

## TOWARDS THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE CONTEMPORARY OFFICE: CHALLENGES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

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### Abstract

*The study was designed to identify the changing role of business education lectures in contemporary offices. The challenges of quality assurance in skill development in Colleges of Education in order to update themselves towards the changes and challenges poses by the constant review and revision of the secretarial education curriculum. The study was carried out in the three colleges of Education in Enugu State and one college in Ebonyi State. A survey research design was used for the study. The population for the study was 52 lectures from the colleges. The instrument was face validated by two experts from the department of Business Education of Federal College of Education Eha Amufu. Two research questions were used for the study, and two hypotheses was tested 0.05. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to analyze the data for answering the research questions, while F- test was used to test the hypotheses of no significant difference at 0.05 level of significant and 3 and 48 degree of freedom. The results shows among other things that lack of enough equipment, lack of steady electric power supply, lack of adequate laboratory and classroom, as well as lack of other ICT support tools as constituting a challenge. The null hypotheses were accepted. It was recommended that workshops be organized for the lecturers, enough and functioning equipments be procured.*

### Introduction

The much desire for quality assurance in Business education in the face of the technological boom should better be addressed through identifying and addressing the challenges facing the business educators in the course of teaching skill development courses at the colleges of education. It should be noted that currently the world over, the relevance of an educational programme is accepted to the extent it meets the needs of the individuals, society and emphasis is shifted from education for mere knowledge to education for relevance. Education for relevance simply implies education designed to meet the societal needs, that are knowledge should be acquired along side with skills and competencies.

In order to achieve the relevance required of skill development for new jobs of the contemporary office there is every need to find out the possible hindrances facing the development of such skills. Contemporary office is that office that has adopted technology into its operations. Agomuo (2005) described that new era office as electronic, paperless and

virtual in nature, skill development involves a laid down process or activities through which one learns how to perform an act. Osinem (2005) stated that skill development involves the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise work or job. The nature of the office must be looked into in depth. It is also of importance to look at the variable such as human resource development through the elimination of the challenges that is confronting the lecturers' efficiency in imparting the office skills. Quality assurance attainment in relation to skill development in colleges of education cannot be achieved in isolation. Virtually, there is no programme without its challenges. Every effort should be made to have these challenges dealt with. It is only when the challenges militating against the development of the right skills have been met that the expected quality will be envisaged to be a reality.

Federal Republic of Nigerian (2004) has it clearly postulated that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. In order for the teachers to impart the needed skills in the face of the new era activities and practices the challenge facing them must be identified and addressed as should be. NCCE (2008) has its objectives for business Education to include; to produce graduates who will be qualified and competent in teaching business subjects in our secondary schools; to produce teachers who will be able to include the various aspects of business education unto the society, to produce competent teachers who will help to bring about the desired revolutionary development from the primary school level; to give the students the necessary qualification to go for a higher degree or university education; to equip the students with the right knowledge and skill needed for adaptation and success in the world of work.

Since it is observed that no trainee will acquire knowledge beyond the level to which the trainer can expose him or her, it becomes obvious that those who impart the skills be made to overcome the challenges confronting them in the course of imparting the skills. Taking a look at the nature of traditional office as against the contemporary office one will actually see the need for this loud cry for quality assurance. Agomuo (2005) and Nwosu (2000) pointed out that in the new era offices; technology has brought about change in its nature. Nwosu (2000) pointed out that the new era office requires workers who are intelligent skillful, tactful, cheerful, friendly, resourceful, committed, computer literate, and has willingness to learn. Nwufu (2005) in (Ekwue 2009) opined that quality assurance refers to systems or processes that are designed to encourage all that is involved in the production or supply of a product or service to review that work constantly so as to assure the quality of the output.

Ekwue (2009) pointed out that for a nation to put in place good quality assurance mechanism for her vocational technical education (Business), that it should be done in the following areas:- institutionalized structure; content; Human Resources; financial resources; and material resources. The urgency needed in identifying and possibly addressing the challenges of the Business educators towards developing the needed skills for the contemporary office should be linked to the principles of skill development.

The inability of the lecturer to cope with the interconnectivity of the technological boom has placed a demand upon making sure that the business educators are made to overcome the challenges facing them in their duty of imparting skills. The close link in operation between word processing which is the base function of virtually all offices and the records management activities connected by the information and communication technology network demands that the challenges be addressed.

