



The high level of self-efficacy of secretarial profession in our higher education institutions in nigeria: case study of federal polytechnic Kaura Namoda, Zamfara state

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show the competences of secretarial profession. The career path for people pursuing secretarial studies in Nigeria has limited future success and growth since the programme designers at the tertiary institutions failed to design courses that will build secretaries skills and knowledge to occupy the executive positions in government sector. A total of 200 questionnaires was developed and distributed among 200 staff of FPTKND based on random sampling technique. The paper reviews the literature from the effectiveness of secretarial profession perspective. This approach enables a greater appreciation of the secretarial practice that has not been considered at our tertiary institutions at most. Findings reveals that secretarial profession is a profession that has been misconstrued by many public or government administrators in terms of educational advancements and reforms in fulfilling the economic needs of a country. It also reveals that among all educational programmes at the higher level of education, it is only secretarial practice that has not been considered at our tertiary institutions at most. This paper establishes that, a secretary is both basic and professional position that serves as the position of the organizational business operations and communication networks within internal and external contacts and as part of management process for decision making.

Keywords: secretary, modern technology, secretarial profession, self-efficacy.

1. Introduction

The reasons why this research topic came into consideration is the wrong perceptions about the secretarial studies/ profession. Coworkers/colleagues within the same polytechnic who are pursuing different programmes like engineering, accounting and many others do not see the importance of secretary ship as a study. They always refer a secretary to someone who did typewriting and nothing else. Most people normally and even including most educators who are not in the field of secretary ship does not recognize the position. There is the need to stress this as a fact because even those students who study secretary ship with colleges are sometimes discouraged by other colleagues because they don't see the career prospects due to the modern technology. In fact, what people don't know is the importance of secretaries. The term 'Secretarial Practice' has been used to include knowledge, skills, procedure and methods of work to be performed by a private secretary or office assistant. Persons with secretarial skills find employment in all types of offices e.g., government, public or private, different types of agencies etc. located in big and small cities. The application of modern technology advancements has brought a revolution and greater effectiveness in day to day working of the offices. Due to this, procedures have become more streamlined and office work has become more interesting and challenging. What is commonly known in Nigeria in terms of secretarial practice is that we only know Typist grade, Stenographer grade, Receptionist, Secretary, Private Secretary (PA), Executive Secretary and that is all. There is no any other hierarchy specified to the position of secretarial practitioners. According to Adam (2011) ^[1], published an article with much emphasis on secretarial practice. Secretarial profession has undergone tremendous changes in advancement of

the way it use to be in the past due to the consistent improved technology day in, day out. Due to these challenges faced by professionals and managers in the past is how they try to shape or position the roles and responsibilities of the secretarial title which has a lot of misconceptions.

Secretarial Practice in those days uses to be first of all as possessing the skills of manual/electronic typing, shorthand with good conduct and character. But today, computers are in abundance which is common to majority of the people and also in the offices. The confusion people or other practitioners have about the concept of secretaryship is an illusion, in that, they assume that since majority of the working class uses computer both at home and in the offices threatens or invades the work of a secretary. Another issue is how the colleges and the higher institutions design the secretarial programme may always affect the credibility of those studying the secretarial course subjects, that is, if not well designed with the necessary subjects to follow the modern trends of technology. The secretarial role is a profession that demands skills that nobody else can have if you have never studied secretaryship, that is, by way of practicing typing and shorthand. Typewriting skills as a field of study teaches students about how to type with speed and accuracy; how to type memos, letters, reports, tables etc; how to correct people or bosses written errors and mistakes, which has to do with comprehension, English Grammar and spellings; should be able to identify people or bosses handwriting even if it is horrible to be read by any other person; adhering to all the standards and practices under the typewriting skills such as paragraphs, spaces, designs of business letters, creative typing, clear and admirable presentation of work; punctuation; and many, many more.

