THE TRANSFORMATION AGENDA AND INCREASING ROLE OF SECRETARIAL PROFESSION IN NATION BUILDING

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Abstract
Secretarial profession can never achieve transformation agenda in its increasing role in nation building without harnessing the power of technology. The National Policy on Education (2004, revised) and decree No 16 of 1985 section 9 (b) and 9 (e) specified office technology and secretarial profession. This includes vocational skill, competencies, productivity, effectiveness and efficiency expected in secretarial profession. This paper is an attempt to show how service delivery can best be provided in secretarial services through. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Internet Services being the crucial aspect of secretarial functions. The paper also enumerates all those skills and functions desired of secretarial profession in job performance. It examines the role of secretarial profession in the changing world of technology as it affects secretarial functions in given organizations, the current challenges in the application of technology in secretarial profession, conclusion and recommendations.

Introduction
The future of any society solidly depends upon its technological development and advancement. The landmark helps to boost the professional image of every field of endeavour and career, covering the following: skill, competencies, productivity, effectiveness, efficiency and a whole lot, especially in secretarial profession.

On the strength of indispensability, the above mentioned plays a very fundamental role in the imperative transformation, increasing and building of a nation, private, public and governmental organizations and agencies with the view of achieving its set aims and objectives.

The role of technology can never be over-emphasized; hence it remains crucial and indispensible. This is because hardly can any nation and organization survive without the power of technology. Denyer (1974) identified that a nation which desire to achieve its transformation agenda in every sector of the economy
must key into harnessing the power of technology in the job performance of secretaries.

The paper intends to examine the concept of harnessing, power, technology, vocational skill, competencies, efficiency, effectiveness and productivity. It also intends to identify how service can best be provided in secretarial profession, through the power of technology such as computer, information and communication technology (ICT), internet services, skills and functions desired by secretarial profession in their job performance and finally the role of secretaries in changing world of technology and the challenges of technology in secretarial profession.

**Concept of harnessing**

The ability to use the current technology to empower and improve skills, creativity and the initiative of professionals, through training and re-training, capable of bringing about dynamic transformation in a nation, organizations and the secretarial profession.

**Power**

This terminology is connected to authority exercises by technology which influences and energizes trained professionals to perform their jobs at ease and faster, which enhances productivity and brings about remarkable change in a nation, organization and the society at large. In the same vein, a secretary who acquired technological training stands to become an authority in his or her professional career which in turn brings about transformative idea and knowledge in the nation building.

**Technology**

Technology is defined by the National Policy on Education (1981, revised) as that aspect which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills and basic scientific knowledge related to one's profession (e.g. manual typewriter, electric typewriter, photocopier, duplicating machines, stapling machine, punching machine, computer usage and internet).

As technology remains the power house for successful execution of organizational functions, so also is the indispensable role of the secretaries in the transformation programme for nation building. This is in-line with the provision of the National Commission (1996) which stipulated among others, the objectives of technology in secretarial profession:

To promote productivity of secretarial functions in job performance
To equip secretaries with the required skill that will make them more competent in their job
To provide them with the knowledge about the latest idea, innovation, creativity in the changing world of technology as it affects their functions in a given
Office technology involves and requires a high level of administrative, academic, technical skills and competencies which secretaries and computer operators and other related office workers must possess.

**Vocational skills**

Vocational skill is the type of skill and knowledge which technology provides to professionals such as secretaries to enable them perform their jobs. John (1990) identified that vocational skill is acquired or gotten through training or learning offered in Commercial Secondary Schools, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics and Universities to make them to become competent Secretaries and Administrators in their office occupation. Okolo (2009) noted that vocational skill is the discipline which provides secretaries with adequate creativity, information, competencies needed to enable them function well in office occupation, which is in line with Adamu (2008) etc.

**Competencies**

Competence includes the ability to use the acquired skill and knowledge credibly and excellently in the job in order to achieve the desired goal or objective. Secretaries are expected to display indispensability in their organization by wealth of the skills, knowledge and experience acquired.

**Efficiency**

Oduma (2008) identified that efficiency has related connotation with the term competence, which deals with the quality of performing a task well and credibly without wasting time. Technology, if harnesses, would equip secretarial professionals in discharging their task or job well and better. The power of technology by trained secretaries will make them outstanding and standard in their day-today job performance, which will be responsible in bringing about the needed transformation agenda in the nation building. This is in line with the statement that when you empower a secretary technologically, you are building the nation.