The shift from the traditional method of the teaching activities to the electronically driven method of teaching is faced with challenges. The quick movement to the electro commuting trend demands a fast movement towards the technology demand. And, this will become very possible when the opposing variable that is the challenges of such shift in activity is addressed. The failure of schools to acquire enough teaching facilities and equipment, and more complex is issue of teaching equipments all contribute great challenge. Agomuo (2005) pointed out that the worst hit of the problem is the unpreparedness of Nigeria by the time we accepted the technology. He noted that if the present day office is witnessing more marvels than that of yesterday, and since the technological off shut is still far going that the office of the future will be more sophisticated and thus place more demand on developing the necessary work force. This can be achieved through the development of the necessary needed skill. Ahukunnah and Ugoji (2009) held the view that the new technology helps solve existing problems, and at the same time creates new ones.

The challenge facing the lecturers in using these technology demands a cost such challenges so as to have a good result. Agomuo (2005) contrasting the office of the past with the office of the future remarked that the typewriter intervention had little changes, but that the office of the future will reflect revolutionary changes with far-reaching implications for fast pace development in the area of technology, automation and the attitudes of the society. He noted that the description of the office of the future is not certain with the office; thus the need to focus effort towards indentifying with the envisaged changes through overcoming the challenges facing the lecturers which must be properly addressed so as to impact the needed skill to cope with the envisaged changes accompanying such technology development.

Anioke (2011) writing on the problem of Business education in Nigeria noted that most schools lack modern teaching facilities, laboratories, workshops and instructional facilities to impart the knowledge and skill needed. Anioke noted that even when they are available, it is either they are not enough for the learners or obsolete to stand the taste of time. Abelega (2010) writing on the challenge facing quality assurance in colleges of education noted that, in all discipline in teacher education (Business) that there are wide gaps between what is studied in such programmes and what is practiced in the employment industry. He noted that Nigeria colleges of education train their products in skills, methodology and teaching that are hardly available in our public school system for them to practice what they have been taught.

Ekwue, C. (2009) writing on the current state of our vocational education noted that in recent times, issues of how and why teachers themselves should be highly skilled in the use

of ICT in teaching and learning has dominated most seminars and conferences. Ekwue however maintained that only few business courses lecturers have skills to effectively teach ICT. On this note if the expected quality should be achieved the challenges that boarder on a equipment procurement, installation and maintenance facing the lecturers must be sorted out to increase their efficiency. This can be done by regularly training and re-training of the lecturers to use ICT Equipment for teaching and learning purposes. Suffice it to be said without bias that unless these challenges are sorted out the development of expected secretarial and communication skills may remain an illusions.

Ekwue (2009) pointed out that quality assurance is not a static but a dynamic process. He said that it is a continuous and not a once-upon-a-life time affair. Anioke (2011) observed student class size as a problem in skill learning and development. She noted that despite the specification of number of students per class size and the student-teacher ration for teaching skill, that there is excess class size. Agomuo (2005) pointed out that the advent of information and communication technologies have made many offices' function possible:- document preparation, communications, information filing and retrieval.

Anioke (2006) enumerated the problem in communication to include lack of knowledge of electronic process, poor planning, poor listening habit, unclarified assumptions, communication overload, and poor writing habit. It should be noted that technology rooted type of communication is seriously in voke and has actually dominated most offices and the world over.

Osualla (2009) writing on how teachers are educated about computer in Nigerian higher institutions observed that the programme is unplanned, and at best only offers a haphazard approach to the subject of computer in education. He also noted that, the prospective teachers are presented with a "show and tell" of computer capabilities, a little about everything. The action he agreed may spark their interest but may not provide good depth or insight.

This study looked at the secretarial skill, and the communication skill development for the contemporary office. The secretarial skills will look at word processing skills, internet skills, records management skills, and reprographic skills.

The study is delimited to the development of Secretarial skills (word processing, internet, reprographics, and records management) and communication skills needed in the contemporary office.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of this study was to identify the challenges of the changing role of the contemporary office. Specially the study will.

- (1) Find out the challenges of contemporary office secretarial skills development in quality assurance.
- (2) Find out the challenges of contemporary office communication skills development in quality assurance.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered by the study:

- (1) What are the challenges in contemporary office secretarial skill development for quality assurance?
- (2) What are the challenges in contemporary office communication skill development for quality assurance?

**Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significant.

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** there is no significance difference in the mean rating of Business educator among the various colleges of education in Enugu and Ebonyi States on the challenges of secretarial skill development for quality assurance.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** there is no significance difference in the mean rating of Business educators among the various colleges of education in Enugu and Ebonyi states on the challenges of communication skill development for quality assurance.

