

THE RELEVANCE OF OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT (OTM) SKILLS IN ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.

EJEKA, CHARLES A.

Department of Office Technology and Management
Imo State Polytechnic,
Umuagwo-Ohaji, Imo State,
Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study was to examine the relevance of Office Technology and Management skills in organizational growth. The population consisted of 100 secretaries in various organizations in Asaba municipality. Two research questions guided the study; the statistical tool used to analyze the research questions were simple percentages. The findings revealed that sound knowledge of Office Technology and Management skills increase the performance of the secretary for organizational growth. The findings also showed that the work of a secretary goes far beyond typing and taking down dictation in shorthand. Not everybody can perform the work of a secretary. It requires certain professional qualities such as diplomacy; tactfulness, initiative etc and no executive can function well without a secretary. Based on these findings some recommendations were made one of which is that employers should employ qualified secretaries to work with their managers to achieve efficiency in the management of the organization to achieve result.

Introduction

The emergence of secretarial personnel into Nigeria's economic development can be traced to the colonial days. The British colonial administration saw the need to have Nigerians to serve them in different lower capacities as typists, messengers, court clerks, interpreters etc. To make this a reality, they introduced into Nigeria's educational curriculum some subjects that could make students become secretaries. These subjects include Typewriting, Shorthand and Secretarial Duties among others. According to National Secretaries Association (United States of America) as cited by Ejeka (2006) "a Secretary is an assistant to an executive, possessing mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, who displays initiative, exercises judgment and takes decision within the scope of his/her authority". Onosanya (1990) sees a secretary as the chief administrator of

an organization or a person who performs the functions of organizing and recording the proceedings of a meeting. The title refers to professional staff skilled in shorthand and typewriting and mainly responsible to an executive.

The work of a secretary is very essential in any business organization. The smooth and efficient working of the organization depends in part upon the secretary. She is the hub from which the various activities radiate. She has a lot to do with the practical running of the organization. According to Harrison (1979) a secretary is a person who has been trained in both science and secretaryship and who is capable, efficient and proficient in carrying secretarial instruction (training) and employed to see to the secretarial, monitoring and participation of an individual in an organization. He further stressed that a secretary can be regarded as an expert capable of dealing with communications and correspondence in skilled manner. And since the word secretary is derived from "secret" it can be added that, in dealing with all such specialized duties their secret or utmost confidentiality are also guaranteed to the last letter.

Information is required for a business to function effectively, and to highlight performance of different units of the business, and to direct attention to areas requiring review. Most information required for management purpose is either available, in a form in which they can be readily used or they exist in form of raw data. Thus for the champions of offices to meet with demands of the job, they need secretaries both male and female. The services of the secretary therefore are one that is commonly needed across various departments in an organization. It is also essential to note that an organization without a secretary will run into problems since the chief executive cannot handle those duties performed by the secretary.

Literature Review

The Secretary: In any organization, the secretary particularly is the most visible employee who occupies, the major sensitive position linking the customers with the managers. He is an indispensable tool for an efficiently administered office since it has in fact been recognized that the Secretary is the live wire of any organization. According to Udom (2002) the human resource of an organization is the most important resource of the organization. A pool of experienced skilful and efficient human capital is an indispensable tool for the attainment of the business goals of an organization, leading to higher profits if properly harnessed. It is common knowledge that every business venture is set up primarily for the purpose of making profit. The greatest challenge facing any organization therefore, is the possibility of recruiting the best hand at the right time to fill the vacancies available in that organization. According to Anderson (1978) “ a secretary is a person who schedules appointment, gives information to callers, records and route incoming mails, takes dictation in shorthand or on machine and transcribes notes on the typewriters or voice recording, composes, types routine correspondences, types statistical reports, keep personal records and record minutes of staff and management meeting”. According to Austin (1983) a secretary is a person who has acquired basic secretarial skills of shorthand and typewriting and has enough knowledge and practical experience in office work to be able to cope with filling simple office machinery and reception duties.

Training and Qualification: According to Ejeka (2006) for one to qualify as a secretary in Nigeria, she must acquire her education from tertiary institution and other government approved centres viz: Federal or State Universities, Federal or State Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Staff Development Centres. The qualifications obtained from the above institutions are National Diploma (ND), Higher National Diploma (HND)/ B.Sc in Secretarial Administration or Office Technology and Management and N.C.E in Business Education (Secretarial option).

Relevance of the Secretary in an Organization

Secretarial training requires constant up-date of knowledge, skills and abilities to continue on the job. A trained secretary exercises initiative, and good judgment to make decision within the scope of assigned authority. The secretarial staff position in an office varies according to the size of the office.

