

**PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF SECRETARIES IN
MODERN AUTOMATED OFFICES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN
ANAMBRA STATE OF NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The current technological innovations in the offices have rendered the professional competencies of secretaries obsolete. The secretaries must acquire the necessary skills needed in automated offices in order to be relevance and functional in their professional endeavour. The main purpose of this study is to determine professional competencies required of secretaries in modern automated offices in the tertiary institutions in Anambra State of Nigeria. The design of the study was survey. Three research questions and three null hypotheses were formulated for the study. An instrument which consisted of twenty-four items was distributed to 94 supervisors of secretaries in the tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The entire population was studied. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Three experts carried out face and content validity. The instrument were established using Crombach alpha and it yielded coefficient of 0.82, 0.84 and 0.86 respectively. The data generated in the course of the study were analyzed using mean ratings and t-test inferential statistics. The results of the study revealed the manipulative, technology and communication competencies that are required of secretaries in the modern automated offices. It was recommended among others that curriculum used for the training of secretaries be reviewed to integrate modern technologies and secretaries should be encouraged to keep abreast of new technologies by availing themselves regularly of short training programmes.

Keywords: *Professional, Technology, Competency, Secretary, Automated Offices.*

Introduction

The professional skills acquired by secretaries are now obsolete in view of the current technological office innovations. There is serious redesignation in secretarial profession.

The new innovations in the modern day offices have altered the nature, method, environment of work and equipment and have challenged the skills and competencies of professional secretaries. According to Akinyemi (2002), technology have effected work from the origination of document to production, revision, reproduction, distribution and storage of documents. The professional secretaries should embrace new technological innovations in the offices and ensure that the professional skills are abreast of current automated office innovations.

According to Olayanju (2015), although technology have revolutionized the traditional role of secretaries in the areas of typing, taking shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails but in recent times, modern secretaries are exposed to simplifies duties and enhance knowledge and performance of secretaries. Modern business organizations have come to appreciate the role and importance of the secretary as well as the need to providing the needed and necessary office machines and equipment for the efficacy of the secretarial functions (Akponi and Ordu 2009). Professional secretaries with modern innovative office skills are highly indispensable in any establishment since secretarial duties are the pivot of office activities.

Yakubu and Ugwu (2015) advocated that the efficiency and effectiveness of the secretary in every business organization depends largely on the availability of office technologies as well as the skills and competencies of the secretary to handle these office technologies.

The current automated offices have made it that for secretaries to be relevant and functional in their office occupation must possess technological professional competencies in the areas of manipulative technology, communication and professional skills.

The high rate of flux of information and communication technology today have made it basically important for secretaries to acquire innovated skills in their field of endeavours so as to keep abreast of current skills and competencies. Secretaries are highly indispensable in any office organization in the performance of their professional duties. The employers and the general public expect them to update their skills in line with current innovations in the offices so as to be more functional and efficient in the discharge of their duties. Emerging office technologies have played important role through the use of computer system, internet, database management, software packages, fax-machines, electronic mail services, duplicating machines for quick and easy service delivery of secretarial functions.

Amoor (2010) and Miller, Okoro and Oji-anyaegbu (2012) contended that the manipulative skills expected of secretaries in the modern automated offices are visible in the areas of internet connectivity, digital photocopier, electronic paper trummer, computer operation, information management, scanner and paper shredders. Proper acquisition of these modern manipulative skills should make professional secretaries highly relevant and more efficient in their office occupation. Employers are obviously expecting secretaries to acquaint themselves with these manipulative skills.

According to Azuka (2000), the way information is transmitted has undergone tremendous change. In the modern offices, secretaries should learn to make effective use of communication facilities. Ahukanna (2000), Olayanju (2015) and Edwin in Yakubu and Ugwu (2015) were of the view that the following communication technologies such as telex, electronic mail (e-mail), fax, telephone, intercom are used in modern offices to send messages. Secretaries should be fully aware of demands of these modern communication facilities and try to avail themselves opportunities to get acquainted with them. These modern facilities are very simple, easy and fast in sending messages.

Yakubu and Ugwu (2015) advocated that modern technology skills required by secretaries include: ability to use computer to create spreadsheets with packages like Microsoft excel, compose correspondences using packages like Microsoft words, word star, word perfect; manage data bases using software like Microsoft access, create presentations with Microsoft power point, publish reports and documents using desktop

publishing software like Microsoft office publisher etc. Secretaries are to acquire these technological skills so as to be technologically acquainted with innovations in the modern offices.

Statement of the problem

The advent of modern technologies have rendered the professional skills of secretaries obsolete. Professional secretaries of the present day modern automated offices are required to possess technological competencies that will enable them be more relevant and functional in their office endeavours. According to Atakpa (2013), the innovations in office information technologies demand new skills, professional and intellectual concept among secretaries. In view of this, secretaries should acquaint themselves with new knowledge, skills and competencies that will enable them function effectively in the modern day offices.

