

AVAILABILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY OF OFFICE EQUIPMENT IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN CROSS RIVER STATE.

BY

**OTU, ANIEMA EDET
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION
AKAMKPA**

ABSTRACTS

This study investigated the availability and utilization of modern office equipment in tertiary institution in Cross River State. The study answered two research questions and tested two hypotheses at .05 alpha level. A descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study. The research instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire which was administered on 200 staff randomly selected from Cross River State University, University of Calabar and School of Health Technology all in Cross River State. The result of the findings indicated that there is significant difference between level of availability of modern office equipment of federal and state institutions. Also, the result showed that there is significant difference between level of utilization of modern office equipment of federal owned and state owned institutions. Among others, it was recommended that the Federal institutions as well as state institutions should improve on their funding and budget so as to make adequate money available for procurement of more modern office equipment for use.

Key Word: Availability and productivity, office equipment and institutions.

Introduction

Office equipment may have various meanings, but they all centre on one basic concept, which is, the use of machines to perform the routine functions formerly done manually. According to Osuala (1982), equipment has been introduced into many activities of the office such as accounting, mailing, telephone switching system and reprographics; the machines performing these functions are generally self-sufficient, operating with a minimum of human intervention. The modern business firm and educational institutions utilizes the benefits of technological development. Discoveries and invention have permitted institutions to utilize products, processes and procedures to maintain a competitive position and to provide service unknown in past years. Therefore, a functional office should be able to provide a means of automating time consuming activities required for the processing of information, this is necessary because we are in a period of technological revolution.

In Nigeria and indeed the world over, the advent of computers, the internet, wireless communication and other technologies are presenting new opportunities. In recent years, a quiet revolution has been happening in most organizations in the country, and this is no other than the

advancement in office equipment. This new technology is reshaping our ideas, ways of working and even the corporate culture of most institutions. Office technology has come a long way since Queen Ann granted a patent for a “writing machine” in 1714 and since Christopher Sholes presented the world with the first practical typewriter in 1873. Throughout the 1960’s and into 1970’s office equipment relied heavily on the sequential data handling techniques that prevailed in the data processing field. At the core was the fundamental need, a way to store data in a form that would readily, rapidly and randomly be accessible and alterable, (Thompson, 2001).

Ugim(1995), says an office is a centre that sorts and classifies information, stores the information in a form so that there is a relationship and allow for easy retrieval. According to Oliver and Chapman (1990), the office is an environment which is suitable for computer software. Harney (1974) defines an office as a room used as a place of business. That is; it could be a government department, including the staff, their work and duties especially in public position of trust and authority. The Office Shop and Railway Premises Act of 1963 defined an office as a building or part of a building, the sole or principle use of the building is for transactional purposes, and office purposes. The term office purposes are expressed to include purposes of administration, clerical work, handling money, and telephone and telegraphic operations. An extended definition of clerical work is given to cover book-keeping, sorting papers, filing, and typing, duplicating, calculating, drawing and additional preparation of matter for publication.

Ugim (1995) further said that an office functions as a centre of information management; secretaries, accountants and other staffs receive information which pours into this centre for a variety of different means of communication example; letters, telephone calls, orders, memo, and face to face discussions. It is the duty of the office to ensure that those who need information get it in any form required.

Thus, office equipment has the effect of adding cost as well as eliminating certain routine operations. Hence, it is a dedicated combination of government legislations on matters which it can effectively legislate, local innovations and participation on an institutional basis which determine any future success for educational technology in Nigerian Universities. This study would therefore attempt to determine the extent of Availability and Utilization of Modern Office Equipment in Tertiary Institutions in Cross River State.

Office services and functions

Office Service: As a nerve centre of any business organization, the office has to provide a multitude of services to meet the information requirement within the business and also to provide the necessary communication with customers, suppliers, banks, government agencies and other external bodies within and outside a particular territory or country. Essential services which have to be provided by an office are as follow: (a) Correspondence facilities which include type writing, word processing and dictation (b) Reprographics which includes duplicating machine, photocopying and miscellaneous techniques (c) Telecommunication services (d) Office machines which include accounting machine, computer, punched card accounting equipment and ledger.

