



Assessment of Computer-Based Competencies needed by Confidential Secretaries for Effective Work Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Ondo State

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Abstract: *This study assessed computer-based competencies needed by confidential secretaries for effective work performance in tertiary institutions in Ondo State. Three research questions were raised to guide the study and one hypothesis was formulated for the study. A descriptive survey research design was used. The population of study comprised 215 confidential secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Ondo State. There was no sampling because the population was manageable hence the entire population was used. A 30-item questionnaire structured on a 4-point rating scale was the instrument for data collection and it was validated by experts. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data in respect of the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that confidential secretaries in tertiary institutions in Ondo State need word processing, power-point presentation and graphic design competencies for effective work performance. The study concluded that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secretaries on their computer based competencies needed for effective work performance. Finally, the study recommended among others that it should be mandatory for all the confidential secretaries to possess some level of skills in computer to be able to function effectively and retain their jobs.*

Keywords: Computer-Based, Competencies, Confidential, Secretaries, Performance

INTRODUCTION

The world is presently witnessing an increase in technological changes in every sphere of human endeavour including the work environment. Many organizations make use of new technologies to handle people, coordinate activities and evaluate performance directed towards attainment of organizational goals and objectives. Enyakit (2006) asserted that the modern business office is rapidly changing as a result of office automation which has brought about new methods of carrying out functions performed by people in organizations. The office employees that constantly use this ever-changing technology in the office are the confidential secretaries who are expected to handle numerous office functions related to information processing. A confidential secretary is a person who is concerned with the preparation, preservation and transmission of different types of office documents as well as conventional secretarial duties of confidential nature at various levels in an organization. Agboola and Ademiluyi (2011) state that a Confidential Secretary is expected to ease the burdens of the boss whose works and responsibilities make a heavy demand on him. A confidential secretary is not only required to have theoretical and practical knowledge of the new technology but to be competent in the usage of some computer packages like excel, e-mailing, corel-draw, and others. However, modern office activities have gone beyond typewriting and note taking especially in tertiary institutions. Tertiary institution refers to as post-secondary education. According to National Policy on Education (2016) tertiary education is the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of



education, polytechnics, monotronics including those institutions offering correspondence courses.

In this new dispensation, majority of the challenges faced by confidential secretaries in the performance of their job might have been reduced due to the advent of information and communication technology (ICT). However, as time went on, majority have realized that for one to be relevant in this era of globalized world there is the need for one to move with change. As a result of the changes in the role of secretaries and occasioned by the present technological advancement in the office, the need for them to acquire new skills to enable them remain relevant in the electronic era becomes evident and become effective in their work performance. Therefore, there is need for confidential secretaries to possess various computer-based applications competencies for effective work performance. Competency here means the skill, knowledge and ability to perform a task well. According to Ekpenyong (2006), competency involves incremental appropriation of cognitive skills and personal attitudes needed to respond appropriately to a variety of familiar and unfamiliar or unexpected professional or career circumstances. Effective work performance in this study is the production of valid results in a work organization. The required computer-based competencies by confidential secretaries may be in clusters of word processing, power-point presentation and graphic design skills. Word processing is the ability to create sentences and paragraphs manipulated. This is possible by using word processor. The ability to load application software (MS Word), effective use of its environment and basic functions, create files and folder, use input devices to enter and edit texts accurately; manipulate information and all range of editing option by opening, coping, cutting, pasting, inserting sentences, deleting and saving files; preview and print. This makes possibilities for deleting and inserting before they are printed, filing of documents, retrieving information and finally printing have become simplified tasks with the use of word processors. Ogbonna (2007) emphasized that word processing competencies are very relevant for confidential secretaries to be able to perform effectively. Similarly, Edeh (2017) noted that word processing applications are needed computer applications for successful work performance.

Power-point presentation is a computer-based application which enables users to create powerful presentations to their audiences. It is mainly used during seminars, workshops, conferences as well as other staff training and development programmes. It allows the user to include formatted texts, graphics, pictures, sounds and animations in presentations. Ndukwe (2005) noted that presentations created with PowerPoint can add audio and visual effects, making such presentations look professional or flashy to meet high standard of presentation. Also, Okolocha and Olannye (2015) stated that confidential secretaries should highly possess power-point competencies for effective work performance. Graphic designs are pictures created using computers; the term refers to computer-generated image data created with the help from specialized graphical hardware and software. It is a vast and recent area in computer. Graphic design is a practice of planning and projecting ideas and experiences with visual and textual content. This includes images and words in graphic forms (Cezzar, 2015). Okolocha and Olannye (2015) emphasized that corel-draw



competencies is a great asset to any confidential secretaries who possess it for effective work performance because graphic design has taken over manual typing in recent times.

