

REAPPRAISING SECRETARIAL EDUCATION TEACHING IN SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR FUNCTIONALITY AND SELF RELIANCE

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Abstract

This study was designed to find out how secretarial education can be reappraised for functionality and self reliance. Secretarial studies education is essentially vocational education intended to provide the skills and the manpower for the office and other administrative services required by the society. Ugwuogo (1988) opined that the aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills, as well as basic scientific knowledge is functional education. Secretarial education as observed, is poorly handled in secondary schools with little or no instructional material / resources to go with. The importance of secretarial studies and its weaknesses is to x-rayed, for redirection, repositioning and evaluation for proper acquisition of appropriate skills and competencies that will enable the student either set up small scale business or become employer of labour. The following recommendation were made that well equipped laboratory should be provided by the government, for functionality and self-reliance. emphasis should be made for practical demonstration to enhance skill acquisition for self reliance.

Introduction

Secretarial education is one of the major course areas of the school of business education, offered at secondary schools as well as colleges of education and universities. This course prepares student after graduation to work in offices as secretaries. Nnanna (1992) stated that education is the process of guiding and initiating the people to acquire the necessary skills, fact, knowledge, habit, and attitudes that will make them co-exist with others as useful and productive members of the society. Similarly Fromkin (1976) said that the problem of education usually begins with the

realization that the people do not possess the skills and attitudes which society wishes them to have. Generally speaking, no responsibility society would play with the responsibility of equipping its citizens with a functional education. It is on this premise that Robbert (1967.3.17) opined that the necessity for equipping each individual for some occupation is a fact that even the most punitive society has realized. The writer would like to state here that secretarial education, as a highly skilled course is a component of vocational education. It prepares the student for work in secretarial / office procedures in an organization.

Specifically, the importance of secretarial studies according to Obioma (1992) are

- Produces a comprehensive treatment and attempts to present a thorough study of the current practice and trends in office procedures and administrations.
- It equips students with the skills to enable them cope effectively with the challenges of rapid changes in a complex sophisticated, modern technology society.
- Highly skilled secretaries are important members of the management team in business, industry, government, education, communication media and other areas of human endeavour
- They should possess excellent mastery of office skills.
- Background for students wishing to work as office mangers, secretaries, and senior administrative assistance.
- Wishing to enter the teaching profession in secretarial subjects.

The importance of secretarial education for functionality and self reliance is vital in achieving the national goals and objectives of education at both primary and secondary levels of education as stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE 2004).

Secondary education in Nigeria is of major importance. The Nigerian system of education (6-3-3-4) is a pointer to this fact. The 6-3-3-4 system of education means six (6) years of primary education, three (3) years of junior secondary education, three (3) years of senior secondary education, and a minimum of four (4) years of university education to obtain the first degree (Orona 1988).

Concept of Secondary Education

Secondary education is described by the National Policy in Education (NPE 1981) as a form of education which children receives after primary education and before tertiary stage. Its broad aims is the preparation for useful living within the society and preparation for higher education.

The specific objectives include, equipping students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology and to inspire its students to desire for achievement of self-employment both at school and in later life. Since the policy response of the 6-3-3-4 system of education, the secondary education had been departmentalized into two (1) Junior Secondary School and (2) Senior Secondary School. Each has duration of three years respectively. At both level of secondary school, we have secretarial education courses.

According to National Curriculum for Junior Secondary Schools, it is called business studies. It comprises of the following subject: Office Practice, Commerce, Economics, Book-keeping, typewriting and Shorthand.

Objectives / Aims of Junior Secondary School are as follows:-

- To enable the students acquire the basic knowledge of business studies.
- To develop the skills in office occupation
- To prepare students for further-training in business studies.
- To provide orientation and basic skill with which to start a life of work for those who may not undergo further training.
- To provide basic skills for personal use in future and
- To relate the knowledge and skills to the national economy.

At the Senior Secondary School programme the secretarial education subjects are typewriting, shorthand, book-keeping / Accounts, Economics and Commerce. At this level of secretarial education, students are equipped with necessary skills and knowledge for a life of work as well as self employment and for higher education. Subjects are divided into two groups here: Core or compulsory and non-compulsory subjects / elective.

