THE CAREER SUCCESS OF SECRETARIAL STAFF IN NIGERIA LABOUR MARKET

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Abstract
The study aimed at examining the areas of capacity building needed for secretaries that could help to boost their career success in modern offices in Delta State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Three research questions were raised. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select a sample size of 50 graduate secretaries as all the respondents could not be found in one particular area. To gather the necessary data for the study, a self structured questionnaire was designed and administered on the sample. The data generated were analysed using mean with standard deviation. The findings from the research questions indicate that ICT skills should be incorporated into secretarial training in tertiary institutions, decision making skills should be incorporated into Secretarial Training curriculum and training on international business should be incorporated into secretarial training programme. Based on the findings, it was recommended that ICT skills should be in corporation into secretarial training in tertiary institutions, the curriculum time could be maintained, Secretaries' competency in the area of connectivity, interaction, data manipulation, presentation and exchange should be the objective of the delivery of ICT courses in tertiary institutions and training on international business should be incorporated into secretarial training programme.

Introduction
The Professional Secretaries International (PSI) defined a secretary 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 decisions within the scope of assigned authority. By implication, secretaries perform tasks similar to an executive or administrative assistant. The term 'Professional Secretary' is becoming obsolete as more often in developed countries has been replaced with other job titles, such as Administrative Assistant, Executive Assistant, as reported by the International Association of Administrative Professionals.
Adebayo and Akinyele (2012) opined that modern professional secretaries are now referred to as office managers by some people because of their activities, education,

skill acquisition, knowledge and even expectations from their bosses, customers, clients and even the general public. Whether called a secretary, a manager or a personal assistant, a professional secretary is a person sitting behind the typewriter, taking shorthand dictations and attending to visitors.

A secretary's most sensitive role in any organisation is that he or she is at the centre of information and communication and as such has the duty of providing comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date information promptly to ensure quality management decisions. **According to Adebayo and Akinyele (2012),** Azih (2013), the introduction of modern information Communications and technology equipment has affected the demands of the modern secretary. The duties of secretaries have been revolutionized especially in the areas of communication, telecommunication, micrographics and reprography. The technology has replaced mechanical technology; new technologies are replacing the old ones Based on the trend on the job responsibilities of a secretary relative to information and communications technology (ICT) and globalization of trade, the duties of secretaries demand analysis of situations under consideration, an objective judgment of problems and available alternatives, technical knowledge and creativity, answering the phone calls and assisting visitors, handling written communications and the mail, as well as inter-office communications, replying to the correspondence by preparing responses for the boss's signature, prioritizing work based on deadlines and communication with others in the office, maintaining a boss's schedule, preparing the boss for meetings and appointments, keeping a calendar of the boss's appointments, arranging for the facilities and amenities and recording the discourse in the meeting, arranging his or her employer's commitments to avoid overlaps, ordering office supplies, supervising other clerical staff, organizing files and other data**(Adebayo &Akinyele,2012)**

In addition, **Adebayo and Akinyele (2012)** also observed that in recent times, the nature of secretarial work has changed drastically, with more professional managers keying in their own correspondences and more files being stored electronically. Duniya (2011) also observed that due to the introduction of sophisticated technological (electronic) office equipment into today's office and the role secretaries need to play in ensuring accuracy and efficiency in their jobs, the secretaries need to meet the challenges by acquiring new skills and competencies for efficient operations in the electronic office. There is continuous advancement in technology which has affected the secretarial profession in terms of the quality, speed and accuracy of works performed. This has led to the introduction of various electronic facilities to ensure adequate secretarial practice in organization. It is essential that secretaries are properly trained on the usage of these modern facilities to enhance their level of productivity.

