



## ON-LINE TRAINING AND RETRAINING NEEDS OF CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARIES FOR EFFECTIVE WORK PERFORMANCE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ONDO STATE

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### Abstract

*This study assessed on-line training and retaining needs of confidential secretaries for effective work performance in tertiary institutions in Ondo State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Three research questions guided the study and One null hypothesis was formulated. The 215 confidential secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Ondo State were the respondents for the study. A 20-item questionnaire structured on a 4-point rating scale validated by experts was the instrument used for data collection. Test retest measurement technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the reliability coefficient and 0.94 was obtained. The mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data related to the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that confidential secretaries in tertiary institutions in Ondo State need training and retraining in electronic communication, internet application and webpage design for effective work performance. The study concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female confidential secretaries on their on-line training and retraining needs for effective work performance. Finally, the study recommended among others that seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized for confidential secretaries to possess some level of on-line computer skills to be able to function effectively on their jobs.*

**Keywords:** *Online Training, Retraining Needs, Confidential Secretaries, Performance*

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### Introduction

Information and communication technology in the 21st century has revolutionized all professions worldwide including the secretarial practice. Information technology



is the coming together of computing and telecommunication for the purposes of handling information. Ofurum and Ogbonna (2008) opined that *information technology is the combination of computing, telecommunication and video techniques for the purpose of acquiring, processing, storing, and disseminating vocal, pictorial, textual and numerical information. The computing techniques provide the capacity for processing and storing of information; the telecommunicating techniques provide the capacity for communicating the information to users; and the video techniques, the capability for high quality display of images.*

ICT broadly refers to all forms of technology used to create, store, process and use information in its various forms (data, voice, image, multi-media presentations and other forms including those not yet conceived) and which enable, facilitate and support communication. The merging has been made possible by recent development in microelectronics. ICTs can be grouped into three categories such as information technology using computers, telecommunication technology (telephone, radio and television) and networking technologies (internet) (Bessant, 2009; Igbinedion & Edeh, 2014). ICT encompasses a wide range of technologies, for the purpose of this paper, On-line aspect of ICTs which specifically involve the use of computers, electronic communication, internet and webpage design to promote school and administrative performance is examined.

Electronic communications is the transmission, reception, and processing of information between two or more locations with the use of electronic circuits. Electronic communication means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant, or pager, e-mails, text messages, instant messages, and communications made by means of an Internet website, including social media and social networking websites (Edeh, 2017; Jemuel, 2016 & Hennesey, 2015). The Internet is an integral aspect of the Information and Communication Technology. The internet is a global collection of many computers and computer networks that are linked together (Igbinedion & Edeh, 2014). It enables individuals and organizations to share information across the world. The internet has been referred to as the “Information Superhighway” (Nnanna, 2000; Ehikhamenor, 2003). This suggests that as road allows travel through different areas of a country, so also the internet allows information to flow



through many different interconnected computer networks. The internet is a world-wide broadcasting capability, a mechanism for information dissemination, and a medium for collaboration and interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographic location.

The term World-Wide Web (www), usually shortened to the “web,” is a system of interlinked hypertext documents accessed through the Internet. Although many people use the terms “Internet” and “web” interchangeably, in reality the Internet is the system that facilitates the transfer of data and the web is the data itself. The web is just one of the ways that data can be disseminated over the Internet. So the Internet is not the web and the two terms should not be confused or used interchangeably. Browsers facilitate access to web documents called “web pages” that are linked to each other using “hyperlinks.” A hyper link is an element in a web page that creates a link to another place in the same document, an entirely different document or media content of some type. Web pages as displayed in a browser window can contain graphics, sound, text and video.

Web page design refers to the process of creating a web page's appearance and to the choice of a right color scheme, page layout, fonts and more. Every single web page in a website has different content, but all the pages are using a similar graphic design. But most of the pages in a website have their own design elements. This is needed because every page has to present a different content, and the basic website style is not fully applicable for all the web pages. For example, designing a contact form will sometimes require a custom layout and design elements with which to handle the form's fields, buttons, drop-down menus, and so on. All these styles, layouts, images, etc. are often not applicable for the other website pages. So, the contact page uses the basic website template for the menus, backgrounds, header images, and so on, but also has its own web page design, including the contact form's design itself and all the other elements specific for that page.

