



CHALLENGES OF UTILIZING NEW TECHNOLOGIES BY SECRETARIES IN SELECTED PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS IN BIDA METROPOLIS

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Abstract

The study was conducted to investigate the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida Metropolis. The population of the study comprised 82 secretaries. There was no sampling. Two research questions guided the study. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire which was duly validated by three research experts from Federal Polytechnic, Bida. 82 Copies of the questionnaire were distributed; only 75 copies representing 91% return rate were collected by the researchers. Mean and Standard deviation were the tools used for data analysis. From the analysis of data, findings revealed that, lack of new technological equipment and machines, lack of training and retraining of secretaries, poor power supply etc were the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries. Based on the findings, it was recommended that management should make effort to provide new technologies for the secretaries, make provision for training and retraining of secretaries on the use of new technologies, provide alternative power supply for technology utilization. It was concluded that secretaries are the integral part of the organization who deal with information process and communication. It therefore behooves on them to acquire the skills needed for the utilization of new technologies.

Key words: New Technologies, Secretary.

Introduction

The advent of new technology has changed the way people work and live. It has brought ease to the office work especially that of the secretary. Office activities are easier, smoother and quicker as a result of new technology. Technology is now shifting attention from the physical building commonly known as the office to any place where information can be processed and accessed, sent and received within the fastest space of time.

New technology has also bridged the gap between the secretary and her boss. The use of internet facilities and smart forms make it easier for the secretary to reach and communicate with her boss. More importantly, the secretary can see the boss online through a network facility known as video conferencing and 'IMO' on mobile phone.

It is therefore, not an oversight to say that technology is power, especially in this information age where advancement of vocational and technical education which secretarial profession belongs is used as one of the yardsticks that determine the strength of an organization in particular and the national at large. This is why Odesanya, Glory, Mohammed and Uche (2014) stated that the secretarial functions everywhere in the world have undergone a lot of technical changes and 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 these office technologies require the secretary to possess new skills and sub-skills to enable her to be relevant in the modern business office.

New technology according to Anderson and Glen (2013) referred to information and communication technologies devices that are used for processing, storage and dissemination of information. They opined that the inclusion of communication to information technology emphasis technological growth and development attributed to communication aspect of the new technologies.

Ezenwafor (2010) mentioned that technology is the process by which machines and equipment are introduced in the work place to facilitate administrative processes. It is aimed at removing bureaucracy and unnecessary delay of the office functions. He went further to say that technology is the use of scientific knowledge to produce goods and services useful to man.

According to Grace (2014), technology utilization involves the use of computer systems and software in service delivery. The introduction of sophisticated telecommunication equipment, computers, and word processors, information technology resources, internet resources, office technology machines coupled with the management techniques have changed the old work habits thereby resulting in complete job re-designation and acquisition of new skills. The author further stressed that secretarial functions everywhere in the world have undergone technical changes, as a result many new office technological equipment give the secretary the opportunity to acquire and increase her efficiency. Secretaries who are not well equipped in terms of new skills and competencies, knowledge and abilities required for today's business offices are sure to be embarrassed as their inadequate skills will render them redundant or thrown out of the job.

Odesanya, Glory, Mohammed and Uche (2014) saw technology as 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 therefore, the handling and processing of information for use by means of electronic and communication gadgets such as computers, cameras, telephone and so on.

On the other hand a secretary is professionally defined by Gambari (2013), (adopted from International Association of Administrative Professional) as an executive assistant who has mastery of office skills demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, exercises initiative and judgment and makes decision within the scope of assigned authority.

The benefits presented by utilizing new technologies cannot be over-emphasized. Okoro and Agholor identified the following as the benefits of utilizing new technologies.

Increase access to information: There is no field of study that cannot be accessed through the internet. The secretary has access to information at his or her finger tips as a result of information technology tools.

Convenience and flexibility: information could be processed with ease with the aid of technology utilization. Unlike the old ways of using typewriter and analogue



telecommunication in information processing and dissemination, new technologies has drastically reduce the energy exerted in typing using the computer and in communication using the smart phones etc.

