Skill Improvement Needs of Secretarial Staff for Effective Job Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State.

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Abstract

The study determined the skill improvement needs of secretarial staff for effective job performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study, and four null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 alpha level of significance. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 245 secretaries at the Central Administration of the six tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts. Cronbach's Alpha method was used to obtain the reliability coefficient of internal consistency. The values obtained were 0.91 and 0.93 for clusters B1 to B2, respectively, with an overall coefficient value of 0.90. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test and ANOVA were used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of office automation control systems and office management software needs of secretarial staff, and those they possessed, revealed that secretarial staff in tertiary institutions in Anambra State need improvement for effective job performance. Age, ownership of institutions, and years of work experience of Secretarial staff do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the skills improvement of office automation control system and office management software needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The study concluded that office automation control systems and office management software are much skill improvement needs of secretarial staff for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. It was recommended among others that secretarial staff can also improve their use of office automation control system and office management software skills by attending seminars and conferences to be kept abreast of the latest development in the world of work and technology, training and retraining of secretaries on the use of new technologies, reading journals and periodical that will educate them on appropriate office skills needed by secretaries for effective performance in tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Secretary, Office Automation, Office Management, Skill Improvement, Training.

Introduction

Skill improvement needs of secretarial staff have always been essentially important for tertiary institutions for staff to be technologically competent and information literate, However, the modern office outlook is one that is characterized by the use of modern technological tools that require secretarial staff to develop both soft and hard skills to fully operate in the office. An

office may therefore be moderately or highly technology inclined, depending on its operations. Some common technologies used in the office are basic office machines such as computers, scanners, printers, photocopiers, telephone systems, internet facilities (Akpomi, Ben-George and Wolugbom, 2021).

Nowadays, modern technologies found in offices are far reaching and may include pens, wrist watches, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIp) solutions such as Google Voice, Skype, Facebook messenger, Team Talk. The 21st century has witnessed a lot of advancement both in science and technology. This advancement has been growing rapidly since the end of Second World War both in manufacturing, aviation, medicine, engineering, finance and administration, such advances has affected adversely all aspects of life. Technological innovations have also impacted on the processes and procedures in modern day offices. Therefore, the knowledge era compels secretaries in various offices to possess and develop creative skills and abilities to adapt to changing technology (Iwuoha and Ebenezer-Nwokeji, 2018). Iwuoha and Ebenezer-Nwokeji, further remarked that these skills improvement can be gotten through training.

Anho (2018) considered training as a planned process to modify attitude, knowledge or skill behavior through learning experiences to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. In the context of this study, training is the process of equipping the workforce with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to tackle the job responsibilities as a secretary.

Secretary are defined as employee who can cope with all the stress and demands of an office in a manner that will ensure an overall control of crisis that may emanate from managing records, communication, information, people and other resources that are intrinsically involved in making the office the nerve centre of the organization (Nwogu, 2014). Operationally, a secretary is someone who has a wide knowledge of business acumen, versatile knowledge in accounting, personnel, office practice, information and communication and inside knowledge of the operation of all departments within an institution.

Thus, an office is a place where managerial, clerical and financial tasks are carried out in an organization. In today's offices, office activities depend on information and communication technology (ICTs). Tools ranging from photocopiers, printers, fax machines, electronic correspondence and image editing have their own knowledge and are used to execute tasks more efficiently in the modern-day office (Akiti, 2017). The process of utilizing the ICT tools in carrying out office functions is called modern office automation.

Modern office automation is the process by which machines and equipment are introduced in the work place to facilitate administrative processes, remove bureaucracy and unnecessary delay of the office functions (Ovbiagbale, Mgbonyebi and Olaniye, 2019). In the same vein, Onoja (2020) defined modern office automation as the use of computer systems and software in service delivery. Thus, office automation is the use of self-regulating devices to handle office activities traditionally performed manually or by semi-mechanical methods. The automation of modern office has thus revolutionized the secretarial procedures in modern offices and has greatly improved the way secretaries carry out their duties. Office automation refers to all processes that integrate computer and communication technology with the traditional manual processes.

Office management is a profession involving the design, implementation and maintenance of the process of work within an office or an organization, in order to sustain and improve efficiency and productivity . Secretarial staff is thus a part of the overall administration functions.

In tertiary institutions, office managers, in addition to their traditional secretarial roles, attend to administrators, lecturers, students, other members of staff, and visitors to the institutions (Ntukidem, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Office management and office automation technology have brought about tremendous changes in today's offices and tertiary institution environments. These technology and innovations demand grater responsibilities and improved performance of secretarial staff in view of their vital role in processing and management of office information. This implies that today's office ,secretarial staff who are unable to cope with the demands of office technology will become irrelevant, low priced or even unemployed as the case may be. The essence of improving the need of secretaries revolves around establishing skill, attitude or knowledge gap. The moderator variables are age (18-35 or 36-60), and years of work experience (1-5years, 6-10years and above 10years).

