

ECONOMIC RECESSION AND ORGANISATIONAL SURVIVAL: SECRETARIAL PERSONNEL'S PERSPECTIVE

by

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Introduction

Economic Recession has been defined with various and diverse names by different authors, writers, researchers and other opinion leaders as a period of general economic decline. It is usually defined as a contraction in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for six months (two consecutive quarters) or longer. It is marked by high unemployment, stagnant wages, and fall in retail sales. A period of Recession generally is not expected to last longer than one year. It is milder than depression and considered as a normal part of a capitalist economy and there is no unanimity of economists on its causes. When a recession last longer than expected, it becomes depression.

The National Bureau of Economic Research (2010) defined Economic Recession as a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months as the hallmark of recession.

Business Day of 19th January, 2017 opined that the Nigeria Economy combines an heritage of natural (human and physical) resources and the consequences (benefits and burdens) of decision executed at various levels in both the distant and recent past. While the economy has witnessed a decline in many macro indices, reflecting largely the ability of the country to overcome its most pertinent challenges, there remain significant opportunity for investment and growth. For the country to realise its immense possibilities however, certain fundamental shifts in the structure and orientation of the economy are being critical. Despite these, global economic recession did not help Nigeria's challenges and problems.

The present global recession has led to loss of jobs, stocks fall, dividend decline or stop, there are personnel shake ups, debtors pay slowly or refuse to pay at all, which leads to organisation's inability to service its debt, default in bonds and prevention of further borrowing. There will be employee's benefit reductions, more work being done by fewer people, which leads to reduced morale even when there is

increased productivity. As recession increases in severity and length, management and labour may meet and agree to mutual concessions to save the company and their jobs. The concessions may include more employees' benefits reductions, wage reduction. If the organisation is a manufacturing company, it may be forced to close plants or discontinue poorly performing products. There will be reduction in quality and standards, customers using products and services not patronised by many customers may have to do without their favourite goods and services while flavours, quantity and packaging may be compromised. Firms under economic recession spend less money on advertising and marketing be it print broadcast or online.

As the effects of a recession ripple through the economy, consumer confidence declines, consumer spending drops, smaller business may not survive as bankruptcy becomes common occurrence among larger firms, stores are franchised, new entrepreneurs are discouraged and life become difficult for most people.

Recessions are not expected to last forever, history shows that past recessions invariably end and; when they do economic recovery follows. In the case of Nigeria, can we see the end of recession coming closer? Are we sure recovery will follow? The government recently reported that we are already getting to the end of recession but Economists reported that the economy just improved by 0.05 which is very far from recovery.

Causes of Recession

Central Bank of Nigeria reported that recession can be caused by two broad factors: internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous). The former is usually as a result of conflict of ideas, misapplication of economic theory and regulations, negligence or policy inconsistency. The Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-1998 was caused partly by internal factors; banks were lending abroad in pursuit of high profit margin, due largely to showdowns at home, desire to pursue development without due consideration of economic fundamentals, corruption and structural and policy distortions (Wong 1999; Corsetti, Presenti & Roubins, 1999). Other internal factors were overheating of private sector and excessive investments in real-estate with no commensurate returns. In the same vein, the global financial crisis of 2007 and the ongoing recession was triggered by the United State housing bubble, excessive lending of banks into high risk subprime and adjustable rate mortgages which resulted in high default rates as well as downfall of banking sector. Default and losses on other categories of loans also rose. Considerably, as the crisis expended from housing market to other sectors of the economy bankruptcy of several high rated investment banks started to panic on the inter-bank loan and stock markets and eventually, the bubble busted. This resulted in the fall of global GDP, rising unemployment and economic difficulties in many part of the world which includes Nigeria (Kamar 2012).