As a result, Azih (2013) opined that currently there is a high demand for skilled and technological trained secretarial staff. Regrettably most secretarial graduates acquire theoretical knowledge which does not match well with the demands of work place. There is acute shortage of trained personnel in the application of software, operating

systems, network communication and local technicians to service and repair computer facilities. The secretaries today are not only required to have theoretical and practical knowledge and skills in ICT computer operations, but to be exposed to the use of some computer packages like excel, data base management, etc. They should be conversant with the issue of interconnectivity, ecommerce, skills in browsing the website, skills in data protection techniques and security and adequate knowledge of how to use search engines to gain access to lots of educational resources.

Adebayo and Akinyele (2012) also noted that, secretaries often use computers to do tasks previously handled by managers and professionals; they create spread sheets, compose correspondence, manage databases, and create presentations, reports, and documents using desktop publishing software and digital graphics. They may also negotiate with vendors, maintain and examine leased equipment, purchase supplies, manage areas such as stockrooms or corporate libraries, and retrieve data from various sources.

Ntukidem in Azih (2013) found out that advancement in technology has continued unabated and has enriched and widened the scope and practice of the secretarial profession in terms of work quality, speed, accuracy and variety. That implies that the training needs of secretaries in tertiary institutions need to be revolutionize toward creating highly resource persons relative to decision making and information management in organizations. There is need, therefore, to identify those areas that have widened the scope and practice of secretaries so as to adequately incorporate them into school curricular. Where this is done, the ability of secretaries to understand a company's problem areas and to actively seek solutions to address the problems becomes easy.

There relevance of ICT usage to secretaries is that as they have access to, and are able to manipulate information, they are becoming more powerful. Secretaries are more proactive with new roles and responsibilities, that their personal interactions are extensive (Halimaton in **Adebayo & Akinyele 2012). Adebayo and Akinyele (2012) identified** some basic skills competencies which are crucial to the secretarial career success so far as **decision making ability:** fact-based decision making, which includes the skill to assess potential decisions based on facts, not assumption; **analytic/cognitive ability:** the skill to thinking analytically, business course in international management, business course in marketing or international marketing, business course in trade theory or international trade theory, business course in human resources or international human resources, business course in accounting and business course in strategy. As such Azih (2013) proposed that training and retraining programme should be organized for secretaries in every organization for occupational relevance. Strong communication, interpersonal, organization and management skills are also critical for a professional secretarys career.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the new demand on the job roles of secretaries in this 21st the century, it behoves the study to find out: what are the areas of capacity building needed for secretaries that would help to boost their career success in the modern office? Also, it is imperative to ask if technology has affected the secretarial profession in terms of the quality, speed and accuracy of works performed; then what are the career skills requirement that are needed to be incorporated in schools' curriculum to identify solutions to problems and be active team as an administrative or executive assist antinan organization?

Purpose of the Study

1.   To determine the ICT skills that should be incorporated into secretarial training in schools.
2.   To determine the decision making skills that should be incorporated into secretarial curriculum.
3.   To determine the ancillary skills required by secretaries for international business.

Research Questions

1.   What are the ICT skills that should be incorporated into secretarial training in schools?
2.   what are the decision making skills that should be incorporated into secretarial curriculum?
3.   What are the ancillary skills required by secretaries for international business?

Method

The study was carried out in Delta State. The population of the study comprised of male and female graduates of secretarial administration or secretarial education. a sample size of 50 Secretaries was used for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 25 males and 25 female secretarial graduates. This study adopted a descriptive survey type of design. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire of 20 items developed by the researcher after a thorough review of the literature on the related matters. The questionnaire was structured into a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA): 4points, Agree (A): 3 ,Disagree (D): 2,and Strongly Disagree (SD): 1.

The research instrument, before it was administered; was tested for face validity by one expert in the field of measurement and evaluation and Business Education and found to be valid. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, it was first administered to a number of 10 respondents who were not part of the sample of the study, using a test-retest method which involved administering the instrument twice at different times. The Pearsons product moment correlation coefficient method was

employed to correlate the set of scores. The computation yield a correlation coefficient of .7, which revealed that the instrument was reliable. The data gathered from the research questions were subjected to weighted mean and standard deviation. Any item with mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed and anyone below it was regarded as disagreed.