The problem of this study therefore, is that in the modern day offices, secretaries are not functional and are no longer efficient in the discharge of their professional duties.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the professional competencies required of secretaries in modern automated offices in tertiary institutions in Anambra State of Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. Manipulative competencies required of secretaries in modern automated offices.
2. Technology competencies required of secretaries in modern automated office.
3. Communication competences required of secretaries in modern automated offices.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the manipulative competencies required of secretaries in modern automated offices?
2. What are the technology competencies required of secretaries in modern automated office?
3. What are the communication competencies required of secretaries in modern automated offices?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- H₀₁: There is no significance difference between the mean ratings of male and female supervisors on manipulative competencies required of secretaries in modern automated offices in tertiary institutions.
- H₀₂: There is no significance difference between the mean ratings of University graduate supervisors and graduate supervisors of other institutions on the technology competencies required of secretaries in modern automated offices in tertiary institutions.

H₀₃: There is no significance difference between the mean ratings of male and female supervisors on communication competencies required of secretaries in modern automated offices in tertiary institutions.

Method

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The reason for adopting this design is that it aimed at determining professional competencies required of secretaries in the modern automated offices. The study was conducted in the tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The population of the study was made up of 94 immediate supervisors of all the secretaries in tertiary institutions in Anambra State of Nigeria. The entire population was studied, no sampling was made since the population was manageable. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. It was validated by three business education experts from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability coefficient was established through a pilot survey. Crombach alpha measure of internal consistency was used to analyse the data. A reliability coefficient of 0.82, 0.84 and 0.86 respectively were obtained. Mean rating was used to analyze research questions while inferential statistics (the t-test) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Mean rating between 4.5 to 5.00 were regarded as highly required. Mean ratings between 3.5 to 4.49 were regarded as required. Mean ratings between 2.5 to 3.49 were regarded as undecided. Mean ratings between 1.5 to 2.49 were regarded as seldom required while mean rating below 1.5 were regarded as not required. A null hypothesis was rejected if the calculated t-value is equal to or greater than the critical t-value, otherwise the null hypothesis was accepted.

Data Analysis and Result

The results of the data collected and analyzed are shown below:

Table 1: Respondents' mean rating of manipulative competences required of secretaries (N = 94).

S/N	Manipulative Competencies	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1	Teleconference devices	4.36	0.85	Required
2	Computer system	4.62	0.49	Highly required
3	Information management	3.43	1.46	Undecided
4	Digital photocopiers	4.21	0.82	Required
5	Electronic paper trainers	3.38	1.25	Undecided
6	Scanners	3.60	1.23	Required
7	Internet connectivity	4.04	1.03	Required
8	Paper shredders	3.66	1.22	Required
9	Digital duplicator	3.86	1.13	Required
10	Printer	4.57	0.24	Highly required
Grand mean and standard deviation (SD)		3.97	0.97	Required

Data in table 1 reveals that out of ten items on manipulative competencies required by secretaries, two had mean rating ranging between 4.57 to 4.62 indicating highly required. The data also indicate that seven items had mean ratings ranging from 3.60 to 4.36 indicating required while two items had mean ratings ranging from 3.38 to 3.43 indicating undecided. The grand mean for this category was 3.97 indicating required.

Overall, supervisors were of the view that secretaries require manipulative competencies to perform in the modern automated offices. The grand standard deviation of 0.97 indicates a relatively close opinion of supervisors on the fact that manipulative competencies are required by the secretaries in the modern automated offices.

Table 2: Respondents' mean rating of technology competencies required of secretaries (N = 94)

S/N	Technology Competencies	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1	Ability to use computer to create spreadsheet with packages like Microsoft excel, peach free and lotus	4.47	0.62	Required
2	Ability to compose correspondents using packages like Microsoft word, word star, word perfect etc	4.36	0.65	Required
3	Ability to manage database using software like Microsoft access	4.36	0.60	Required
4	Ability to create presentations with Microsoft power point	3.53	1.24	Required
5	Ability to publish reports and documents using desktop publishing software like Microsoft office publisher or font page	4.38	0.60	Required
	Grand mean and standard deviation (SD)	4.22	0.62	Required

The data in table 2 shows that all the items on technology competencies had mean ratings ranging from 3.53 to 4.47. This indicates that all the five items on technology competencies were required by the secretaries to perform in the modern automated offices. The technology competencies had their standard deviations ranged from 0.60 to 1.24. This indicates that the respondents were related in their opinions and are not far from the mean.

