THE INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGY ON SECRETARIAL PROFESSION AND PRACTICE

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Abstract

The effects of technology on secretarial profession and practice had brought relief to secretaries and afforded them the opportunity to make use of modern word processing machinery starting from electronic typewriter through memory writer to computer. The speed and accuracy with which documents are produced are unraveled in the history of human skill. Technology has eliminated wastage of secretary's time saving his/her time spends on routine job such as creation of files, storage and retrieval of such files which are now done by computer. Computer of course has turned everybody in the world into secretarial profession. It is therefore recommended that for the secretarial staff to cope with the technologically dynamic world they require not only to be retrained but to be acquainted with the designs and become versatile with many kinds of machines.

Introduction

Usenu (2006), observes that as reliance on technology continues to expand in offices across the world, the role of offices professional has greatly evolved. Office automation and organizational restructuring have led secretaries and administrative assistants to assume a wider range of range of new responsibility once reserved for managerial and professional staff. Many secretaries and administrative assistants now provide training and orientation for new staff, conduct research on the internet, operate and trouble shot new office technologies. In the midst of the change however, their core responsibilities have remained much the same performing and coordinating an administrative activities and storing, retrieving and integrating information for dissemination to staff and clients. Secretaries are responsible for a variety of administrative and clerical duties necessary to run an organization effectively and efficiently. They serves as an information manager for an office, plan and schedule meetings and appointment, organize and maintain paper on electronic files, manage projects, conduct research and provide information by using the telephone, postal mail and e-mail. In spite of the economic strains of a country, industrial organizations, institutions, establishment and offices owned by government and private individuals are in need of competent, qualified and efficient secretaries (Odorewu, 2001).

Iredia (2002), the world is changing and all that exist in it are changing along with it. That is why the secretarial profession is changing too. Secretarial profession is a noble profession. It existed in the early stage of development of man and practitioners were associated with kings, top military officers and great men. In the time past, secretary's job was tedious as he had to take note of speeches and keep secret records manually. The secretary's duty then was narrow and limited to only taking of notes of speeches of great men and keeping of official secrets.

However, the advent of technology and metamorphic world has not only changed but has also significantly enlarged the profession. World economics have changed social order and value orientation is changing by the day. Technology has brought about monumental development in communication supers world-wide as a direct consequence, secretarial profession, is becoming more and more multi-dimensional and sophisticated. The new status, which technology and changing world are imposing on the secretarial profession, has led many people into exercising some fears whether or not the profession will go into extinction. All over the world, technology is seen in all facets of the business world. This development has affected way people behave, office functions, equipment used by workers and skills used in different fields. Prior to the introduction of modern office equipment such as the computer, secretarial staff were talking about manual typewriter, the world processor but nowadays they are talking about computer, email, fax machines and so on. Similarly, they were concerned with producing letters written by their bosses and later were transcribing from their shorthand passages.

The office today has taken a new dimension in terms of the ways its functions are carried out and the great demands and challenges on management which have affected all facets of administration. In this case the secretary is not left out because most of these challenges are centered
on her functions (Onoriowhowose, 1996),

From the foregoing, it means that the world of business in which the staff finds herself is not static but dynamic as a result of the emergence of technology.

**Concept of Secretary**

The word secretary is coined from Latin word "secretum" and in medieval times a secretary was a person who deals with the correspondence of the king or other high ranking persons and consequently with confidential and secretarial matters. The secretary is an important officer in any establishment. The contribution and effectiveness of a secretary can either enhance or diminish the efficiency of an organization.

Ohaegbulem (2002) quoting Nwosu (1998) defines secretary as any person who possesses and uses a mastery of stenographic skills, plus clerical and management skills in processing office information. The secretary must possess superior secretarial skills such as highest degree of efficiency in typewriting, shorthand, office practice/duties, communication/language skills and general business knowledge.

Njoku (2002) states that a secretary should be a staff of any organization trained in office administration. Acquisition of secretarial skills and he/her competent to function in the world of business or becoming self employed. He/her possesses skills in the use of office machines. Put differently, a secretary is an office worker who combines the competencies of stenographer, clerical officer, receptionist and more, who needs a variety of other skills, talents and attitude.


Uba-Mbbi (2002) observes that the advent of technology has led increasingly to the use of machines in our offices. But as civilization and new innovations emerge, there is need for extensive training and technical knowledge as more and more offices adopt technological inventions such as office automation. Many regarded it merely as a faster way of turning out correspondences.

The word computer of which office mechanization is a part has long baffled those outside it, because of the apparent incomprehensibility of its special jargon. New and strange terms are introduced in a never - ending stream, and many of those terms are ambiguous. A word processor for example, is both the hardware system that has the word processing and the software programme that enables the hardware system to function.

Offices automation may not be very new, but its application has been extended in recent years and its potentials for the future are now so clear that it has acquired new and greater significance. The essential points of technology in the positive effect on automation are the reduction in cost, chance c: success and the value of results which can be estimated with sufficient accuracy.

The advent and changes in technology to the working environment promise to be exciting, challenging and rewarding ventures, specially, if one considers the daily toil of the user. The contribution of technology to development and advancement in the business world cannot be over emphasized for its tremendous effects. Before the advent of technology, the secretarial profession was faced with tedious tasks but today it has boomed in activities as a result of the various modern automatic machines which are in operation (Ochiedu, 1998)

Ohaegbulem (2002) says technology has transformed office functions- the telephone, Email, computer and internet are useful technological devices, which have made work easier, cheaper and effective through computer. The secretary in the technological era should be an office information manager with mastery of the uses and operations of modern office machines.

