

SELF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF SECRETARIAL STAFF TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AS PERCEIVED BY SECRETARIES IN SELECTED EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN BAUCHI METROPOLIS

**KHADIJAH B. ABDULAZEEZ,
C.I.K. DAJUR, and
CECILIA IFESI**

Department Of Office Technology And Management
Federal Polytechnic, BAUCHI

Abstract

Self-development is an important aspect of the secretarial profession, which is expected to help the secretary to be competent in the profession. It is because of this that the researcher undertook a research into the significance of self development to a secretary's competency in an organization. Accordingly, the research made use of questionnaire. One hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed to secretaries who are staff of the Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi, Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic, Bauchi and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi. Data gathered was analyzed using the mean statistic via the Likert type rating scale. The findings of the study revealed that secretaries need self-development in information and computer technology, which the present secretarial curriculum emphasizes. The researchers therefore, concludes that no secretary can successfully exist in any fully automated office without developing his skills in information and computer technology. Finally, the researcher recommends among others that a secretary should be self motivated and find out areas where he/she needs self development in order to develop their skills for competencies.

Introduction

Technology changes that have taken place today have made the office work to be more complex and the secretarial job a demanding one. This technology has made it necessary for a secretary in any organization to possess the competencies required to cope with the demanding nature of the work as every organization depend on the duties of a secretary to achieve it set goals and objectives.

A secretary is important personnel in the office that assist the executive in the office to achieve all the administrative and managerial functions of the organization. She is an executive assistant who possess a mastery of office skills, demonstrate the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, exercises initiative and judgment and make decision within the scope of assigned authority. It is the secretary who ensures that the organization as a whole is moving in a direction of goals attainment

and achievement.

Omotola (2004) defined self-development as the ability to improve oneself in areas of benefit academically, politically or socially without any force. There is now doubt that self development has to do with that individual in the office that has been trained in a specific field of study and it involves improvement of oneself in areas of benefits. Secretary is able to increase in knowledge and skill in order to show professionalism in every dimension.

Information technology which basically comprises of transmission, processing, storage and retrieval of information has brought about complexity in the nature of the office today Ehiemua in Gocheke (2009) stated that “any form of technology (equipment or technique) used by people to handle information are information technology”. Technology itself is any formalized and systematic method of doing things. Information technology is that technology or a technique which supports activities involving the creation, storage and retrieval, manipulation and communication of information together with related method, management and application.

Prior to information technology age, the management of information by secretary was not an easy task as it was done manually via the use of manual typewriters, taking of shorthand dictating, filing hundreds of documents and which must be done accurately. However, today, information technology has brought about new and advanced machines that will handle information with ease. It reduce paper work to a great extent, it consumes less time and information are transmitted within a short period of time. Due to these innovations, secretaries must obtain new skills and acquire knowledge that will enhance their performance in the modern office.

Self development can never be ignored in this profession because the secretary's surrounding is constantly changing due to the change in information technology and the secretary as important personnel must not lose control of her surroundings. In this present age secretaries are faced with problems, which emerged from the technological changes that have taken place. As Schuster in Gocheke (2009) opined that computer have revolutionalized the way secretaries work and process information. More and more offices have acquired the most sophisticated technological equipment and secretary needs only the ability and the desire to grow and change with each new development or modification. The computer has now become the problem faced by some secretaries because handling such equipment and using some available software application is difficult due to their inability to acquire the skill and procedure, of operating the computer. Moreso, some secretaries are contented with the knowledge they have acquired in institutions of higher learning and not eager to go for further training not knowing that it is not all that a secretary

needs to be successful that can be acquired at once in the secretarial institution which calls for the need for a secretary to continually develop herself to meet the challenges of technological changes.