Okoro and Ndinechi (2013) stated that webpage design competencies needed by secretaries include assessing software application, typing a HTML code, formatting a table in HTML, applying colour to a HTML element, ability to create a hyperlink, publishing a webpage on the internet, refreshing a webpage, print webpage document, using shared devices in a network and stop a web page. Secretaries should have a full command of a web design software application to improve the secretary online performance and utilize the internet for effective work performance.



The secretary has to be well equipped to meet the present challenges and the challenges of the future in a contemporary office. A confidential secretary is a person who is concerned with the preparation, preservation and transmission of different types of office documents as well as conventional secretarial duties of confidential nature at various levels in an organization. The skills demanded of confidential secretaries today, as the significant stakeholders in information processing and monitoring areas require emphasis on skills and knowledge for the use of modern information processing facilities (ICT). These facilities include word processors, data processing equipment, micro-computers, records management with its emphasis on paperless files and reprographics. It has become necessary to ask the question; how many higher institutions secretaries have been trained and retrained to become computer literate and ICT compliant so as to catch-up in incorporating these powerful ICT skills in their jobs in the offices? How many of the higher institutions secretaries even know what is required of them to acquire in terms of ICT skills for office work effectiveness?

ICT is seen as a way to promote educational change, improve the skills of secretaries and prepare them for the global economy and information society. ICT is used to improve delivery of and access to effective and efficient management of office and the organization as a whole. ICT tends to improve the understanding of the secretarial practice and functions, increase quality of secretaries work attitude thereby increase the impact of secretaries on the management of the office. While basically ICT based innovations can occur in secretarial functions, their linkage to office management is essential to achieve intended outcomes of an organization. As noted by Edwin (2008), the roles of secretaries in contemporary times have changed tremendously from the traditional roles. They have access to modern office technology such as the internet, intercom and fax. These technologies make work more easily. It is easier to send messages using telex, electronic mails, fax and telephones. He noted that the era of computers and information technology helps users to write, edit and send memos, letters and reports.

Nonye (2013) investigated the need for capacity building of secretaries in modern office technology concluded that secretaries should be abreast of the use of modern office technology and recommended the need for periodic training programmes to be organized for secretaries to update their knowledge on modern office skills. With modern office skills, words, sentences and paragraphs are manipulated. This is made possible using word processor. This makes possible all range of editing options applicable. This makes possibilities for deleting and inserting sentences before they



are printed. Designing of documents, filling of forms, retrieving information and finally printing have become simplified tasks.

Examining the effects of information and communication technology on the performance of public sector secretaries, Chukwumezie (2002) noted that 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. In recent times, modern secretaries are exposed to high technology such as the internet which simplifies duties and enhance knowledge accessibility (Edwin, 2008). These technologies make it easier to send messages by fax, telex and electronic mails and there seems to be need for training and retraining on their uses.

Training is the process of modifying the knowledge; attitude and skill of a person through learning for enhance performance while retraining is the process of learning a new skill, often in response to a change in the work environment. According to Osuala and Okeke (2006), training involves providing employees with directed experience that enables them to be more effective in performing the various tasks that constitute their jobs. If effective, the training experiences result in changes in employee's attitudes, work habits, and performance. It is a means of building up skills through reading professional materials, attending conferences and workshops in order to perform excellently and to bring about high productivity in the work place. Re-training is a calculated attempt towards improving quality of an employee in terms of skills, knowledge and attitude with a view to obtaining qualitative and quantitative output from him. Re-training needs arise when workers or employees cannot cope with new techniques and innovations in their professional areas. Re-training is also required to be provided on regular basis to avoid personnel obsolescence due to technological changes, to remain efficient in the workplace and be equipped with the future needs of the organization.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Technological advancement has modernized offices through the use of latest equipment and procedures. The challenges of new technologies and innovations demand from secretaries much greater responsibilities and improved performances on their jobs. Secretarial staffs have been described as the key personnel concerned with office information processing (Ezenwafor & Okeke, 2012). The essence of providing training and re-training for secretaries is to enable them develop