Results

ResearchQuestion1: What are the ICT skills that should be incorporated into secretarial training intertiary institutions?

Table1: ICT Skills and Secretarial Training

S/N	ICT SKILLS	MALE N_1=25			FEMALE N_2=25		
		X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision
1	Functional use of electronic mail	3.36	0.95	Agreed	3.60	0.53	Agreed
2	Training on how to use video-conferencing media	3.16	0.80	Agreed	3.50	0.50	Agreed
3	training on how to use teleconferencing media	2.90	0.97	Agreed	2.82	0.95	Agreed
4	training on how to use projector and power-point for presentations	3.60	0.53	Agreed	3.36	0.95	Agreed
5	Training on how to use the different search engines	3.50	0.50	Agreed	3.16	0.80	Agreed
6	Training on electronic-commerce	2.7	0.90	Agreed	3.68	0.40	
7	Training on how to use Microsoft Word, Excel and Power-point	3.60	0.53	Agreed	3.36	0.95	Agreed

From Table 1,the seven items had a mean score above 2.50 and therefore agreed that ICT skills should be incorporated into secretarial training in tertiary institutions. Applying the decision rule, the conclusion that could be drawn is that ICT skills should be incorporated into secretarial training in tertiary institutions.

ResearchQuestion2: What are the decision making skills that should be incorporated into secretarial training curriculum?

Table2: Decision Making Skills and Secretarial Training Curriculum

S/N	Decision making skills	MALE $N_1=25$			FEMALE $N_2=25$		
		X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision
1	Functional use of Excel spreadsheet functions and formula for arithmetic and accounting data.	3.50	0.50	Agreed	3.36	0.95	Agreed
2	Training on how touse SPSS for statistical data	2.7	0.90	Agreed	3.68	0.95	Agreed
3	Training on how to use develop models from spread sheet.	3.16	0.80	Agreed	3.50	0.52	Agreed
4	Training on how to use spreadsheet to develop and present graphs.	2.90	0.97	Agreed	2.82	0.95	Agreed
5	Training on how to develop and use computer data base.	3.36	0.95	Agreed	3.16	0.80	Agreed

From Table 2, the five items had a mean score above 2.50 and, therefore, agreed that decision making skills should be incorporated into secretarial training curriculum. Applying the decision rule, the conclusion that could be drawn is that decision making skills should be incorporated into secretarial training curriculum.

Research Question 3: What are the ancillary skills required by secretaries for international business?

Table3: Secretaries' Ancillary Skills and International Business

S/N	ANCILLARYSKILLS	MALE $N_1=25$			FEMALE $N_2=25$		
		X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision
1	Business course in international management	3.60	0.53	Agreed	3.36	0.95	Agreed
2	Business course in marketing or international marketing	2.7	0.90	Agreed	3.68	0.40	Agreed
3	Business course in trade theory or international trade theory	2.90	0.97	Agreed	2.82	0.95	Agreed
4	Business course in international human resources	2.90	0.97	Agreed	3.36	0.95	Agreed
5	Business course in accounting	3.50	0.50	Agreed	3.16	0.80	Agreed
6	Business course in business strategy	3.36	0.95	Agreed	3.60	0.53	Agreed

Table2: Decision Making Skills and Secretarial Training Curriculum

S/N	Decision making skills	MALE N₁=25			FEMALE N₂=25		
		X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision
1	Functional use of Excel spreadsheet functions and formula for arithmetic and accounting data.	3.50	0.50	Agreed	3.36	0.95	Agreed
2	Training on how touse SPSS for statistical data	2.7	0.90	Agreed	3.68	0.95	Agreed
3	Training on how to use develop models from spread sheet.	3.16	0.80	Agreed	3.50	0.52	Agreed
4	Training on how to use spreadsheet to develop and present graphs.	2.90	0.97	Agreed	2.82	0.95	Agreed
5	Training on how to develop and use computer data base.	3.36	0.95	Agreed	3.16	0.80	Agreed

From Table 2, the five items had a mean score above 2.50 and, therefore, agreed that decision making skills should be incorporated into secretarial training curriculum. Applying the decision rule, the conclusion that could be drawn is that decision making skills should be incorporated into secretarial training curriculum.