The external causes of recession have to do with factors that are exogenous to

the economy over which policy makers have little or no control. Factors like natural disaster, climate change and revolution. An agricultural economy could face crop failure resulting in general economic slowdown. Also, a mono-economy could suffer recession from International shock for its product. This is a major cause of recession in Nigeria. Oil Boom led to the death of groundnut and cocoa production, and a shift to oil made people spend incomes from oil recklessly without the thought of fall in demand and price as well as likely reduction in production. Maintenance of oil refineries is so poor, oil barge racketeering, stealing of crude oil and illegal refineries became the order of the day that other countries see us as being irresponsible. The neoclassical economists are of theories that state interference in the market, labour union, monopolies and technological shocks are external causes of recession: this is also applicable in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, other causes of recession are:

- Bad governance and greed/selfishness of leaders;
- Poor/bad infrastructures with lack of maintenance;
- Inappropriate and lack of continuity in policies;
- Putting triangular pegs in round holes when making appointments and giving out duties/assignments; and
- Lack of government security and encouragement for small scale businesses.

To another group, negative demand and supply shocks as well as deflationary demand side shock that affect the aggregate demand work through a global economic slowdown that impacts major trading partners of a country is a major cause. In the case of Nigeria, when there is economic slowdown in the United States (US), China, India, EU, it could have a negative impact on the demand of Nigeria's crude oil from these countries. As a result, government's revenue and spending will dropped, taxes will rise, disposable income will fell and aggregate demand fell adversely impacting the production of goods and services. Also, a crash in asset prices as was the case during GFC, Credit Crunch, where financial institutions reduced the amount of credit to support production could occur.

Another source of negative demand shocks could be sharp appreciation of the domestic currency which encourages import and discourages export of goods and services and causes disequilibrium in balance of trade and deterioration in the balance of payments position.

Supply side shocks causes recession resulting mainly from general increase in commodity prices such as crude oil, metal and other non-fuel inputs, foodstuff etc. These factors are inflationary in nature. Persistent inflations are usually transferred to final consumers who can only afford less quantity because of higher prices. This lowers demand for goods and services and reduces standards of living and ultimately depresses production of goods and services by firms. When monetary and fiscal policies are not well coordinated, it also results to recession.

Emmanuel (2017) opined that the major cause of economic recession in any

economy (lesson from great depression, 1981, 1991, 2004, 2008-2009 global economic recession) may include:

- High inflation, a general rise in price of goods and services leading to low purchasing power.
- Accumulation of debt servicing especially foreign debts.
- High business loan interest rate – discouraging investors.
- Fall in aggregate demand, fall in wages and salaries.
- Mass unemployment and general loss of confidence in the government due to economic indices.

He further listed the following as causes of recession in Nigeria:

- Poor economic planning
- Diversification of the economy
- Encouraging foreign investment, among others, with no concrete evidenced strategic plan for growth
- Raising agricultural output and export
- Profiting from exchange rate and creating opportunity for the rich to make more money at the expense of the poor. CBN was selling dollars at N315 and people were buying at N480. The poor pays the price of a devalued currency and the rich schemes off the profits.
- High inflation rate

Consumer Price Spike

ITEM	PRICE (MAY, 2015) #	PRICE (MAY, 2016) #	%	PRICE ELASTICITY
Tomatoes (Basket)	12, 000	45, 000	275	Low
Pepper (Basket)	6, 000	20, 000	233	Moderate
Yellow Garri (50kg)	11, 000	18, 000	63.6	Low
Rice (50kg)	9, 000	14, 500	61.1	Low
Beans (50kg)	15, 000	16, 000	6.7	Low
Onion (Basket)	4, 000	10, 000	150	Moderate

Nigeria inflation rate currently stands at 18.63%; that is, extremely high and the highest for the past last decades.

- High Interest Rate: Interest rate is between 26.77% this is too high. It discourages investors and leads to unemployment as well as reduction in aggregate demand.
- High Taxation: Small businesses are slaughtered in Nigeria with high interest

rate and tax rate.

- Policy Conflict: No two governments in Nigeria operate the same policy. This always leads to confusion, conflict and lack of continuity.

Recession as a Blessing

Recessions are periods of 'creative destruction' of economic restructuring which industries decline, often terminally while new ideas, technologies, products and industries emerge and become the driving forces of subsequent economic growth. Bryson (1996) opined that recession conditions contribute to economic restructuring through at least two distinct processes.