professionally; keep abreast on new knowledge and technology in their office procedures and operations. Employees' retraining in public establishment is considered expensive in terms of time and maintenance of staff during the programme. There is also managements' inability to recognize the training and retraining needs of their employees. The work force is generally under-tapped, underutilized and therefore falls short of its anticipated contributions to the realization of organizational goals. Tertiary institutions in particular deal with information processing to a very great extent and employ different categories of secretarial staff for the functions. Ezenwafor (2013) revealed that most secretaries do not possess relevant knowledge and competencies for the technology driven office of today.

These above stated inadequacies, if not properly addressed will result in poor performance, difficulty in attaining organizational goals and objectives, and lack of individual development and so on. These anomalies should urgently be corrected for the benefit of both the organizations and their staff members. It is therefore very significant to find out the online training and retraining needs of secretaries in tertiary institutions.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

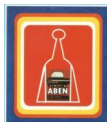
1. To what extent do confidential secretaries working in tertiary institutions in Ondo State need training and retraining in electronic communication for their effective office work performance?
2. To what extent do confidential secretaries working in tertiary institutions in Ondo State need competencies in internet application for their effective work performance?
3. To what extent do confidential secretaries working in tertiary institutions in Ondo State need competencies in web page design for their effective work performance?

### **Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female confidential secretaries on the online training and retraining needs for effective work performance in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.

### **Method**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study covered all the 215 confidential secretaries in nine (9) public tertiary institutions in Ondo State (Source: Registry of various Institutions' checklist, 2016).



The entire population (215) was used because the size was manageable; hence, there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was a 20-item structured questionnaire. The instrument was structured on a four-point (4point) rating scale of Highly Needed (HN), Needed (N), Fairly Needed (FN) and Not Needed (NN) with assigned weighted values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by two experts from the Department of Vocational and Technical Education and an expert in measurement and evaluation all from University of Benin, Benin City. The reliability of the instrument was determined by a test-retest measuring technique. The instrument was administered to 20 confidential secretaries in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. Reliability coefficient of 0.94 was obtained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher and two trained research assistants to the confidential secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Ondo State. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected in order to answer the research questions and t-test statistical tool was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

### Research Question 1

To what extent do confidential secretaries need electronic communication competence for effective work performance?

**Table 1:** *Extent to Which Confidential Secretaries Need Electronic Communication Competence or Effective Work Performance*

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1.	Check mails	3.50	.83	Needed
2.	Ability to identify unread messages	3.36	.83	Needed
3.	Applying techniques for saving new mail	3.50	.76	Needed
4.	Sending mails	3.60	.79	Needed
5.	Receiving mails	3.62	.74	Needed
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.52</b>		

Source: Field work: 2017

Table 1 shows the extent to which confidential secretaries need *electronic communication* competencies for effective work performance. The table shows that the mean responses on the five items on *electronic communication* competencies ranged from 3.36 to 3.62. The standard deviation ranged from .74 to .83. The mean responses show that the respondents agreed that the five items on *electronic communication* competencies are needed for effective work performance.



### Research Question 2

To what extent do confidential secretaries need internet application competence for effective work performance?

**Table 2:** *Extent to Which Confidential Secretaries Need Internet Application Competence for Effective Work Performance*

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1.	Accessing internet application software	3.62	.67	Needed
2.	Upload information into the internet	3.70	.61	Needed
3.	Download information from internet	3.72	.60	Needed
4.	Ability to identify appropriate application	3.60	.67	Needed
5.	To be able to move around application	3.50	.80	Needed
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.63</b>		

Source: Field work: 2017

Table 2 shows the extent to which confidential secretaries need *internet application* competencies for effective work performance. The table shows that the mean responses on the five items on *internet application* competencies ranged from 3.50 to 3.72. The standard deviation ranged from .60 to .80. The mean responses show that the respondents agreed that the five items on *internet application* competencies are needed for effective work performance.

### Research Question 3

To what extent do confidential secretaries need web page design competencies for effective work performance?