Unfortunately, secretarial education subjects fall under the elective (non-compulsory), the resultant effect of this discriminatory attitude, coupled with other factors, reduced secretarial education to a pitiable position, its richness in skill acquisition notwithstanding. Crews and Dickerson (1977) cited in Ndinechi (2000) pointed out that the secretarial education curriculum at the Senior Secondary School should serve the needs of the youth through:

1. Occupational and career guidance, career orientation and exploration of job opportunities and requirements in business.
2. Development of occupational knowledge, attitudes and skills that is oriented around job classifications of – clerical – stenographic – book-keeping and accounting – data processing – marketing

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- and sales – business ownership and management
3. Development of consumer knowledge, attitudes and skills that permit one to make appropriate and reasoned decisions in the selection, buying and use of consumer goods and services.
 4. Development of understanding regarding the organization and operation of the nation's economic system that will permit one to make personal economic decisions that are appropriate for elected officials who are most likely to promote the best economic interests of the nation.
 5. Developing of personal use skills that will permit one to become a fully functioning individual in the personal business activities of life.
 6. Course offerings that serve as the basis for advance study in business.

Secretarial Education in Secondary School

The subjects in junior and senior secondary school curriculum include shorthand and typewriting. It is a vocational course. Typewriting and shorthand are some of the secondary school subjects that required special teachers because of the special skills. Curriculum in education setting is viewed to the experiences, which are provided to the students under the direction of the school, (Ugwuogo, 1988, Oyekan 2000). The organization and presentation of instruction documentarily pass through the curriculum, syllabus, scheme of work, lesson plan, network (Oyekan 2000). Curriculum of schools should be designed so that the products, can be useful to themselves and the society at large.

Hook and Brynside (1978) asserted that the primary concern of the field of secretarial education is the development of skills, attitudes and knowledge people needed for “gainful” employment, that is, simply, using, their business training to earn a living.

Everyone, regardless of age, occupation or profession, economic or social status needs to

learn how to perform certain business activities that are part of everyday living. Since secretarial education is expected to achieve all of the above (education for and about business) the present subject content of the curriculum at this level needs to be increased.

Kanu (1987) stated that comprehensive secondary school education should offer preparation for useful, gainful and satisfying occupation of employment for youth as well as building versatility and flexibility in them to ensure that such youths acquire understanding, knowledge and skills that are transferable in a rapidly changing technology.

Functional Education

Functional education according to Zeiberger (1999) has several meanings depending on the country concerned. She stated that in the United State and in Germany, the adjective “functional” refers to education that comes spontaneously from the influence of the environment. It is a kind of undirected “natural” education that is different from the deliberate goal-oriented education, that is directed by man.

In western Europe this term refers to education that comes from the child's needs and that uses the child's interest as a mechanism for activating him towards his desirable career. Its purpose she added is to develop the life of the mind, that act from the wholeness of organic life with relation to practical life in the present and in the future.

Functional instruction according to Zeiberger (1999) takes as its starting point the activity of the child and it is based on a practical work – plan that is intended to have the child master the subject matter. The subject matter to be taught is considered according to the importance in the life of the human, in his childhood and adulthood. The

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instruction is based on phases in the life of the pupil, the country the environments and the daily life. Secretarial education curriculum and instruction is fully in line with the above stipulation for functional instruction or teaching basic skills.

The Principles of Functional Education

Zeiberger (1999) identified some of the principles of functional education as

1. One has to judge the individual from the standpoint of his own world-view and to describe him in terms of concepts drawn from his experience and to teach him according to his criteria: one has to relate to him like a person that ought to be respected and nourished.
2. The functional education is based on the natural need of the child to enquire and know, to observe and to work, and especially to play. It strives to arouse in the child spiritual longing, like the love of the good and of work, that will come by force, but rather in a free atmosphere and in suitable living conditions for that purpose, the school should create a lively and happy environment. Where the child will act enthusiastically.
3. The educator should get to know properly the students interest and the changes that he undergoes as he grows up physically and emotionally: hence the teacher should adapt his teaching to the natural growth of the student.
4. One should not demand from the student an action, unless he has a natural need for it. In order to activate the student, the teacher has to place the child in conditions that will naturally induce the action, by satisfying a need. The motivation of the student should not be external (fear of punishment or hope for a reward), but internal (out of genuine interest in the discussed question and in the activities connected with it).

5. The functional education will develop the intellectual and moral abilities of the student rather than force feeding him, many facts, that are quickly forgotten, or are accumulated in the memory like a foreign substance without any connection to his life.
6. An “active school” is needed where the classroom would be a kind of laboratory. The art of the teacher will be reflected by his ability to bridge between the studied material, that is not very attractive, and the natural needs of the student: “the best way for achieving this goal is play”.
7. Because the student in the future live in a social framework. One must introduce the student to work and to subjects that prepare for social activity.
8. One should no longer have examinations that are but a burden on the memory instead one has to introduce an “achievement and summary” that were achieved during the school year. For that, the teacher has to use diagnostics and tests, in order to check his own teaching method and to summarize the achievements of his students.

A functional secretarial education is very important. Secretarial education is practical oriented and contribute to national development. Oyedeji (1987) argued that secretarial education helps to achieve the aims of secondary education as contained (NPE 1981) as noted abinitio.

