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ASSESSMENT OF ACQUISITION OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS AMONG SECRETARIAL STAFF IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

Lawal Rasheed Adesunmbo

Department of Business Education,
College of Education,
Ikere Ekiti, Ekiti State,
Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

This study assessed the acquisition of Office Technology and Management skills among secretarial staff in Colleges of Education. It adopted descriptive survey research design. The population comprised all secretarial staff in College of Education, Ikere Ekiti. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 60 secretaries. A well structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study and analyzed by the use of mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that keyboarding skill, grammatical and communication skills, computer fluency, operating the telephone, surfing the web, browsing the net offline and online, downloading and uploading software, and Office management and management information skills are the required skills necessary for effective service delivery by secretary in an institution but the level of acquisition of these skills was low which has made the work of secretarial staff less productive and attractive. Its recommends that secretary should endeavour to possess OTM skills such as keyboarding skill, grammatical and communication skills, computer fluency, operating the telephone, surfing the web, browsing the net offline and online, downloading and uploading software, and Office management and management information skills for effective service delivery by secretary in tertiary institutions.

KEYWORDS: *Secretarial Staff, Skills, Colleges of Education.*

INTRODUCTION

The work of a secretary is very essential in tertiary institutions as their roles and functions cannot be overemphasized. Oguejio and Nwogu (2014) saw secretary as one who can think for you, act for you, anticipate your whims, and increase your output phenomenally. They are executive assistant who has mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, exercises initiative and judgment and makes decisions within the scope of assigned authority. They are officers, who is in charge of records, correspondence,

minutes of meetings, and related affairs of an organization. A secretary assists his boss and equally acts for the boss when directed. The secretary must accurately think and act fast especially in an automated office.

Despite the numerous functions performed by the secretary in an institution, in recent time, their work has been affected by the introduction of technology which has almost relegate the work of the secretary to the background. Most institutions have developed word processing centers, relied on personal computers and even electronic mail in an effort to lessen the need for

secretarial support and make the secretary unproductive (Osuala, 2004). The type of machines and gadgets that were used to produce, duplicate and store information has undergone a great transformation to cope with the growing world of technology, as a result, the role of secretaries in the business set up has changed tremendously from that of typewriting, shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of emails (Mumuni and Sam 2014).

Over the years, the office skills required by the secretary were mainly to take dictations in shorthand, type business letters, answer phone calls and book-keeping. But with more sophistication of today's modern office, technology has reshaped the way offices are run and have also reshaped the skills required for practice as a secretary. Akpomi and Ordu (2009) noted that the changes in technology has brought about a tremendous change in the role of secretaries in business from that of typewriting and shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails, to office technology including the internet that makes work much easier and knowledge more accessible. Although with the increasing sophistication in today's modern office, the very core office skills of typewriting, taking dictations (shorthand), answering of phone calls, processing of mails, receiving of clients and other visitors are yet indispensable.

The Secretary plays a very important role in the efficiency of an institution. The effectiveness of these functions depends largely on the extent to which the secretary possesses the needed competencies and skills required for the smooth running of the institution. Several changes have taken place in private and public offices as regard the roles and functions of the secretary. However, for secretary to meet with the modern advancement in technology and be relevance in an office there is need to acquire office technology and management skills. Office technology and management skills, according to Eneche and Audu (2014), are the skills required for planning, organizing, directing and controlling of office activities to ensure that various resources (human and materials) are put into optimal utilization so as to achieve the aim of the organisation. Amos (2005) also sees office technology and management skills as management skills which are concerned with services of obtaining, recording and analyzing information. The managerial skills required in office technology and management includes the ability to plan, organize, staff, direct and control the activities of the organisation so as to achieve set goals. As noted by Chukwumezie (2002) the skills needed by secretaries to manage information on the internet are keyboarding skills, grammatical and communication skills, computer fluency, operating the telephone and surfing the web. The rest are browsing the net offline

and online and downloading and uploading the software. Etonyeaku (2011) stated that managerial skills are needed for planning, decision making, human relationship, innovative changes, visionary leadership and ability to manage change.

