

THE RELEVANCE OF PROFESSIONAL SECRETARIES AND NEED FOR FURTHER TRAINING

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Abstract

Really, in the past, business organization and some governmental establishments have little or no idea of the duties of professional secretary in their sectors. Actually some executives fail to distinguish between the Professional Secretary and a mere Copy-typist, due to the fact, that both staff are given common place in general office or typing pool. The executives are flocked with numerous opinions that professional secretary is a mere typist staff in the services, as such fails to provide modern equipment and facilities for his/her efficient duties. Inwardly, many people look at secretaries as “drop-outs” or those who cannot advance to secondary education. Other staff ridicule, disrespect both female and male secretaries for -reasons due to the way the Chief Executives treat them. However, the defamatory idea or opinion that secretary belongs to the less privileged has dropped due to better understanding in educational system. They are beginning to realize that Secretary is live wire of any organization. In fact, the earlier they realize this fact, the better for the future development of Nigeria companies. Therefore, this paper seeks to discuss the relevance of secretarial training and the need of the employers in the Nigeria labour market.

Introduction:

During the colonial period in our country, the basic understanding of professional secretarial Discipline was not succinct in our society. In fact, this initial neglect happened at the time Nigerians could not champion their educational systems and then continued believing that professional discipline is a mere “copying – typist” affair.

However, Oni (1999) remarked that professional secretarial is an Executive assistant who possesses a mastery of office skills, demonstrates ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision., The Professional secretarial discipline includes such characteristic disciplinary knowledge as shorthand and typewriting plus enough knowledge skills, practical experience in office work, so as to cope with filling systems, office machines, and equipment and reception duties.

Also, he/ she should be smart conscientious, cheerful, holistic and exhibiting high sense of initiative.

In the past, British Colonial Government established two types of secondary education educational systems in our country, namely, Conventional Secondary School or College and Commercial School. Much emphasis were seriously laid on Secondary or College System as the best future development of our education. This secondary school or college was programmed for five years duration for a course or training leading to obtain Cambridge Certificate, which of course, now known as West African School Certificate. With this qualification, one could apply for admission into any University to study for higher degree in various art disciplines, while those who could not have enough fund for such higher Institution got employed as clerks in the offices at that time.

But, in the case of Commercial School system, there was no course or policy programmed for the school. Infact, individual educationist, people were freely allowed to establish the school anyhow, no laid down policy and was without systematic Syllables. Sometimes, the school existed without approval and above all, the Government did not border about it. Admission into such school is based on how the parents of the students relate with the authorities of the Commercial School concern.

Again, there was no definite year duration one could spend in the school and no definite goal. Honestly, there was no entry qualification conditions for public admission and students were admitted based on public relationship with their parents. Students stayed as many years as they could in pursuit of RSA (Royal Science Association) stage 1 – 3 or Pitman Certificate from London, provided that they paid seasonal school fees.

On the other hand, majority also learned Typing and Shorthand, then left school with a good Testimonial and then got employed in established Institutions, Organization or Company as cheap labour. These groups of staff have never been accorded respect as Professional Secretaries; hence they were given office in the same room with Clerks, messengers and office staff. That was the origin of office neglect, abuse on Professional Secretary by the respective executive or boss.

Therefore, they should not be so much blamed on executive or boss of our time now, because this was an act of mentality training they inherited from past Colonial Government. By now the executive or boss should have changed, having seen the detailed elaborate training programme for Professional Secretaries of our present educational system. Honestly, the earlier they realize this fact, the better for the future development of our establishments or organization or company. Happily, our present educational system is now putting the right step in the right direction and it is our society to manifest this change.

Our Ministry of Education introduces intermediate educational system known as

Polytechnic. The Polytechnic is programmed merely for manpower development for our established organization or institution or company. It is for two years course to obtain OND (Ordinary National Diploma) Certificate after regular study and another two years course to obtain HND (Higher National Diploma Certificate after regular study too. Various educational course contents for science and art studies are developed in polytechnics system. Admission qualification is five credits.” In addition, there is provision for post graduate Diploma” (PGD) after obtaining HND Certificate, in any course related to one discipline. With this healthy development, Nigerian Youths have brighter future. Frankly speaking, through this system, the old colonial commercial educational system was completely eliminated and abuse of underrated education stopped.