He asserted that secretarial education at secondary school level:

- helps to reduce the problem of unemployment because students need not depend solely on government for employment, since they can start a business on their own.

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- It can help to produce a person who is occupationally competent to today's society.
- It provides a leading experiences which will aid the individual in development of knowledge, ability, skills and attitudes to make sound reasoning.

Careers in Secretarial Education for Self Reliance

Ugwuogo (1997) noted that secretarial education is a self-reliant and dynamic field of study whose central theme is hinged on the improvement of lives of everyone in the society, therefore, it is the right tool for self-reliance.

Secretarial education related business / career opportunities for self-reliance are machine operator, telephone operator, receptionist, typist, cashier, book-keeping, account clerk, filling, classifying record into top secret, secret confidential. Staff records electronic typewriter, returning records lastly, obsolete and records, boss abbreviations e.g. kiv, wref etc. Circulars for meetings, reference documents, urgent correspondent (Oyedeji 1987).

Reappraising Secretarial Education for Functionality and Self-Reliance

To reappraise according to Coventry and Nixon (1988) is the continuous estimation of value or quality of anything. This includes secretarial studies. Secretarial education teaching should be reappraised regularly for functionality and self-reliance. Secretarial education should be functional. Ovute (2005) stated that secretarial education can help individual (male and female) acquire basic skills, attitudes, competences for gainful employment and entrepreneurship. This will make room for self-reliance. Umeoduagu (2008 b) stated that the curriculum of science education should be revisited at all levels to incorporate new knowledge and requisite problem solving skills. This equally affect secretarial education, because it is a science oriented subject.

Secretarial education, teaching should be reappraised towards actively based and child centred where students have direct contact with what they are learning. Bamide (1985) stated that it provides first hand experience which guarantee learning of the most vital and most lasting qualities. There is no gain saying that secondary school is where the sound base for education is laid. Umeoduagu (1993 b) suggested that science at the secondary school level should commence with the art of exploration, observation and interaction with the environment. Secretarial education is also a science subject and should be tailored towards this direction.

Secretarial education must move with the times. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be introduced in the teaching of secretarial studies. Reappraising secretarial education towards ICT will make teaching and learning more meaningful. Ekwo (2005) opined that the huge advances in ICT can enhanced education and social charge in the form of programmes to upgrade the quality of school instruction to teach pre-school and out-of school student and to teach basic literacy, numeracy, sumiral skill in typewriting, shorthand, computer to adult. Udensi (2006) added that computer interconnected with telecommunications are very effective when education becomes independent of the location of the learners. In the words of Umeoduagu (2008 a) introduction of modern technologies will help to concretize learning taking cognizance of the current issues of globalization and the acquisition of global skills.

Practical demonstration by secretarial education student needed to functional and as well as self-reliance. Teachers who taught secretarial studies at Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) or above should be employed to teach the subject in junior and senior secondary school so as to meet up the

demand of the student for skill acquisition. Education in the word of Umeoduagu (2003) should produce within a society group of people who have been empowered with pre-requested skills and knowledge for utilization at all such for the betterment of the society. This will enable the student in secondary school system learn the required skills for self-reliance from their teachers. Umeoduagu (2009) also added that we need a disciplined mind, positive attitude to work, and patriotism to bring about national development in Nigeria.

Reappraising shorthand and typewriting laboratory for self-reliance; was observed by Obasogie and Orumense (2010) who pointed out that government in fulfilling her objectives of reducing educational cost; have over the years been under finding educational sectors and hence shorthand and typewriting laboratory are under-equipped (in the case of secondary schools, there are no laboratory and no equipment) they also added that due to chronic inadequacy of shorthand and typewriting equipment, nation wide, business education (inclusive) has led to teaching such subjects theoretically and only explaining the practical aspects verbally-without actual experiment or practical practice carried out. This will not make room for functional education and self-reliance because the skills explained are not practicalise.

Conclusion

The issue of self-reliance is very paramount in this era of unemployment in the country. Reappraising secretarial studies education at the secondary school level is a very timely step because it will help to expose the weaknesses of secretarial studies despite the wide recognition as skill acquisition course in the National Policy on Education (NPE) and nip it in the bud.

Recommendation

Having exposed the strengths and weaknesses of secretarial education in helping individual to be self-reliant, the following strategies if implemented could help achieve the purpose

1. Secretarial studies teachers in the secondary schools should be made to teach secretarial courses alone from junior secondary to senior secondary for proper skill acquisition.
2. Well equipped laboratory should be provided by the government for functionality and self-reliance. Government can also partner with individuals, parent and co-operate bodies if they cannot do it alone.
3. Emphasis should be layed on practical demonstration to enhance skill acquisition for self-reliance.

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