Research Questions

1. What are the office automation control system skill improvement needs of secretarial staff for effective job performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?
2. What are office management software skill improvement needs of secretarial staff for effective job performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

1. Secretarial staff do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on skill improvement of office automation control system needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on age.
2. There is no significant difference in the respondents' mean ratings on skill improvement of office automation control system needs for of secretarial staff for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on years of work experience.
3. There is no significant difference in the respondents' mean ratings on skill improvement of office management software needs of secretarial staff for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on age.
4. There is no significant difference in the respondents' mean ratings on skill improvement of office management software needs of secretarial staff for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on years of work experiences.

Method

The study adopted a survey research design. The research design is one which aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 2015). The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population was 245 secretaries at the Central Administration of the six tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The instrument that was used for data collection in this study is a structured questionnaire known as the "Skill Improvement Needs of Secretarial Staff for Effective job Performance in Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (SINSSEJPTIQ)" as instrument for data collection. It is divided into two main parts, namely Part I and Part II. Part I solicited information on the bio-data of the respondents as it relates to age and years of working experience, part II was splited into two-sections A and B.

Section A has 14 items and seeks responses on office automation control system skill improvement needs of secretarial staff for effective job performance in tertiary institutions. Section B has 9 items which is designed to elicit information on the office management software skill improvement needs of secretarial staff for effective job performance in tertiary institutions.

The needs category is based on 5point scale with nominal values assigned as follows:

Very Highly Needed (VHN) = 5 Points

Highly Needed (HN) = 4points

Moderately Needed (MN) = 3points

Lowly Needed (LN) = 2points

Very lowly Needed (NN) = 1 point

The possession category equally has 5 point Likert scale with nominal values assigned as follows:

Very Highly Possessed	(VHP)	=	5points
Highly Possessed	(HP)	=	4points
Moderately Possessed	(MP)	=	3Points
Lowly Possessed	(LP)	=	2points
Very lowly Possessed	(VLP)	=	1point

The information below served as a guide to the rater in rating each category.
VHP: When you have an excellent mastery of competence.
VHN: When you need excellent mastery of competence.
HP: When you have a very good mastery of competence
HN: When you need very good mastery of competence.
MP: When you have a good mastery of competence
MN: When you need good mastery of competence.
LP: When you have a low mastery competence
LN: When you need low mastery of competence.
VLP: When you have a very low mastery of competence
VLN: When you need very low mastery of competence.

To ascertain the validity of the instrument developed for this study, the title of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, hypotheses and the questionnaire were given to three experts. Two experts from business education of Department of Technology and Vocational Education and one expert from Department of Educational Management and Policy; with a bias in measurement and evaluation all from the faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.The reliability of the instrument was determined through trial testing. Copies of the instrument were administered to 20 secretaries in Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta State and University of Agbor, Delta State. To analyze the data, Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the items in the instrument. The use of Cronbach's Alpha here was to test the consistency and stability of the questionnaires which measure latent variables. The analysis showed reliability co-efficient values of *0.91 and 0.93* for clusters B1 to B2 respectively, with an overall co-efficient value of 0.90. This shows that the

instrument was reliable for the study as agreed by Nworgu (2015) that if the coefficient is positively high (0.70), it is adequate for the study. The questionnaire constructed were administered by the researcher with the help of two research assistants who are among the members of the staff in the respective tertiary institutions. The research assistants were briefed on how to administer, distribute and collect the questionnaire. A period of two weeks was used for the administration and collection of the questionnaire. Out of the 245 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents in their institutions through direct approach which facilitated a response rate, 238 copies (representing 97 percent) were retrieved with an attrition rate of seven copies (representing 3 percent) and used for data analysis.

Two-way ANOVA was used to analyze the hypotheses. The p-value was compared with the level of significance. Where the P-value was less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypotheses was rejected. But if the P-value was greater than 0.05, the null hypotheses was not rejected. The statistical package of the social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data collected and for computing the relevant statistics.

The mean (xn) of the skill possessed were determined for each item.

The mean (xp) of the current performance were determined for each item.

The skill Gap (SG) were determined by finding the difference between the values of the two means. That is, $\bar{X}n - \bar{X}p = SG$.

However, where SG is zero (0), it implies that the item was not needed because the level of possession of the skill of secretarial staff is equal to level at which the skill was required, i.e skill possessed by the staff was same as skill expected for the job. Where the SG becomes negative (-), it means that the item was not needed because the level at which the secretarial staff possess skill was higher than the level at which it was expected or required for the job. Where SG is (+), it implies that there was skill gap for that item because the level of possession of the skill improvement of secretarial staff, was lower than the level at which it was expected for the job.