Statement of the Problem

Important personnel in an office that helps to achieve the set goals and objectives of an organization is the secretary, and her work has change and keeps changing from traditional ways to carrying out duties into a computerized form of executing such duties. With this advancement in technology and because of the importance of her duties in the office, she needs to improve on her performance to be able to meet up. However, it is unfortunate that some secretaries are not versed in the use of the computer (packages) and other information technology accessories in order to apply them to information processing, which limit their abilities in the office and leads to in competencies. Some secretaries lack sense of satisfaction in their job because their abilities to carry out operation on the computer are limited which makes them irrelevant in the office. While some of the secretaries are contented with the knowledge they have acquired in school of higher learning not knowing that they still need to know some aspects of computer applications which will help them in moving with the changing world due to technological advancement and to be competent in the modern office. A self-development need of secretarial staff to meet the challenges of information technologies is what informed this study.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study was to find out:

1. Whether the present secretarial curriculum meets up with the information technology development of secretaries.
1. How secretarial staff can better develop themselves to meet the challenges of information technology in office environment.

Research Questions

1. What extent does the present secretarial curriculum meet up with the information technological development of the secretaries?
2. How can secretarial staff better develop themselves to meet the challenges of information technology in office environment?

Review of Related Literature

A secretary is “a person employed in an office usually working for another person, dealing with letters, typing, keeping records such as appointment and arrangement”. In other words a secretary is the one who coordinate the various activities of an organization in making decision and taking actions and sees to the execution of various activities of an organization. Institute of Certified secretaries and reports in Adejumo (2004) viewed a secretary as a professionally trained and qualified

information technologist with mastery of office and administrative management processes of an institution for instantaneous comprehension of ideas and issues in human and organization behaviours. From the above view, it shows that a secretary must be someone who is highly knowledgeable to the latest development in the world of information technology in order to fit into the modern office and not become obsolete.

Kehinde (2001) defined information as the content of communication which makes up the data used in communication. From the above definitions it is evident that information is what makes communication possible, without information there will not be any facts or details about a situation or event which a secretary needs to work upon. This information could be in form of text, numeric, graphics and voice.

Technology according to Akeretola in Gocheke (2009) refers to all ways people use their inventions and discoveries to satisfy their needs and desires. He further stated that technology involves the use of tools, machines, material techniques and sources of power to make work easier and productive. Technology is the application of scientific principles in research, design, development production distribution or services. It involves the use of machines in getting things done. Atueyi in Kehinde (2004) also described information technology in relation to secretarial profession as the host of system, equipment and material essentially computer based which is used to achieve the set goals of an organization in relation to the function of an office.

Importance of Information Technology

Information technology is of great importance to the secretary in the sense that it enhances efficiency and effectiveness of the secretary. The secretary must provide a more effective and efficient support services to her boss or manager and the boss requires timely and concise information for effective decision making. This information must therefore be presented properly, using the appropriate channel in order to help a comprehension and reduce time waste. The introduction of computer and data processing facilities had made the work of the secretary to provide all services easily and faster. However this can only be achieved through the acquisition of knowledge that helps the secretary to manipulate the facilities to enhance her work. Obiorah in Gocheke (2009) affirmed that the use of computer for information and communication does not constitute a threat to secretary's job but rather an enhancement and a facilitator. The advantages or importance of information technology include the following:

- The use of modern work processing machines has brought great relief to secretaries thereby, enhancing their efficiency.
- The use of information technology enhances speed and accuracy.
- It eliminates time wastage on routine jobs such as file management.
- Modern Information technology has led to the retraining of the traditional

secretaries thereby widening their scope of knowledge and skills.

- The modern information technology is a morale booster to the secretary.
- Information technology leads to increase productivity on the art of the secretary.

Information technology can be seen from the above advantages has having great influence on the communication system and also prepared the secretary to a great extend to be more effective in the office.

The Duties of a Secretary and the Role of Information Technology

The modern secretary today has shifted from the traditional way of carrying on their functions into a modern way of carrying out such role or duties. These traditional roles include:

- Typing on manual typewriters
- Minutes writing/note taking.
- Making tea
- Working under close supervision.
- There was not room to use initiative
- Not really in control of the daily office activities.