Secretarial studies should change to "office information management" while secretary should change to "office information processor". The concept, "secretary" should equally change by way of definition. The work of technology calls for Electronic Data Processing (EDP) in place of Manual Data Processing (MDP). Secretary ship in technologically dynamic office should develop stenographic skills, (Keyboarding reprography, and transcription). Also, there should be communication skills such as reading writing, speaking and learning abilities. Similarly, there should be organizational or managerial skills such as negotiability and creativity. The individual competence skills are also vital, general business knowledge, sound judgment, determination, punctuality and regularity work. Work maturity skills as exhibition of positive image and problem solving attitudes are indispensable. Secretaries who can operate teleconferencing and video conferencing equipment are in great demand. Those with only shorthand and typing skills are being threatened by the insurge of information technology (IT).

Njoku (2002) states, technology is seen in all facets of the business world. This development
has affected the way people behave, office function equipment used by workers, skill used in different fields. Some years back, the secretarial staff were talking about manual typewriters, the word processor. Today, they are talking about e-mail, fax machines. Similarly, they were concerned with producing letter written by their bosses and later they were transcribing from their shorthand passages.

The office today has taken a new dimension in terms of the ways its functions are carried out and the great demands and challenges on management, which have affected all facets of administration. In this case the secretarial staff is not left out because most of these challenges are centered on this her functions.

Today, the secretarial staff are asked to give replies on behalf of the boss or organization to customers or even to members of staff.

Furthermore, some of the secretarial staff here today are given the opportunity to participate in decision making of the organization, appraisal and interview of prospective candidates. Also they participate in the selection of employees by determining the right employee to be fixed in a particular position. Some secretaries carry out the functions of human resources managers. For instance, they help their establishments determine the manpower and materials to be employed and the type of equipment such staff would be able to operate at their levels. They are also involved in planning, directing, motivating, controlling, supervising and organizing among others. In effect, she is everything and everybody.

This means that the world of business in which the secretarial staff finds herself is not static but dynamic as a result of the emergence of technology.

**Effects of Technology on Secretarial Profession**

Iredia (2002), technology has greatly affected secretarial profession not only in Nigeria but the world - over. Looking at the contribution of technology to the profession in present time, one begins to imagine what would have become of the profession if technology had not come to its rescue. Technology has completely enveloped secretarial profession such that it is now safe for one to say that without technology there is no secretarial profession. Some of the ways technology has affected secretarial profession include:

(a) The use of modern word processing machines starting from electronic typewriter through memory writer to computer, have brought relief to the secretary, enhances secretarial efficiency and makes secretarial functions pleasurable and attractive.

(b) The speed and accuracy with which documents are produced are unraveled in the history of human skills.

(c) Technology has eliminated wastage of secretary's time by saving him of the time he spends on routine job such as creation of files, storage and retrieval of such files, which are now done by the computer.

(d) Technology has enriched secretarial job and this enrichment has resulted in job satisfaction for secretaries. A secretary now feels happy and satisfied when he poses behind a computer, which is also found on the tables of top executives and important officials in important offices. In fact, the computer has become a status symbol and has turned everybody in the world into secretarial professional.

(e) Technology has broadened the scope of secretarial profession. It has severed the secretary from the derogatory appendage status to an independent member of the organization, information manager and a custodian of organization information reservoir.

(f) Technology has brought the whole world to the secretary's table; he takes organization to the world and brings the world to the organization. For this reason, every member of the organization including his boss respect him.

(g) Technology is gradually revising the general misconception and poor perception of secretaries in Nigerian society. Instead of their downgrading, they are now being interested. Instead of their being looked down on as in the previous cases they are now being looked up to.

(h) Technology has increased in secretary's productivity. A secretary while attending to a visitor may as well set a computer in motion to be printing out copies of needed documents while at the same time answering a telephone call.

(i) Technology has increased the secretary's job opportunities and expands his areas of specialization. In addition, a secretary can now be engaged as an information officer,
information manager, computer operator or chief executive's personal aid.

**Recommendations:**

1. For the secretarial staff to cope with this technological, dynamic world they require not only to be retained but to be acquainted with the new designs and become versatile with many kinds of machines.
2. They must be psychologists with working knowledge of all the processes of automation
3. They must be mentally equipped by furthering their education, to enable them tackle any situation that may arise and be ready at any time to learn new designs of machines that may come their way.
4. Secretarial staff should as a body fight for training opportunities with incentives from their employers to enable them to adapt to any new situation.
5. They should equally attend any relevant conference/workshop for development.
6. To cap it all secretarial staff should have the mind that absorbs any new ideas or innovation.

**Conclusion:**

With the introduction of modem equipment into the secretarial profession, the secretary cannot only type but also save, file and retrieve records with effortless ease. Besides technology has completely enveloped secretarial profession such that it is now safe for one to say that without technology there is no secretarial profession as it relief to the secretary, enhanced secretarial efficiency and makes secretarial functions brought pleasurable and attractive (Osazuwa 1998).

Technology has no doubt severed the secretary from the derogatory appendage status to an independent member of the organization, information manager and a custodian of organization reservoir.

Secretaries are no longer being downgraded as it was in the past, they are now being recognized and respected in Nigerian Society.

**References:**


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