- First, through business churn – the entry and exit of firms.
- Second, by motivating incumbent firms to adapt products and processes in order to increase or maintain business performance.

Recessions impact unevenly on industries, countries and firms and contribute to structural adjustment change as resources are transferred between existing industries, and from existing to new industries. Particular recessions present particular threats to and enable particular issue. Therefore, each recession provides lessons to business and policy makers.

How the Government can fight Recession

Emmanuel (2017) suggested Keynesian Model as a way out of recession or means of coping with recession:

- Counter cyclical spending and investment
- Lower taxes and incentives
- Accommodative monetary policy (Lower Reserve Requirements)
- Massive borrowing and infrastructure spending (Marshal plan)
- Acceptance of a natural rate of inflation
- Bail outs e.g. Obama's auto bailout.

He further proffered the following:

- Reduction in tax rate
- Effective spending through strategic spending in areas with high multiplier effects such as agriculture and manufacturing sectors
- Enhancing access to credit with very low interest
- Increased expenditure on skills
- Increased agricultural produce and export
- Increased manufacturing produce and export
- Investment in energy sector
- Speedy continuous execution of projects
- Commodity prices and raw material prices should be regulated through Consumer Protection Agency to avoid further inflation
- Let the country's economy grow by allowing the forces of market control the

value of the name

Organisational Survival During Recession

Fapounda (2012) opined that the global recession can be solved or managed by business organisations through:

- Subsidy and tariff protection from the government
- Reinvention of management and practice of human resource
- Communication using town hall meetings to encourage collectivism and symbiosis, conferences, workshops to enhance learning from others.
- Leadership should be characterized by transparency, accountability, courage to effect necessary changes, sacrifices and incremental changes.
- Organisational structure and procedures should be reviewed to simple ones that allows autonomy to improve decision making process and concentration on core areas.
- Succession planning
- Proactive human resource management using emotional intelligence strategies
- There should be free human resource practice in the use of the carrot and stick approach. In-plant sharing forum should be enthroned to encourage staff to share their knowledge.
- Change of management should be effected in bits and not radically.

Salidev (2008) observed that companies are not expected to employ for the sake of the word, rather, adequate assessments should be done. There is need to assess available staff, expected duties of those to be employed and the cost of employing compared to outsourcing or organising upgrading workshops for existing staff. For example, training and workshops for typists, secretaries and computer operators on tools that will make them function well as Office Managers.

Okpara (2006) suggested that jobs abound because there are so many gaps to be filled in any developing country or nation as the case may be. Refuse collection, road/environment cleaning, self-employment through entrepreneurial practice, harnessing of personal gifts for good of others etc are areas both government and organisations can encourage to survive during the recession.

Samsbury (2007) recommended that during recession, emphasis should be laid on cost-driven rather than quality innovations as users place premium on low cost. This can be recommended as long as it will not jeopardise health and safety of consumers.

Investment strategies as earlier mentioned can be adopted to avoid retrenchment. There may be need to innovate and expand into new markets in order to break even and achieve or extend a competitive advantage during recession and beyond.

Kitching, Blackburn, Smallbone, and Dixon (2009) identified three broad categories of strategy in recession as follows: retrenchment strategies, investment

strategies and ambidextoxous strategies; when considering business strategies and performance during difficult economic conditions (Recession).

Office Manager/Secretary in a Workplace

An office manager/secretary is a trained personnel who harnesses the process, methods and products of communication, documents and other operative techniques for maximum output as well as managing human and material resources towards the achievement of individual, group and organisational objectives.

An office manager/secretary is in charge of records, correspondence, minutes of meetings and related affairs in an organization, company or association. He or she is also in charge of routine tasks like taking dictation, typing, computing of documents, filing and management of clerical/secretarial personnel. Esene (2007) described a secretary (office manager) as an assistant to an executive, possessing mastery of skills and ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, who displays initiative, exercise judgement and makes decision with the scope of her authority.

