (2008) citing Osuala affirmed that a qualified Office Technology and Management lecturer is one who is knowledgeable in the six component areas. Fafunwa (1991) maintained that in spite of the universities producing trained lecturers annually, there are only few qualified lecturers in the polytechnics. He further stated that of all educational problems that beset the African countries, none is as persistent or impending as that of inadequate lecturers.

Commenting on professionalism of Office Technology and Management lecturers, Pophem, Schrang, and Blockhus (2001) and Reggs, Ryans and Shell (2002) shared similar views when they stated that it is behavioral, attitudes, aim, or qualification that characterizes a professional person. According to them, it is an attitude of willingness to work, to share and to disagree when disagreement tends to progress. It is committed to work, to self, to students, and to profession.

It is also observed that some are not ready to discharge their duties as expected of them; instead, they cover up their inadequacies by making the skill course to be more difficult for the students to understand.

### **Funding for Quality Assurance**

Funding is the provision of money on a regular basis for functions, services overhead, and is a critical factor in the management of Office Technology and Management programme. Ootobo and Makeri-Yahaya(2002) stressed that poor funding by proprietors (in most cases the federal and state government) and the failure of institutional managers to accord Office Technology and Management programme the right priority is a serious problem affecting the teaching and learning process in Office Technology and Management. Adequate funding is required for training and retraining of lecturers of OTM from time to time.

### **Staffing/ Shortage of Teachers**

The relevance of personnel to the achievement of goals and objectives of OTM cannot be overemphasized. Staffs are the activators of functions and services. For effective Management of OTM programme in any higher institution, there is need for quality staff with adequate skills to perform efficiently. It is a well-known fact that OTM suffer from shortage of staff. It was observed that few lecturers on ground could not impart the desired knowledge, skills, and competence on the students to effectively meet up the labour market after graduating.

### **Leadership/ Supervision**

Leadership is one aspect of management that has received considerable attention in the literature due to the importance attached to it in any higher institution. Attempt to determine the leadership qualities that can deliver effectiveness have led to several theories of leadership. There was the traits theory, which assumed that leaders are born and possess certain qualities such as intelligence, honesty, and confidence among others.

With the situation on ground in some higher institutions, the head needs to have good leadership traits in order to plough the boat of the department most especially in the area of sending the staff for workshop/seminars, conferences and also in getting things done at the appropriate time. Some leaders tend towards autocracy, hence the now common “wait for your time” syndrome when a colleague attempts to see more than what he can see or give a reasonable advice.

Avolio (cited by Ijaya 2012) identifies four characteristics of a transformational leader as:

1. stimulation interest among colleagues and followers to view their work from new perspective;
2. generates awareness of mission or vision of the team and organisation as one who;
3. develops colleagues and followers to higher levels of ability and potentials; and
4. motivates colleagues and followers to look beyond their own interest towards those that will benefit the group.(p.23)

Supervision is a generic term that involves observation, assessment, evaluation (value judgment), brain storming and discussion of findings that focus on student learning . OTM is a unique course that need thorough supervision and probably monitoring what the teacher teaches. This will go in no measure in achieving the quality assurance of the programme.

### **Qualities Assurance and Graduates of Office Technology and Management in the Labour Market**

Effective services are determinant factors of established standards of performance. Quality services are made possible in OTM when quality is assured when the students are given quality skill that they can apply in the labour market. Poor teachers' quality causes serious damage on the graduates of OTM says (Amoor 2010). He stressed further that it hinders the graduate from developing intellectual skills and knowledge that will equip them to contribute significantly to the society and the nation at large. Quality assurance in OTM will enable the graduates to perform excellently.

### **Conclusion**

Maintenance of quality in lecturers in OTM will improve the quality of teaching and learning in Nigerian polytechnics and in turn raise the standard of education in these institutions.

Quality assurance will ensure that standards are built in performance of lecturers in discharging their duties. The application of quality assurance will bring solution to the problem facing OTM such as teacher education, staffing, funding, and leadership/supervision. Qualities assurance in OTM needs quick and serious attention for the programme not to lose its value.

## Recommendation

In order to ensure quality assurance on the performance of teachers in Nigerian polytechnics. The following recommendations are made:

1. The Federal and State Government should make fund available for provision of necessary materials that will bring quality assurance in OTM.
2. The school authority should release part of internally generated fund to secure some equipment and to send lecturers for seminars/workshop/ and conferences to improve on lecturers' performance.
3. Qualified teachers and experience head of department should be employed.
4. Technical training and re-training programme for OTM teachers is necessary to ensure quality assurance because the new curriculum is technically based.
5. Lecturers should be ready for change because of the challenges in the new curriculum and this will reflect in discharging their duties.

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