

Computer-Based Competencies Needed by Administrative Supervisors and Executive Secretaries for Effective Work Performance: A Case of Universities in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

In recent times, the issue of computer based competencies is crucial for the survival of secretaries and their administrative supervisors for effective work performance and advancement in career. Yet, many secretaries and their administrative supervisors are technologically lagging behind and secretarial/office information management students in our universities are not sufficiently exposed to computer technologies in modern office, hence, the need to examine whether computer-based competencies by administrative supervisors and secretaries are needed for effective work performance among selected universities in South-South region of Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey design and two (2) research questions and two (2) research hypotheses were developed. The study population consists of one hundred and forty-six (146) secretaries and administrative supervisors. Data gathered through questionnaire were tested for reliability via the test-re-test method and the Cronbach alpha reliability result of 0.97 was obtained. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviations) were used to provide answers to the research questions while inferential statistics (Z-test) was employed to validate the relevant hypotheses. Findings showed that database management and PowerPoint presentation applications are needed by secretaries and administrative supervisors for effective work performance. On the basis of the findings, relevant recommendations were made proffered towards improving the performance of secretaries and administrative supervisors in Nigerian universities.

Keywords: Competences; Secretaries, Administrative; Personnel, Database, PowerPoint, Performance.

JEL Classification: M12; M19

1. INTRODUCTION

The old pattern of carrying out secretarial/office function is fast fading away globally; therefore, Administrative supervisors and secretaries today ought to be engaged in modern office and work. The introduction and invention of computer and other modern office equipment has placed a demand on Administrative Supervisors and Secretaries (ASS) to acquire certain office and information management (OIM) capabilities needed to augment job performance. ASS who are not ill-equipped with these skills, knowledge and abilities will soon become obsolete, redundant or can even be thrown out of their jobs for not meeting up with the technological trends.

Executive secretaries are trained either in office technology and management (OTM) or OIM departments. OTM is a nomenclature designed to replace the old secretarial studies curriculum which was found inadequate as a result of technological revolution in the Nigerian education sector. The objective of the programme, as stipulated by the Nigerian Universities Commission NUC in 2007 is to prepare professionals who can effectively perform tasks as office administrators/executive secretaries and contribute to economic, social and ethical progress of the nation. It also provides a thorough grounding in modern trends and practices in computers, telecommunications, technologies and office skills. In addition to the above, the thrust of the programme is the comprehensive and thorough treatment of the contemporary office administrators/executive secretaries' procedures in line with the developed nations.

OIM graduates can be employed as administrators/executive secretaries, confidential secretaries, or administrative assistants and are expected to perform professionally in all information and communication technology (ICT) based tasks. X-raying OIM programme, one will observe that it aims at providing the business world with highly skilled knowledge workers to serve as Administrators/Executive Secretaries (AES); these secretaries are expected to be equipped with a robust skills encompassing technological, communication and managerial skills to manage information efficiently. An executive secretary is a competent professional who supports high-ranking officials by organizing schedules, attending board meetings and keep minutes, managing correspondence, receiving phone calls and transmitting them when appropriate, maintaining executive's agenda and assist in planning appointments, conferences and performing various administrative tasks. They possess excellent time-management and organizational skills, proficiency in office software, and a strong understanding of Business Administration. Anderson in Oguejio for (2013) defined executive secretary as the one, who can think for the boss, acts for and anticipates the boss's whims. Therefore, the effective performance of the secretary largely depends on the supervision by administrative supervisors.

An administrative supervisor is an individual who oversees and directs a project or people. Administrative supervisor could be perceived as someone who is in charge of a particular department. Arora (2012) sees administrative supervisor as an executive encumbered with the role of overseeing the realization of assigned tasks/duties of subordinates. The administrative supervisor can be a member of the management team that plans, organizes, directs, coordinates and controls the activities of an organization toward the achievement of stated goals and objectives (Abdullahi, 2012). Overall, administrative supervisors are often authorized to make recommendation and/or engage in hiring, discipline, promotion,

punishment, reward and other activities linked with personnel management in an organizational setting.