The secretarial staff in an organization or industry occupies an important place because he/she is the true ambassador of the organization where he/she works. The secretarial work is the link between the employer and the customer/public. This is the reason why many people regard the secretarial staff as the representative of the organization. No office can function without a secretarial staff. Heads of units/sections would be faced with too much to contend with as no meaningful work can be done with visitors, customers, clients and even staff who want to see an executive, who have no secretarial staff to attend to these people, there would be chaos (Imolorhe, 2006).

Important and Essential Duties of the Secretary

1. Attend to and process administrative details not requiring the immediate attention of the chief executive, independently respond to routine letters and general correspondence, compose and prepare letters, memoranda and reports pertaining to standard policies.
2. Perform responsible and difficult secretarial and administrative work involving the use of independent judgment and personal initiative; perform varied responsible secretarial duties to assist in processing and completion of administrative operations for the chief executive.
3. Serve as primary resource and information source regarding organizational policies, procedures, objectives and operational functions, receive and interview office visitors and telephone callers; answer questions and provide information where judgment, knowledge and interpretations are utilized, especially in the proper handling of confidential information or files, resolve complaints, refer callers to appropriate source as necessary.

4. Receive, compile and organize information for the preparation of correspondence, documents and reports, compose confidential correspondence, documents and reports; maintain confidentiality of information.
5. Prepare information needed in administrative decision and in facilitating implementation of organizational policies and programmes, research, collect, compile, tabulate, analyze and summarize data and information pertaining to specific activities, operations or functions as assigned, prepare variety of fiscal statistical and administrative summaries and reports.

Job Related and Essential Qualification

Knowledge of:

- Principles and the practice of basic fiscal, statistical and administrative data collection and report preparations.
- Modern office procedures, methods and equipment including computer equipment and application software programmes.
- English usage, spelling, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.
- Principles and practice of business letter writing.
- Principles and procedures of record keeping.

Ability to:

- Learn the procedure, functions and limitations of assigned position.
- Work under limited supervision within a broad framework of standard policies and procedures.
- Use independent judgment, initiative and good human relations and problem solving skills in the application and follow through on decision.
- Analyze situations carefully and adopt effective courses of action.

- Plan and organization of work to meet schedules and timeliness.

Skill to:

- Operate modern office equipment including computer equipment
- Type at a speed necessary for successful job performance.
- Take dictation at a speed necessary for successful job performance.

Effects of Office Automation on the Secretary

New technology has captured the secretarial profession and made it challenging. The effect of electronic development has become a visible reality in our days. When we talk of electronic equipment we mean those classes of electronics that affect office activities such as telephone and other electronic typewriters, photocopier, scanners and the computer. The digital telephone and other electronically powered machines reduces the long hours to mere pressing of buttons, thus making the world a small global place where contacts could be made between people at different continents in seconds.

The stereotypical image of the secretary as a servant to the boss is fading. Today, secretaries are seen as partners working side by side with their bosses and taking responsibility for more decision-making. Though secretaries have always possessed intelligence and initiative, current technological advances especially with computers – have made it easier for secretaries to be recognized within a company. Secretaries no longer need to type various versions of form or letter. They now have time to show management new talents and abilities. A secretary now spends more time composing correspondence instead of typing it. Instead of simply typing a statistical report from a draft, secretaries may use a spreadsheet programme to prepare information.

It is no longer a tale that there is no longer any complete traditional office with stressed and tensed secretaries. The work of the secretary is becoming enviable with the new electronic devices in offices. The automated office permits greater efficiency, higher productivity, faster and better quality

work at low costs. By using automated equipment there is a standardized procedure to produce communication quickly, accurately and inexpensively. In an office where automated machines and equipment are used, tasks are generally organized according to work specialization. Today, automated equipment makes preparation of written communication easy. Certain step-by-step procedures and forms are needed to ensure that automated equipment is used in a way that saves time.

Statement of the problem

The secretary is undoubtedly an indispensable member of an office and it is said that the manager's job is affected one way or the other by the secretary and that is why many organizations recognize the need for secretaries and actually employ them to work with their managers. There has been neglect of the fact that secretary is becoming a critical resource to drive and support performance in clerical and general administrative office functions in organization's growth today.

Purpose of the study

1. To examine the effect of office automation on secretaries in the achievement of organizational growth.
2. To examine the relevance of secretarial skills on the productivity of the secretary for organization growth.