2. The Role of Professional Secretary in Established Organization

The success of any business organization to a large extent is determined by how the objectives are effectively realized. This in actual sense has to do with secretarial staff as integral part of any establishment or Institution or company. Therefore, the roles of Secretaries can be regarded as

Primary and Secondary Roles

The words *primary* and *secondary* are not meant to imply more important and less importantly, rather they have been chosen to indicate the primary functions they are expected to perform. The basic skills of a Secretary, like dictation taking, typing work, transcription, filing, directing, planning, controlling, coordinating, record keeping, and human relations are the work of Secretarial Profession.

In addition, the secretary has to plan his/ her work budget time, and reserves in order to achieve the stated goals. Although, the secretaries may not be members of any panel in any established organization /company / institution, but, suffice it to say that, they should be in a meeting only to take records of deliberations and possibly offer some clarifications when asked to do so.

According to Olatunbosun (1988), the secretaries is regarded as “Confidant” one who is entrusted with secret or confidential matters of the respective Chief. Prior to the meeting, the Secretaries are to champion, organize and communicate all people required to attend the general and confidential meetings as case may be. They keep or store appointments for the respective executives or bosses. They also communicate information that desire response to their bosses through gesture. They receive verbally or orally messages and signed documents on behalf of his /her boss.

The secretary must see about the company or established organization, or institute network of operational structures of relationships. Keep all company secret and carry all company assignments given to his / her, such as dispatching incoming mails and keep all types of reports such as routine, formal and informal statutory, technological and special reports.

The secretaries have to classify all types of filing, equipment, card index, suspension folders and must keep them confidentially clear and simple for any other staff to use. The secretaries must have good human relationship with other staff that would lead to understanding which can generate cooperation. In fact, to be precise, the common problem in most established commercial centers today is that, inability for the commercial centers to realize their objectives. To a very large extent, the Executive who endeavor to realize that the roles of secretaries would make successful attainment of their organizational goals. This is a fact, because the profession is that of all known one, practiced around the world and seems also to the most exciting and cherished one if the company concerns recognize that.

Advantages of Periodic Training of Professional Secretaries in Established Organizations.

Robert et al (1978) pointed out that lack of continuous or periodical training or course for Professional Secretaries in an established Organization or Institution or Company causes inefficiency of the Secretaries. Honestly, it is quite true, because there is no stimulation to make advancement in traditional equipment, to develop a new manual, electrical and electronics units with added features and devices that speed individual operations and make them more automatic and accurate. As we are in the most sophisticated age ever lived by mankind, the computer age, its present dispensation brings along with a technical competition which evidently exposes workers to the risk of being drop-outs. The up liftment of professional dexterity and promotion of productivity are by extending training opportunities to their staff. This is a way to promote growth and development especially when new machines are been installed in an organization/ institution/ company.

Adekanmbi (1992) observed that secretaries are not given opportunities to make contributions on what they learnt from their academic qualification on how its establishment should be run as executive assistants. However, they refused to integrate them into their stylized operations in their respective established organization. This failure of stimulation of the ideas, skills energizes more the solution of the problems and this affects the promotion of the secretaries. Besides, Ejiogu (1972) believed that the purpose of promotion in any organization is to increase the effectiveness of the organization in attaining its service and profit objectives. Apart from that upgrading, promotion should be based on reward for efficient work done and not alone by long service.

Truly, every established organization must have yearly budget for training programmes, seminars, and workshops for the professional secretaries and other staff included, so as to expose them to the various fields of specialization and also to learn new techniques and skills to improve in their duties.

The Professional Secretaries should periodically be sent to training or course to be familiar with modern communication structures, information technology and the serious need to enhance Company Secrecy. This will help them to know more about Company or established or Organization or Institution index system, classification/codification, microfilming structures and deep understanding of human relationship. Furthermore, they should also periodically be sent to know more about methods of recruitment procedures and champion company or established organization or institution's internal and general meetings. They should be allowed to prepare the preliminary – take off of any board meeting. They should know some or even advanced company or Organization or Institution bye laws, such as nature of contract agreement, essential elements of a valid contract or agreements. They should be served as pivot in established Organization or Company or Institution for smooth running and improving the development of daily administration.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the best approach towards achieving high productivity rate, efficiency and effectiveness is by creating an enabling working environment for subordinates. It could be done through clearly defined responsibility for the staff, possibly professional secretaries or better through clear job description to them.

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