



SECRETARIAL PROFESSION IN THE DIGITAL WORK PLACE

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Abstract

The main aim of this research was to ascertain the secretarial profession in the digital work place. The study was carried out in the North West States of Nigeria. A survey research design was used for the study. The population comprised 60 secretaries across ministries, department and agencies in Kano States Nigeria. A self structured questionnaire developed by the researchers and carefully validated by two experts. From Faculty of Vocational Technical education, department of Business Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. Was used to solicit information from the respondents. The instrument consists of 35 questionnaire items. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The result of the study showed that for the secretarial profession to remain relevant in the work place, there is need for the secretaries across ministries, department and agencies to acquire requisite skills and competencies in digital work skill needs. The study was concluded that the secretaries need to be adequately equipped with relevant knowledge, attitude and competencies in digital work place skill needs to be relevant and also to be able to effectively and efficiently execute tasks. It was recommended amongst others that: Secretaries across ministries, department and agencies should attend periodic training and retraining on professional competencies in order to acquire current digital work place skills and competencies needed to utilize and manage a digital work places. Also, that there should be an orientation programme organised by the head of service for newly employed secretaries where they will be taken through skills and competencies needed ij digital work place as identified in this study.

Keywords: Secretarial, profession, Digital work place,

Introduction

The office today is dynamic and challenging. The advances in office technology and information systems have greatly transformed the role and functions of the secretarial profession in both public and private organizations in the 21st century. The system of office information generation, acquisition, processing, storage, dissemination and even the business environment all over the world have witnessed tremendous changes in its traditional methods and practices thus making the secretarial profession to fall among office personnel who have come face-to-face with the challenges of the new technology (Ezeonwurie, 2017). For decades now, fast changes have been taken place in all facet of human life including the office environment as a result of technology. Buttressing this fact, Okolocha and Baba (2017), opined that it is an indisputable fact that presently, there is a wide spread of technological advancement in ways and means of rendering office services. The function of the office remains the same but its responsibilities and expectations changes as a result of changes in technology. in the word of Adu (2014), the secretarial profession in the world are witnessing a lot of technical and practical changes on daily basis. This ever changing technology has come with new roles and responsibilities for the secretary in the modern office called: 'Digital Work Place'.



A secretary as we all know plays a very vital role in an office. That is to say a secretary is an indispensable office personnel. Supporting this assertion, Adebayo and Akinyele (2012), expressed the view that a secretary is an executive assistant who has mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility with or without supervision, exercises initiatives and judgment and makes decision within the scope of assigned authority. A professional secretary according to Oguejiofor (2015), is not only needed to have theoretical and practical knowledge of the new technologies but to be competent in the usage of those computer packages that are needed and necessary for her secretarial work performance in the digital work place. The roles of secretarial professionals have been turned around by technology. It has provided the tools that shift the role of secretaries from that of information recorders to business strategists (Adedoyin, 2010; Appah and Emeh, 2011 and Jaiyeola, 2007). Several other authors in the secretarial profession are of the view that the secretary has to be well equipped with requisite digital work place skill needs to meet the present challenges. It was concluded the changes will reshape both the office and the secretarial profession (Boladele, 2012; Onifade, 2009; Igbinedion, 2010).

A secretary in the view of Adozoga and Massnawain Ezeonwurie (2017) is expected to be computer literate and proficient in a number of word processing, spreadsheet and desktop publishing software including sending and receiving electronic mail (e-mail) and browsing the World Wide Web (www) (that is the internet). In the same vein, Boladele (2012), opined that the secretary's value to the organization is often measured by response to these challenges. That She is no longer confined to taking notes, typing and making tea. Buttressing the above assertion, Nwaokwa and Okoli (2012) assert that the efficiency and effectiveness of the secretary depends on her ability to operate electronic equipment-computer and this requires the acquisition of new skills, new knowledge and new techniques of managing information.

Statement of the Problem

The advancements in information communication technologies has led to the need for secretaries to reposition themselves in other to continue to be relevant in their performance of office functions as well as cope with the trend of technological changes in digital work place. The secretarial profession has been affected in one way or the other due to the introduction of digital work place. At this junction, one may pause and ask, If the demand in digital work place will make additional demands on the analogue secretaries in terms of skill training. It is to this question that the research work was carried out to ascertain the place of the secretarial profession in the digital work place.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is the secretarial profession in the digital work place. Specifically, the study sort to ascertain:

1. The digital work place skill needs of the secretarial profession

Research Question

1. What are the digital work place skill needs of the secretarial profession?

Method

A descriptive survey research design was used to carry out this study. The design is appropriate for this study because it makes use of questionnaire to elicit respondents opinion on the subject matter. The population of the study is made up of 60 secretaries drawn from ministries department and agencies in Kano State Nigeria. There was not sample used as the entire population was reached and managed. The instrument used to elicit information for the study was a structured



questionnaire containing a 35 items. The instrument was validated by two experts. From Faculty of Vocational Technical education, department of Business Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha reliability formula which yielded 0.74 were used for data analysis. The descriptive statistical design was used for the analysis. Mean score of 2.50 and above was used for the acceptance of items on digital work place skills. The decision rule with respect to hypotheses was not to accept the null hypotheses when the calculated value is greater than the critical value, while, the hypotheses be accepted when the calculated value is less than the critical value

Presentation of Data

Research Question 1

1. What are the digital work place skill needs of the secretarial profession.

Table 1: Digital work place skill needs of the secretarial profession. (N = 60)

