

PERCEPTION OF SECRETARIAL STAFF ON SECRETARIAL TRAINING AND ATTRIBUTES NEEDED TO REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE SOCIETY

by

KHADIJAT BOLAJI ABDULAZEEZ

Office Technology and Management Department

Federal Polytechnic, BAUCHI, Nigeria

Phone: +2348029493449, e-mail: abdulazeezkhadijahb@gmail.com

and

SYMPATHY OGECHUKWU ARIKWANDU

Office Technology and Management Department

Federal Polytechnic, BAUCHI, Nigeria

Phone: +2348025257818, e-mail: symarik99@gmail.com

Abstract

The study focused on secretarial staff perception on the training and attributes needed to reduced unemployment in the society. Two research questions were developed in line with the purpose of the study. One null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 1.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A thirty (30) skill clustered item questionnaire was developed from literature reviewed. The instrument title Training and Attributes Needed to Reduce Unemployment Questionnaire (TANRUQ) was structured on a five point likert rating scale to rate the training and attributes needed by professional secretaries in an organization. The instrument had option of Very Highly Needed, Highly Needed, Averagely Needed, Needed and Not Needed. The research questions were answered using Mean with Standard Deviation and t-test used for testing the hypotheses. The result of the study revealed that thirty (30) skills on personal and business attributes were needed by secretarial staff in an organization. The study also found that male and female secretarial staffs have better perception on training, personal and business attributes in an organization and considered it very highly needed in an organization to reduce unemployment in the society.

Key words: Training, Technical education, Secretarial education, Unemployment.

Introduction

The advancement in business has made the businessmen and women, government officers, company directors; etc to be caught up with the web of jet age development and this is faced in every facet of the economy. This makes them not to have time to attend to office details and routine matters as before. They now sought for secretaries with the present-day training who can adequately fill the gap for them, someone with sound initiative who can handle situations with little or no supervision, hence Babatunde in Philip (2007) succinctly stated that 'a secretary is a person who can think for you, act for you and anticipate your whims, yet increase your output in the organization'. Employers of secretaries in this modern time now know what they want from their secretaries; hence they are prepared to provide the necessary secretarial aids to enable the secretary put in their best. All these are achieved as a result of the present day training of secretaries.

Although the present global recess has tremendously affected the economy, coupled with the problem of unemployment, the purpose of training is to improve people's lives by expanding their choices, freedom and dignity (Otive, 2006). Training constitutes a basic concept in human development as it is concerned with developing a particular skill to a desired standard by instruction and practice. It is a highly useful tool that can bring employees into a position whereby they can do their job correctly, effectively and conscientiously. Training is the act of increasing the knowledge and skills of an employee for doing a particular job. The National Policy on Education as amended (1981) defined the aims of technical education to include "the provision of trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce" (section 6).

Similarly, The National Policy on Education (2004) identified three broad goals of secretarial training namely: Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and business particularly of craft, advanced craft and technical level, provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, commerce and economic development and give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.

By that arrangement the policy placed Technical Education on the shoulders of the Polytechnic, Colleges of Technology, Colleges of Education (Technical) and other Technical Colleges. Ahukannah and Chukwumezie (2008) stated that the professional secretary in a modern age needs to be trained in the effectiveness and operation of modern office machines. Such training avenues include;

- a) In-service training: This is a type of training designed to help one achieve a high degree of competency in one's job. It is a method which is common in industries and organization, civil service, agricultural sectors, marketing companies etc.
- b) On-the-job training: This is a training method which enables the trainee to learn on the job. In other words, it is a strategy by which the trainee is guided

by his or her immediate supervisor or an experienced worker to enable the trainee learn the basic skills as he or she performs the normal job

- c) Conferences: This is a training level and development in which participants are drawn from different organization to deliberate on a selected theme or topic, for the purpose of getting detail information on the selected theme.
- d) Workshop: Is a programme designed to give an opportunity to participants to work and deliberate on a common problem affecting them under the guidance of an expert in the same filed. It is a means of acquainting participants with possible solutions to common problems with the assistance of a person.
- e) Off the job Training: This is a type of training which a secretary receives while away from his or her duty post. It is aimed at acquiring further training or skills that will improve the secretary's knowledge.

They further listed the following institutions that offer secretarial training in Nigeria to include:

- a) Rivers State University, Port Harcourt whose secretarial programme is entitled: Office Information and Management.
- b) Niger Delta University, Amasoma, Bayelsa State whose programme is entitled: Office Management and Technology.
- c) Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, whose programme is entitled: Office Technology.
- d) Polytechnic, and Colleges of Technology: Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology provide courses of training leading to the National Diploma (ND) in Office and Technology Management (OTM) (2years) and the Higher National Diploma (HND) in OTM (3years) which includes one year of post-ND compulsory Industrial Experience.
- e) Colleges of Education (Technical) run secretarial programmes in secretarial education. The certificate awarded is Nigeria Certificate in Education (Technical). The duration of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is three years.
- f) Staff development centres provide in-service training for serving officers in the public and civil service to upgrade existing skills or provide new ones.
- g) Commercial/Vocational Schools: There are numerous commercial and vocational schools in the country which provide basic training for intending typists and secretaries.
- h) The National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB): The NABTEB is a certification agency and not a training institution. Single subjects which were formerly examined by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) under the Royal Society of Arts London Examination Scheme are now examined by the National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB).

