

EFFECT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY ON SECRETARIAL PRACTICE IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The study investigated the effects of information and communications technology on secretarial practice in public institution. The study was guided by four specific objectives, and four research questions. Descriptive survey research design was employed to guide the study. Ten public institutions in Katsina State were used for this study. Eight secretaries drawn from each institution which made eighty (80) respondents were purposively selected. The self-developed questionnaire using modified 4point scale was used. The instrument was validated by three experts; the reliability coefficient of .81 was obtained. The researcher administered eighty copies of the questionnaire and seventy eight (78) were filled and returned which was 97.5% The researcher concluded that the integration of ICT facilities in the selected public institutions and their effective use by the secretaries has significantly contributed in the development of Secretarial profession to the extent that the profession may hardly exist without the ICT facilities. It was therefore suggested that public institutions should endeavor to acquire as many current ICT facilities/equipment as possible with a view to assist in the development of Secretarial profession which will lead to improvement of their performance and in the long run, resulted to achieving the institutional objectives. Information and communications technology have significant effects on secretarial profession in public institution in katsina state, Nigeria. The effects were found to be relevant to secretarial profession in ICT in public institution. The researcher recommended among others that both government and private organizations should procure adequate modern information technology/equipment to enhance their secretaries' productivity. Organizations should involve the secretaries in deciding the kind of technological devices they wish to procure since the latter are going to use them.

Keywords: *Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Secretarial Profession*

Introduction

In the past decades, different changes have taken place in all facets of human life including the office environment. This is as a result of ICT related technological advancement. Every office in today's business world, be it government, industry or other human endeavors, requires facts and accurate information for quick decision-making which necessitates the use of ICT.

The ICT advancement has been moving at break-net speed since the end of the Second World War, in different human endeavors. These advances have permeated and affected adversely all aspect of life. Information and Communication Technology has been modified and even replaced our traditional method of communication. There are other technological transformation on the way we live, play and relax in our homes.

The office worker, including the secretary, expects certain support from the organization into which he/she is employed. This support can be industrial (machines and equipment) and human. In offices of the old generation managers dictate memos and letters for secretaries to type. Most recently, businesses focuses and relied on personal computers (PC) and even electronic mail in an effort to lessen the need for secretarial support and make the employee-secretary very productive (Ezoem, 1996; Osuala, 2005).

As a result of changes in equipment, the protagonist of secretaries in business has changed enormously from that of typewriting and shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails to the present day where secretaries are exposed to office equipment including the internet and other Communication gadgets that make work much easier and knowledge more accessible (Edwin, 2008). It is now easier to send messages by telex, electronic mails (e-mails), fax and telephones. Other office gadgets available to the secretary are photo-copy machines, duplicating machines, dictating machines, printers, application software among others. We have three most popular types of computer software programme like MS Word, which help the user to write and edit memos, letters and reports, Database Management programmes or Databases like MS Access, which help the user-secretary to use long lists of data and spreadsheet programmes like MS Excel, which handle tables and numbers, calculations and logical function. Secretaries now have many technologically advanced office gadgets to ease their jobs, enhance proficiency and performance leading to improved access to goods and services globally.

There are wide range of ICT gadgets and equipment which now enable secretaries to improve their performances. Such new equipment takes the form of electronic typewriters machines that have replaced the manual ones, word processors with multiple facilities, computers and other sophisticated office machines and

equipment are now supported by employers. Some of the physical equipment used by secretaries includes computer communication equipment and electronic pocket organizers (Lucas, 1997). New technological equipment that has altered the procedures and technique for office functions include the computers, electronic mail/ commerce, voice mail, and the Internet.

The modern office with ICT gadgets undoubtedly, offers new effects and responsibilities for the secretary. Such new effects presuppose that additional training and qualifications are required from the secretaries.

Silver (1981) asserted that based on the reorganization of the office and the introduction of the automated office equipment, the manager's work is produced faster with professional touch. The manager is also able to concentrate on a more creative task with the presence of an experienced secretary assisting him.

Spencer (1981) opined that automation which is a product of ICT remains a prominent factor that has contributed immensely and positively to the complete information processing revolution. In recent times, the secretary's routine has reached an advanced stage due to the invention of automated ICT office equipment. Most of the traditional and routine tasks are performed by automated office equipment such as computers, telephone, etc. In a nutshell, ICT automation has improved general and secretarial education, thus, enabling secretaries to become better prepared for automated office tasks.