But today, the secretaries play the major administrative roles in the office. Adejumo (2004) attested that the modern secretary is an information communication and human relation management expert. The secretary today performs a variety of functions which is centered on information technology. These functions include: handling confidential matters, answering telephone calls, making and scheduling appointment, making travelling arrangement, sending and receiving mails, assisting with meeting and conferences operating the computer, public relation office, instruction and drafting of mails, handling of communication and information and managing the office.

Technology has greatly affected the role of secretary, looking at the contribution of information technology, in the present time, what would have become of this profession if information technology has not come out its rescue? As information technology has now completely enveloped the service of the secretary, one can proudly say that the secretarial profession is all about information technology.

Peter (2002) stated these as some of the ways technology has affected secretarial profession.

- The use of modern word processing machines started from electronic typewriter through memory writer to computer have brought great relief to the secretary, enhance secretary efficiently and make secretarial function measurable and attractive
- The speed and accuracy with which documents are produced are unraveled in

the history of human skills.

- Technology has eliminated wastage of secretary's time by saving her of the time she spend on routine job such as creation of files, storage and retrieval of such file which are now done by the computer.
- Technology has broadened the scope of secretarial profession; it has served the secretary from the derogatory appendage status to an independent member of the organization information manager and a custodial of organization information reservoir.
- Information has brought the whole world to the secretary's table takes organization to the world and brings the world to the organization. For this reason, every member of the organization include her boss respect her.
- Technology is gradually revising the general misconception and poor perceptions of secretaries in Nigeria society. Instead if their down grading they are now being respected. Instead of their being looked down on as in the previous cases they are not being looked up to.
- Technology has increased the secretary's job opportunities by expand his areas of specialization. In addition to the conventional duties of a secretary, a secretary can now engage as an information officer, information manager, computer operator or chief executive personal aid.

Self Development Need for Secretarial Staff

The public services review commission report in Ajibade in Gocheke (2009) emphasized the need for self development and opined that “training is needed to improve performance in the existing job whether or not there are promotion opportunities. The secretary needs to acquire knowledge and development further skills in order to function more effectively in her job by.

- Keep abreast of new development in her area of operation for productive performance.
- Be more knowledgeable in her field and even in other related fields that would have positive impact on her job.
- Be an intelligent, respectable, effective and efficient staff in the organization.
- Produce good, accurate and expected result.
- Able to train other staff in the organization of subordinates around her.
- Be well informed about the world which has become a global village.

It is important therefore, to say that a secretary must be up and doing, she must desire the need to develop herself in order to gain the opportunity of changing or moving along with the fast changing environment.

Other Areas where Self Development is needed include:

- Human relation which is a vital aspect of secretarial function because has to do with people. The secretary cannot work without relating to people such as her

- **Curiosity:** The ability of the secretary to desire to find out how things are inquisitive on how to handle new machines that may be brought into the office for her to be effective and efficient. Above all the secretary must be eager to learn.

Challenges to Self development of Secretarial staff

Self development is a vital area in the secretarial profession, it is the only channels through which a secretary can advanced and cope with the changes; in her environment, but sometimes there are some limitation that may stand as barrier to self development strategies these include.

Pride: When the secretary thinks she is satisfied with her present state of knowledge, there³ by feeling too big to learn from others about new changes in the working environment, then it stand as a obstacle to self development Attachegebe (2004) stated that some people wonder how they can go back to start learning with the children “as you desire to advance, you must take away pride and prepare to learn.

Fear of failure: Secretaries should desire success more than fear of failure. Secretary can only be successful by trying to achieve success in their carrier option.

Lack of self discipline: Attachegebe (2004) define discipline as the ability of an individual to exercise self control and respect constituted authority in the society. For a secretary to be self developed she must exercise self control if not, it might be difficult to achieve the aim and objective of the organization.

Inability to make sacrifice: For development to take place, secretaries must sacrifice her time, money and pleasure. Secretaries need to learn all activities that will make her contribute to the growth of the organization.