This study sees administrative supervisors as all senior employees in the universities who have secretaries fastened to them and are in a noble position to evaluate their secretaries' computer application competencies. Since the introduction of ICT, largely symbolized by computer, in the system of office information generation, acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination, the business environment all over the world has witnessed tremendous changes in its traditional methods and practice. While advances in technology has been significantly marked in most advanced countries of the world such as the United States of America (USA), China, Japan and Britain, the same does not seem to be the case in most developing countries like Nigeria. ASS falls among office personnel who have come face-to-face with the challenges of the new technology.

Furthermore, an executive secretary is saddled with the role of carrying out routine jobs of typing office documents like letters, memos, reports, manuscripts, notes taking among others and transcribing same. Additionally, the secretary handled mail, telephone calls and other general communication services. Most of these traditional roles are now seen as rather crude since they could only make little contribution to office duties. Organizations, nowadays are gradually moving into the era of paperless office which is categorized by the use of computers and their networks especially the internet. Thus, emphasis now is being on skills for digital business transactions; this is so because ICT has transformed the ways businesses are being done.

The global drift to Competency Based Training (CBT) has initiated a number of novel or new concept and this concept is competence (Mansfield 2004). Competency according to Commission for Information and Communication Technology (CICT) (2011) is the knowledge, skills, ability or characteristics associated with high performance on a job. Competency means the knowledge, skills and behavior that enable an employee to meet established performance criteria. In other words, it is the ability, knowledge and skills to carry on a task in the most efficient way. Competency is the ability to do a task as expected. It is the acquired knowledge, skills and procedure that enable OIM graduates (secretaries and administrative assistants) to meet established performance criteria. Okolocha and Olanye (2015) defined ICT application competency as ability to put into correct use machine-software needed to obtain useful results.

Competency is a set of self-evident attributes and skills enabling and improving the efficiency of job performance. While skills are learned, competencies are innate traits an individual possesses (Darwinbox, 2023). From the above, it means that since contemporary office activities have moved from typewriting and note-taking at very high speed and transcribing same with the aid of a typewriter, there is thus the need for office secretaries and administrators /to be competent in the use of various computer-based applications for effective work performance. These computer-based competencies may be in clusters of Word Processing competencies, Electronic Spreadsheet competencies, PowerPoint Presentation competencies, Database Management competencies, Desktop Publishing competencies and Internet competencies. For the purpose of this study, the researcher restricted the study to database management competencies and powerpoint presentation competencies.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The major problem affecting secretaries and administrative supervisors is the technological changes which demand that they keep pace with new-phase of office functions affecting the traditional office that has become modern office. This introduction of sophisticated technological equipment has considerably uttered the role of administrative supervisors and the secretaries. According to Oduma (2006), opined that the technological trends in modern office today do not only cause some jobs to disappear in direct correlation with the amount of training in such job but the emergence of previously unknown office occupation. So it becomes difficult for secretaries who have not undergone any retraining programme to cope with this development.

Furthermore, to remain relevant in this era of ICT and ensure effective work performance, secretaries and administrative supervisors are generally expected as a matter of necessity to rise up to the challenges of the new changes in their job by acquiring the computer based skills and competences. In other words, it would have been expected that appropriate criteria such as specific types of training be provided to uplift the level and quality of computer related competencies that are needed by administrative supervisors and secretaries. However, the researcher has not been able to establish the form or level of preparation for office competency by the three universities to their administrative and secretarial employees. The concern of this research is therefore to investigate the computer -based competencies that are needed to prepare secretarial and administrative supervisors for effective work performance in the universities selected in South-South region of Nigeria.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study examined computer-based competencies needed by administrative supervisors and secretaries for effective work performance in universities in the South-South region, Nigeria. In specific, the study sought to:

1. Determine the level of PPT competencies needed by administrative personnel and the executive secretaries for effective work performance.
2. Determine the level of MS competencies needed by secretaries and administrative supervisors for effective work performance.