The Modern training of secretaries from these bodies has received tremendous changes in scope and advancement. In terms of scope, the duties and roles of the secretary in the modern office also the managerial and information functions such as advisory, supervising subordinates, human relations, personnel management, exhibiting high sense of tact, maturity and psychological traits and information management. Okoji in Philip (2007) confirmed this when he stated that “the uniqueness of modern secretary lies in the multi-dimensional nature of his/her duties and responsibilities”.

The acquisition of technical skills in typewriting and shorthand are not the criteria that determine or qualifies one to be a secretary at present as it was the case in the early days. Today's secretaries are versatile in training and subject such as English language, business communication, personnel management, word processing, office information system, philosophy, psychology etc together with the skill courses of word processing and shorthand. According to Eze (2000), the training imparted to present day secretaries has made them to be 'a power behind the throne' in many executive situations.

Statement of the Problem

Omotosho in Philip (2007), commenting on today's secretarial challenges stated that. “Secretary in the real sense today could be seen as a person who accommodates all profession, occupations and trade”. The type of today's training makes him versatile and enables him to function readily in all aspects of human endeavors. Notwithstanding, all these achievements and developments in the training of secretaries at present, there is still great challenges facing the secretarial training in the third world countries and this requires more advancement in the training of secretarial studies. The high cost of funding and equipping the institutions among others. It is against this backdrop that this research work was undertaken to examine the secretarial staff perception on the training and attributes needed to reduce unemployment in the society.

Research Questions

1. Find out personal attributes that are needed by secretarial staff for effective performance in an organization?
2. Find out the business attributes needed by secretarial staff for effective performance in an organization?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the perception scores of male and female secretarial staff as regards to the training and attributes needed for effective performance in an organization
2. There is no significance difference in the perception scores of male and

female secretarial staff as regards business attributes needed for effective performance in an organization.

Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a thirty (30) item structured questionnaire. The ratings of the respondents were obtained on a 5-point rating scale determining training, personal and business attributes needed to reduce unemployment.

Table 1. t- Test analysis of the mean perception scores of male and female secretarial staffs on personal attributes needed in the organization.

	Test Value = 0					
	T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Ambitious and always willing to increase existing knowledge and learn more all the time	52.294	44	.000	3.822	3.67	3.97
Ambitious and willing to learn more most of the time	41.639	44	.000	3.600	3.43	3.77
Ambitious and willing to learn more some of the time	23.696	44	.000	3.089	2.83	3.35
Satisfied with preset knowledge and status	16.092	44	.000	2.622	2.29	2.95
Dull, careless, reticent and makes no efforts to grow in knowledge	11.833	44	.000	1.911	1.59	2.24
The secretary should be neat and appropriately dressed all the time	82.082	44	.000	3.889	3.79	3.98
Secretary should be neat and appropriately dressed most of the time	42.320	44	.000	3.778	3.60	3.96
The secretarial staff should be occasionally neat and appropriately dressed	13.839	44	.000	2.778	2.37	3.18
Neat and appropriately dressed some of the time	11.580	44	.000	2.133	1.76	2.50
Has no regard for neatness and dressing	10.431	44	.000	1.844	1.49	2.20
Easy going and gets on well with people all the time	23.125	44	.000	3.400	3.10	3.70
Easy going and gets on well with people most of the time	29.224	44	.000	3.400	3.17	3.63
Generally easy going and occasionally erratic	15.503	44	.000	2.378	2.07	2.69
Generally tough and unpredictable	12.166	44	.000	2.044	1.71	2.38
Easily annoyed, unforgiving and a hard nut to crack	10.577	44	.000	1.622	1.31	1.93

Field Survey, 2017

The Table 1 indicates that seven out of fifteen skills listed under personal attributes were needed by secretarial staff to reduce unemployment in the society with the mean scores ranging from 3.89 to 3.09. Therefore, respondents secretarial staff considered ambitious and always willing to increase existing knowledge and learn more all the time, ambitious and willing to learn more most of the time, ambitious and willing to learn more some of the time, the secretary should be neat and appropriately dressed all the time, secretary should be neat and appropriately dressed most of the time, easy going and gets on well with people all the time, easy going and gets on well with people most of the time. While, remaining four skills were rated low with the mean score ranging from 2.04 to 1.64 respectively. Which shows that satisfied with preset knowledge and status, dull, careless, reticent and makes no efforts to grow in knowledge, the secretarial staff should occasionally be neat and appropriately dressed, Neat and appropriately dressed some of the time, has no regard for neatness and dressing, Generally easy going and occasionally erratic, generally tough and unpredictable, easily annoyed, unforgiving and a hard nut to crack. The table also revealed that all personal attributes needed by secretarial staff in an organization is significant with p-value (sig 2-tailed) less than 0.05 at 95% level of significance.