Reliance on other people: People have the tendency of relying on others for what they want. Spencer and Pruss in Gocheke (2009) opined that “you are on your own, with no one to praise you or to counsel you. Be your own coach”, A situation may arise where the person you are relaying on is not there; you have to face the reality alone. Therefore, relying on other cannot bring about any positive contribution to self development.

Laziness: This is the greatest enemy to improvement. In you rush to get ahead, don't overlook the fact that there is no substitute for competencies. Competence comes at a high price paid in hard work, study and dedication. Self-development can only be achieved through hard work.

Discouragement: Some people are discouraged or think cannot make it any

- boss, colleagues and outside visitors.
- The secretary must develop in her ability to initiate new idea and knowledge which will be of benefit to her boss and the organization as a whole.
 - Planning, organizing, coordinating, motivating the activities of others towards the specific objectives in an organization is a function that the secretary need to develop themselves in other to be effective in are job.
 - Secretarial function evolves round communication, secretaries need to develop themselves to be able to be an effective unique or vital medium of communication between their organization and the outside world; it could be through writing or oral communication.
 - Every individual has a way of reacting to situation that is so particular to that individual. The secretary is not an exception to these qualities. Therefore, she must be able to improve or change some of the qualities that are a threat to the organization and to visitor
 - Dressing cannot be put aside of the secretarial profession because appearance adds a lot to the image of the organization and to the secretary as a person

Self Development Strategies

The changes and challenges of the secretarial profession is now so high therefore the secretary needs to equip or develop herself to be able to face these challenges. This strategy includes the following.

- **Training:** Training aim at assisting an individual to acquire knowledge, skills and attitude for effective performance of the secretarial functions in an organization.
- **Reading:** This is a way of understanding what is being read in order to increase one's knowledge, if a secretary develops a habit of reading textbook, journal, magazines or any relevant write up she would definitely improve in communication and she would be informed about some acceptable way of working habit, he would also change with the dynamic world positively.
- **Observation:** Secretary should be quick at noticing how things are being done in order to apply the same experience whenever the situation arises; Learning can also take place through observing what others do and improving ones skills and attitude for job efficiency.
- **Imitation:** Is a process of trying to act or be like others. Good skills and behaviour can be observed then try to act such behaviour or quality in order to developing oneself in some areas where development is needed.
- **Determination:** The challenges may be strong, the time constrains, the job may be stressful, but purpose, there is not improvement that cannot take place and the sky will surely be her limit.
- **Perseverance;** A secretary should be able to stand and continue in search for self development in spite of all difficulties that may be encountered along the way.

- **Curiosity:** The ability of the secretary to desire to find out how things are inquisitive on how to handle new machines that may be brought into the office for her to be effective and efficient. Above all the secretary must be eager to learn.

Challenges to Self development of Secretarial staff

Self development is a vital area in the secretarial profession, it is the only channels through which a secretary can advanced and cope with the changes; in her environment, but sometimes there are some limitation that may stand as barrier to self development strategies these include.

Pride: When the secretary thinks she is satisfied with her present state of knowledge, there3 by feeling too big to learn from others about new changes in the working environment, then it stand as a obstacle to self development Attachegebe (2004) stated that some people wonder how they can go back to start learning with the children “as you desire to advance, you must take away pride and prepare to learn.

Fear of failure: Secretaries should desire success more than fear of failure. Secretary can only be successful by trying to achieve success in their carrier option.

Lack of self discipline: Attachegebe (2004) define discipline as the ability of an individual to exercise self control and respect constituted authority in the society. For a secretary to be self developed she must exercise self control if not, it might be difficult to achieve the aim and objective of the organization.

Inability to make sacrifice: For development to take place, secretaries must sacrifice her time, money and pleasure. Secretaries need to learn all activities that will make her contribute to the growth of the organization.

Reliance on other people: People have the tendency of relying on others for what they want. Spencer and Pruss in Gocheke (2009) opined that “you are on your own, with no one to praise you or to counsel you. Be your own coach”, A situation may arise where the person you are relaying on is not there; you have to face the reality alone. Therefore, relying on other cannot bring about any positive contribution to self development.

