



The Use of and Effects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its Effects on Office Technology and Management Practitioner's Performance in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT:

The secretary is in charge of organizing meetings and making appointments for or on behalf of the boss. Because of these responsibilities, the secretary is well positioned to contribute significantly to the effective administration of the company. The secretary is now a practitioner of office technology and management thanks to the usage of office automation and ICT in general. The term "secretary" in this text really refers to a practitioner of office technology and administration. The availability of the required proficiencies and abilities obtained by the secretary inside the organization determines how effectively and efficiently these tasks are performed. The performance of the secretary in managing office technology is examined in this essay from the standpoint of the Malaysian secretary. Card index analysis was used in conjunction with thematic data analysis to accomplish these goals. The tool for gathering data was a semi-structured interview. 12 people took part in the data collecting. In the research, a method known as purposeful sampling was utilized, and criteria were applied to choose the study sample. ICT proficiency is a significant determinant in the performance of the secretary in the organization, according to the study's conclusions. The paper recommends that appropriate training programs on the use of office technology equipment for secretaries be put in place. The paper concludes that training and re-training of the secretary is very important in order to update the secretary on new merging office technologies.

Keywords: Practitioner, Secretary, Technology, Management.

Introduction

A secretary is an executive officer's or manager's assistant who is trained to type and handle a variety of office tasks. Both personal and professional qualities are present in the secretary. The secretary upholds his obligations to maintain discretion, presentableness, and unwavering commitment in the workplace (Onifade, 2010). Information management and processing are key components of the secretary's job. Office technology management in this article refers to the administration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) resources by secretaries while they carry out their duties. Regarding the duties and responsibilities of the secretary, secretarial practices in the public and commercial sectors have undergone a number of modifications (Akpomi & Ordu, 2009). In order to keep up with the rapidly expanding technological world, office devices and equipment that were formerly utilized to generate, replicate, and store records have undergone significant changes (Castels & Gustavo, 2005). The usage of cutting-edge ICT technology by firms nowadays is a crucial factor in what sets them apart (Ilomaki, 2008).

Due to the nature of his job, the secretary has continued to play a crucial role in attaining the aims and objectives of the organization. For the accomplishment of their organizational goals and objectives, many organizations depended on the secretary's skills (Nwaokwa & Okoli, 2012). Numerous factors, including customer behavior, market competitiveness, effective service delivery, technology, and quality management, influence organizational changes in today's corporate environment. For proper and advantageous decision-making, every organization requires reliable facts and information (Akpomi & Ordu, 2009). Regarding the development of the organization where the secretary works, the function that the secretary plays inside that organization is crucial. Therefore, the organization where the secretary works should strongly consider providing both technology and human assistance. The optimum use of office technologies as well as the knowledge and skills required to operate the various office technologies are prerequisites for the secretary to act efficiently and effectively inside the organization. Modern workplace ICTs have replaced the time-consuming practice of doing activities repeatedly. The existence of ICT has eliminated the fragmentary character of information generation, replication, storage, and retrieval (Fry et al., 2009).

However, the production and usage of computers and software programs as a consequence of the advancement of office technology has made the secretary's job easier (Malavia & Gogia, 2010). When compared to the old-time secretary, the production of the modern secretary is much greater. If the advantages of employing these technologies—including the printer, pen drive, smartphones, picture copier, e-mail, Zimbra, and internet—were regarded as variables maximizing the secretaries' overall production, this would be clear. As a result, the goal of this essay is to evaluate how well Malaysian

secretaries employ office technology and management. The research also included office technology skills, how to use them, and how that impacts a secretary's productivity.