Secretaries existed since the earliest memories and have always played a lead role in the management growth and achievement of an organisational role. Secretaries (scribes) whose duties were to record speeches of great Rome Orators such as Cicero, as well as the words spoken by the kings to their subjects; during that time, the transcripts were handwritten which made the work of a secretary slow, laborious and limited (Blackborn, 2001). However, secretarial practice as a distinct sphere of home endeavour has gone beyond typing and shorthand. Their roles has transformed from that of a scribe to more complex works of office management, information generation, information management, supervision of office staff, planning budgets, making appointments, preparing the boss for appointments, meetings, presentations and other assignments, conveying and implementing decisions, collecting, collating and analysing from various sources for planning and decision making, records management, follow up actions, etc.

Although, the duties of dictation, transcription and typing have been reduced since modern technology has taken over but all activities in the office still revolve round him or her, and since an office is the nerve centre of an organisation, an office manager/secretary still remains the backbone or spinal cord of any organisation. Blackborn (2001) reacted to this fact by stating that secretaries are a wonderful group of experts without whom bosses would perish.

Eric (2006) reinforced this position by stating that no organisation can operate satisfactorily without the services of a secretary as one who acts executive alter ego and the power behind the thrones of executive. It is not an exaggeration to say that the quality of administrative work in any organisation is a reflection of the quality of secretarial service in that organisation.

Modern Secretarial Personnel as Office Manager during Recession

An effective and efficient secretarial personnel is the one who is able to manage all resources in cooperation with his or her boss in order to achieve the organisational goal as well as individual goals. Economic recession should be well managed for the survival of the organisations by the managements with the Secretaries as the backbone.

Secretarial functions include office administration and management, supervision of junior office workers, management of human and material resources, meeting arrangement, report and organisation etc. Prior to the Civil Service Reform of 1988, these calibres of secretaries were referred to as Confidential Secretaries but after reorganisation, they were redesignated to Secretarial Assistants i.e Assistants to the Boss on Secretarial Matters. Modern Offices now call them Office Managers. A Secretary is as important and professional as the executive. Each of them takes his or her place and recognises their dependence on one another for effective result.

The boss and the secretary are expected to work as a team even though the boss still remains the boss while the Secretary anticipate his or her needs but don't try to step ahead of him/her needs but try to complement him or her for efficiency and effectiveness. Secretaries are expected to be progressive and effective; and bosses should acknowledge the Professionalism of the Secretarial Profession and to relate with the Secretary on partnership basis rather than on Master-Slave or Superior-Inferior relationship.

A professional Secretary is expected to know about accounting (to keep Imprest and Petty Cash Book). He or she should be an expert in Public Relations, Personnel Manager (to manage junior staff), an Entrepreneur (to enable her to give proper advice to boss that will enhance profitability), a Business Lawyer expert (to guide against making illegal decisions that can lead to embarrassment or legal law), a good Information Technology Office User (to meet up with global expectation) etc

He or she is often regarded as the cleaning house through which various projects undertake. As a result, the challenge of staying organised and on top of everything is required, of him or her everyday. SWOTT Analysis can be used to assist modern secretaries to achieve success in their duties especially now that there is economic recession (Adebayo & Akinyele, 2012).

Swott Analysis of Professional Secretarial Practice

Adebayo and Akinyele (2012) used SWOTT to discuss professional secretarial practice as follows:

➤ Strengths

Secretaries have always been indispensable individuals in all types of organisations, for they have relieved countless executives of details and cut red tape for customers and employees. The traditional role of a secretary was to support an executive, by helping to manage his schedules, handle visitors

and callers, and produce document and communications (Musigha, 2009). In recent times, however, the nature of secretarial work has changed drastically, with more professional managers keying in their own correspondences and more files being stored electronically. As the reliance on technology continues to expand in offices, the role of the office professional has greatly evolved. With office automation and organizational restructuring, secretaries are increasingly assuming responsibilities once reserved for managerial and professional staff. In spite of these changes, however, the core responsibilities for secretaries and administrative assistants have remained much the same: performing and coordinating an office's dissemination to staff and clients. Secretaries, in today's occupational setting, are doing more professional work. They are involved in training, supervision, desktop publishing, information management and research. They are involved with equipment purchase and maintenance, customer service, project management, public relations and supervision of outside vendors.