1. Posting machines includes adding machines, calculating machines and filing facilities.
- Offices Functions:** the office has earlier been described as an information centre that receives record, stores and sends information. The following are the functions of an office:

1. *Receiving of information:* Information is received in the office and this information is usually kept for the purpose of presentation for future reference. According to Etudor (1986) some items of information are to be kept to meet the needs of the management in controlling business. He said this information comes into office in forms of letters, telephone call, orders, invoice, receipts, report on various activities of the business. Office also gathers information from which the organization policies are formulated.
2. *Keeping information:* The information gathered has to be kept or stored in such a way that they are easily retrievable. This information could be stored either in register, ledger, computer and punch cards. Etudor (1986), this information are either kept to control the operation of decision making in he organization or to conform to legal requirements.
3. *Arranging information:* Information collected in the office is usually collated, this collation could be given to management in the form of statistical reports to enable action to be taken on it, such information could be sent to other departments where they are to be their appropriate.
4. *Giving information:* an office must be able to disseminate or give the information as the need arises. When information is given out, it may help the purchasing department to arrange, amend and give quotation to amen prices. The personnel manager keeps up to date staff records and the accounts departments to provide the shareholders with financial statements of the years trading. According to Etudor(1986), the information should be properly arranged in case of references and this arrangement including filling chronologically and according to subject matter.
5. *Safe guarding information:* information received must be properly safeguarded for immediate and future use. Etudor (1986), states that information could be stored in protective cabinet against fire, dust, theft, and all forms of destructive insects and animals. It is the duty of the office workers to ensure that information is well protected in the office.

Office Technology Today

Technological advancement in the office maybe described as the many improvement in machines and in the methods of their use and application in the office or business in order to increase productivity and facilitate effective management.

Technological advancement has revolutionized office procedures and activities.

Margaret Wu in her book office technology said “we are caught up in a revolution that is beyond our once wild dreams, a revolution that affects all of us in our daily lives, a revolution that has changed and will continue to change the way in which we perceive our world and process information” Margaret Wu who is conversant with the situation remarked, today we are trying, witnessing a revolution that is beyond our once wild dreams, a revolution that has changed and will continue to change the way in which we perceive our world and process information. The breath and depth of the impact of computers on our lives makes it imperative for everyone to be educated in both the fundamental of computers and their myriad uses. (Wu, 1979)

Today, office technology is based on small, powerful electronic devices and a collection of other tools that may be applied to the performance of basic office functions. Successful application of the technology in advanced will enhance an promote the performance of the office

system, which is a combination of devices and techniques to provide, co-ordinate functions and services, based on a firm understanding of underlying office functions and basic human needs, (Ugim, 1995).

Classification of Modern Office Equipment

There is great deal of equipment available which can increase productivity and efficiency in the office. All clerical staff should have most of these simple office aids, many of which are essential, as much valuable time is wasted if people have to borrow from each other, (Omotoshol 1981). There is no easy way to classify office equipment. One can list many types, some having uses that are quite specialized, others serving such a variety of operation that they cannot be tied down to any one, for the sake of continuity. Various authors relate classes of office equipment to the basic categories of methods by which office operations are carried out, assembling, communicating and recording.

The various technological and equipment used in the execution of the various office duties would be classified and discussed under the following sub-heads:

1. Communication equipment
2. Assembling equipment
3. Office production equipment

Communication Equipment

Communication technology is concern with the act of disseminating information. It provides ways of exchanging information almost instantaneously over vast distance. Modern communication has assisted the growth in size of business enterprises as well as in the central control of their activities. Office communication is carried out via sophisticated facilities.

Ezekiel (1981), "as our society develops more people are now using modern equipment in their offices and at home". The modern switch board connects department to department, branch office to headquarter, international companies with foreign subsidiary, ship to shore and aircraft to control tower. Modern office technology includes: telephones, reproductive machines, fax machines, computer via internet facilities. Telephone: this is the most vital communication link n business. It is direct, personal and immediate. Design trends include hand off equipment which controls call receiving automatic dialing and has a large storage capacity. Telex printers: according to Harrison (1995), it is an electric typewriter on which messages can be typed and transmitted over telegraph lines to another telex printers else where. The message typed appears instantly on the other end. Facsimile telegraph: when various formulae, drawing or other information over a distance are to be transmitted quickly, the facsimile telegraph is used. Fax machines: the system is used in transmitting of information. It produces text as well as graphics and it very easy to use. Fax machines are connected via telephone line. Stenography machine: the machine is portable and is use to record dictation on a paper tape according to an alphabetic phonetic and short hand code. It used mostly in courts and conferences. Staff Location System: this are used to make easy location and identification. They include: public address system, bells and buzzers, and wireless call system.