Utilizing ICT in a Business Setting

A secretary is a worker who organizes office tasks and handles secretarial tasks for management or professional employees (Robert et al., 2011). These duties may totally be performed for the advantage of only one superior employee, or they might serve the interests of many. General office coordination, meeting scheduling, creating and keeping office records, and producing reports are just a few of the secretarial tasks carried out by secretaries. These many activities made the secretary adaptable and well-versed in the organizational operating tasks. Office technologies have caused the secretary's function to modernize from previous responsibilities that were more conventional (Edwin, 2008). The secretaries have access to contemporary office equipment including laptops, the internet, cell phones, and fax machines. The secretary's job is significantly simplified by this ICT. This element has influenced the secretaries' successful performance in companies all around the globe. This is due to the fact that secretaries prefer utilizing e-mail, group collaboration tools like Zimbra, fax machines, and telephones for message sending and communication. One piece of open source software that the research participants utilize is called Zimbra. The reason secretaries use this and comparable software is because it makes it possible for them to plan and carry out activities appropriately. The telephone, fax, and email, on the other hand, are often used in workplaces. The secretaries can create, edit, and transmit memos, letters, and reports both within and outside the organization more quickly thanks to computers and ICT (Mumini & Hawa, 2014). According to Duniya (2011), workplaces in the twenty-first century are highly furnished with office technology tools that boost output efficiency, accuracy, and productivity. The availability of these amenities in the secretaries' organizations, as well as their capacity to use them, had a significant influence on the performance of the secretaries. The usage of computers and other computer applications to handle various secretarial chores enables this. The secretarial profession has seen a great deal of change, which is what is responsible for such performance. This is shown by the fact that formerly manual secretarial tasks have been replaced by computerized ones (Atakpa, 2010). Aynsley (2015) observed that any workplace today without ICT would be dull and uninspiring to work in, supporting the aforementioned claim. This demonstrates that secretarial job would be seen as pleasant and social in workplaces with ICT tools. The secretaries' workplaces that were visited during data collection still have this issue. The offices have excellent ICT capabilities. Using the amenities was also found to be second nature to the secretaries. This demonstrates how drastically the conventional function of secretaries' offices has changed as a result of technology advancements. The conventional duties include typing and shorthand dictation, phone answering, and mail processing. Modern secretaries are increasingly exposed to cutting-edge technology, such the internet, which makes tasks easier and improves information accessibility (Edwin, 2008). Sending communications by fax, telex, and email is made simpler by these technologies. There is a variety of office equipment accessible, including printers, dictation devices, photocopy machines, and duplicating devices, to name a few. The job of a secretary has always seemed difficult, from the requirements for the secretarial profession in the past, which included the ability to take dictations in shorthand and type the transcribed document, to the current requirements for knowledge, skills, and qualifications for modern secretaries. The task of the secretary should become simpler thanks to the advancement of office technology. The acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and competences by secretaries to make the most use of the ICT resources at their disposal, however, is the most difficult part. Potentially, the secretary requires training and re-training in order to be able to contribute as much as possible to the fulfillment of organizational goals and objectives. This is because the secretary has to stay current with technology advancements in order to abandon outdated ways of doing things. In order to handle the demands of the contemporary workplace, the secretary has to be both academically educated and well-versed in office technological tools. It is undeniable that technology has completely transformed the functions of secretaries in contemporary organizations (Armah, 2015). This shift has opened up a path for secretaries to transition from being just information recorders and receptionists to business strategists (Appah & Emeh, 2011; Adedoyin, 2010; Igbinedeon, 2010). The duties of a secretary nowadays go beyond just typing and directing visitors to appropriate areas of the company. The organization of schedules and appointments for higher-ranking officials has evolved into a multi-line operation of office equipment, including computers, the internet, copier machines, telephone handling, adding machines, and more. Due to the nature of the secretary's job, handling information about official activities necessitates a lot of creative effort on the secretary's part. Given the significance of information as a resource for a number of the secretary's responsibilities, it is imperative that the secretary not be excluded from information and communication development. The secretarial profession was once thought to be merely a supporting one in the workplace, but today's secretaries must meet the demands of modern offices or risk having their careers jeopardized by poor performance and a failure to quickly adapt to technological advancements (Akpormi & Ordu, 2009). This confirms that the secretary, who is the primary planner of meetings, record keeping, handling of incoming and outgoing mail for the organization, and one who manages various office activities, should be up to date with the desired ICT skills and take some steps to improve the secretary's skills and performance (Mdlongwa, 2012).