It is also pertinent to know that gender seems to influence the extent of computer-based competencies possessed by secretaries. It is also important to have a clear understanding of the needs of the target groups. Thus the gender gap is more pronounced in the developing world, where 16% fewer women than the men use the internet, compared with only 2% fewer women than the men in the developed world. Agboola (2006) observed that male workers experience less anxiety about ICT and make more frequent use of it than their female counterparts and they are assumed to show lower ability than males about using computers. On the contrary, Edeh (2017) found out that there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female business education students regarding computer applications needed. Hence the need to assess the computer-based competency needed by confidential secretaries in tertiary institutions in Ondo State for effective work performance.

Statement of the Problem

The development and introduction of information communication technology (ICT) have significantly altered the role and duties of confidential secretaries. These developments demand greater responsibilities and improved performance on the part of confidential secretaries in view of their vital roles in processing of office information. However, Agboola (2006) observed that many graduate confidential secretaries in different establishments still find it difficult to utilize various computer-based technologies in carrying out their office responsibilities effectively. It has been observed that confidential secretaries under the present ever dynamic changes of computer base application software find it difficult to adjust themselves to meet up with their timely-base job, which has resulted in poor quality performance, waste of organization's resources in terms of paper, fuel, tonner (ink) and damages of the computer system. What is agitating the researcher's mind now is: to what extent do confidential secretaries working in tertiary institutions in Ondo State possess computer-based competencies for their effective work performance?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to assess the computer-based competencies needed by secretaries in tertiary institutions in Ondo State for effective work performance. Specifically the study will assess:

1. the extent of word processing competencies needed by secretaries for effective work performance in tertiary institutions in Ondo State;
2. the extent of power-point presentation competencies needed by secretaries for effective work performance in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.
3. the extent of graphic design competencies needed by secretaries for effective work performance in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:



1. To what extent do confidential secretaries working in tertiary institutions in Ondo State need competencies in word processing for their effective work performance?
2. To what extent do confidential secretaries working in tertiary institutions in Ondo State need competencies in power-point application for effective office work performance?
3. To what extent do confidential secretaries working in tertiary institutions in Ondo State need competencies in graphic design for their effective office work performance?

Hypothesis

This hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H_0 , There is no significant difference in the mean ratings between male and female secretaries in computer based competencies needed for effective work performance in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.

Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study covered all the 215 confidential secretaries in nine (9) public tertiary institutions in Ondo State as tabulated below:

S/N	INSTITUTION	NO
1.	Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko	38
2.	Federal University of Technology, Akure	43
3.	Federal College of Agriculture, Akure	15
4.	School of Health, Technology, Akure	2
5.	Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo	29
6.	Federal Polytechnic, Ile-Oluji	7
7.	Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo	64
8.	University of Medical Science, Ondo	6
9.	Ondo State University of Technology, Okitipupa	11
Total =		215

Source: Registry of various Institutions' checklist (2016)

The entire population (215) was used because the size was manageable, hence, there was no sampling. The instrument for data collection was a 30-item structured questionnaire. The instrument was structured on a four-point (4point) rating scale of Highly Needed (HN), Needed (N), Fairly Needed (FN) and Not Needed (NN) with assigned weighted values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by two experts from the Department of Vocational and Technical Education and an expert in measurement and evaluation all from University of Benin, Benin City. The reliability of the instrument was determined by a test-retest measuring technique. The instrument was administered to twenty (20) confidential secretaries in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. Reliability coefficient of 0.94 was obtained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher and two trained research assistants to the confidential secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Ondo State.



Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data collected in order to answer the research questions and t-test statistical tool was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	57	26.5
Female	158	73.5
Total	215	100.0

Source: Field work: 2017

Table 2 shows that two hundred and fifteen respondents were used in this study. Out of the 215 respondents, 26.5% were male while the remaining 73.5% were female. The result from this table implies that the female respondents were more than the male respondents.

Figure 1 further presents the result from the table in pie chart.