Accounting Equipment

Accounting equipment can be traced back to 19th century when the adding machine was suitably adopted with a moving carriage and with keys for printing figures. Accounting machines

is a broad classification used to include book-keeping, billing and posting machines as well as the specific accounting machines. They perform accounting work in the literal sense, their basic purpose being to prepare accounting documents and to total accumulated sum. The primary factor which distinguishes book-keeping and accounting machines from other office machines is their ability to enter descriptive information such as simple numerical codes or complete alphabetical description.

Office Production Machines

In every there is always a need for a letter, memorandum or report. Office production equipment included the typewriter and the computer. Archibong (1994), assert that an electronic typewriter has a memory although it does not function like a word processor. In same vein the computer which is sometimes called the brain is being increasingly used in business. The computer is capable of performing the basic electrical duties of an office. The computer performs numerous applications. Other machines include the duplicating machines, the photocopying machine and mailing equipment.

Statement of problem

A common goal of introducing office equipment in any institution is to improve on the performance of the workforce. In Nigeria, economic and political instability has made it difficult or almost impossible for offices to acquire modern office equipments. Most machines that were acquired in the past are now obsolete resulting in low productivity. This problem is found mostly in public offices which suffer neglect by the past regimes of governance in our country. Our institutions of learning are not left out. This is why graduates of our universities do not know how to operate or use modern office equipment which their counterparts in other countries are exposed to. The problems envisaged are inability of the schools authorities to release enough fund for the purchase of new equipments, lack of trained teachers in tertiary institutions and, slowness on the part of government to plan and make policies affecting tertiary institutions.

Purpose of the study

This study is aimed at finding out the availability and utilization of modern office equipment in tertiary institution in Cross River State, while the specific objectives of this study are;

1. To identify those modern office equipment available in Tertiary Institutions in Cross River State.
2. To find out if the available equipment is utilized

Research questions

1. Are modern office equipments available in tertiary institutions?
2. To what extent are they used if available?

Research hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference between the level of availability of modern office equipment of Federal owned and State owned institutions.
2. There is no significant difference between the level of utilization of modern office equipment of Federal owned and State owned institutions.

Research Methods

Design of the Study

Due to the nature of research topic, the researcher chose a descriptive survey design for the study. This is because the study seeks to determine the level of availability and utilization of modern office equipment in tertiary institutions.

Research Area

This research was carried out in five tertiary institutions in Cross River State. Two of the institutions are owned by the federal government while three are owned by the state government.

Population of the Study

The population of the study considered of all staff of tertiary institutions in Cross River State which are the University of Calabar, Cross River University of Technology, Federal College of Education Obudu, Management Development Institute and the School of Health Technology.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The peculiar nature of each institution in terms of ownership made the researcher to choose the sample by a stratified random sampling. The sample consisted of 200 staff randomly selected from the University of Calabar (UNICAL) and Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH). 100 copies of questionnaire each were administered to the institutions. The sample included lecturers, Non Academic Senior Staff and Non Academic Junior Staff.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for this research work was the questionnaire constructed by the researcher.

Validation of Instrument

The instrument used in the collection of data was validated by 1 expert in test and measurement.

Procedure for Data Collection

The data for this research was collected through questionnaire which was administered and retrieved by hand.

Results and discussions

Research Question 1

What is the difference between the level of availability of modern office equipment of federal owned and state owned institutions?

To answer this question item 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the questionnaire was use.

Item 1: My Institution has a number of modern office equipment.

Item 2: Only few of the available modern office equipments are used.

Item 3: Internet services are available in my institution

Item 4: There is a network of computers from my office to my superior office.

Table 1:

Responses of CRUTECH and UNICAL staff on availability of modern office equipment.

ITEM	UNICAL			CRUTECH		
	Agreed	Disagreed	Total	Agreed	Disagreed	Total
1	80	20	100	55	45	100
2	50	50	100	30	70	100
4	95	5	100	45	55	100
5	20	80	100	5	95	100

From table 1 above, 80% of the respondents from UNICAL assert that their institutions have a very good number of office equipment whereas only 55% of the CRUTECH respondents gave the same response for their institution. 20% of UNICAL respondents and 45% of CRUTECH respondents disagreed on the availability of modern office equipment in their institutions. 50% of the UNICAL respondents and 30% of the CRUTECH respondents agreed to the fact that their schools have just little modern office equipment while 50% and 70% of the two institutions respondents disagreed respectively. On the availability of internet facilities, 95% and 45% of UNICAL and CRUTECH respondents attested to this while 5% and 55% of the institutions respondents disagreed respectively. In the same vain, 20% and 5% of UNICAL and CRUTECH respondents accepted that there is a network of computers in the offices of their schools while 80% and 95% disagreed outrightly.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the level of availability of modern office equipment of federal owned and state owned institutions?

