Quality Assurance in Teaching Shorthand in Tertiary Institutions: Case Study of the Federal College of Education (Technical), Akoka, Yaba, Lagos State

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Abstract
The study is set to look into Quality Assurance in Teaching Shorthand in Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study of the Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka, Yaba, Lagos State. Quality assurance in teaching of shorthand involves the practice of checking the quality of services rendered by the lecturers in teaching shorthand in the tertiary institutions. This entails their methodology, the teaching resources used and the quality of professional development they have acquired in the shorthand field of study in terms of certification and experience. In an attempt to achieve the purpose of this study descriptive survey research design was adopted with the use of structured questionnaire which was administered on the fifteen (15) lecturers of the Secretarial Education Department during working hours (8am 4pm) in Federal College of Education (Tech), Akoka, Yaba, Lagos. All the data collected were analyzed using simple percentage on the demographic data and mean (x) on the entire variables which answered the three research questions formulated for the study. The findings revealed that there is poor quality assurance in teaching of shorthand most especially in methodology used for teaching and the teaching resources. The College Management and Government should be enlightened on their role to ascertain quality of service delivery in teaching shorthand and to adequately supply necessary teaching resources for effective teaching.

Introduction
Business education is one of the component parts of vocational and technical education that equips individuals with accounting knowledge, secretarial skills and broadens ideas towards how their chosen career functions Nwosu (2006). Business education is a combination of accounting and secretarial disciplines dealing with subjects such as shorthand, typewriting, accounting, business mathematics, commerce, office practice and management, secretarial duties. Shorthand has been explained by Adeluola (1994) as a system of rapid writing which involves:

i) The use of signs and symbols to represent spoken sounds as can be seen in Pitman 2000 shorthand.

ii) The use of combination of conventional letters of English plus arbitrary symbols as in speed writing.

iii) The use of machines shorthand which is represented by letters of English alphabet as in stereotype.

Based on the experience of the researcher in teacher Shorthand over the years, students’ academic performance in shorthand can be linked to how the teaching of the course is being handled in the college. Poor academic performance of students in shorthand has been an issue of concern to students, teachers, moderators and other stakeholders in business education, as semester result sheets very often indicated poor performance in shorthand.

Poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been linked to quality of teachers teaching the courses, the methodology of teaching, available teaching resources, relevance of what is being taught in the classroom to the society which the students belong. It has also been linked to the kind of attitude and professional disposition of the teachers of the course to the students who are the recipients of the skills and knowledge of the course in the college. All these are issues on the level of quality assurance in teaching of shorthand in Federal College of Education (Technical), Akoka, Yaba, Lagos.

Quality assurance as defined by Pearson (2007) is the practice of checking quality of goods or services rendered by an individual or company so that the standard will continue to be good. In the context of this study, quality assurance of lecturers teaching shorthand can be assessed through the performance of the students in shorthand at the Federal College of Education (Tech.) Akoka, Yaba, Lagos. Therefore, Okoro (2000) sees assessment as a form of evaluation that uses collected data for estimating the worth, quality or effectiveness of a programme or project. This study sees assessment as a process of determining the functionality and performance of the lecturers in teaching shorthand to students of secretarial education.

The assessment effort will show level of secretarial education programme in the school of Business Education which is exhibited according to Olaitan, Amusa and Nwobu (2009) to include:
* mastery of related technical information.
* acquisition of specific skills when drilling shorthand.
* quality of performance as a result of manipulation of resource on the job.
* knowledge of change or improvement required.
* level of adaptation or creativity to cope with new challenges in the place of work.

Statement of the Problem
Shorthand is one of the vocational subjects taught to business education students in which academic performance of students in the subject has been dwindling based on the quality of instructional process in the classroom. The level of assessment of quality assurance in teaching of shorthand is very poor. This is revealed in the way the teaching of the subject is handled which in turn affects students’ interest.
Students seem not to be interested in the subject owing to the teaching method of some teachers, the quality of teaching resources used, time allocation for teaching the subject and learning difficulties. Moreover, with the availability of computers, many students seem to think that teaching of shorthand is no longer necessary. It also appears that some students offered admission to study business education have poor career choice information.

Therefore, the study sought to assess the level of quality assurance in teaching shorthand in tertiary institutions using the Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka, Yaba, Lagos as a case study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to look into quality assurance and the teaching of shorthand in F.C.E (T) Akoka, Yaba, Lagos. Basically, it examined:

1) Quality assurance in teachers of shorthand.
2) Quality assurance in the teaching method used by teachers of shorthand.
3) Quality assurance in the teaching resources for teaching shorthand.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1) What is the level of quality assurance in teachers of shorthand?
2) What is the quality of the methodology used by teachers of shorthand to teach the subject?
3) What is the status of quality assurance of teaching resources used in teaching shorthand?