➤ **Weaknesses**

One key area of secretarial practice and skill in Nigeria, especially in the public service, that is being unconsciously neglected is the use of Shorthand. Although, a secretary is required to possess a good shorthand and Word Processing and ICT skills, good knowledge of secretarial duties and communication skills, the occupational dynamics in the Public Sector has greatly reduced the daily use of shorthand skills, as more managers are getting involved in the word-processing of their documents. Without prejudice to the foregoing, the use of Shorthand by secretaries rather than go to the extinction; has been confirmed to be complimentary to e-administration and efficient secretarial practice internationally. It saves time, serves as a testimonial of secretarial competence and provides a veritable medium of expression that qualifies secretarial practice as a unique and universally accepted profession similar to medical practice. Suffice to note that the use of Shorthand also enable the Professional Secretary to effectively codify information in a safe medium for diligent management and confidentiality. In succinct terms, a professional secretary that is deficient in the knowledge and use of Shorthand is at best a glorified Typist. Regrettably so, that many secretaries in the public sector fall into this category; not because they could not know or use Shorthand in their daily practice, but because they have imbibe the limiting culture of doing daily only the needful, which does not require the application of Shorthand.

➤ **Opportunities**

Far from being an endangered profession, secretaries are employed in

organizations of every type. Around 90 percent are employed in service-providing industries, ranging from education and healthcare to government and retail trade. Most of the rest work for firms engaged in manufacturing or construction. The Occupational Outlook Handbook (2010-11 Editions) noted that secretaries and administrative assistants held about 4.3 million jobs in 2008, ranking it among the largest occupations in the U.S. economy. The following tabulation shows the distribution of employment by secretarial specialty:

▪ Secretaries, except legal, medical and executive	-
2,020,000	
▪ Executive secretaries and administrative assistants	-
1,594,400	
▪ Medical secretaries	-
471,100	
▪ Legal secretaries	-
262,600	

Employment is projected to grow to about as fast as average. Secretaries and administrative assistants will have among the largest number of job openings due to growth and the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or leave this occupation. Opportunities would, however, be best for applicants with extensive knowledge of computer software applications. Employment of secretaries and administrative assistants is expected to increase by 11 per cent, which is about as fast as the average for all occupations, between 2008 and 2018. Projected employment varies by occupational specialty (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11).

➤ **Trends**

Developments in Office Technology are certain to continue. Many secretarial duties are of personal and interactive nature and are not easily automated. Responsibilities such as planning conferences, working with clients, and instructing staff require tact and communication skills, which technology cannot substitute. Secretaries nowadays use a variety of office equipment, such as fax machines, photocopiers, scanners, videoconferencing and telephone systems. In addition, secretaries often use computers to do tasks previously handled by managers and professionals; they create spreadsheets, 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. At the same time, managers and professionals have assumed many

tasks traditionally assigned to secretaries and administrative assistants, such as keyboarding and answering the telephone. Because secretaries do less dictation and word processing, they now have time to support more members of the executive staff. In a number of organizations, secretaries work in teams to work flexibly and share their expertise. Many secretaries and administrative assistants provide training and orientation for new staff, conduct research on the internet, and operate and troubleshoot new office technologies. It is projected that increasing office automation and organizational restructuring will continue to make secretaries and administrative assistants more productive in coming years. Computers, e-mail, scanners, and voice message system will allow secretaries and administrative assistants to accomplish more in the same amount of time.