Table 2: t- test analysis of the mean perception scores of male and female secretarial staffs on business attributes needed in the organization.

	Test Value = 0					
	T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Versatile in the use of computer and electronic typewriter	48.982	44	.000	3.778	3.62	3.93
Makes good use of the computer for certain jobs	32.405	44	.000	3.511	3.29	3.73
Uses the computer for minor jobs but cannot do advanced word processing on it	12.691	44	.000	2.089	1.76	2.42
Has only a general awareness of the uses of the computer but cannot use one to solve a secretarial problem	10.780	44	.000	1.822	1.48	2.16
Cannot use the computer and word processor and has no idea what they do	10.446	44	.000	1.978	1.60	2.36
Has an excellent all round knowledge of secretarial duties	29.932	44	.000	3.511	3.27	3.75
Has a good knowledge of secretarial duties	33.548	44	.000	3.600	3.38	3.82
Works generally well as a secretary	42.215	44	.000	3.622	3.45	3.80
Tries to impress but lacks grasp of the work	13.681	44	.000	2.200	1.88	2.52
Can complete assigned tasks with a reasonable degree of thoroughness within a given time frame	21.869	44	.000	3.333	3.03	3.64
Effectively relates very well with all co-workers	27.951	44	.000	3.511	3.26	3.76
Exceptionally tactful in dealing with people of all types	34.147	44	.000	3.533	3.32	3.74
Generally tactful and effective in dealing with the public.	38.637	44	.000	3.578	3.39	3.76
Always loyal and obedient in carrying out official instructions.	42.215	44	.000	3.622	3.45	3.80
Occasionally loyal and obedient in carrying out official instructions.	15.070	44	.000	2.667	2.31	3.02

Field Survey, 2017

The Table 2 indicates that ten out of fifteen skills listed under personal attributes were needed by secretarial staff to reduce unemployment in the society. Respondent secretarial staff consider versatile in the use of computer and electronic typewriter more useful, makes good use of computer for certain jobs, has an excellent all round knowledge of secretarial duties, has a good knowledge of secretarial duties, works

generally well as a secretary, can complete assigned tasks with a reasonable degree of thoroughness within a given time frame, effectively relate very well with all co-workers, exceptionally effective in dealing with people of all types, generally tactful and effective in dealing with the public while always loyal and obedient in carrying out official instructions with the mean scores ranging from 3.78 to 3.33 respectively. While uses the computer for minor jobs but cannot do advanced word processing on it, has only a general awareness of the uses of the computer but cannot use one to solve a secretarial problem, cannot use the computer and word processor and has no ideas what they do has mean score of 1.98, tries to impress but lack grasp of the work, Occasionally loyal and obedient in carrying out official instructions were rated low with the mean score ranging from 2.67 to 1.82 respectively. It also revealed in the same Table 2 that all questions on business attributes needed by secretarial staff in an organization were significant with p-value (sig 2-tailed) less than 0.05 at 95% level of significance.

Conclusion

The research findings made a far-reaching revelation. It was concluded that both male and female professional secretarial staff have positive perception of the training, personal and business attributes needed in an organization.

Recommendations

1. Institutions have to be properly funded by their proprietors to ensure that quality graduates that can compete with their counterparts globally are employable. Funding the institutions would ensure that the physical facilities are adequate, laboratories and libraries are up to date and well equipped for the training of would be secretarial staff.
2. Government should help in improving social services like electricity generation and distribution, good road, good network interconnectivity and easy access to credit for the graduate to be self employed.

References

- Ahukannah L.I & Chukwumezie, F.U (2008). *Office Career Development*. Owerri: Polytechnic Publishers Limited.
- National Policy on Education (1981) Yaba. Nigeria, NERC Press
- National Policy on Education (2004), National Educational Research and Development Agency, Skills You Need 2013, www.skillyouneed.com
- Philip B.B (2007). A Study of Students and Teachers Opinion on the Need for Option in the Secretarial Profession. *A Project* submitted to the department of Office Technology and Management in partial fulfilment for the award of Higher National Diploma in Secretarial Studies.
- Eze, M.O (2000). *Diversifying Secretarial Training in the 21st Century and Beyond*

Introduction of Specialty Areas: NAPSSON Workshop, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.

Olive, I (2006) Seeing Through Computers: Education in a Culture of Simulation.
The American Project, 31, 76-82