Laziness: This is the greatest enemy to improvement. In you rush to get ahead, don't overlook the fact that there is no substitute for competencies. Competence comes at a high price paid in hard work, study and dedication. Self-development can only be achieved through hard work.

Discouragement: Some people are discouraged or think cannot make it any

longer in life, but if you are alive there should be no hindrance to your learning because learning has no end entail you are deal. Therefore, age, lack of fund etc should not discourage one form self development.

Lack of Confidence: Each time you find a way to free your employer of some tasks, you will become more valuable. If you expect to get ahead, you must be a "self starter" alert to opportunities to prove your value by assuming more responsibility. "If you lack confidence in yourself, you cannot assume any responsibility and self development will be far away from you. Therefore secretary needs to equip or develop herself to be able to face these challenges.

Methodology

The study was a survey research since it focused on collecting the opinion of the secretary (respondents) as regard the need for self-development. The research work covered Federal Polytechnic Bauchi; Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic, Bauchi, and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi.

Table 1: Administration of the questionnaire

Schools	Population	Sample
Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi	67	40
Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic	27	10
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University	73	50
Total	167	100

In order to gather information and make adequate presentation of the study. The researcher sampled 100 secretaries out of the entire population using simple random selection technique.

A Structure questionnaire which consisted of 10 items was used in the collection of data. The questionnaire was designed using the 5 Point Likert rating scale to which values were attached. Data collected were analyzed using mean.

Results

Research question 1: What extent does the present secretarial curriculum meet the information technological development of the secretaries?

Table 2: Mean rating on present secretarial curriculum and information technological development of the secretaries?

Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	X	X	Remarks
Secretarial curriculum emphasizes use of Desktop Publishing to handle office work.	75	20	5	-	-	470	4.7	Accepted
It emphasizes knowledge of Web Page Design to cope with modern office environment.	90	10	-	-	-	490	4.9	Accepted
emphasizes skills and adequate knowledge of ICT Office Application 1 and ICT office application II for effective and efficient delivery of duties in an office.	95	5	-	-	-	490	4.9	Accepted
emphasizes skills in Database management system to handle information relating to statically matter in modern office environment.	85	15	-	-	-	485	4.9	Accepted
emphasizes knowledge and skills in Advanced Desktop Publishing to handle graphic information in an office environment.	70	20	10			460	4.6	Accepted

The result of the analysis shown in the table 2 revealed that Secretarial curriculum emphasizes skills development on Desktop Publishing to handle office work with mean score of 4.7. Knowledge of Web Page Design required to cope with modern office environment with the mean score of 4.9. It is obvious from the table that adequate knowledge of ICT Office Application 1 and ICT office application II is required for effective and efficient delivery of duties in an office with the mean score of 4.9. It was also agreed that skills in Database management system is necessary to handle information relating to statically matter in modern office environment while the mean score of 4.6 agreed that skill in advance desktop publishing to handle graphic information in an office environment is needed to meet the need of modern office environment.

Research question 2: How can secretarial staff better develop themselves to meet the challenges of information technology in office environment?

Table 3: Mean ratings on how secretarial staff can better develop themselves to meet the demand of information technology in office environments?

Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	X	X	Remarks
Secretarial staff can develop themselves by self -training and observation.	55	38	7	-	-	488	4.9	Accepted
Secretarial staff can develop themselves though off- the- job training method by receiving training from executive officer in an organization.	89	11	-	-	-	489	4.9	Accepted
Secretarial staff can develop themselves through understudy method by placing learner under a proficient person in an organization.	50	30	10	5	5	415	4.2	Accepted
Professional body (like ICAN for Accountants) can also be established to expose graduate secretaries to practical professional training in their chosen career.	80	10	5	5	-	475	4.8	Accepted
Professional secretaries can develop themselves by attending conference/seminar in other to cope with the challenges in the use of office equipment.	75	20	5	-	-	480	4.8	Accepted
Professional secretaries need knowledge of ICT in Office application packages to cope with the challenges in the office environment to cope with challenges in the office environment.	90	10	-	-	-	490	4.0	Accepted