➤ **Threats and Challenges**

The use of automated equipment is also changing the face and distribution of work in many offices. In some cases, traditional secretarial duties as typing, filing, photocopying, and bookkeeping are being done by clerks in other departments or by the professionals themselves. For example, professionals and managers increasingly do their own word processing and data entry and handle much of their own correspondence. In some law and medical offices, paralegals and medical assistants are assuming some tasks formerly done by secretaries. Also, many small and medium sized organisations are outsourcing key administrative functions, such as data entry, book-keeping, and internet research, to virtual assistants. Despite various research studies and a far larger quantity of speculations on the impact of new office technology, there has been a lack of empirical evidence focusing on the secretaries' working patterns, interactions, and communication as well as how new office technology has changed the experience of work in the culture of offices. Hamilton Khalid (2000) in a doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield, Malaysia examined the effects of new office technology on secretaries' attitudes and training in the United Kingdom and Malaysia. The main findings of the research are as follows:

- Whilst significant cultural changes are subtle and complex, there are certain shifts which stand out as particularly important. Both managers and secretaries are using new office technology and software packages, regardless of the size of organisations. They both access almost the same information, indicating a possible breakdown in the traditional hierarchical structure of management.
- As secretaries have access to, and are able to manipulate information, they are becoming more powerful. There are no significant differences in using new office technology because of gender and

age. Secretaries are more proactive with new roles and responsibilities.

- The study found that secretaries both exhibit more positive attitudes toward new office technology and welcome the changes. The results also demonstrated that both internal and external communication has increased with electronic communication. The secretaries are able to communicate with all levels of employees.
- The study found that personal interactions are extensive as secretaries not only prefer personal contacts but that technology becomes a means of making this happen.
- The findings also suggest that both formal and informal training are more extensive than in the past due to the ever-changing technology, but especially in Malaysia more informal training is utilised to improve the understanding of the technology.
- Although there are many similarities between the findings in two different countries, there are some differences due to cultural backgrounds.

Office Manager/Secretary and Work Place in the Era of Economic Recession

For a secretary to ensure organisational survival despite the recession there is need to work on the following:

Personal Competencies

1. **Positive Attitude:** A positive attitude in relation to managing work relationships and coping with change. This can be referred to as “can do” attitude and approaching work with enthusiasm.
2. **Self-Motivation:** Self-motivation refers to an internal drive to get things done. This quality is associated with a positive attitude.
3. **Flexibility and Adaptability:** Being flexible to and adapting well to change, whether it be in regard to position changes, changes in responsibility, or general organisational reorganisation.
4. **Integrity:** Honesty, especially as it applies to interpersonal dealings.
5. **Being Active Learner:** Willingness to continue the learning process on the job. Employers are looking for candidates who want to grow their knowledge-base for themselves, and to help the company.
6. **Problem Solving:** The skill to resolve issues, and identify solutions to problems. The ability to understand a company's problem areas and to actively seek solutions to address problems.
7. **Decision Making Ability:** Fact-based decision making, which includes the skill to assess potential decisions based on facts, not assumptions.
8. **Analytical/Cognitive Ability:** The skill to thinking analytically.

9. GPA/Academic Achievement: Grade Point Averages (GPA) refer to the overall grade point, with the higher the GPA being more desirable. An average of 3.0 or above is sought. GPA has been positively correlated to potential success on the job. Other academic achievements include academic awards and scholarships.
10. Loyalty: Commitment to the job.

Communication Competencies

1. Communication, Written and Oral: Competency in effectively articulating ideas in both written and oral formats.
2. Public Speaking: Oral communication skills, public speaking skills, and presentation. Presenting information clearly to group.
3. Listening Skills: This skill refers to the individual as an “active listener”. Some articles indicated that a good listener is one who repeats back to the speaker the essence of what they are saying to make sure that the meaning is understood.
4. Social Skills: Getting along with others, participation in the creation of positive working relationships. This term is linked to team/group skills.
5. Team/Group Skills: Skills to work well in a team or group on projects and jobs. Drawing on combined strengths, including leadership ability and social skills, and the ability to be one of many who collaborate to get the job done.
6. Networking: Skills to build connections among people, in offices or departments. This skill may be more important as it relates to company size.