Research Question 3: What are the ancillary skills required by secretaries for international business?

Table3: Secretaries' Ancillary Skills and International Business

S/N	ANCILLARYSKILLS	MALE N₁=25			FEMALE N₂=25		
		X	SD	Decision	X	SD	Decision
1	Business course in international management	3.60	0.53	Agreed	3.36	0.95	Agreed
2	Business course in marketing or international marketing	2.7	0.90	Agreed	3.68	0.40	Agreed
3	Business course in trade theory or international trade theory	2.90	0.97	Agreed	2.82	0.95	Agreed
4	Business course in international human resources	2.90	0.97	Agreed	3.36	0.95	Agreed
5	Business course in accounting	3.50	0.50	Agreed	3.16	0.80	Agreed
6	Business course in business strategy	3.36	0.95	Agreed	3.60	0.53	Agreed

From Table 3, the six items had a mean score above 2.50 and therefore agreed that ancillary skills relative to international business should be provided for secretaries. Applying the decision rule, the conclusion that could be drawn is that training on international business should be incorporated into secretarial training programme.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the Research Questions 1 revealed that ICT skills should be incorporated into secretarial training in tertiary institutions. This confirms the view of Duniya (2011) that due to the introduction of sophisticated technological (electronic) office equipment into today's office and the role secretaries need to play in ensuring accuracy and efficiency in their jobs, the secretaries need to meet the challenges by acquiring new skills and competencies for efficient operations in the electronic office. It also confirmed the view of Azih (2013)that training and retraining programme should be organized for secretaries in every organization for occupational relevance and that strong communication, interpersonal, organization and management skills are also critical for a professional secretary's career.

Research Question 2 revealed that decision making skills should be incorporated into Secretarial Training curriculum. This confirms the view of Ntukidem in Azih (2013) that advancement in technology has continued unabated and has enriched and widened the scope and practice of the secretarial profession in terms of work quality, speed, accuracy and variety. That implies that the training needs of secretaries in tertiary institutions need to be revolutionized towards creating highly resourced persons relative to decision making and information managing in organizations.

Research question 3 showed that training on international business should be incorporated into secretarial training programme. This confirms the view of **Adebayo and Akinyele (2012) that** some basic skills competencies which are crucial to t**h**e career success so far secretary are **decision making ability, analytic/cognitive ability;** the skill to thinking analytically, business course in international management, business course in marketing or international marketing, business course in trade theory or international trade theory, business course in human resources or international human resources, business course in accounting and business course in strategy. Also it confirmed the view of Halimaton in **Adebayo and Akinyele (2012)** that secretaries are more proactive with new roles and responsibilities, that their personal interactions are extensive.

Conclusion

Secretarial **profession over several decades have survived changes in occupation and work methodology because it is one of the professions that incorporates business and organizational demands to the training programmes with moderate level of flexibility.** The **current challenges facing secretaries all over the world call for focusing of secretarial training programmes so as to boost the**

secretarial career and take it to the next level of innovations in organizations. Thus, if secretarial career is to survive the changes in work roles and responsibilities, then the curriculum or training needs of secretaries should be given a serious consideration and commitment to implement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the study thus recommended the following:

1. It calls for incorporation ICT skills into secretarial training in tertiary institutions.
2. The curriculum for ICT skills should match with the demands of the field of work such career sustenance of secretaries over time could be maintained.
3. It demands the commitment of school management and lecturers towards the provision and use of the ICT equipment in ICT courses in the teaching-learning process.
4. Lecturers should be trained on the new ICT courses.
5. Secretaries' competency in the area of connectivity, interaction, data manipulation, presentation and exchange should be the objective of the delivery of ICT courses in tertiary institutions.
6. Training on international business should be incorporated into secretarial training programme.

Reference

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