Statement of the Problem

The Technological world is fast changing especially in the area of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) inventions. These inventions brought about new technological tools/facilities that redefined and improved the work of Professional Secretary and the entire Secretarial Profession to the extent that the Secretary could almost not be able to work effectively without them. Hence, the Secretarial profession largely depends on the ICT. On the other hand, some secretaries still prepare the old method of office work thereby refusing to update themselves in the area of ICT and the different office automation the ICT brought. Some institutions are also not investing in ICT which hampers the performance of secretaries and Secretarial profession. There is also a fear that since the profession depends on ICT facilities, anybody who can operate such facilities can be assigned to handle the Secretary's work which may ultimately force the Secretarial profession into distress while some argued that the ICT facilities will only help the profession continue to improve on the services it provides. These and many more necessitate the study. At the end of the study, the researcher would provide recommendations that will be useful to the Secretaries, Organizations, institutions that offer Secretarial courses.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research included to determine:

1. The effect of information and communications technology on Secretarial Profession in public institutions.
2. Dependency of Secretarial Profession on the information and communications technology in public institutions.
3. The relevance of Secretarial profession in Public institutions.
4. Information and communications technology inventions/facilities and their effect on Secretarial Profession in public institution

Research Questions

The following research questions were postulated to guide the study:

1. What are the effects of information and communications technology on Secretarial Profession in public institutions?
2. What are the effects of dependency of Secretarial Profession on the information and communications technology in public institutions?
3. What is the relevance of Secretarial profession in Public Institutions?
4. What are information and communications technology inventions/facilities and their effect on Secretarial Profession in public institutions?

Literature Review

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Many people perceive Information and Communication Technology synonymously with computer science. While Agomo (2000), defines Information Technology as “a Term, which covers not only the use of computers with their increasingly powerful hardware and software, but also communication technology which links them together into an information network. They further describe Information and Communication Technology as the scientific way of handling and processing of information.

Michel (2007), stated that Information and Communications Technology is any equipment or interconnected system or subsystem of equipment, that is used in automatic acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control, display, switching, interchange, transmission, or reception of data or information by the operator, it also include computers, ancillary equipment, software, firmware and similar procedures, services and related resources.

To Schneider, (2007), Information and Communication Technology is the use computer hardware and software to manage information for storing information, protecting information, retrieval of information, processing information, transmitting information, and later receiving the feedback.

To Blackhurst (2002), Information and Communication Technology is computer software, hardware and related system that enable us access to knowledge and

resources on a wide range of topics and to work more effectively and efficiently. The internet, and its World Wide Web component, is the most prominent example of Information Technology. The Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) is another example. The Information Centre System enables people to search and locate much of the world's educational literature on a given topic.

The Effect of Information Technology in Effective Communication

Clearly, the advent of Information Technology in communication process has a potential effect to revolutionize organization effective communication.

According to Sutherland and Cowell (1997), using Information Technology in communication will result to an increase in the quantity of communication which leads to organizational consequences such as improve in coordination and decision making processes.

They added that Information and Communication Technology save time for managers and employees and replace face-to-face or verbal (i.e. telephone) communication this will lead to better productivity. Provide an interactive channel for direct communication and data exchange with customers, suppliers, distributors, manufactures, product developers, information providers, etc.

The Secretary

The word, *secretary* is derived from Latin word "*Secretarius*" meaning "*something known only to one or few and kept separate or hidden from the view or knowledge of others*". A secretary is any person employ by other person, society or corporation for the purpose of keeping business records and transacting other business and has access to all confidential information. A secretary is a person who can think for you, anticipate your whims and increase you output result. (Ado Nagadau, 2013).

The journal of the National Secretarial Association describe a secretary as an executive assistant who possess a mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability without direct supervision, who exercise judgment and make within the scope of assigned authority.

While Esene (2007) defined Secretary as assistant to Executive possessing mastery of skills and ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, who displays initiative, exercise judgment and makes decision within the scope of his/her authority.

Webster (1977) defined a secretary as one employed to handle correspondence and manage routine and detailed work for a superior, and officer of a business concern, who may keep records of directors stock, holding meeting and stock ownership and transfer or help to supervise the company's legal interest an officer of an

organization or society is responsible for its records and correspondence, and also an officer of state who superintends a government administrative department.

Harrison et al (1979) stated the first impression a visitor encounter of an organization is influence by the manner by which he is received at the secretary's office, for instance the failure of a firm to get contract award supply due to the attitude exhibited by the secretary may not end well with her, and consequently on the organization. Turner (1994) is in support skills to this view when he wrote that "The new office skills to each caller, regardless of his or her approach should be favorable".