**Quality of Teachers Teaching Shorthand in the College**

Every lecturer in Secretarial Education Department teaching shorthand is qualified based on their certification, experience and publication within and outside the college. However, there is absolute need for assessing their performance on ICT skill and general competence in teaching shorthand.

**Teaching Methods used in Shorthand**

The method adopted by a teacher to impact knowledge to the students plays a significant role. There are numerous issues and problems associated with the teaching of shorthand. Some of the problems are related to transcription, numerous principles especially in Pitman 2000 shorthand textbook, vowel placement, identification of consonant, etc. Ifeagwu (2000) explains that teaching methods are the strategies adopted and used by the teachers in transferring learning in a classroom teaching and learning process.

In shorthand, the following teaching methods can be employed:

* Functional Method: Theory/speed work carried out simultaneously.
* Speed Work: Carried out in a short way into the theory work.
* Traditional Method: Speed work delayed till theory is covered.

Studies by Nyanabo (1994), reveals that overtime and from observations, the functional method for teaching shorthand is widely used and these conclusions are still relevant.

**Teaching and Learning Resources used in Shorthand**

Unlike other subjects ideal shorthand teaching needs a laboratory that can accommodate only thirty (30) students to enable the teacher to give a close monitoring to the learners. Window blinds are required to avoid distraction, swivel chairs are needed to make the learners to sit erect while dictation is going on. Head-piece is necessary to enable the learners to hear correctly when certain consonants are pronounced. Whiteboard is ideal so as to see the consonants and vowel placement properly. Above all the laboratory should be fully air-conditioned to make learners comfortable, good tables and fluorescent light are not left out too.

**Method**

The population consisted of all the nineteen (19) lecturers in Secretarial Education Department who specialized in teaching shorthand in Federal College of Education (Technical) Akoka, Yaba, Lagos State. All the nineteen (19) lecturers were selected for the study.

Structured questionnaire was used for this study. The questionnaire assumed two sections; section A focused on the demographic data and section B focused on the entire variables. Section B assumed 4 point Likert scale which are; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

**Data Analysis**

All the data collected were analyzed using simple percentage for the demographic data and mean (x) on the entire variables so as to answer the research questions formulated for the study. Any calculated mean which was greater than cut off point x = 2.50 was accepted while the one less than the cut-off point was rejected.

**Results**

Demographic Data

Gender
Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above shows that 42.11% (8) were male while 57.89% (11) were female. This shows that most of the respondents were female lecturers.

Research Question 1:
What is the level of quality assurance in teachers of shorthand?

Table 2: Level of quality assurance in teaching of shorthand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Most lecturers teaching shorthand are not internet compliant on recent method of teaching shorthand.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Government rarely organize in-service training for shorthand lecturers.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Most of the shorthand lecturers often find difficulty to strategically motivate the students to learn the course content.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Being certified in shorthand professionally is not a criterion for teaching shorthand in the college.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Most of the lecturers taking shorthand often feel incompetent while explaining the shorthand principles.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 above shows that most of the respondents agreed that most lecturers teaching shorthand are not internet compliant on recent method of teaching shorthand. Government rarely organize in-service training for shorthand lecturers. Most of the shorthand lecturers often find it difficult to strategically motivate the students to learn the course content, being certified in shorthand professionally is not a criterion for teaching shorthand in the college and that most of the lecturers taking shorthand often feel incompetent while explaining the shorthand principles. All the items were accepted based on the decision that their mean ratings were greater than the cut off point x = 2.50.

Research Question 2:
What is the quality of methodology used by teachers of shorthand to teach the course?

Table 3: Quality of the methodology used by teachers of shorthand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The methodology used in teaching shorthand in the college is rarely evaluated by National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Methodology for teaching shorthand have not been enhancing the students’ interest overtime.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Most lecturers of shorthand still use traditional method for teaching shorthand.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Secretarial Education Department where shorthand is being handled rarely evaluate the content of work given to students by the lecturers.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.249</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Poor performance and negative attitude of students in shorthand is a result of low quality assurance in the teaching methodology used for the course.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 above shows that most of the respondents agreed that methodology used in teaching shorthand in the college rarely evaluated by National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). Methodology for teaching shorthand has not been enhancing the students’ interest overtime, this is as a result of the use of traditional method for teaching shorthand by most lecturers and that poor performance and negative attitude of students in shorthand is as a result of low quality assurance in teaching method used for the course. Items 1, 3, 4 and 5 were accepted based on the decision that their mean ratings are greater than the cut off point x = 2.50.