S/N	Digital Work Place Skill Needs	X	SD	Remark
1.	Mastery of word processing packages/Software	4.06	0.51	Needed
2.	Ability to create and organize computer files and folders	4.08	0.50	Needed
3.	Ability to use storage devices (hard disk, diskette, CD, flash etc.) for storing and sharing files	3.85	0.82	Needed
4.	Generate MS office document using integrated application	3.76	0.85	Needed
5.	Manipulate hardware devices like printer, scanner, digital camera and projector to create electronic records.	3.88	0.58	Needed
6.	Inserting pictures and symbols into a document	4.07	0.60	Needed
7.	Using computer aided design such as digital camera, touch screen, trackballs etc for records creation	3.92	0.96	Needed
8.	Opening and working with more than one application at a time (multi –tasking) for records creation	3.91	0.70	Needed
9.	Using Word Art to create and shape text in a Document	3.95	0.61	Needed
10.	Use of electronic document imaging for the storage and retrieval of bitmapped documents	4.00	0.62	Needed
11.	Use of Microsoft Access to generate management reports	3.41	0.73	Needed
12.	Use of Microsoft Access to generate management reports	3.82	0.84	Needed



13. Knowledge to access the Internet application software or web browser	3.88	0.61	Needed
14. Creating an e-mail account	3.85	0.79	Needed
15. Opening and composing mail online	3.86	0.80	Needed
16. Sending and receiving mails with attachment	3.89	0.62	Needed
17. Uploading information into the internet	3.82	0.76	Needed
18. Ability to communicate with colleagues and clients online	3.42	0.90	Needed
19. Ability to use shared devices with a network	3.89	0.71	Needed
20. Refreshing and saving a web page	4.06	0.48	Needed
21. Downloading information from the internet	3.88	0.72	Needed
22. Ability to print a web page document	4.06	0.48	Needed
23. Generate and use electronic mail	4.05	0.49	Needed
24. Placing and confirming orders online (electronic marketing)	3.92	0.68	Needed
25. Use the internet to store specifically formatted documents in multimedia and graphics	3.92	0.68	Needed
26. Opening a PowerPoint work area	4.08	0.36	Needed
27. Ability to create slides using different layout	4.07	0.38	Needed
28. Adding titles and subtitles to a slide	4.11	0.57	Needed
29. Changing font and sizes of text in a slide	4.17	0.53	Needed
30. Applying the slide show effects	4.02	0.34	Needed
31. Adding sounds and videos to presentation	4.09	0.64	Needed
32. Applying transition effects	4.10	0.42	Needed
33. Running slide show in a power point	4.11	0.40	Needed
34. Create PowerPoint graphics/slides of business products to be sent online (Electronic marketing)	4.08	0.42	Needed
35. Ability to make presentation using slides and projectors	4.11	0.57	Needed

Source: field trip 2021

The data shown in Table 1 reveals that all thirty-five items listed to answer Research Question One, were accepted by the respondents as the digital work place skill needs of the secretarial profession. This implies that secretaries across ministries, department and agencies unanimously accepted all the items listed as digital skill needs of secretaries profession.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study are discussed based on research questions as follows:



The findings of this study regarding digital work place skill needs of professional secretary shows that the respondents agreed that the secretarial profession needed the thirty-five identified digital work place skill needs. The identified skill needs include: mastery of word processing packages/software, ability to create and organize computer files and folders, Use the internet to store specifically formatted. documents in multimedia and graphics for storing and sharing files, Ability to make presentation using slides and projectors among others.

The findings of this study on digital work skill needs agreed with the findings of Ezeonwurie (2017) who identified computer skill needs of secretaries to include, Create PowerPoint graphics/slides of business products to be sent online (Electronic marketing, opening an existing document, using page set-up and paper sizes,

Ability to communicate with colleagues and clients online, Use the internet to store specifically formatted documents in multimedia and graphics. Furthermore, The findings are also in agreement with Ezeonwurie (2021) who stated that for the secretarial profession to remain relevant in the digital work place, there is need for the secretaries to acquire skill that will enable them to be able to create PowerPoint graphics/slides of business products to be sent online, use computer aided design such as digital camera, touch screen, trackballs for records creation, placing and confirming orders online (electronic marketing), Opening and working with more than one application at a time amongst others.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, It was concluded that the Secretarial profession of the 21st century are saddled with a lot of responsibilities and organisations expect so much from them. This need is further compounded by the dynamic nature of today's offices which have gone highly electronic. Thus, the secretaries need to be adequately equipped with relevant knowledge, attitude and competencies in digital work place skill needs to be relevant and also to be able to effectively and efficiently execute tasks.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Secretaries across ministries, department and agencies should attend periodic training and retraining on ICT in order to acquire current digital work place skills and competencies needed to utilize and manage a digital work places.
2. There should be an orientation programme organised by the head of service for newly employed secretaries where they will be taken through skills and competencies needed in digital work place as identified in this study.
3. The office technology and management education curriculum should be constantly reviewed, revised and adjusted by specialists in the field in collaboration with the industries. This is necessary to enable graduates fit properly and competently in the digital workplace of the 21st century.
4. Governments should recognize the need for Information Communication Technology skills and their benefits to the progress of every organization. Consequently, adequate training and resources should be provided. Model offices should be equipped with the latest equipment's/facilities to enable students have adequate exposure to practical's.

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