Processing and Retrieval of information: information could be processed and retrieved at any point in time with the help of new technologies.

Acquisition of new skills: The advent of new technologies presented to the secretary new knowledge of information processing.

Challenges of New Technologies

Despite the huge benefits presented by new technologies secretaries are still facing some challenges in the performance of their duties. The challenges are:

1. Inadequate or lack of modern facilities and equipment: Otobo and Makeri-Yahaya(2002) argued that the automated office uses sophisticated equipment which provides information faster. Nevertheless, it is expensive, making public organizations to provide few while using other obsolete machines to complement the effort of the secretary.
2. Constant power failure: Technological equipment used includes computers, projectors, scanners, printers, smart phones etc. These cannot be utilized without power supply. Constant power supply is therefore needed for the secretary to effectively perform and utilize the benefits of those technologies. Buttressing this, Umar (2009) asserted that electricity power has been erratic to allow for proper functioning of equipment in Nigeria.
3. Lack of funds: Grace (2014) identified lack of funds to be another challenge affecting the acquisition of new technology equipment in some public offices, thereby impoverishing the office of the secretary for lack of equipment.
4. Lack of training and retraining: Lack of training of secretaries has become very difficult in the name of lack of funds. The inability of any organization to send their secretaries on training will hamper the acquisition of new skills and competencies needed for the operation of modern equipment. The invention of new technologies therefore calls for acquisition of new skills. As a result, training and retraining of secretaries is key to the utilization of new technologies.
5. Poor knowledge of new technologies: According to Olukemi and Boluwaji (2014), the design of OTM programme components appears to be responsive to a global initiative with an objective that portends new academic direction in favour of ICT. The objectives, theoretical and practical contents of the new curriculum are geared towards integrating graduates of OTM into the evolution of technology. Poor knowledge of utilizing new technologies in teaching could affect efficient acquisition and of modern utilization of new technologies by students who in turn graduate to be secretaries. Onwukwe and Aliche (2012) asserted that lecturers are duty bound to help students acquire and develop needed skills and attitudes for employment by aligning curriculum with practice. The lack of those skills could also affect effective acquisition and utilization of new technologies which may render the secretary unemployable.



Other challenges according to Ojohwoh (2014) are:

- Conservatism
- Unreliable internet connection
- High cost of new technologies
- Lack of management support in acquiring technological equipment etc.

Statement of the problem

Secretaries are integral part of the organization. They are the wheel upon which the activities of the office rotate. Information passes across them every minute. As a result it behooves them to acquire the skills and competences for modern information processing by taking the advantages which new technology has provided. In spite of the huge opportunities presented by technology, public organizations are without modern equipment as a result of management lack of support in the acquisition of modern equipment. The secretaries on the other hand, seem to exhibit conservative attitude by dragging feet in personal development of acquiring skills needed for modern organization. New technology which has to do with the utilization of computer systems and software, and other internet facilities in service delivery seems to have presented some huge challenges to the secretaries. This is why the study was conducted to investigate the challenges facing secretaries in utilizing new technology in selected public organizations.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to find out the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida metropolis. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Identify challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida metropolis.
2. Proffer possible solutions to the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida metropolis.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, two research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. What are the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida metropolis?
2. What are possible solutions to the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida metropolis?

Method

The study adopted a survey design. The population of the study comprised eighty-two (82) secretaries from three selected public organizations in Bida metropolis. A breakdown of the population indicated that forty-one (41) secretaries were from Federal Polytechnic, Bida, twenty-one (21) secretaries from National Cereal Research Institute, Baddegi and twenty (20) were from Bida Local Government Secretariat. There was no sampling as the researchers considered the population to be sizable and manageable. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. It was validated by three research experts from the Federal Polytechnic Bida. The



researchers personally administered 82 copies of questionnaire and collected 75 copies representing 91% return rate. Mean and Standard deviation were the tools used for data analysis. The study adopted a modified four point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Disagreed (2) and Strongly Disagreed (1). The decision rule for the mean was set at 2.50 above as agreed and any mean below 2.50 was considered disagreed.