The type of machines and gadgets that were used to produce, duplicate and store information has undergone a great transformation to cope with the fast growing world of technology. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is concerned with managing and processing information. This is made possible through the use of electronic computers and computer software to manage information (Okute and Agomuo, 2010). According to Atakpa (2010), secretarial functions the world over have undergone tremendous technical transformations. They further noted that secretarial functions which were previously done manually have been mechanized. The introduction of sophisticated office technology equipment like computers, word processors and other information technology resources coupled with new management techniques have completely changed old work habits in the office and triggered off a new business orientation thus making moribund the older methods of business transaction. According to Okute and Agomuo (2010), Information Communication Technology is concerned with the aspect of managing and processing information through the use of electronic computers and computer software to convert, store, protect, process, transmit and retrieve information. It is the handling and processing of information for use by means of electronic and communication gadgets such as computers, cameras, telephones etc. As a result, modern office equipment which gives the secretary the opportunity to increase her efficiency abound. Many office functions and secretarial duties which were previously done manually have been mechanized. Thus, the diversities of the office technologies require the secretary to possess new skills and sub-skills to enable him/her to be relevant in the modern office.

Secretaries are required to be able to communicate effectively in writing, speaking and listening. The important generic skills in communication which includes writing, speaking, reading and listening. The expected skills that OTM staff should possess are personal skills, technical skills and professional skills. Personal skills include self-confidence, motivational skill, communicative skill, planning skill, saving and investment skills, adaptive skill, managerial skills, human relations skill. Technical skills are computer skills or professional software skills, record management skill, psychomotor skill, analytical skill, creative skills and finally, professional skills. It is against this background that this paper is written to explore the assessment of

acquisition of Office Technology and Management skills among secretarial staff in Colleges of Education.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is generally noticed in recent time that technological advancement has affected many professionals both in the public and private institutions, and the role of the secretary is no exception. The roles of secretarial professionals have been turned around by technology and the secretary is undoubtedly an indispensable member of an office and it is said that the managerial work is affected one way or the other by the secretary and that is why many institutions recognize the need for secretaries and actually employ them to work with their management. There has been neglect of the fact that secretary is becoming a critical resource to drive and support performance in clerical and general administrative office functions in institutions today, as such secretaries are required to possess some OTM skills as a result of introduction of ICT in most offices. Okwuanaso in Utoware and Amiaya (2014) asserted that the more the changes in Information and Communication Technology are occurring, the new occupational opportunities emerge. The authors added that new occupational opportunities demand training and retraining that will enable the beneficiaries to meet the challenges of ever changing skill requirements. Unfortunately, most of the secretaries are not adapting to the ICT innovations in our tertiary institutions today. Hence, there is need for this study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The broad purpose of this study is to examine the assessment of acquisition of Office Technology and Management skills among secretarial staff in Colleges of Education Ekiti state. Superficially, the study sought to:

1. Examine the necessary skills required by secretarial staff for effective service delivery.
2. Examine the level of acquisition OTM skills by secretarial staff in the institution.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following two research questions guided the study.

1. What are the necessary OTM skills required by secretarial staff for effective service delivery in tertiary institution?
2. What is the level of acquisition OTM skills by secretarial staff in the institution?

HYPOTHESES

H01: There is no significant difference between the OTM skills possessed by male and female secretarial staff for effective service delivery in an institution.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study which deals with sampling of opinion on the subject of discussion. The population comprised all secretarial staff in College of Education Ikere. The sample of 60 secretaries was selected from the total population using simple random sampling method. A questionnaire titled "Assessment of Acquisition of Office Technology and Management Skills among Secretarial Staff (AAOTMSSS)" were used to collect data for the study. The data collected was subjected to face and construct validity and split half method of reliability was used to test the reliability of the instrument with reliability coefficient of 0.86. The data collected was analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS OF THE FINDINGS

Question 1: What are the necessary OTM skills required by secretarial staff for effective service delivery in tertiary institution?