Table 2:

t-test analysis of responses related to availability of office equipment between UNICAL and CRUTECH.

Institution	\bar{X}	SD	N	DF	t-crt	t-cal
UNICAL	61.25	28.80	3	0.05	7.815	7.971
CRUTECH	33.75	18.83	3	0.05	7.815	

Since the calculated t-value (7.971) is greater than the critical t-value (7.815) at 0.05 level of significance, then the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis which states that; there is a significant difference between the level of availability of modern office equipment of Federal and state owned institutions is upheld.

Research Question 2

Is there any difference between the level of utilization of modern office equipment of federal owned and state owned institutions.

To test this hypothesis items 5,6,7 and 8 of the questionnaire are used.

Item 5: All the office equipment in my office is being utilized.

Item 6: There are provisions to utilize the equipment if available

Item 7: Information about my institution can be accessed from the website.

Item 8: Job performance is enhanced because of the use of modern office equipment.

Table 3:

Responses of UNICAL and CRUTECH staff on level of utilization of modern office equipment.

ITEM	UNICAL			CRUTECH		
	Agreed	Disagreed	Total	Agreed	Disagreed	Total
2	50	50	100	20	80	100
5	70	30	100	15	85	100
8	95	5	100	25	75	100
12	60	40	100	80	20	100

Table 4 reveals that 50% of respondents agreed with the item 2 of questionnaire that equipment are being utilized in UNICAL and 20% for CRUTECH. 50% AND 80% of UNICAL and CRUTECH respondents disagreed on the usage of available equipment. 70% of UNICAL respondents agreed that there is provision to utilized available equipment and 15% for CRUTECH. 30% and 85% for UNICAL and CRUTECH respectively disagreed with the item. Accessibility of information via website in uncial is 95% and CRUTECH 25% while 55 and 75% of respondents disagreed. Job performance enhanced by use of modern office equipment

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the level of utilization of modern office equipment of federal owned and state owned institutions.

Table 4:

t-test analysis of staff responses to utilization of modern office equipment in UNICAL and CRUTECH

Institution	\bar{X}	SD	N	DF	t-crtl	t-cal
UNICAL	68.75	16.718	4	3	7.815	14.82

CRUTECH 35 26.22 4 3 7.815

Since calculated t-value (14.82) is greater than the critical t-value at 0.05 level of significance (7.815), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative which states that; there is a significant difference between the level of utilization of modern office equipment of federal and state owned institutions is upheld.

Discussion of Findings

From the test of hypothesis it was discovered the federal institution are better funded and have better modern office equipment than state owned institutions, and the rate of utilization is greater than in state institutions, this is because federal institutions have more capability of hiring more professionals and organizing work shop and staff development programmers' to improve staff utilities of modern office equipment.

This finding is outlined with the findings of Ugim (1995) which prove a greater number of professionals in federal institutions than state institutions. Also supporting this finding Etudor (1986) re-emphasized that financials buoyancy determines the availability of facilities in school hence federal schools are more open to funding than state owned schools. Findings in this study showed that there is a significant difference between the level of productivity in equipment of federal and state schools, this goes on to reiterate the fact that output in federal schools is higher than of state schools because of the availability and utilization of equipments.

Conclusion

The following conclusions have been reached:

1. Federal institutions have more modern office equipment than state owned institutions.
2. Federal institutions have more expertise and use more modern office equipment than the state owned institutions.
3. Productivity is maximized in institutions whose modern office equipment is put into optimum use.
4. Workers attitude to work is influenced by the availability of the required office equipment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made by the researcher.

1. Federal institutions as well as state institutions should improve on their funds and budget so as to make adequate money available for the procurement of more modern office equipment.
2. Training and re-training programmes should be organized by the state and federal government at all levels to educate workers on the use and benefits of modern office equipment.
3. The federal government should embark upon production of office equipment in order to reduce the volume of importation of office equipment.

4. Staff working condition should be improved in order to positively change their interest and attitude towards the use of the available office equipment at their disposal.

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