Out of total of 82 copies of questionnaire distributed, 75 copies only representing 91% return rate were retrieved and used for the study. The breakdown of the retrieved copies of questionnaire was 38 (93%), 19 (90%), and 18(90%) were from Federal Polytechnic, National Cereal Research Institute and Bida Local Government Secretariat, respectively.

Results

Research question 1: What are the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida metropolis?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of responses on the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida metropolis

N=75				
S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	Lack of training and retraining on the utilization of new technologies.	2.80	0.93	Agreed
2	Lack of new technological equipment	2.65	0.96	Agreed
3	Poor power supply	3.01	0.83	Agreed
4	Unreliable internet connections	2.60	0.93	Agreed
5	High cost of new technological equipment	2.85	0.91	Agreed
6	Lack of funds	2.25	0.85	Disagreed
7	Poor maintenance habit by management	3.21	0.74	Agreed
8	Poor knowledge of new technologies	2.53	0.96	Agreed
9	Lack of management support in acquiring modern technologies	2.61	0.85	Agreed

Source: field survey, 2017

Table 1 shows that lack of training and retraining, lack of new technological equipment, poor power supply, unreliable internet connections, poor knowledge of new technologies etc with mean of 2.80, 3.01, 2.60, 2.53 and standard deviation of 0.93, 0.83, 0.93, 0.96 respectively, are the challenges facing the utilizing of new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bidametropolis according to the responses of the respondents. However, respondents were of the opinion that lack of funds is not a challenge to the utilizing of new technologies.

Research question 2: What are possible solutions to the challenges of utilizing new technology by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida metropolis?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of responses on solutions to the challenges of utilizing new technology by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida



metropolis?

N=75

S/N	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
10	Provision of modern technologies for secretaries	3.48	0.62	Agreed
11	Training and retraining of secretaries on the use of new technologies	3.47	0.66	Agreed
12	Constant and alternative power supply	2.55	0.94	Agreed
13	Good background knowledge of new technologies by secretaries	2.68	0.93	Agreed
14	Self-motivation by secretaries towards acquiring new knowledge of modern technologies	2.87	0.96	Agreed

Source: field survey, 2017

Table 2 reveals that provision of modern technologies for secretaries, training and retraining, constant and alternative power supply, good background knowledge of new technologies are the possible solutions to the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in Bida Metropolis. The above constructs have mean of 3.48, 3.47, 2.55, 2.68 and standard deviation of 0.62, 0.66, 0.94, 0.93 respectively, according to the responses of the respondents.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the analysis on the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida metropolis indicated that secretaries faced some challenges in the utilization of new technologies. The findings agreed with Umar (2009) who asserted that electricity power has been erratic to allow for proper functioning of equipment in Nigeria. Ojohwoh (2014) also argued that unreliable internet connection and high cost of new technologies posited some challenges to the secretaries.

The outcome of the analysis on possible solutions to the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bidametropolis revealed that provision of modern technologies for secretaries, training and retraining, constant and alternative power supply, good background knowledge of new technologies are the possible solutions to the challenges of utilizing new technologies by secretaries in Bida Metropolis. The findings above agreed with Odesanya, Glory, Mohammed and Uche(2014) who stated that secretarial functions everywhere in the world have undergone a lot of technical changes and as a result, modern office equipment which gives the secretary the opportunity to increase her efficiency abound.

Conclusions

It is therefore concluded that are integral part of the organization. They are the wheel upon which the activities of the office rotate. As a result, it behooves them to acquire the skills and competences for modern information processing by taking the advantages which new technology has provided. In spite of the huge opportunities presented by technology, secretaries in public organizations are still facing the



challenges of lack of modern equipment, power supply, unreliable internet connections etc.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it was therefore recommended that:

- Organizations should first of all provide modern equipment to the office of the secretaries.
- Management of public organizations should make provision for training and retraining of secretaries on new technologies/equipment
- Secretaries on the other hand should be self-motivated and make efforts to acquire skills needed for the utilization of new technologies.
- Alternative power supply should be provided by management to enable secretaries utilize modern equipment as at when needed.

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