Organisational Competencies

1. Organisational Skills: Managing tasks and projects, and files well.
2. Leadership/Management Skills: Skills to manage other people to get results and taking the initiative.
3. Meeting Skills: The skill to successfully run meetings and participate
4. Systems Perspective: This quality involves taking into account of the behaviours of a system as a whole in the context of its environment
5. Computer Skills: The skill to use a computer competently is a quality sought by employers. Other technical skills that employers mentioned included knowledge of photocopiers, fax machines and other office equipment.
6. Economics/Statistics: Business courses in economics and/or statistics.
7. Quality Approach Knowledge: The understanding of work as a process. Several authors indicated that TQM knowledge is desired, since companies are looking to offer quality services and products, and analyse processes for improvement.
8. Work Experience: Through an internship, externship, co-ops or other employment, companies seek those who possess some work experience.

This quality is paired with Business Understanding.

9. Customer Orientation: The skill related to both social skills and problem solving ability. The skill to relate to people/clients/customers, and address concerns or issues in a positive way. This skill has been more closely identified with smaller organisations (those of 200 employees or less).
10. Extra-Curricula Activities: These activities are those that a new graduate may have been involved in outside of class while attending college.
11. Business Understanding: Relating to a business environment and its processes. This kind of understanding would be gained through some sort of prior work experience.

International/Intercultural Competencies

1. Cross-Cultural Competency: The skill to deal with others unlike themselves and to do so with a positive attitude. Since some individuals may not have extensive experience in dealing with diverse people, this trait in a new graduate is viewed positively by employers.
2. International Knowledge: A basic understanding of international business workings.
3. Second Language: Some employers are seeking candidates with skills in other languages.
4. International Management: Business course in management or international management.
5. International Marketing: Business course in marketing or international marketing.
6. International Trade Theory: Business course in trade theory or international trade theory.
7. International Human Resources: Business course in human resources or international human resources.

Domain Competencies

1. Basic Business Courses: Some business courses were identified as being useful for new graduates to have taken. Certain undergraduate business college courses were valued because they provided the new graduate with some basic knowledge. Often articles pointed out that a new employee would be taught what they did not know and that sometimes prior knowledge (as gained through such classes) may not be applicable.
2. Domain Knowledge: Reflects the knowledge that a person gained through their undergraduate major. Domain knowledge is the one area of concentrated skills/ability gained through college education.
3. Accounting: Business or management course in accounting.

Others

1. Strategy: Business or management course in strategy.
2. College Expense: The contribution to paying for some, or all, of the educational cost.

Brent and Togelyn (1998) opined that some skills and competencies are required for a secretary/office manager to achieve success at work. Looking through it, the writer believes the afore discussed skills and others can easily assist in maintaining organisational goals and objectives during recession.

In addition, virtual office is the main thing now and a secretary needs to be skilled in telecommunicating and networking where office worker work from another location outside the traditional office. Virtual workers only need to access data, information and some applications to perform duties. Mobile workers can access and be accessed anywhere through phone calls, e-mails, Facebook, LinkedIn, Yahoo, Messenger, BBM etc (Akinyele, 2016).

Secretaries/Office Manager need to be skilled in corporate data management and applications kept in the centre (in the house or in the cloud). To reduce cost and at the same time, maintain quality as well as ensure security, cloud computing can be applied by the secretary for at most organisational data, information and e-communication.

Recommendations and Conclusion

A secretary is the spinal cord of any organisation who can enhance or mar the achievement of individual and organisational goals. There is need to always see them as partners in progress rather than slaves to enable organisations to get the best out of them. Acceptability and respect of professionalism in secretarial practice will make secretaries feel accepted and respected which will in turn enhance their morale and result in perfect performance. To achieve continuity, profitability and effectiveness during recession, there is need to upgrade knowledge, skill and methods of operation of Professional Secretaries.

In conclusion, there is need for secretaries and stakeholders in the office to work as a team for the progress of their organisations and not to see some people as inferior or slave. Recognition, respect and making available what is required to make a secretary successful is for the benefit of the organisation, management members, staff, workers, clients, customers and other stakeholders id essential. There is then need to take good care of organisation's spinal cord (secretaries) for greater achievement during economic recession and even when there is no recession.

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