1.3 Research Questions

To be able to attain the purposes, one cannot but ask:

1. What level of competence in DMS do secretaries and administrative supervisors need for effective work performance?
2. What level of competence in DMS do secretaries and administrative supervisors need for effective work performance?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested at 0.05% level of significance

- H₀1: There is no significant difference in the secretary's and administrative supervisors' mean ratings on DMS needed for effective work performance.
- H₀2: There is no significant difference in the secretary's and administrative supervisors' mean ratings on PPT needed for effective work performance.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Database Management System (DMS) Competencies

Database management system (DMS) is software that facilitates the creation, organization and management of database. The system enables users and secretaries to store, retrieve and manipulate large amounts of data with ease and efficiency. It provides a framework for managing and securing data, ensuring data consistency, integrity, and availability to authorized users. Also, organizations and companies from small to large, largely depend on database for their operations. Oguejiofor and Umeh (2016) postulated that Microsoft (MS) access database is an all-encompassing term, which describes anything from an address book, dictionary or file cabinet to a set of computerized data file with sophisticated data relationship. MS access allows the secretary to create custom database that store information in an organized structure. It provides a visual interface for creating forms, tables, report and queries.

Furthermore, it enables the secretaries to send data to and from other database programs such as my SQL, FoxPro and Oracle. Pedraza (2011) asserted that DMS provides the secretary with a wide variety of templates that can be used to speed up database creation process. A template is a ready-to-use database consisting all tables, forms, reports and queries needed for performing specific tasks; these templates facilitate a secretary's work performance in the sense that the data can be recorded in such templates to automatically generate information. With DMS such as MS access, security of information against unauthorized users is highly guaranteed. In addition, database integrity is maintained (i.e. ensuring that no two users are able to update same record and preventing duplicate entries like two employees being give the same employee number (Okwudili & Anigbogu, 2010).

2.2 PowerPoint Presentation (PPT) Competencies

PowerPoint presentation (PPT) is a program forming part of the Microsoft Office Suite (MOS). It is frequently used to show structural presentations to improve written and verbal communication. Thus, it is a very powerful tool for inculcating competencies for enhanced effectiveness in the workplace and it is highly relevant in the society today (Nwosu & Mbaezue, 2016). It allows users to create overhead slides; speaker notes, audience handouts and outlines - all in a single presentation file. PPT offers powerful tools to help create and organize a presentation step by step. Ohakwe (2008) explained that power point is software that enables a user to create a powerful presentation to his audience. It allows the user to include formatted text, graphics, pictures, sound and animation in the presentation.

PPT is one of the leading programmes used for creating presentations used by the administrative supervisors/executive secretaries to organize business meetings, seminars and workshops. The main component of a PPT is a slide; slides are similar to pages in a word document or worksheet in an excel spreadsheet. They show the content. Slideshows are made up of a series of slides that contain text, pictures, diagrams, charts and other objects to display and enhance a presentation.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized descriptive survey in conducting the study. Nworgu (2006) noted that it is most preferable to use survey design when the subject of an investigation centres on individual opinions or views, attitudes and perception purely on personal basis. The researcher chose this method because it met with the type of research under study. The

views/opinions and responses of secretaries and administrative supervisors in universities were sought in this study.

The population of this study covered all the principal officers, deans, heads of departments and secretaries across the three selected Universities in South-South Nigeria, namely: Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Delta State University of Science and Technology. The study population comprised seventy-three (73) secretaries and their administrative supervisors from the three (3) institutions which brought the population of the study to a total of one hundred and forty-six (146) respondents. This number being equal in each case is because every secretary has a supervisor and there is no secretary serving two supervisors at a time. The distribution of the population of respondents in the three polytechnics is indicated below:

Table 1: Distribution of Population of Respondents by Institution

S/ N	Name of Institution	Administrative supervisors	Secretarial Personnel	Total
1.	Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Rivers State	26	26	52
2.	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State	23	23	46
3.	Delta State University of Science & Technology, Ozoro	24	24	48
	Total Population	73	73	146

Source: Computed by the Researcher (2023)

All 146 secretaries and their administrative supervisors-principal officers, deans and heads of departments in the three universities were involved in this study in view of the limited size. Hence, there was no sample and sampling technique of the population. The instrument used for data collection was a 10 item structured questionnaire based on the research questions and hypotheses. The instrument was designed to elicit the ratings mean of respondents on the 5 –point Likert-type rating scale as follows: (VMN) 5 points, (N) 4 points, (MN) 3 points (RN) 2 points (NN) 1 points. The instrument was content validated by 3 experts. Two experts from Department of OIM, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Department of OIM, University of Science and Technology, Ozoro. The suggestions were taken into consideration in drafting the final copy of the instrument; also, reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained.