The internet is yet another crucial piece of workplace technology employed by the secretary. Like never before, the Internet has changed the computer and communications fields (Barry et al., 2009). This remarkable integration of internet capabilities was made possible by the advancement of the telephone, mobile phones, radio, and computers. According to Barry et al. (2009), one of the best illustrations of the advantages of consistent investment and dedication to information infrastructure research and development is the availability of internet facilities. These advantages included the secretary using ICT to do out duties. In fact, the internet helps the secretary carry out secretarial duties by making information accessible and successfully disseminating it. Significant educational, social, economic, and political advancements have been made thanks to ties created by the internet between people, countries, organizations, enterprises, and education (Guttermaan et al., 2009). Time and distance have no longer been a barrier. The secretaries' tasks are being made simpler thanks to this.

ICT is utilized for academic and job reasons in addition to being used for fun and amusement, according to Onifade (2010). ICT promotes learning; it inspires the person while also enabling the individual to do certain tasks. This activity includes secretarial labor, where secretaries utilize ICT to carry out their duties. The secretaries can plan the details of in-person meetings thanks to ICT (Beqri, 2014). ICT is also utilized by secretaries to track out the

organizational members' areas of specialty, which makes it easier to connect with the correct individuals, spread information, and share knowledge (Nader & Shamsuddin, 2009).

Especially for talks taking place across multiple locations, computer-mediated communication such as electronic mail or computer conferencing aids the secretary in maintaining continuity and connection between sessions (Al-Hawamdeh, 2002). The secretary utilizes ICT to carry out these responsibilities quickly and effectively while planning meetings and other official events. This is only one of the many ways that ICT benefits the secretarial profession. Today, secretaries have access to a variety of information and communication technology tools for use in businesses and offices (Onifade, 2009). There are several information centers that challenge and compete with one another in the delivery of information in this era of the information revolution (Nwaoka & Okoli, 2012). In the administration of secretarial chores, there are several areas where specific ICT solutions are chosen over others. Examples of these products include word processing, record keeping, and resource preservation.

The ICT offers the secretary the benefit of having backup data stored in case the original data is destroyed. As a result, the secretary must refresh their practical knowledge and ICT skills via both long and short-term training. In fact, ICT makes it possible for self-directed learning, allowing secretaries to examine the advantages of ICT to enhance their job (Livingston & Tonia, 2012). Furthermore, according to Abubakar (2010), computer technology is highly regarded as one of the best ways to preserve knowledge and a means of documenting and information gathering. In the information age, computer literacy is crucial, but information literacy is more basic and challenging. This is due to the fact that handling and processing information in any form requires certain thinking and communication abilities. Andoh (2012) argues that the risk of blindly accepting whatever is on the internet and failing to recognize the need to look at other sources of information exists in the absence of information literacy.

Methodology

The performance of office technology and management practitioners is the main topic of this essay. As a result, the study's research strategy is qualitative in nature since it will be looking for material that will provide specific details on the subject. In addition to the aforementioned, a qualitative research focuses on human behavior and social interaction in natural environments. This study is issue-based, thus participants must provide detailed justifications (Punch, 2009). A circumstance where the secretary may feel uneasy about their workplace, the facilities they use, or their relationship with their boss and wants clarification is an example of one of these natural situations. The survey included 12 secretaries from higher education institutions in Malaysia. The data collecting method employed open-ended interviews. Instead of forcing participants to choose from a predetermined answer (s), this provided them the chance to react in their own words and perspectives (Creswell, 2007). In contrast, a card index was used in this study's thematic data analysis (Bazeley, 2013; Petra & Primorac, 2015).

Findings and Discussion

The study's results were accurately stated in the context in which they appeared. This essay carefully adheres to the topic at hand and the results' ethical standards. As a result, the subjectivity of the research might be linked to the actuality of the issue under investigation. The participants had the chance to openly express their opinions during the interviews about any problems they were having with the secretary's job. Interviewing all 12 participants provided the researcher with evidence that the data had achieved empirical saturation since, eventually, repetitions of what other participants had previously stated forced the interview to terminate (Baker & Edwards, 2012).