**Methodology**

The study adopted survey research design. This design was appropriate for the study since questionnaire was used to elicit Business educator's opinion on the challenges they face in developing the contemporary offices skills for quality assurance. Survey research focuses on people, attitude, belief, motivation, behavior and opinions. This is in agreement with (Osuala 2004) when he views survey research design as a design appropriate for studies dealing with peoples opinion, attitude, behaviour and motivation

The study was carried out in colleges of education in Enugu and Ebonyi states. The population comprised of all the 52 lectures who teach the skills. The questionnaire consisted of 23 items structured on 4 point rating scales of Highly Challenging (HC) 4 Points, Challenging (C) 3 (Points), Slightly Challenging (SC) 2 (Points) and not challenging (NC) 1 (Point t).

The questionnaire was in two sections. Section A covered information on personal data, section B has items 1-18 for challenges on secretarial skills, items 19-24 for challenges on communication skill.

The questionnaire was face validated by two lecturers in the department of Business Education Federal College of Education Eha- Amufu.

**Population Distribution Table**

- Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu	17
- Institute of Ecumenical Education, Enugu	10
- Enugu State College of Education (Technical)	13
- Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo	12

The study questionnaire was administered by the research through the help of two research assistants who were trained by the researcher on how to administer and retrieve the instrument.

The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question and analyses of variance for testing the hypotheses the decision rule for the research question was based on the normal value assigned to the different scale in items of the questionnaire and the corresponding mean value were interpreted using real limits of numbers. Thus, any item with a mean rating of 2.50 and above were regarded as challenging while items below 2.50 were regarded as not challenging . For the hypotheses ,any items with F-calculated value greater than table-value was rejected , if otherwise , the hypotheses of no significance difference were upheld for the item.

**Research Question I:** What are the challenges in contemporary office Secretariat skills development for quality assurance?. This question seeks to find out the challenges in secretariat skill development.

Table 1: Title

s/n	Office Secretarial Skills Development	College I X	College II SD	College III X	College IV X	College IV SD	X	SD	X	SD	Decision
1	Lack of adequate professional personnel development.	3.35	13.41	3.30	3.30	9.90	3.76	11.3.05	3.58	11.88	Challenging
2	Lack of enough equipment.	3.64	14.58	3.70	3.70	11.10	3.23	11.19	3.66	12.16	Challenging
3	Have not received enough institutional Capacitating for the new office skills	3.11	12.47	3.30	3.30	9.90	3.23	11.19	3.10	10.22	Challenging
4	Lack of steady electric power supply.	3.64	14.58	3.80	3.80	11.40	3.30	11.46	3.41	11.33	Challenging
5	Lack of steady internet connectivity.	3.41	13.64	3.40	3.40	10.20	3.46	11.99	3.58	11.88	Challenging
6	Use of different modems and their peculiar nature.	3.41	13.64	3.50	3.50	10.50	3.46	11.99	3.41	11.33	Challenging
7	Lack of adequate laboratory and classrooms	3.64	14.58	3.70	3.70	11.10	3.61	12.52	3.41	11.33	Challenging
8	Lack of other ICT support tools	3.76	15.05	3.80	3.80	11.40	3.53	12.26	3.41	11.33	Challenging
9	Lack of equipment maintenance and technical personnel.	3.52	14.11	3.60	3.60	10.80	3.23	11.19	3.33	11.05	Challenging
10	Difficulty in tailoring students learning habit from traditional to e-learning habit	3.52	14.11	3.80	3.80	11.40	3.30	11.46	3.41	11.33	Challenging
11	Lack of adequate indigenous textbooks	3.29	13.17	3.50	3.50	10.50	3.38	11.72	3.10	10.22	Challenging
12	Lack of quality reprographic machines	3.29	13.17	3.00	3.00	9.00	3.15	10.92	3.08	10.20	Challenging
13	Inability to hold or minimize a text in reprographics.	3.29	13.17	3.30	3.30	9.90	3.53	12.26	3.16	10.50	Challenging
14	Inability to operate the various storage Devices CD, Diskette, flash drive etc.	3.00	12.00	3.40	3.40	10.20	3.07	10.66	3.33	11.05	Challenging
15	Inability to observe all the security Network	3.29	13.17	2.90	2.90	8.70	3.23	11.19	3.25	10.77	Challenging
16	Inability to source help from the machine	3.41	13.64	3.20	3.20	9.60	3.00	10.39	3.00	9.94	Challenging
17	Mean class size against student-teacher ratio for practical work	2.94	11.76	3.30	3.30	9.90	3.07	10.66	2.75	9.12	Challenging
18	Inability to adapt to the operational Procedures of the machines	3.47	13.88	3.50	3.50	10.50	3.15	10.92	3.08	10.20	Challenging
	Weighted mean		3.44			3.31		3.28			

**Key:**

- College I - Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu
- College II - Institute of Ecumenical Education, Enugu
- College III - Enugu State College of Education (Technical)
- College IV - Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo

Table I shows that respondents agree with the items as being challenges to the development of secretarial skills.