A total of 146 questionnaires were administered by the researcher and two research assistants and all the copies were retrieved and used for analysis. The research questions were analyzed using the simple mean and standard deviation and Z-test statistical tool was used to test the research hypotheses. Any item with a mean rating that is equal to or greater than 3.5 was considered “Needed” while any item with a mean rating that is less than 3.5 was considered “Rarely Needed”. The decision rule with respect to hypotheses was reject null hypothesis where t-calculated is greater than or equal to critical value or otherwise accept.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Research Question One: What competence in DMS do secretaries and Administrative supervisors need for effective work performance?

Table 2: Respondents' Rating on DMS Competencies.

S/No	Database Management System	Secretarial personnel			Administrative supervisors		
1.	Opening a database management application	3.80	0.98	Needed	4.30	1.01	Needed
2.	Creating New tables using table wizard of design view	3.60	0.94	Needed	4.80	0.99	Needed
3.	Modifying table structure	2.60	0.86	Needed	3.60	0.96	Needed
4.	Applying Data types and changing table format	4.20	0.88	Needed	4.00	0.96	Needed
5.	Locating a specific record in database.	4.00	0.68	Needed	4.00	0.94	Needed
6.	Adding and deleting fields and records	3.80	0.99	Needed	3.60	0.81	Needed
7.	Finding and replacing data in a database	4.20	0.94	Needed	4.00	0.88	Needed
8.	Sorting records in alphabetical or descending order	3.50	1.00	Needed	3.50	0.99	Needed
9.	Querying a table and applying filter	2.80	0.84	Rarely Needed	3.60	1.03	Needed
10.	Applying techniques for saving a new database	3.80	0.68	Needed	3.80	0.82	Needed
	Grand Mean	3.88	0.88	Needed	3.99	0.94	Needed

Source: Computed by the Researcher (2023) Key: RN = Rarely Needed, N = Needed

Table 2 showed that 9 of the items were considered Needed while one of the items were considered rarely needed. The grand mean of 3.81 and 3.82 for secretaries and administrative supervisors revealed that DMBS competencies needed by secretaries and Administrative supervisors.

Research Question 2: What competence in PPT does secretaries and Administrative supervisors need for effective work performance?

Table 3: Respondents' Rating on PPT Competencies.

S/NO	Database management system	Secretarial Personnel			Administrative supervisors		
1.	Opening a PowerPoint work environment	4.30	0.78	Needed	4.90	0.83	Needed
2.	Creating slides using different layouts	4.80	0.96	Needed	4.80	0.99	Needed
3.	Adding titles and subtitles to a slide	3.60	0.01	Needed	4.00	1.03	Needed
4.	Changing front and sizes	4.00	0.90	Needed	3.60	0.99	Needed
5.	Copying and pasting objects and pages	4.00	0.86	Needed	4.00	0.88	Needed

6.	Inserting images in a presentation	3.60	0.84	Needed	3.60	0.96	Needed
7.	Adding sounds and animation in a presentation	4.00	0.91	Needed	4.00	0.83	Needed
8.	Running a slide show in a power point	3.50	0.78	Needed	3.50	0.94	Needed
9.	Printing out and storing slide presentation	3.60	0.88	Needed	2.60	1.90	Needed
10.	Making a presentation using slides and projectors	3.80	0.76	Needed	3.80	0.87	Needed
	Grand Mean	3.92	0.87	Needed	3.88	0.92	Needed

Source: Computed by the Researcher (2023) Key: RN = Rarely Needed, N = Needed

Table 3 showed the level of PPT competencies needed by secretaries and administrative supervisors in the three universities. The table showed that all the items were considered needed. This implies that PPT competence is highly needed for effective work performance.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the secretary's and administrative supervisors' mean ratings on DMS needed for effective work performance.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the secretary's and administrative supervisors' mean ratings on PPT needed for effective work performance.