**Effectiveness**

This connotes an act of producing the most intended and successful result. For secretaries to achieve this result in their professional career or discipline there is need for them to key into the world of technology, to enable them obtain the best output. Effectiveness is never limited only to the field of discipline rather is a global phenomena that needed to be given the highest priority if successful achievement in the reality of transformation agenda and nation building is to be made. However, effectiveness can be achieved particularly in secretarial profession if the power of technology is progressively harnessed.
Productivity

Productivity involves giving birth to larger quantities. Productivity is absolutely very certain in every field of endeavour or discipline when the technical skill of the professionals (staff, workers, labourers, work force etc) in an organization is completely been harnessed. This will also reduce the limitation that might be responsible for any transformation agenda into nation building.

Computer

Computer is one of the current and latest technology in the world today. Nations, organizations, individuals, and professionals are hastily keying in to enable them achieve the benefits in the world of technology. Aliyu (2007) stated that computer is an electronic device which uses set of instruction to automatically accept data, process the data, store and produce the information as an output.

Computer plays a vital role in secretarial profession as it affects their jobs, especially in their day-to-day office and business world which computer literacy is required. Aina (2009) identified the following as the role of computer: reduce office time wastage, promote the required accuracy and effectiveness in job performance, controls and reduce excessive error on official typed documents, improves work quality and production, and increase speed and efficiency.

The role of computer has gone beyond the traditional age of using manual typewriter, duplicating machine, electronic typewriter to mention just a few.

Information and Communication Technology

Information and Communication is a crucial aspect of secretarial function. Organization can never succeed without effective information management. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides the best medium through which information and communication can easily and adequately be disseminated to the appropriate quarters within and outside an organization, hence information and communication is the cardinal objective, as no nations and organizations operates in a vacuum. This is largely possible through computer technology and internet services.

Internet Service

The internet is a collection of computer networks that operate on common standard to enable computers and the programmes run to communicate directly. The term is used globally. This is in agreement with the view of Alexandar (2008) who defined internet as a global system of interconnected computer networks that interchange data. He further explained that the benefits of internet service technology to secretarial profession include the following:
Provides Secretary with the ability to search and evaluate relevant information

- It serves as a source of information and provides wider knowledge about professional careers.
- Facilitate contacts with personalities internationally, nationally, and locally.
- Connect secretarial staff with the rest of the world on business and private issues, etc.

Skills/functions desired by Secretaries

Who are secretaries? Secretaries are trained professionals in the field of secretarial, administrative and clerical duties. However, in line with the significant roles of secretaries, they are regarded as the life-wire of any given organization.

The implication of harnessing the power of technology in Secretarial Profession is to bring about dynamic transformation toward nation building. Thus, the skills include the following:

Speed and accuracy in keyboarding, ability to operate computer, ability to communicate and command good English Language, ability to maintain official confidentiality (keep secrets on official matters), ability to operate both manual and electric typewriter, ability to use shorthand and writing skills in covering minutes of meetings, ability of good usage of English Language in writing private and business letters and ability to display good human relationship, politeness, tactfulness, loyalty etc to staff and visitors in an organization.

From the above background, it can be seen that secretarial job requires high level of skills and functions.

Role of Secretaries in the Changing world of technology

The introduction of modern office technology in the 21st century has helped to transform the role of secretarial profession in both public and private organizations. The technology now enable secretaries conduct research on internet, coordinate administrative activities effectively, keep record of official and personal document electronically, making appointment or contact through computer with the aid of internet etc.

Current Challenges in the Application of Technology in Secretarial Profession

In the light of the foregoing, it is completely very clear that professionals, such as secretaries, must possess technological competences and skills required in their job performance, to be able to fit effectively. These competencies are especially required in the discharge of secretarial and administrative duties toward achieving the programme of the government which include transformation and nation building.
Conclusion

Technology is the nerve-centre and life-blood. No nation can achieve its transformation agenda and advancement in Education, Agriculture, Industrial or Commercial Organization without harnessing the power of technology, such as is required in secretarial profession.

The realization of improved output in the quality of secretarial job depends entirely on technological advancement and competence

Recommendations

Based on the issues discussed in this paper, the following recommendations are made:

Secretaries should be provided with the required technical skill that will make them effective, efficient and competent in their job performance.

Efforts on work-experience and cooperative work-study programme should be designed for professional secretaries to enable them acquire practical exposures.

Secretaries should be trained on computer application, appreciation, programming, ICT and internet services as part of technological advancement in their job.

Degree programmes in Secretarial Management or Studies should be runned by very many universities to provide opportunity for ambitious secretaries acquire degrees and higher certificates.

Secretaries should be properly groomed by allowing them attend seminars, conferences, workshops, re-training or in-service course to up-date their knowledge on the methods and the use of newer types of secretarial equipment or technology.

References