**Table 3:** *Extent to which confidential secretaries need web page design competences for effective work performance*

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1.	Assessing software application	3.36	.81	Needed
2.	Typing a HTML code	3.20	.78	Needed
3.	Formating a table in HTML	3.22	.80	Needed
4.	Applying colour to a HTML element	3.12	.91	Needed
5.	Ability to create a hyperlink	3.22	.82	Needed
6.	Publishing a webpage on the internet	3.43	.73	Needed
7.	Refreshing a webpage	3.20	.95	Needed
8.	Print webpage document	3.40	.76	Needed
9.	Using shared devices in a network	3.56	.70	Needed
10.	Stop a wep page	3.40	.76	Needed
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.33</b>		

Source: Field work: 2017

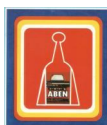


Table 3 shows the extent to which confidential secretaries need web page design competencies for effective work performance. The table shows that the mean responses on the 10 items on word processing competency ranged from 3.12 to 3.56. The standard deviation ranged from .70 to .95. The mean responses show that the respondents agreed that the 10 items on web page design competencies are needed for effective work performance.

### Test of the Hypothesis

The data analysis for answering the hypothesis was carried out using t-test. The result is presented in Table 8.

**Ho 1:** There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female confidential secretaries on the online training and retraining needs for effective work performance in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.

**Table 8:** Summary of t-test Analysis Showing Significant Difference in the Mean Ratings of Male and Female Confidential Secretaries on the On-line Training and Re-training Needs for Effective Work Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Ondo State

Test Variable	Grouping Variable (Gender)	N	Mean	SD	t. cal	Df	t. tab	Remark
Online Competencies	Male	57	139.14	16.05	1.199	213	1.96	Not Significant
	Female	158	136.13	16.35				

Source: Field work: 2017

Table 8 shows that t.cal (1.199) is less than t.table (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secretaries on their computer based competences needed for effective work performance.

### Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study showed that electronic communication competencies needed by confidential secretaries for effective job performance include checking mails, ability to identify unread messages, applying techniques for saving new mail. Others include sending mails and receiving mails. This finding agrees with Duniya (2011) who asserts that no confidential secretaries can perform effectively without adequate knowledge of electronic communication.



Findings of the study also revealed that internet application competencies are needed for effective work performance of confidential secretaries. The competencies include accessing internet application software, uploading information to internet, downloading information from internet, ability to identify appropriate application and ability to move around applications. The finding was in line with Buseni (2013) who stated that the rapidity of change in the modern technology as occasioned the use of computer to get adequate information through the internet which therefore becomes very imperative for confidential secretaries to be very knowledgeable in the use of internet application for effective work performance.

Findings of the study also showed that confidential secretaries need web page design competencies for effective work performance. The competencies include assessing software application, typing a HTML code, formatting a table in HTML, applying colour to a HTML element, ability to create a hyperlink, publishing a webpage on the internet, refreshing a webpage, print webpage document, using shared devices in a network and stop a web page. Okoro and Ndinechi (2013) supported this when they reported the urgency of training and retraining need in webpage design. The result of the hypothesis tested revealed that the opinion of male and female confidential secretaries in Ondo State did not differ significantly on the electronic communication, internet application and web page design competencies needed for effective work performance. This finding agrees with Chibuikwe (2013) who reported that electronic communication, internet application and web page design are specific ICT components needed for training and retraining of business education graduates for further development.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that electronic communication, internet application and webpage design competencies are needed by confidential secretaries for effective work performance in tertiary institutions in Ondo State. Therefore, it is expected that the confidential secretaries in tertiary institutions acquire these competencies for effective work performance.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made:

1. Conferences, seminars and workshops should be organised from time to time for training and re-training of confidential secretaries on on-line networking technologies.



2. The government should provide the necessary and up-to-date ICT equipments and facilities for tertiary institutions to enable confidential secretaries to get acquaintance with the modern information management challenges.
3. Confidential secretaries should make personal efforts to update their online skills in order to be professional relevant and be up to date.
4. The school management should fund the on-line training and re-training of confidential secretaries in tertiary institutions for effective work performance.

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