Results

Research Question 1

What are the office automation control system skill improvement needs of secretarial staff for effective job performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Office Automation Control System Skill Improvement Needs of Secretarial Staff for Effective Job Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State N=238

	Needed			Possessed			
Item Description	**Mean**	**SD**	**Remark**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Remark**	**Decision**
Operate word perfectly to make work more interesting.	4.67	.58	VHN	4.52	.50	VHP	Not Needed
Create data base application to control access to information.	3.93	.54	HN	3.09	1.01	HP	Not Needed
Create data on spread sheets to input students' records in a database.	4.16	.37	VHN	4.53	.67	VHP	Not Needed
Create data on spread sheets to input staff records in a database.	4.08	.78	VHN	4.45	.67	VHP	Not Needed
Create PowerPoint graphics/slides presentation.	4.66	.60	VHN	4.19	.77	VHP	Not Needed
Use Microsoft Access for report generation.	3.11	1.03	HN	2.51	.69	MP	Needed
Apply electronic filing record files electronically.	4.63	.67	VHN	3.58	.74	HP	Needed
Use computer aided design like digital camera	2.41	.77	MN	2.87	.69	MP	Not Needed

for records creation.							
Operate Batch processing for record purpose.	3.71	.74	HN	3.31	1.22	HP	Not Needed
Operate electronic mail for record storage.	3.97	.69	HN	3.47	.85	HP	Not Needed
Operate video conferencing for meeting purpose.	4.71	.46	VHN	4.00	1.26	HP	Needed
Use computer aided design such as touch screen computer for records creation.	4.08	.58	VHN	3.59	1.06	HP	Needed
Use computer aided design such as trackballs for records creation.	3.71	1.22	HN	2.95	.62	MP	Needed
Create computer files and folders.	4.04	.89	VHN	4.23	.67	VHP	Not Needed

The analysis in Table 1 shows that out of the 14 areas of office automation control system skill needs, secretarial staff in tertiary institutions in Anambra State very highly need improvement on eight areas which are: item 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12 and 14. Out of the remaining six areas, they highly need improvement on five which are: item 2, 6, 9, 10 and 13 while they moderately need improvement on the remaining area (item 8). On the other hand, secretarial staff in tertiary institutions in Anambra State very highly possess skills on five of the 14 areas of office automation control system which are: item 1, 3, 4, 5 and 11. Out of the remaining nine areas, they highly possess skill on six which are: item 2, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12 while they moderately possess skills on the reaming three areas which are: item 6, 8 and 13. Analysis of office automation control system skill improvement needs of secretarial staff and those they possessed shows that, secretarial staff in tertiary institutions in Anambra State need improvement for effective job performance in five areas, namely; use of Microsoft access for report generation, apply electronic filing record files electronically, operate video conferencing for meeting purpose, use computer aided design such as touch screen computer for records creation and use of computer aided design such as trackballs for records creation.

Hypothesis 1: Secretarial staff do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the skill improvement of office automation control system needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on age.

Table 1: t-test Comparison of Secretarial Staff Mean Ratings on the Skill Improvement of Office Automation Control System Needs for Effective Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State Based on Age

Source of variation	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	*P*-value	Remark
18-35 Years	164	3.66	.16				
				236	.46	.64	Not-Sig

36-60 Years	74	3.67	.14

The results in Table 2 shows that the mean score for Secretarial staff between the ages of 18-35 (*M*=3.66*, SD*=.16) was not significantly less than that of those between the ages of 36-60 (*M=3.67, SD=.14*); *t (*236*)* =.46*, p*=.64. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on the skill improvement of office automation control system needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State was therefore not rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Secretarial staff do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the skill improvement of office automation control system needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on years of work experience.

Table 2: ANOVA on the Skill Improvement of Office Automation Control System Needs of Secretarial Staff for Effective Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State based on years of work experience.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	*P*-value	Remark
Between Groups	.016	2	.008	.32	.72	Not-Sig
Within Groups	5.905	235	.025			
Total	5.921	237				

As shown in Table 3, the F-ratio (df: 2/235) is .32 and the p-value (.72) is greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. It was therefore decided that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of secretarial staff on the skill improvement of office automation control system needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on years of work experience. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected.