Ho<sub>1</sub>: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the Mean Responses of colleges in Enugu and Ebonyi State on the Challenges of Secretarial Skills Development.

Source of variation	Degree of Freedom SS	DF	Sum of square	Mean Squares (F)	F-cal	Critical values of	Significance	Decision
Between Groups	(K - 1)3				0.0051			
Within Groups	(N - K)	48	421.01	8.77	0.00058	2.76	NS	Accept
Total	(N - 1)	51	421.0255					

Table II also shows that the calculated F-value of 0.00058 is lesser than the critical F-value of 2.76. This indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of the lecturers in the four colleges. The four colleges did not differ in their opinion. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

**Research Question 2:**

What are the challenges in contemporary office communication skills development for quality assurance? This question seeks to find out the challenges in Communication skill development

Tables 2:

S/N	Office Communication Skill Development	College 1		College 11		College 111		College IV		Decision
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	
19.	Inability to Understand the Language of the new communication equipment.	3.00	12.00	3.20	9.60	3.07	10.66	3.25	10.77	Challenging
20.	Lack of good listening, writing and reading habit.	2.82	11.51	3.00	9.00	3.23	11.19	3.00	9.94	Challenging
21.	Prone to semantic distortion	2.88	11.52	2.90	8.70	3.15	10.92	3.00	9.94	Challenging
22.	Prone to poor planning and organization.	2.88	11.52	3.10	9.30	3.07	10.66	3.25	10.77	Challenging
23.	Inability to foster information security	3.35	13.41	3.40	10.20	3.23	11.19	2.83	9.31	Challenging
	Weighted mean.	2.98			3.12	3.15		3.06		

Source of variation	Degree of Freedom SS	DF	Sum of square	Mean Squares (F)	F-cal	Critical values of	Signi- ficance	Decision
Between Groups	(K 1)3	0.005	10.0171	0.0057				
Within Groups	(N K)	48	9.458	0.0006		2.76	NS	Accept
Total	(N 1)	51	454.0071					

Table II also shows that the calculated F-value of 0.0006 is lesser than the critical F-value of 2.76. This indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of the lecturers on the four colleges. Therefore the null hypothesis is accepted.

### Discussion of Findings

The result of table I revealed that the challenges of quality assurance in secretarial skills development in colleges of education includes among others lack of steady electricity supply lack of adequate laboratory and classroom, lack of equipment maintenance and technical personnel, inability to observes all security network, and mean class size against student lecturer ratio. This agrees with the assertion of Ahukannah and Ugoji (2009), Ekwue (2009) that the new technology helps in solving existing problems and at the same time creates new ones, and that effort over years has been on how and why lecturers should be highly skilled in the use of ICT.

The result of table I and the F-value calculation shows that there is no significant difference between the opinion of the lecturers in the four colleges of education in Enugu and Ebonyi States in the challenges of secretarial skills development.

Result of table II on the challenges facing the lecturers in quality assurance in colleges of education in communication skills includes: inability to understand the language of the new communication equipment, lack of good listening, writing and reading habit, pronenes to semantic distortion, to poor planning and organization, and inability to foster information security. This falls in line with the idea of Anioke (2006) and Agomuo (2005) that problems of communication includes lack of knowledge of electronic process, poor planning, poor listing habit, and careless attitude to information security.

The result of Table II and F-value calculation show that there is no significant difference between the opinions of the Lecturers in the four colleges of education under study in the challenges of communication skills development.

### Conclusion

Judging from the result of the study all the challenges of secretarial skill development as in the are experienced by Business education lecturers of the four colleges of education. The experience of the challenges of communication skills development is also common among the Business education lecturers of the four colleges.

The development of secretarial and communication skills to enable lecturers to cope with the contemporary office job demand have some challenge to overcome.

### Recommendations

1. That the relevant equipment should be procured for use by lecturers and students to enhance their performance.
2. Lecturers should be trained and retrained to help them cope to the new developments.
3. Equipment should be serviced at as the need arises.
4. Technical workers should be employed for instance technical attention.

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