The results demonstrate that the software indicated in this research as supporting the secretarial jobs is the Microsoft office software suite, which includes MsWord, MsExcel, and MsPowerPoint. The secretary use ICT applications to do various office responsibilities. Ms. Word is used by the secretary for word processing, whereas Ms. Excel is utilized by the secretary for record keeping and easy computations. The secretary may also use this program to record incoming and departing mail, figure out travel reimbursements, and generate financial reports. By combining MsWord and MsExcel, the secretaries also utilize the program to do mail merge operations. In general, all of the participants said that MsExcel was a crucial piece of software that they utilized while carrying out certain official jobs that required computations and other diverse activities. Zimbra software was also found to be assisting the secretary in carrying out crucial tasks, such as scheduling appointments for the superior, as well as supporting and enhancing secretary performance by reminding the secretary of scheduled appointments and assisting the secretary in sending emails to multiple recipients. Zimbra's ability to synchronize two accounts is a key feature. For instance, the secretary and superior accounts may be linked so that both parties can see each other's calendars and appointments. This is crucial because whenever the secretary schedules an appointment on the boss's behalf, the boss will see the booking right away. If the boss cannot make the appointment, the boss will tell the secretary to reschedule it for a time and date that work better for him or her. The secretary may schedule appointments with more freedom thanks to this function. Participants who were subjected to interviews felt that Microsoft Office had a substantial impact on how well their secretarial chores were completed. The results of the interview addressing the usage of several Microsoft office programs that the secretaries employed to carry out official activities suggested this. This demonstrates how the software has a significant influence on the secretary's overall performance. The secretary may increase professionalism, productivity, and work quality in the workplace with the aid of the software. Office technology, particularly text processing capabilities, have expanded specialization of skills that support and assist administrative, secretarial, and clerical work, according to (Malon et al., 2011). Along with the foregoing, all of the secretaries who were interviewed made a generalized statement about how they used Microsoft Word, saying that it was user-friendly and that they used it to carry out their mandated tasks, which included writing letters, creating memos, creating reports, and other word processing tasks. This demonstrates how the secretary's performance is enhanced as a result of the software's assistance with their job. With the help of Microsoft software, typing, which is still seen by many as the secretary's primary duty, has been made simpler, increasing productivity. The use of MsWord has made typing easier than it was in the past when manual or electric typewriters were used (Gerry, 2009).

This has had a significant influence on how secretaries carry out their duties and has assisted them in doing a better job at it. The secretary uses MsPowerPoint, another software program, to provide graphic data at meetings and other official events. The secretaries use the program to carry out a variety of official responsibilities during meetings and official briefings. The secretaries can show visual images, including photographs, graphs, and charts, thanks to the software. It allows for the construction of vital information slide shows that may be used during presentations at meetings or other formal events. Whether doing presentations for academic or non-academic objectives, the secretary may offer a lot of high-quality presentations with the help of the program. Further research has shown that reports are shown using Power Point during presentations at meetings or other formal gatherings. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that the secretary need timely training in office technology in order to stay current with these technologies' burgeoning improvements. This is significant because management and employees of a business work together to make judgments and ethical judgements inside that organization (Janie, 2016). In today's corporate world, the global trend toward technology has made training necessary, however the knowledge gained during training may not result in a beneficial change in behavior unless it is supported with motivation and a supporting atmosphere. Therefore, in order for the secretary to assume favorable improvements from acquired training, assistance and motivation are required. Training, according to Olaniyan (2008), is the deliberate development of the information, abilities, and attitudes needed for productive employment. Therefore, it is anticipated that there would be a beneficial shift in working behavior after the conclusion of the training. As suggested by Kulkarni (2013), training appears to be a criterion for enhancing the capacity of organizational workforce for attaining organizational goals. There are recorded evidences that training activities have a good influence on the performance of employees. It should be recognized, nonetheless, that quality training will undoubtedly help the organization advance its fundamental objectives. As a result, the importance of training inside a company is crucial to its growth. Training is therefore essential because every organization that implements a good training program will have a controlled way of managing its business, flexibility in carrying out its activities, and the ability to produce consistent, fruitful results (Kulkarni, 2013).