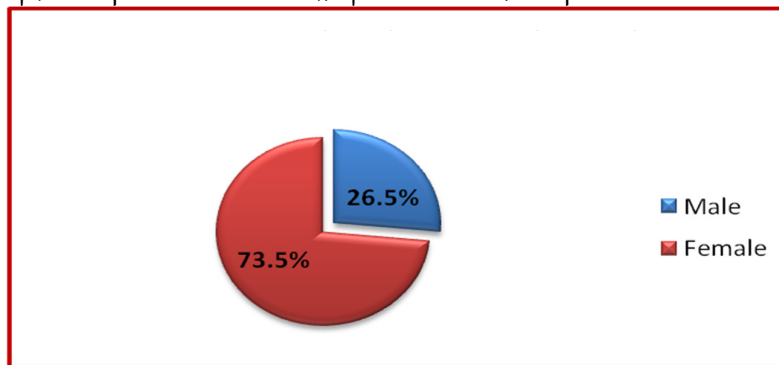


Figure 1: Pie chart showing gender distribution of respondents

Source: Field work: 2017

Research Question 1: To what extent do confidential secretaries need word processing competence for effective work performance?



Table 3: Respondents' Mean Rating on the Extent confidential secretaries need word processing competences for effective work performance

No	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1.	Hyperlink in word processor	3.36	.81	Needed
2.	Mail merge	3.20	.78	Needed
3.	Summation of figures	3.22	.80	Needed
4.	Use manual bullet and numbering without using automatic wizards	3.12	.91	Needed
5.	Clipboard and text wrap.	3.22	.82	Needed
6.	Letters and mailings option from tools menu.	3.43	.73	Needed
7.	To create mathematical formulae.	3.20	.95	Needed
8.	Creating header and footer on documents.	3.40	.76	Needed
9.	Password file or folder so that nobody will be able to open such documents.	3.56	.70	Needed
10.	Sorting alphabetically in ascending and descending order.	3.40	.76	Needed
Weighted Average		3.331		

Source: Field work: 2017

Table 3 shows the extent to which confidential secretaries need word processing competencies for effective work performance. The table shows that the mean responses on the ten (10) items on word processing competency ranged from 3.12 to 3.56. The standard deviation ranged from .70 to .95. The means responses show that the respondents agreed that the ten (10) items on word processing competencies are needed for effective work performance.

Research Question 2: To what extent do confidential secretaries need power point competence for effective work performance?

Table 4: Respondents' Mean Rating on the Extent Confidential Secretaries Need Power-Point Competences for Effective Work Performance.

No.	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1.	To open a power-point presentation.	3.05	.96	Needed
2.	To create sides with power-point.	3.89	.95	Needed
3.	Adjusting titles and subtitles to a slide.	3.09	.95	Needed
4.	Changing font type and size in a slide.	3.30	.86	Needed
5.	Changing font color.	3.40	.79	Needed
6.	Copying and passing objects and creating pages.	3.33	.80	Needed
7.	Inserting images in a presentation and with power point.	3.39	.85	Needed
8.	Adding sounds and animation to a presentation.	3.44	.82	Needed
9.	Running a slide show in a power point.	3.56	.80	Needed
10.	Printing out and storing slide presentation.	3.23	.87	Needed
Weighted Average		3.50		

Source: Field work: 2017



Table 4 shows the extent to which confidential secretaries need power-point competencies for effective work performance. The table shows that the mean responses on the ten (10) items on power-point competency ranged from 3.05 to 3.89. The standard deviation ranged from .82 to .96. The means responses show that the respondents agreed that the ten (10) items on power-point competencies are needed for effective work performance.

Research Question 3: To what extent do confidential secretaries need graphic design competence for effective work performance?

Table 5: Respondents' Mean Rating on the Extent Confidential Secretaries Need Graphic Design Competences for Effective Work Performance.