Research Question 3:
What is the status of quality assurance of teaching resources use in teaching shorthand?

Table 4: Assurance in teaching resources used for teaching shorthand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Most of the teaching resources supplied for teaching shorthand are substandard and often worst out.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Quality of teaching of shorthand has not been encouraged with provision of shorthand laboratory in the college.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Students often complained of lack of classrooms for teaching shorthand.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>ICT resources (such as projector, computers, shorthand gadgets, etc. have not been supplied for teaching shorthand in the college.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Government has not been playing their role in assuring quality of service delivery in shorthand through adequate provision of teaching resources.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 above shows that most of the respondents agreed that most of the teaching resources supplied for teaching shorthand are substandard and often worst out. No provision of shorthand laboratory, there is lack of shorthand classroom and ICT resources such as projector, computers, shorthand gadgets, etc. Most of the respondents agreed that government has not been playing their role in assuring quality of service delivery in shorthand through adequate provision of teaching resources. Most of the items were accepted based on the decision that their mean ratings are greater than the cut off point x = 2.50.

Decision of Findings:
Based on the analysis of the data collected, the following findings were made: Most of the lecturers in Secretarial Education Department in Federal College of Education (Tech) Akoka are not internet compliant on recent method of teaching shorthand, at times they find it difficult to motivate the students strategically for effective learning as such felt incompetent while explaining shorthand principles.

The researcher found out that Government rarely organize in-service training for shorthand lecturers, this may be due to the fact that the lecturers have been certified in shorthand professionally but it is not a criterion for teaching shorthand effectively in the college. This shows that to some level, quality assurance among the shorthand lecturers is
poor. Though most of the lecturers are certified in related fields with some years of teaching experience on the course yet, regular professional empowerment and acquisition of ICT skills can be applied to motivate the students and enhance their performance academically in the course. When many students lack interest and perform poorly, the quality of the lecturers which handled the course should be assessed to ascertain their quality before other factors are practically considered.

The researcher found out also that the methodology used by shorthand lecturers in the college is rarely evaluated by NCCE. Most lecturers still use traditional method of teaching shorthand which has not been enhancing the students’ interest overtime and as such result in poor performance and negative attitude which was as a result of poor quality assurance in the method used for teaching the course. This finding is in disagreement with Nyanabo (1994) who revealed overtime and from observations, the functional method for teaching shorthand is widely used.

Finally, the resources used for teaching shorthand in the college posed a lot of discouragement in the minds of the lecturers handling the course. Most of the teaching resources supplied for teaching shorthand are obsolete, no provision of shorthand laboratory at all in the college, most students taking the course often complained of lack of classroom for teaching the course, no supply of ICT resources such as projector, computers and gadgets etc.

Students of shorthand will keep having problem developing personal interest in the course and as such result in mass failure in the college. Government has not been playing their role in assuring quality of service delivery in shorthand through adequate provision of teaching resources. If attention is not giving to ensuring the quality of teaching of shorthand, it is certain that in the nearest future, the course will be scrapped and go into absolute extinction even up to secondary school level where shorthand is introduced as a part of business studies.

Conclusions

The quality assurance in teaching of shorthand is of paramount importance and concern to both lecturers and students offering the course in the college. The resources used for teaching the course should be assessed for quality service delivery and proper handling of the course in terms of achieving the objectives of the course into the department for students to offer and constantly developing the body of knowledge of the course so as to make the course relevant to the society which the students belong.

Recommendations

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

* Government should be informed about the status of teaching shorthand in the college and be reminded on their role in assuring quality of service in secretarial education department through adequate provision of teaching and learning resources and to always carry out routine check on regular basis on all the teaching resources supplied for functionality, workability and durability. Further, in-service training should be provided on professional empowerment of shorthand teachers at all levels so as to enhance their competency in teaching the course.

* The college management should encourage the Secretarial Education Department to organize in-house service for both lecturers and students in the best methodology and strategies to use for enhancing the quality of teaching of the course. Students should be motivated to drill shorthand and develop interest in the course and as such enhance their academic performance in the course. Funding should be provided by the college management for instructional aids and practical projects in shorthand.

* Students offering shorthand should be given orientation at the beginning of the session especially when they are freshmen (new intake) on how they can effectively use what they are being taught in shorthand to cope in business activities after graduation and the need to build successful career.

References