Table 3 proves that secretarial staff can develop themselves by self -training and observation with the mean score of 4.9. While mean score of 4.9 also revealed that secretarial staff can develop themselves though off –the- job training method by receiving training from executive officer in an organization. Mean score of 4.8 accepted that professional body like APSSON Professional body (like ICAN for Accountants) can also expose graduate secretaries to practical professional training in their chosen career. While the mean score of 4.8 revealed professional secretaries can develop themselves by attending conference /seminars in order to cope with the challenges in the use of office equipment. The mean score of 4.9 revealed that

professional secretaries need knowledge of ICT Office application packages to cope with the challenges in the office.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the analysis shown in the above table revealed that professional Secretaries need skills on Desktop Publishing to handle office work with mean score of 4.7. Knowledge of Web Page Design is required to cope with modern office environment with the mean score of 4.9. It is obvious from the table that adequate knowledge of ICT Office Application 1 and ICT office application II is required for effective and efficient delivery of his duties in an office with the mean score of 4.9. It was also agreed that professional secretaries must possess skills in Database management system to handle information relating to statistical matter in modern office environment while the mean score of 4.6 also agreed that skill in advanced desktop publishing to handle graphic information in an office environment is needed to meet the need of modern office environment. Attachegebe (2004) stated that “some people wonder how they can go back to start learning with their children”. It was discovered in the finding that secretaries need more development in Information and computer technology.

The above table proved that Secretarial staff can develop themselves by self training and observation with the mean score of 4.9. While mean score of 4.9 also revealed that secretarial staff can develop themselves though off the job training method by receiving training from executive officer. Mean score of 4.8 accepted that professional body like APSSON Professional body can also be established to expose graduate secretaries to practical professional training in their chosen career. While the mean score of 4.8 revealed that Professional secretaries can develop themselves by attending conference/seminar in other to cope with the challenges in the use of office equipment. It is obvious that secretaries who are considered to be important personnel in the office must be up and doing in managing the affairs of the office in this new era of technological innovation. It is unfortunate, however, that some secretaries are not versed in the use of the computer machines and its related packages in order to apply it to information processing and management.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, the researchers conclude that no secretary can successfully exist in any developed office without developing her skills. The competence and the effectiveness of a secretary are greatly required in this era of information technology. Much more, the secretary must be able to be comfortable in computer and information technology as it enhances secretarial service.

Recommendations

It was recommended that;

1. Secretaries should be self motivated, pick out areas where they need

- development in order to pursue it to change along with the changing secretarial profession.
2. Management of the institution should prepare short courses/workshops/seminars for their secretaries in ICT related subject such as Ms Word, Ms Excel, Power Point, Internet etc to make them fit into the automated office.
 3. Government should make fund available to equip our higher institutions for adequate training and purchasing of facilities for the training of secretarial students.
 4. Professional body like APSSON could encourage graduate secretaries by providing practical professional training in their chosen career

References

- Adejumo, M.O (2004) Secretarial survival in information technology: The need or reorientation of secretaries *Journal of National Association of Secretarial Staff of Nigeria*.
- Attachegbe, A.O (2004). Training and development of secretarial practitioners in a dynamic world of technology. *Journal of National Association of Secretarial Staff of Nigeria*.
- Gocheke, J.A (2009) Secretarial self-development needs to meet the challenges of information technology. *Unpublished project*, Department of Office Technology and Management, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi.
- Kehinde E.E (2004). Re-orientation the secretaries in the information technology era. *Journal of National Association of Secretarial Staff of Nigeria*.
- Peter A. (2002). Secretarial profession in a techno dynamic World: Prospects and constraints. *Journal of National Association of Secretarial Staff of Nigerian* 6-7
- Omotola, I.A. (2004). The Relevance of secretarial studies in information era. *Book of Readings in Business Education*, pp 78-79.