2. What are office management software skill improvement needs of secretarial staff for effective job performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

Table 3: Mean Ratings of Office Management Software Skill Improvement Needs of Secretarial Staff for Effective Job Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State N=238

	Needed			Possessed			
Item Description	**Mean**	**SD**	**Remark**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Remark**	**Decision**
1. Store information in the storage software	4.07	.59	VHN	3.45	.95	HP	Needed
2. Access information easily	3.91	.83	HN	3.16	.49	HP	Not-Needed
3. Reduce paperwork	4.21	.84	VHN	3.64	1.08	HP	Needed
4. Congest people in waiting areas	3.81	.85	HN	3.54	1.11	HP	Not-Needed
5. Free up reception at the security staff for other tasks	4.01	1.12	VHN	3.81	.81	HP	Needed
6. Enhance employee experience and productivity	3.95	.72	HN	3.29	1.24	HP	Not-Needed
7. Reduce employee interruptions from unexpected guests	4.34	.64	VHN	3.60	.68	HP	Needed
8. Optimize space usage and save on real estate costs	4.31	.76	VHN	4.31	.94	VHP	Needed
9. Retrieve of information in the storage software	3.67	.88	HN	4.31	.76	VHP	Not-Needed

Analysis in Table 3 shows that out of the 9 areas of office management software skill needs, secretarial staff in tertiary institutions in Anambra State very highly need improvement on five areas which are: item 1, 3, 5, 7 and 8. They highly need improvement on the remaining four areas which are: item 2, 4, 6 and 9. On the other hand, secretarial staff in tertiary institutions in Anambra State very highly possess skills on two of the 9 areas of office management software

which are: item 8 and 9. They highly possess skill on remaining 7 areas which are: item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Analysis of office management software skill improvement needs of secretarial staff and those they possessed shows that, secretarial staff in tertiary institutions in Anambra State need improvement for effective job performance in five areas, namely; store information in the storage software, reduce paperwork, free up reception at the security staff for other tasks, reduce employee interruptions from unexpected guests, optimize space usage and save on real estate costs.

Hypothesis 3: Secretarial staff do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on skill improvement of office management software needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on age.

Table 3: t-test Comparison of Secretarial Staff Mean Ratings on Skill Improvement of Office Management Software Needs for Effective Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State Based on Age

Source of variation	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	*P*-value	Remark
18-35 Years	164	3.67	.22				
36-60 Years	74	3.68	.21	236	.23	.81	Not-Sig

Table 3 shows that the mean score for secretarial staff between the ages of 18-35 (*M*=3.67*, SD*=.22) was not significantly less than that of those between the ages of 36-60 (*M=3.68, SD=.21*); *t (*236*)* =.23*, p*=.81. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on skill improvement of office management software needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State was therefore not rejected.

Hypothesis 4: Secretarial staff do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on skill improvement of office management software needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on years of work experience.

Table 4: Analysis of variance in the on Skill Improvement of Office Management Software Needs of Secretarial Staff for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on years of work experience.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	*P*-value	Remark
Between Groups	.024	2	.01	.25	.77	Not-Sig
Within Groups	11.06	235	.04			
Total	11.09	237				

As shown in table 20, the F-ratio (df: 2/235) is .25 and the p-value (.25) is greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. It was therefore decided that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of secretarial staff on the skill improvement of office management software needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on years of work experience. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected.

Discussion

Findings of the first research question revealed that office automation control system skill improvement needs of secretarial staff and those they possessed shows that, secretarial staff in tertiary institutions in Anambra State need improvement for effective job performance in five areas, namely; use of Microsoft access for report generation, apply electronic filing record files electronically, operate video conferencing for meeting purpose, use computer aided design such as touch screen computer for records creation and use of computer aided design such as trackballs for records creation. The findings of the study further revealed that Secretarial staff do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the skill improvement of office automation control system needs for effective performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State based on age and years of work experience.

Findings of the second research question two revealed that office management software skill improvement needs of secretarial staff and those they possessed shows that, secretarial staff in tertiary institutions in Anambra State need improvement for effective job performance in five areas, namely; store information in the storage software, reduce paperwork, free up reception at

the security staff for other tasks, reduce employee interruptions from unexpected guests, optimize space usage and save on real estate costs.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that secretaries need training for effective job performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra State. Secretaries in tertiary institutions in Anambra State needs training to improve their Office Automation control system and Office Management / managerial skills.

Recommendations

1. The tertiary institutions should make efforts to equip the secretarial offices with modern information communication technologies to help equip the secretaries with the requisite skills in information technology needed in offices of today and tomorrow.
2. It is therefore imperative that administrators of tertiary institutions ensure that secretarial staff possess adequate skills and measures are put in place to improve on the areas of skills deficiency and gaps revealed in the study.
3. Secretarial education teachers should endeavour to attend seminars and conferences in order to be kept abreast of the latest developments in the world of work and technology.
4. Secretaries should read books and journals that will equip them with relevant management techniques and innovation to improve administrative effectiveness in performing their duties.
5. Administrators/management of tertiary educational institutions should make effort to provide new technologies for the secretaries, make provision for training and retraining of secretaries on the use of new technologies, provide alternative power supply for technology utilization.

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