PROMOTING PROFESSIONALISM IN CONTEMPORARY SECRETARIAL PRACTICE

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Abstract
Over the years, secretarial professionals occupy very strategic positions in the business world, and have significantly contributed in various ways to developing the Nigeria economy. It is, therefore, a known fact that the world ordinarily would not have survived without the secretarial position, hence the survival and sustenance of economic and management of any private enterprise, government establishments, parastatals and financial institutions depend largely on the effectiveness and efficiency of secretarial professionals, who have adequately been trained in secretarial discipline. This paper highlights the significance of promoting the practice of secretarial professionals in Nigerian economic development. It thus, recommends among others that for secretarial professionals to continue to play significant role in Nigeria economic development, modern office automation should be made available for use, training and retraining of secretarial practitioners for effective and efficient development of knowledge, skills and competences toward the development of Nigerian economy.

Introduction
Secretarial profession has been in existence for several decades. It plays a very significance role in Nigerian economic development. Amoor (2001) observed that the professionals have acquired skills whose knowledge and competencies are needed in private enterprise, government establishments, parastatals and financial institutions therefore contributing immensely their quota for economic development and its impact felt in various sectors of the Nigerian economy.

Secretarial practice is a component of Vocational Education and Office Technology and Management that provides knowledge and skills required to perform efficiently and effectively in the world of work. According to Uduma (2008) if secretarial profession is promoted it would serve as one of the building for economic development.

Secretarial Profession can never make impact in isolation without education and training to improve the qualities and build the attitudes that are necessary to empower secretaries to make proper use of office technology in order to give credence and proper guidance to the readers, the paper will focus in the following areas; Nigeria Economic Development, Promoting Secretarial Profession through education and its contribution to Nigeria Economic Development, Education and Training of the Professionals, use of Modern Office Technology, Conclusion and Recommendations.

Nigerian Economic Development
Economic Development and Economic Growth could be misunderstood to mean the same. But these terms are completely not the same. There are significant differences
existing between Economic Growth and Economic Development. The term economic growth refers to increase of a specific measure such as the real national income, gross domestic product or per capita income. When the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a nation rises the economists refer to it as economic growth while the term economic development on the other hand, implies much more. It refers to improvements in a variety of indicators such as literacy rates, life expectancy, and economic welfare that does not take into account important aspects such as leisure time, environmental quality, freedom, or social justice. Economic growth of any specific measure is not a sufficient definition of economic development.

In another sense, economic development focuses on the recruitment of business operations for a region or assisting in the expansion or retention of business operations with region. In a broad sense, economic development encompasses three major areas:

(a) Policies that government undertakes to meet broad economic objectives such as price stability, high employment, expand tax base, and sustainable growth.
(b) Policies and programme to provide infrastructure and services such as highways, parks, affordable housing, crime prevention and sound educational system.
(c) Policies and programme explicitly directed at job creation and retention through specific efforts in business finance, marketing, neighbourhood development and small business development, etc.

A country's economy is said to be developing when the masses are enjoying good health facilities, political stability, non-ethical standards, good educational system, good security system, constant availability of portable water, electricity, good roads, employment and poverty eradication.

**Promoting Secretarial Profession through Education and its Contributions to Nigeria Economic Development**

Promoting Secretarial Profession through education contributes indisputably to the development of Nigerian economy in the following ways:-

(a) It provides adequate skills to professional secretaries on how to receive and manage information.
(b) It provides human resources for employment in all sectors of economy, this encompasses employability skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to propel and propagate the graduate into employment or paid jobs.
(c) It develops knowledge, competencies and skills for effective and efficient supportive role in administration and management of Nigerian economy.
(d) It educates and train for self-reliance. The graduates of Secretarial Studies do not necessarily wait to be employed by government establishments, rather they set up businesses of their own and get others employed, thus contributing immensely to the nation's economy.
(e) It trains and educates for job creation. According to Nathaniel (2006), secretarial education trains graduates to be self-employed as well as an employer of labour, and hence a professional secretary has a lot of
entrepreneurial opportunities in the information and computer age.
(f) It produces proficient secretaries who utilizes human and material resources for optimal productivity and contributes to nation economic development.

Training of Professional Secretaries
Professional Secretaries are those trained in the field of secretarial, administrative and clerical duties. The role of secretaries proves that they are indispensable and live-wire of any given organizations. Promoting secretarial profession is essentially very crucial and vital through training and retraining for effective and efficient development of their potentials, talents, creativity, knowledge, skills, competencies and service delivery which includes the following:
(a) The ability to fit into the current technology such as Information Management Technology (IMT) and Information Communication and Technology (ICT).
(b) The ability to communicate and command good use general language in job places.
(c) The ability to display good human relationship, politeness, tactfulness, loyalty etc to visitors in an organization.
(d) The ability to handle confidential matters without leakage.
(e) The ability to maintain speed and accuracy in the operation of day-today computation and production of correspondence and other documents.

The Use of Modern Office Technology
The introduction of modern office technology in the 21st century has helped to transform the practice of secretarial profession in public and private organizations. This include the use of ICT, Internet, computers, printers and photocopiers which enable Secretaries to carry out their duties fast, conduct research, coordinate administrative functions, keep very clean and clear record of official and personal documents electronically. It is, therefore, very clear that Secretaries must update and possess modern technological skills and knowledge to promote the quality of the profession.
In addition, no nation of the world can achieve its economic development in education, agriculture, industrialization and commercialization if such a nation fails to promote the professionalism of secretarial practice. However, modern technology if embraced by all secretarial practitioners world-wide the integrity and the respect of the profession will stand higher, greater, taller, mightier, and better than every other professions in the world.

Conclusion
The realization of improved output and the quality of secretaries depends entirely on promoting the professionalism of the practitioners. Secretarial profession which in the past was regarded as a job for the dropouts and the disabled has now eventually become the cornerstone and empowerment for gainful employment,
human and material resources management, public relations, management of information and entrepreneurship development for Nigerian economic development. Therefore we most embrace and be proud of our profession, as together we most move forward.

Recommendations
For secretarial profession to continue to play its significant role in Nigerian economic development following recommendations are made:

(a) Its curriculum at the tertiary institutions should be reviewed to include course like management, economic and personal finance, entrepreneurship, information and international business. If this is done, it would:

(i) Prepare professional secretaries to become responsible and capable of making the best economic decisions that will benefit the profession and the organizations they serve.

(ii) Introduce secretaries to the basics of personal finance and decision making techniques needed to be wise administrators.

(iii) Give secretaries the very broad based knowledge to enhance their administrative and managerial roles in both private enterprises and government establishment or institutions.

(iv) Make professional secretaries very competent to advise their executive on policy matters.

(b) Modern office equipment should be provided in schools and offices for use, training and re-training of secretarial practitioners for effective and efficient development of knowledge, skills and competencies for economic development.

(c) Degree programme in Secretarial Management or studies should be introduced by many universities to provide opportunity for ambitious secretaries acquire degrees and higher certificates.

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

(e) Secretaries should be properly groomed by allowing them attend seminars, conferences; workshops and some other relevant trainings that will help update their knowledge on the use of modern secretarial equipment or technology.
References