Research Questions

1. What are the effects of office automation over secretaries in the achievement of organizational growth?
2. Does sound knowledge of secretarial skills increase the performance of the secretary for organizational growth?

Significance of the study

The outcome of the study would be of immense value to create the desired awareness of the continuous relevance of the secretary to organizational growth in individuals, government bodies and corporate organizations. The findings could provide the necessary solutions to none recognition and under utilization of secretary.

Methodology

Population: The population for this study consisted of secretaries in organization in Asaba municipality of Delta State.

Sample/Sampling Technique: 100 secretaries were randomly selected for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument used for this study was a 5-item questionnaire, whose items were derived from the literatures reviewed.

Method of Data Analysis

Data gathered were analyzed by the use of simple percentages using the following formula:

$$\% = \frac{f}{n} \times 100 / 1$$

Where f = frequency response

N = number of response

Presentation and Data Analysis

The analysis of the data generated from the field are presented in tables 1 - 5

Table 1: An executive cannot function well without a secretary

Variables	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
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Yes	Nil	0
No	100	100
Total	100	100%

From table 1 above, 100(100%) of the respondents said No. This implies that all of the respondents agreed that an executive relies on the secretary who acts as his daily reminder and a librarian of some sort to carry out his daily activities.

Table II: Sound knowledge of Office Technology and Management skills increases the productivity of the Secretary for organizational growth.

Variables	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	100	100
No	0	0
Total	100	100%

The data presented in table II above shows overwhelming agreement among the respondents. This implies that sound knowledge of Office Technology and Management skills increases the productivity of the secretary for organizational growth and development.

Table III: Anybody can perform the work of a Secretary.

Variables	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	0	0
No	100	100
Total	100	100%

Table III shows that 100 (100%) of the respondents said yes. This means that not just anybody can perform the work of a Secretary.

Table IV: The effects of Office Automation over Secretaries in the achievement of organizational growth and development.

Variables	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Increase in production	84	84
Decrease in production	12	12
Neutral	4	4
Total	100	100

Table IV above shows that 84(84%) of the respondents strongly agreed that office automation increased the productivity of the secretary, 12(12%) disagreed while 4(4%) were neutral. This implies that majority of the respondents believe that office automation may lead to increase in productivity of the secretary for the achievement of organization growth and development.

Table V: Introduction of modern electronic machines in offices influenced the secretary's attitude to work.

Variables	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
To large extent	80	80
To some extent	16	16
Not at all	4	4
Total	100	100

The table above shows that 80(80%) of the respondents believe that the introduction of modern electronic machines in their office has influenced their attitude to work, 16(16%) said it did to some extent, 4(4%) said it did not. This implies that the introduction of modern electronic machines in offices has influenced the attitude to work of the secretary.

Analysis of findings

Research Question 1: What are the effects of office automation over secretaries in the achievement of organizational growth and development?

Table IV on the table of distribution above was considered relevant. 84(84%) of the respondents strongly agreed that office automation increase the productivity of the secretary, 12(12%) disagreed while 4(4%) were neutral. Table V also revealed that the introduction of modern electronic machines in office has influenced the attitude to work of the secretary.

Research Question II: Does sound knowledge of Office Technology and Management skills increase the performance of the secretary for organizational growth and development? In response to this research question, table II shows that 100(100%) overwhelmingly agreed that sound knowledge of Office Technology and Management Skills increase the performance of the secretary for organizational growth and development. Table I also revealed that no executive can function well without a secretary while table II shows that the work of a secretary goes far beyond typing and taking down dictation in shorthand. Not everybody can perform the work of a secretary.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researcher concludes as follows:

1. That the secretary performs complimentary roles in the efficiency and management of the organization.
2. That the secretary is undoubtedly an indispensable member of an office and it is said that the manager's job is affected one way or the other by the secretary and that is why many organizations recognize the need for secretaries and actually employ them to work with their managers.

3. The invention of modern office equipment only helps to make office work more efficient and productive, but cannot replace the secretary.

Recommendations

From the findings, it is clear that secretaries contribute immensely to the organizational growth and development through series of roles/duties they perform. Based on the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made:

1. Employers should employ qualified secretaries to work with their managers to achieve efficiency in then management of the organization to achieve result.
2. Organizations should procure modern office equipment for secretaries, as this will assist them to do their job in order to improve their efficiency and productivity, which will no doubt lead to organizational growth and development.
3. A secretary is vital in an organization and should be seen and treated as such to enable her achieve efficiency and effectiveness in performing her duties.

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