Table 3: Respondents' mean rating of communication competencies required of secretaries (N = 94)

S/N	Communication Competencies	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1	Ability to have good command of English language	4.15	0.96	Required
2	Ability to detect and correct procedural defect in the writing of normal correspondence	4.02	0.67	Required
3	Reports on secretary's conversation skills on telephone with other visitors	4.39	0.61	Required
4	Ability to communicate with the callers and in colloquies	3.99	0.99	Required
5	Ability to master communication techniques in			

	report writing	3.91	1.05	Required
6	Ability to integrate information for dissemination to staff and client	4.19	0.77	Required
7	Ability to communicate with telex machine	4.12	0.85	Required
8	Ability to communicate with electronic mail services (e-mail)	4.36	0.70	Required
9	Ability to communicate effectively with the colleagues within office with intercom	4.52	0.50	Required
	Grand mean and standard deviation (SD)	4.18	0.79	Required

The data presented in table 3 reveals that out of nine items in communication competencies, item nine (9) had mean rating of 4.52 and is regarded as highly required, while eight items with mean ratings ranging between 3.91 to 4.39 were rated required. The grand mean of this category was 4.18. It was concluded that supervisors were of the opinion that secretaries require communication competencies in the modern automated offices. The grand mean standard deviation of 0.79 shows a relatively close opinion of supervisors that secretaries require communication competencies in the modern automated offices.

Results of test of Null Hypotheses

Table 4: t-test analysis of supervisors mean rating on manipulative competences required of secretaries based on gender

Gender	N	\bar{x}	S ²	Df	Level of significance	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	28	2.11	1.24	92	0.05	0.44	1.96	Accepted
Female	66	2.00	1.21					

The data in Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.44 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant difference is therefore accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female supervisors on manipulative competencies required of secretaries in the modern automated offices.

Table 5: t-test analysis of supervisors mean rating on technology competencies required of secretaries based on qualifications.

Qualifications	N	\bar{x}	S ²	Df	Level of significance	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
University graduates	32	1.84	0.88	92	0.05	0.098	1.96	Accepted
Graduates of other institutions								

62 1.82 0.86

Table 5 shows that at 92 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance, the calculated t-value of 0.098 was less than the critical t-value of 1.96, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was therefore accepted. This indicates that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significance difference in the opinion of university graduate supervisors and graduate supervisors of other institutions on technology competencies required of secretaries in modern automated offices was upheld. This therefore, means that secretaries require technology competencies to function effectively in the modern automated offices.

Table 6: t-test analysis of male supervisors and female supervisors mean rating on communication competencies required of secretaries.

Gender	N	\bar{x}	S ²	Df	Level of significance	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	28	1.75	0.62	92	0.05	0.749	1.96	Accepted
Female	66	1.89	0.86					

The result in Table 6 shows that the calculated t-value is 0.749 at 92 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value 0.749 is less than the critical t-value 1.96 the null hypothesis was not rejected. This indicates that male supervisors and female supervisors have similar views on the communication competencies required of secretaries in the modern automated offices.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study were discussed in line with the research questions developed for this study.

On the manipulative competencies required of secretaries in the modern automated offices. The result of the study indicate that secretaries should be conversant with the use of computer and printer. Again, the results show that the modern automated offices require that secretaries should be competent in modern office technologies like teleconference devices, digital photocopier, scanners, internet connectivity, paper shredder and digital duplicators. This will enable them to be relevant in the modern automated offices. Miller and Okoro (2012) contend that employers are obviously expecting secretaries to effectively carryout the various manipulative activities in the current automated offices without hesitation.

On the technology competencies required of secretaries, the results of the study reveal that secretaries should effectively use computer to create spread sheet with packages, Microsoft Excel, peach free and lotus and compose correspondents using packages like Microsoft word star and word perfect. The results also show that secretaries should have the ability to manage database using software, create presentations with Microsoft power point and publish reports and documents using desktop publishing. According to Nwosu (2012), secretaries can effectively perform their duties in the emerging office technologies through the use of computer system, internet, database management, software packages, Microsoft words star etc.

On the communication competencies required of secretaries, the results of the study reveal that secretaries should have good command of English language; communicate effectively with callers and in colloquies, write report effectively and be able to correct procedural defect in writing of normal correspondence. The results also show that the secretaries should have the ability to integrate information for dissemination to staff and clients, communicate effectively with telex-machine, electronic mail services (e-mail) and intercom within and outside the office. Secretaries should keep abreast of these communication skills to enable them be more relevant in the modern day automated offices.

Conclusion

The advent of information and communication technology has made it highly imperative for secretaries to update their professional skills to enable their continuing relevance in the modern day offices. They should acquaint themselves with new technological skills in the areas of manipulative, technology and communication competencies in order to be more relevant, functional and efficient in the performance of their secretarial duties in their office of endeavours. Secretaries acquisition of these technological competencies is of paramount importance since it will make them have job satisfaction, achieve maximum result, improve productivity and efficiency in service delivery.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The curriculum used for the training of secretaries should be reviewed to in cooperate modern technologies found in offices
2. Short training programmes should be organized for secretaries regularly to enable them keep abreast of new technologies in the offices.
3. Training institutions should be adequately funded to enable them install modern ICT equipment for effective training and proper acquisition of skill by the students.

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