Functions/Duties of the Secretary

According to Fosy (1979) the secretary performs an important role in human relation within the organization; they state that he or she is an assistant to the executive, who serves as a memory for him by reminding him of his appointment and engagements. He or she is a public relation representative, representing the company and the employer effectively.

French (1990) stated that the function of the secretary varies from one office to another, he further gave the following as the duties of the secretary in an office: Drafting of letter, typing of memos, reports, replies to invitation etc. Duties performed by secretaries are numerous, the structure and the formation of an organization determine the duties of the secretary. A secretary's duties are also determine by his nature of work depending on the department and the base. Keeping the boss's dairy arrange his appointment and engagements. Austin (1980) stated that whether the boss is an accountant or sales management, or even a junior O'Brien (2003) stated that the use of Information Technology in communication offers organizations unprecedented potentials for expanding markets, reducing cost and improving profit margins. He further added that using Information and Communication Technology

Furthermore, in the area of keeping record, Bennett, (2000), believed that Record Management is based on relevant and reliable information and can in-turn sustain well-grounded and persuasive arguments. The electronic records can extend knowledge of past actions to influence future decision making, which are faced with these challenges in today's offices. Records management which is among the main functions of the professional secretary can evident be assessable in today's offices as the need for the installation and maintenance of these electronics equipment. Some average organizations are not able to procure electronic gadgets needed for effective office.

Challenges and Prospects of ICT on Secretarial Profession

Secretarial profession is increasingly important to institution whether private or public. Secretarial professionals traditionally restricted their technical routine functions such as telephone answering, institution's agenda and meeting, filing documentation, manual typing, etc. With introduction of advanced office automation lead to reduction of professionals, and become new challenges to secretarial professionals. Some personnel who read computer studies or know just how to operate computer feel can do secretarial work and seat in a position of secretary which cannot produce intended good results. Secretarial professionals need to have more skills than those in previous decades. Secretarial professionals must constantly keep changes in their profession. They should have skills in diverse areas of knowledge such as institutional language based on nationality having one or more foreign language, writing techniques, computing financial matters, human relation. However, some people fail to understand the profession, which means the recognitions of the profession are not organized properly.

Furthermore, in the area of keeping record, Bennett, (2000), believed that Record Management is based on relevant and reliable information and can in-turn sustain well-grounded and persuasive arguments. The electronic records can extend knowledge of past actions to influence future decision making, which are faced with these challenges in today's offices. Records management which is among the main functions of the professional secretary can evident be assessable in today's offices as the need for the installation and maintenance of these electronics equipment. Some average organizations are not able to procure electronic gadgets needed for effective office record keeping because these electronics equipment are very expensive.

The fragile nature of the electronic medium and the dynamic way in which information and Communication technology is deployed, threats the reliability and authenticity of the record if appropriate information management disciplines are not applied. In essence advancement in technology has rendered almost every aspect of electronic world bear for touting as most of an institution sent data are made accessible to unauthorized users which is very uncomfortable state for the institution (online theft).

Unfortunately, in today's offices system environments information is often created, collected or receive without being subject to the procedures or rules governing good record keeping. For instantly, e-mail messages and other electronic documents are often sent across a network without regard to rules for keeping and filing in records systems. Contextual and structural information is needed to make documents understandable and usable as records.

Other challenges include lack of available ICT resources to be purchase by an institution for the Office professional to effectively utilize and use or the equipment are old ones and the tools/software used are old versions.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was employed for this study. The descriptive study attempts to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristics, attitude or behavior of the population. The study type was preferred because of the economy of the design and the rapid turnaround in data collection. The population of the study included all secretaries in ten (10) public institutions in Katsina state. Eight (8) secretaries were purposively selected from the ten (10) public institutions which made eighty (80) respondents served as a sample of the study. Data were collected from two main sources; primary and secondary. The researcher used self-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed using modified 4point t Scale format, which Strongly Agree =4, Agree=3, Disagree=2, strongly disagree=1, respectively. The instrument was validated by the three experts; all their corrections and modification were incorporated into final copy and through this content validity was established. The reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained. The administration was done personally by the researcher to ensure a safe recovery of the questionnaire copies. In all Eighty (80) questionnaires were developed and administered to the secretaries. Out of this seventy-eight (78) were received back and this was suitable for data analysis giving a 97.5% percent response rate. The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 21). The decision means to determine agreement or disagreement was derived by adding $4+3+2+1=10/4=2.5$. Therefore, the means scores for individual item >2.5 signifies agreement.