Table 1: OTM skills required by secretarial staff for effective service delivery in tertiary institution

| S/N | Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Decision |
|-----|---|------|--------------------|----------|
| 1 | Keyboarding skill | 2.71 | 1.04 | Agreed |
| 2 | Grammatical and Communication Skills | 2.98 | 0.81 | Agreed |
| 3 | Computer fluency | 2.92 | 0.69 | Agreed |
| 4 | Operating the telephone | 3.47 | 0.66 | Agreed |
| 5 | Surfing the web | 3.05 | 0.63 | Agreed |
| 6 | Browsing the net offline and online | 2.71 | 1.04 | Agreed |
| 7 | Downloading and uploading software | 3.11 | 0.86 | Agreed |
| 8 | Office management and management information skills | 3.46 | 0.66 | Agreed |

Mean less than 2.50 indicate 'Disagreed' otherwise 'Agreed'

The mean response presented in Table 1 revealed the necessary OTM skills required by secretarial staff for effective service delivery in tertiary institution as the

mean value was greater than 2.50. This mean that majority of the respondents agreed that Keyboarding skill (2.71), Grammatical and Communication Skills (2.98), Computer fluency (2.92), Operating the telephone (3.47), Surfing the web (3.05), Browsing the

net offline and online (2.71), Downloading and uploading software (3.11) and Office management and management information skills (3.46) are the necessary

OTM skills required by secretary for effective service delivery in tertiary institution.

Question 2: What is the level of acquisition of OTM skills by secretarial staff in the institution?

Table 2: Level of acquisition of OTM skills by secretarial staff in the institution

| S/N | Items | Mean | Standard Deviation | Level |
|-----|---|------|--------------------|-------|
| 1 | Keyboarding skill | 2.06 | 0.63 | Low |
| 2 | Grammatical and Communication Skills | 2.13 | 0.65 | Low |
| 3 | Computer fluency | 2.27 | 0.70 | Low |
| 4 | Operating the telephone | 2.28 | 0.70 | Low |
| 5 | Surfing the web | 2.24 | 0.69 | Low |
| 6 | Browsing the net offline and online | 2.17 | 0.66 | Low |
| 7 | Downloading and uploading software | 2.29 | 0.70 | Low |
| 8 | Office management and management information skills | 2.12 | 0.65 | Low |

Mean less than 2.50 indicate 'Low' otherwise 'High'

The mean response presented in Table 2 showed that the acquisition of OTM skills by secretary in the institution was low as the mean values were less than 2.50. This showed that many of the secretarial staff in institution does not possess the OTM skills that can enhance effective service delivery.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

H_{01} : There is no significant difference between the OTM skills possessed by male and female secretarial staff for effective service delivery in an institution.

| Variables | N | Mean | SD | Df | t-cal | t-tab |
|-----------|----|------|------|----|-------|-------|
| Male | 20 | 3.43 | 1.08 | 58 | 1.08 | 1.96 |
| Female | 40 | 3.45 | 1.06 | | | |

P < 0.05 (Significant)

The result presented in Table 3 revealed that t-cal (1.08) was less than t-table (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. This led to the non-rejection of the hypothesis. Hence, there was no significant difference between the OTM skills possessed by male and female secretarial staff for effective service delivery in an institution.

DISCUSSION

The finding of this study revealed the required OTM skills by secretarial staff for effective service delivery in tertiary institution. These OTM skills include keyboarding skill, grammatical and communication skills, computer fluency, operating the telephone, surfing the web, browsing the net offline and online, downloading and uploading software, and Office management and management information skills. These skills according to Eneche and Audu (2014) are essential by secretarial staff in tertiary institutions to function effectively and for good service delivery.

The study also revealed that the level of acquisition of OTM skills by secretary in the institution is low. This has resulted into reducing the work of secretary to taking dictations in shorthand, type business letters, answer phone calls and book-keeping. But with more sophistication of today's modern office,

technology has reshaped the way offices are run and have also reshaped the skills required for practice as a secretary. This made Chukwumezie (2002) to suggest that for effective functioning of secretary in an institution, there is need to possess adequate OTM skills such as keyboarding skills, grammatical and communication skills, computer fluency for effective functioning.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that keyboarding skill, grammatical and communication skills, computer fluency, operating the telephone, surfing the web, browsing the net offline and online, downloading and uploading software, and Office management and management information skills are the required skills necessary for effective service delivery by secretary in an institution. However, the level of acquisition of these skills is low, which has made the work of secretary less productive and attractive.

The study therefore suggest that secretary who want to relevant, functioning and effective in tertiary institution should endeavour to possess OTM skills such as keyboarding skill, grammatical and communication skills, computer fluency, operating the

telephone, surfing the web, browsing the net offline and online, downloading and uploading software, and Office management and management information skills.

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