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1.	Using Corel-draw to create fancy fonts.	3.05	.96	Needed
2.	Converting font to bitmap.	2.92	.94	Needed
3.	Cropping of pictures using corel- draw.	3.08	.94	Needed
4.	Design a simple invitation card.	3.30	.86	Needed
5.	Creating simple letter head within limited time.	3.40	.76	Needed
6.	Word art for job effectiveness.	3.33	.79	Needed
7.	Using of scanner to scan picture into the computer system for design.	3.40	.85	Needed
8.	Setting our ref, your ref and date on printed letter headed papers without wasting it.	3.44	.81	Needed
9.	To print typed letters on letter headed papers.	3.52	.79	Needed
10.	Insert clipart, shapes and text box in a document.	3.24	.87	Needed
Weighted Average		3.30		

Source: Field work: 2017

Table 5 shows the extent to which confidential secretaries need graphic design competencies for effective work performance. The table shows that the mean responses on the ten (10) items on graphic design competencies ranged from 2.92 to 3.52. The standard deviation ranged from .76 to .94. The means responses show that the respondents agreed that the ten (10) items on graphic design competencies are needed for effective work performance.

Tests of the Hypothesis

Ho 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secretaries on their computer based competences needed for effective work performance.



Table 6: Summary of t-test showing significant difference in mean ratings of male and female secretaries on their needed computer-based competencies

Test Variable	Grouping Variable (Gender)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t.cal	Df	Sig.	Remark
Computer Based Competencies	Male	57	139.14	16.05	1.199	213	.232	Not Significant
	Female	158	136.13	16.35				

Source: Field work: 2017

Table 6 shows that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female secretaries on their computer based competences needed for effective work performance. ($t = 1.199$; $df = 213$; $p > 0.05$). Hence, the hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings of research question 1, this study revealed that word processing competencies are needed for effective work performance of confidential secretaries. These competencies include hyperlink in word processor, mail merge, summation of figures, use manual bullet and numbering without using automatic wizards, clipboard and text wrap. Others include letters and mailings option from tools menu, creating mathematical formulae, creating header and footer on documents, password file or folder and in sorting alphabetically in ascending and descending order. Corroborating this finding, Ogbonna (2007) emphasized that word processing competencies are very relevant for confidential secretaries to be able to perform effectively. Result of data presented in question 2 as presented in table 4 shows that power-point competencies required of confidential secretaries for effective work performance include competence to open a power-point presentation, create sides with power-point, adjusting titles and subtitles to a slide, changing font type and size in a slide, changing font color, copying and passing objects and creating pages. Others include inserting images in a presentation and with power point, adding sounds and animation to a presentation, running a slide show in a power point, and printing out and storing slide presentation. This finding agreed with Okolocha and Olannye (2015) that confidential secretaries should highly possess power-point competencies for effective work performance.

The results of data presented in question 3 as shown in table 5 shows that competence in graphic design required of confidential secretaries for effective work performance include using corel-draw to create fancy fonts, converting font to bitmap, cropping of pictures, design a simple invitation card, creating simple letter head within limited time, word art for job effectiveness, using of scanner to scan picture into the computer system for design. Others include setting our ref, your ref and date on printed letter headed papers without waste, print typed letters on letter headed papers, and to insert clipart, shapes and test box in a document. This finding corroborate with Okolocha and Olannye (2015) who emphasized that corel-draw competencies is a great asset to any confidential secretaries



who possess it for effective work performance because graphic design has taken over manual typing in recent times. The result of the hypothesis tested revealed that the opinion of male and female confidential secretaries in Ondo State did not differ significantly on the word processing, power-point application and graphics design competencies needed for effective work performance. This finding is in congruent with Edeh (2017) who found out that there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female business education students regarding computer applications needed.

CONCLUSION

Technology has revolutionized office information processing functions in today's offices. Functions that were traditionally performed manually have been mechanized. Today, the entire office information system has become computer-based. Information Communication Technology (ICT) has implication on the performance of confidential secretaries in tertiary institutions. The modern secretarial functions/office work needs a good knowledge of office information processing system. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that word processing, power-point application and graphic design competencies are needed by confidential secretaries in public tertiary institutions in Ondo State. Therefore, it is expected that when the confidential secretaries in tertiary institutions acquire these competencies it will equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude for effective work performance and make them relevant in their field.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

1. The school management should provide opportunity for in-service training programme on computer-base for the confidential secretaries to upgrade their skills and knowledge in new electronic software applications.
2. The school management should provide and encourage the confidential secretaries to attend conferences, seminars and workshops on ICT and related fields.
3. The government should also finance and fund the training and re-training of the confidential secretaries on ICT programmes and any other outside service training programme.
4. The government should provide the necessary and up-to-date ICT equipments and facilities for tertiary institutions to enable confidential secretaries to get acquaintance with the modern information management challenges.

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