The secretary's duties include planning meetings and other official events. However, research has shown that the secretary thought ICT was highly helpful in preparing meetings. This include carrying out the secretary's responsibilities before to, during, and after meetings. According to Victor (2010), a secretary's duties also include setting up meetings, conferences, and seminars. The secretary sets the meeting agenda, sends invitations, plans lunch and light refreshments. The secretary prepares meeting materials, arranges the meeting location, offers secretarial and administrative assistance, and also provides the logistical information required for the achievement of the corporate goals during meetings. The help of ICT is necessary for the secretary to do the aforementioned tasks properly and efficiently. Meetings are used to coordinate tasks, exchange ideas, market concepts, and resolve issues via group collaborations of people. According to Lloyd (2004), a meeting begins with the assembly of two or more people to promote a shared goal that cannot be accomplished by a single person. The secretary has a number of responsibilities before, during, and after planning sessions. The secretary's role before a meeting includes inviting and alerting members to attend. Another responsibility the secretary has before a meeting is to ask members who will be present for information. Asking for members' input to be included in the meeting agenda is one of the types of information the secretary may seek to gather prior to meetings. Any additional logistical requirements that would make it more convenient for members to attend the meeting, such as letters of apology from members who might not be able to attend (Onifade, 2010). Additional research showed that ICT has a significant impact on secretaries' roles in relation to scheduling meetings inside the business. This is shown by the conclusions that the current secretary's responsibilities for meeting organization cannot be carried out effectively and successfully without the use of ICT. The secretaries now need to properly reposition themselves with ICT knowledge in order to stay relevant in their places of employment and be able to keep up with technological advancements in today's modern offices as a result of the current ICT advancements (Nwaoka & Okoli, 2012). For this reason, it has become more common for secretaries to form the practice of acquiring new ICT skills in order to stay relevant in their roles. Therefore, secretaries must follow the requirements for the contemporary office, which include the worldwide trend in ICT, in order to stay relevant in their businesses and to maintain their positions. Their use of the ICT has amplified the influence of the technology on their job and enhanced their output. According to Idris (2013), the use of automation in information technology has ushered in a new age of managing communication and information, which has improved the secretarial profession. The competition for secretarial jobs has increased as a result of this development. According to the results, ICT is now necessary for the correct performance of secretarial duties. Therefore, it is impossible to underestimate ICT's importance to the secretarial profession. Today's globe has seen a significant shift in the working environment in developed countries due to the use of ICT in the form of emerging technologies, and this transformation is now occurring in developing countries (Ogunsola & Hezekiah, 2005). According to Ogunola and Hezekiah, the important aspect of these changes that affects both developed and developing countries is information management. As a result, the focus of this paper was drawn to the most fundamental characteristics of the work of the secretary, which are, to put it briefly, the processing and handling of information (Adebayo & Akinyele, 2012). In this respect, research has shown that Malaysian secretaries consistently work to take use of the possibilities provided by ICT in the conduct of their secretarial business. This action has highlighted how the secretaries performance was improved by using the office technology as a tool in the completion of their tasks, and they have realized a significant advantage by operating in the space provided by ICT opportunities which helped to make them relevant in their places of work (Richard, 2007).

Final Thoughts and Suggestions

In this essay, the tasks of the secretary have been examined in relation to how the secretary uses ICT as a tool to carry out his job. The purpose of the article is to look into and talk about how the secretary uses office technology to function. The intention is to inspire the secretaries to continue contributing by working harder for their organizations. The secretaries' jobs will be secure as a result of this move, making them relevant in their organizations. The literatures that were researched in this article focused on determining the significance of ICT and how it helps the secretary carry out duties in order to determine how these technologies help to enhance the secretary's performance for the best service delivery. However, the results of this research have shown that:

1. The employment of different ICT applications has a major influence on the secretaries' overall performance. This has shown that ICT has a significant impact on the secretary's overall performance.

2. The secretary requires regular training in office automation technology so that he or she can keep up with new developments in this field. This is significant since the current workplace environment need constant personnel training and retraining due to the continuous changes and technological advancements. This made it necessary for the secretary to obtain motivation and support in order to anticipate good improvements as a result of the training's effects.

Regular training and retraining is preferred so that the secretary may stay current in the workplace. This article suggests general office automation software, public relations, time management, communication skills, as well as editing and proofreading abilities for papers as potential training topics. Secretaries need to be completely engaged in running the secretarial operations of their organizations. They ought to be permitted to plan and run meetings. Cover meetings by taking minutes, and actively engage in all organizational matters including secretarial services.

This will undoubtedly have an effect on their productivity and performance, and it will also encourage the secretary to meet the demands of the current office environment needs.

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