Results

Research Question One: What are the effects of information and communications technology on Secretarial Profession in Public Institutions?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Effect of Information and Communication Technology on Secretarial profession in public institutions

S/ N	ITEMS	N	MEAN	SD	REMARK
1	The micro soft word application use by the secretary increase productivity and faster in an organization	8 8	3.58	1.251	Agreed
2	The use of ICT allows the secretary to receive and send electronic mails through handset.	8 8	3.75	1.215	Agreed
3	The use of ICT gadget help the secretary to create digital method of running office affairs	8 8	3.47	1.219	Agreed
4	The use social media platform to facilitate method of disseminating information to the staff by the secretary in organization	8 8	3.76	1.238	Agreed
5	The use of micro soft excel by the secretary allow him to make analysis of organizational data in different form	8 8	3.62	1.234	Agreed
6	The use of duplicators make for cheap production of many copies of document by the secretary	8 8	3.73	1.173	Agreed
7	The secretary use internet service to carryout teleconferencing meeting while staffs are apart.	8 8	3.58	1.126	Agreed
8	The secretary use Google chrome and cloud to save more documents.	8 8	3.66	1.234	Agreed
GRAND TOTAL			3.64		

Source: Field Study 2022.

The output of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 revealed that all items of the variable of effects of secretarial profession in public institutions were having a mean score of above 3.0. The mean scores of all the items range from 3.47 to 3.58, the grand mean is 3.63 which is above the benchmark of revised four point Likert scale. The results indicate that the of information and communication technology has effects on secretarial profession in public institutions.

Research Question Two: What are the effects of dependency of secretarial profession on Information and Communications Technology?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Dependency of secretarial profession of Information and Communication Technology.

S/ N	ITEMS	N	MEA N	SD	REMAR K
1	Without ICT the production document can be difficult to provide by secretary	8 8	3.59	1.222	Agreed
2	Without ICT the sending and receiving email cannot be done	8 8	3.48	1.303	Agreed
3	Without ICT the power presentation in an office cannot be done	8 8	3.69	1.190	Agreed
4	Without micro soft excel the analysis of data can take long time before it finish.	8 8	3.74	1.121	Agreed
5	Without internet service the secretary cannot conduct zoom meeting	8 8	3.70	1.991	Agreed
6	Without use of ICT communication it will be delayed	8 8	3.69	1.269	Agreed
7	Without used of ICT e-filing cannot be done by the secretary	8 8	1.32	1.032	Disagreed
8	Without the use Corel draw in ICT posters, invitation cannot be produce.	8 8	3.69	1.269	Agreed
GRAND TOTAL			3.36		

Source: Field Study 2022

The output of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 indicates that only one items of the variable on the dependency of secretarial profession in information and communication technology disagreed with mean score of 1.32, while other items agreed were having a mean score of above 3.0, the mean scores of dependency of secretarial 1 profession on information and communication technology ranging from 1.32 to 3.74. The grand mean of dependency of secretarial profession on information and communication technology is 3.36 which is above the benchmark of revised four point Likert scale. The results indicate that the respondents agreed with statements of dependency of secretarial profession on information and communication technology.

Research Question Three: what is the Relevance of secretarial profession in public Institutions?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Relevance of secretarial profession in public institutions

S/ N	ITEMS	N	MEA N	SD	REMAR K
1	The secretary uses the computer typing and filing the official documents In an organization	8 8	3.48	1.219	Agreed
2	The duties of a secretary is to arranges for an effective meeting with visitor and members of staff	8 8	3.68	1.189	Agreed
3	The secretary is responsible for receives in-coming mails and dispatches the out-going m ails when the need arises in an organization	8 8	3.63	1.217	Agreed
4	The secretary takes the minute of the meeting with the use of electronic gadget in an organization	8 8	3.14	1.333	Agreed
5	The secretary is responsible for an attending the Visitors to the office in an organization	8 8	3.29	1.297	Agreed
6	It is secretarial duties to carried out with less supervision by the superior officer in organization	8 8	3.68	1.248	Agreed
7	The secretary is responsible prepare and disseminate correspondence, memos and forms	8 8	3.62	1.336	Agreed
GRAND TOTAL			3.07		

Source: Field Study 2022

The output of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 3 indicates that all items of the variable on the relevancy of secretarial profession in public institution agreed were having a mean score of above 3.0, the mean scores of relevancy of secretarial profession in public institution ranging from 3.13 to 3.68. The grand mean of relevancy of secretarial profession in public institution is 3.07 which are above the benchmark of revised four point Likert scale. The results indicated that the respondents agreed with statements of relevancy of secretarial profession in public institution.