These null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level using Z-test. The results of the computation are presented in Table 3.

Table 4: Z-test Analysis of Secretaries and Administrative Supervisors' in their Mean Ratings on DMS Competencies

Institutions	N	X	S	Z-cal α	df	Z- rit	Remark
Secretaries	68	3.83	0.93	1.35	0.05	126	1.96
Administrative supervisors	56	3.82	0.88				

Source: Computed by the Researcher (2023)

Table 4 showed the computation of Z-test statistics of respondents' secretaries and Administrative supervisors on DMS competence at 0.05% level of significance. On the basis of the **decision rule**, it implies that DMS is needed by secretaries and administrative supervisors.

Table 5: Z-test Analysis of Secretaries and Administrative Supervisors in their Mean Ratings on PPT Competence

Institutions	N	X	S	Z-cal α	df	Z- rit	Remark
Secretaries	68	3.92	0.87	1.28	0.05	126	1.96 Retained
Administrative supervisors	56	3.88	0.92				

Source: Computed by the Researcher (2023)

Table 5 showed the computation of Z-test statistics of respondents' rating on the PPT competence needed by secretaries and administrative supervisors at 0.05% level of significance. On the basis of the decision rule, we therefore conclude that PPT competence is needed by secretaries and administrative supervisors in the three universities in South-South, Nigeria.

5. DISCUSSION

The result of analysis of question one as shown in table one shows how secretaries and administrative supervisors considered database management competencies needed for effective job performance. Apart from the "modifying table structure" which received a mean rating of 2.60 and "querying a table and applying filter" which received a mean rating of 2.80 (for secretaries only), the remaining items in the table received mean rating higher than 3.00. The data in the table also recorded grand means of 3.83 and 3.82 for secretaries and administrative supervisors respectively. It can therefore be adjudged that DMS competencies are needed by secretaries and administrative supervisors for effective job performance.

The result of this analysis is in agreement with the finding of Ezenwafor (2011) who held that graduates of OIM programme need competencies in database management system (DMS) for gainful employment in public and private sector of Nigerian economy. This implies that competence in DMS is a requirement for secretaries as well as their administrative supervisors in modern office. Oduma (2010) further emphasized this when he noted that OIM graduates need to be competent in the use of DMS package especially Microsoft (MS) Access. MS Access enables organization to create, share and maintain data and files electronically and secretaries being at the centre of information management in an organization no doubt need to be versatile in the use of this application. Lawrence (2010) noted that Ms Access is among the database application being used in offices, banks and companies.

The finding of the study with regard to research question 2 as shown in Table 3 revealed that the respondents considered all the items in the table as PPT competencies needed by secretaries and administrative supervisors for effective job performance in Delta State Polytechnics as all the items in the table has mean greater than 3.00. Grand means of 3.92

and 3.88 for secretaries and administrative supervisors further indicate that secretaries and administrative supervisors strongly need PPT or effective work performance.

This finding is in accordance with the results of Oduma (2010) who asserted that OIM graduates should be good in the use of PPT packages. PPT package is a specially designed computer package used for programme presentations. Thus, secretaries and administrative supervisors need this package for presentation of papers at seminars and workshop as well as exhibition of new product of an organisation. Ndukwe (2005) noted that with PPT package, powerful presentation can be created with audio and visual effects, making them look professional or flashy to meet high standard presentation.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that computer-based competencies in the area of DMS and PPT competencies are needed by secretaries and administrative supervisors for effective work performance. Based on the findings of this study, discussion and conclusion drawn from it, the following recommendations were made:

1. Nigerian universities should provide necessary instructional facilities such as the ones used in the automated offices and trained personnel for the proper training of skilled manpower to meet the standards set by the employers of secretaries in automated office.
2. The youth should be encouraged to take up OIM courses and this programme endows learner with creativeness to survive in today's highly competitive business environment.
3. The stakeholders should build a support system for OIM graduates, so that they can acquire the expertise and competencies needed in the world of work.
4. Secretaries and Administrative supervisors should as a matter of necessity, be mobilized from time to time for skill development and update.

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