Research Question Four: What are information and communications technology inventions/facilities and their effect on Secretarial Profession in public institutions?

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Information and Communication Technology Invention and Facilities and their Effects in Public institution.

S/ N	ITEMS	N	ME AN	SD	REMA RK
1	The use electric typewriters are faster and increase productivity	8 8	3.44	1.238	Agreed
2	The scanning machines are very important for effective efficiency in producing exact copies	8 8	3.59	2.234	Agreed
3	The uses of telephone makes communication easy and reduces boredom by secretary in organization	8 8	3.27	1.250	Agreed
4	The use of computers increase speed and productivity in an organization	8 8	3.47	1.421	Agreed
5	The use of photo copiers machines help in producing more copies and time-saving	8 8	3.58	1.358	Agreed
6	The use of shredding machines are important for easy discarding of unwanted documents and help office secrecy	8 8	3.50	1.319	Agreed
7	The use of modern filling/Equipment help in safekeeping and easy retrieval of documents and information in an organization	8 8	3.51	1.238	Agreed
8	The use of franking machines for ease of stamping many documents in an organization	8 8	3.47	1.255	Agreed
Grand Mean			3.05		

Source: Field Study, 2022

The output of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 indicates that all items of the variable on the invention/facilities on information and communication technology and their effects in public institutions agreed were having a mean score of above 3.0, the mean scores of invention/facilities on information and communication technology and their effects in public institutions ranging from 3.27 to 3.59. The grand mean of invention/facilities on information and communication technology and their effects in public institutions is 3.05 which are above the benchmark of revised four point Likert scale. The results indicated that the respondents agreed with statements of invention/facilities on information and communication technology their effects in public institution.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question 1 indicated that the respondents agreed with statements of effects of information and communications technology on secretarial profession in public institutions. This is in line with finding of Muhammad et al (2015) that information and communication technology helps to reduce the disparities between staff, since they work in teams in order to achieve a given task. Also assume responsibilities when they use ICT to organize their work through digital portfolios

The findings of research question 2 revealed that respondents agreed with statements of dependency of secretarial profession on information and communication technology. This in line with Phyllis (2016) who suggests that optimum use of modern office technology/equipment depends on the level of knowledge and skills of the secretary who operates the facility. Knowledgeable and skillful secretaries are therefore prerequisites for deriving maximum benefit and value from office technology/equipment. The performance of the secretary is enhanced since office technology ensures that timelines are met and errors minimized, if not completely eliminated, as far as document processing and records management are concerned.

The finding of the research question 3 indicates that that the respondents agreed with statements of relevancy of secretarial profession in public institution. This is agreed with finding of Phyllis (2016) whose suggests that organization require potential secretaries' efficient knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences to perform their roles effectively in the organization. All the organizations involved in this study had acquired and installed significant quantities and varieties of technology and equipment in their offices to facilitate the performance of secretarial duties and responsibilities relevant for effective and efficient production and management of information.

The findings of the research question 4 revealed that the respondents agreed with statements of invention/facilities on information and communications technology, and their effects in public institution. This finding agreed with Phyllis (2016) who suggested that modern office technology/equipment contributes to the rise in productivity levels of the organizations. It is not farfetched to infer from the foregoing that office technology provides the secretary with additional opportunity for automatic fine-tuning of concrete documents or transmission of information devoid of ambiguities. Where the technology is effective, it may result in saving the secretary from fatigue that may arise from excessive exertion of physical and mental effort associated with performing secretarial duties manually.

Conclusion

Considering the findings of the study, it was concluded that information and communications technology have significant effects on secretarial profession in

public institution in Katsina state, Nigeria. The effects were found to be relevant to secretarial profession in ICT in public institution.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were given:

1. Both government and private organizations should procure adequate modern information and communications technology/equipment to enhance the productivity of their secretaries.
2. Organizations should involve the secretaries in deciding the kind of technological device they wish to procure since the latter are going to use them. Dependency of secretarial profession on information and communications technology
3. The secretaries not used to relevant knowledge and skill in modern information and communications technology/equipment should be retrained to fit into the current trend of technological advancement for effective performance in public institution.
4. Government should procure adequate modern information technology/equipment to enhance and facilitate the administrative task of secretaries

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