2. Literature Review

There's no doubt that secretaries are the best office management and administration practitioners in all over the globe. Since technology is about improving work efficiency within work environments, then it means that secretaries have to be proactive in their profession to be abreast with the technological world as soon as any new development is introduced. Thereby increase their management and administration capabilities as good leaders of all times. Old secretaries who are casualties of new technology have to go for further studies to learn and know them better than any other person, whereas those yet to join the profession need to take courses that actually matches the growth of modern technology and that will make them masters in the future and more marketable in the employment sector."

According to Adam (2011)^[1], "Students must understand that the study of secretarial course is a business subject and can decide to upgrade their studies in the future into any of the business administration course programmes anywhere such as management, finance/accounting, banking, I.T., web development, journalism, etc. What this means is that secretarial students have upper hand in everything that they do be it financial accounting, human resource management, management, banking and finance, law, strategic management, etc. All these areas are for secretarial students to upgrade themselves into and become proper managers of all times. Moreover the advancement of secretarial practice to professionalism goes through the following qualification status: Certificate, Diploma, Degree, Masters and others. This means if one is a secretary with a certificate level grade, you have the chance to study diploma, then a degree and to masters. This will earn you the top management or senior executive level post within the administration function of any organization.

2.1 History of the Secretarial Profession

The word, "Secretary" has been defined variously by different authors and employers. Some people refer to the secretary as a typist, others refer to her as a part of the clerical team in an office, some other people see secretary as a receptionist and some the "mind" of the boss. Ugiagbe (2002) defined a secretary as an assistant to an executive, possessing an impressive mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, who displays initiative, exercises judgment, and makes decisions within the scope of his/ her authority. Boladele (2002) expressed that a secretary is a warm, endlessly helpful and understanding individual whose sole aim is to alleviate, solve, prevent or soften problem workload and upsets for his/her executive. He/she is the means by which the executive initiates, handles and completes a project. However, the Professional Secretaries International (PSI) defines a secretary as an executive assistant: who has mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, exercises initiative and judgment and makes decisions within the scope of assigned authority.

Generally, a professional secretary coordinates the daily routines of an office and organizes the office schedules and paper work. A secretary's duties require analysis of the situation, judgment, technical knowledge and creativity. The number and type of activities secretaries are assigned to depend on whether they are generalists (multifunctional secretaries) or specialists (such as legal or word processing secretaries). Secretaries use many

different talents and work with many different people. Modern professional secretaries are now referred to as office managers by some people because of their activities, education, skill acquisition, knowledge and even expectations from their bosses, customers, clients and the general public.

Buseni (2013)^[6] stated that literature on the history of the secretarial profession shows that nobody knows when secretaries originated, but that the Romans were first to employ men till the late 1880s. However, in the 1930s, women started to dominate the profession. In Nigeria, there were few secretaries in the early 1900's because there were no government established training institutions. Organizations employed typists and stenographers as secretaries. These "secretaries" trained in road-side secretarial institutes. These institutes did not have qualified instructors and adequate machines. Hence, those who employed them were skeptical about their administrative competence, thus limiting their activities to routine or chore office jobs.

In the late 1900's, the state and federal governments started recognizing the need to employ efficient secretaries and established Federal Training Centers in Lagos and Kaduna. The state governments later established Staff Development Centers. Admission requirements into these centers were low. Later, polytechnics were established by both state and federal governments in order to have better trained secretaries. At present, we have a few universities with a secretarial administration department where secretaries are trained. The polytechnics are still regarded as the best place to train secretaries.

Secretaries command high respect and they easily get jobs. They are versatile because all organizations need them. In the early days of producing secretaries in Nigeria, people regarded those who went to commercial secondary modern or commercial secondary schools as dullards. The public regarded those who went to secondary grammar schools as highly intelligent - those who would become doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. Things have interestingly reversed as commercial or business courses are becoming more versatile than the science courses. We now find doctors and other professionals who write accounting examinations.

2.2 Modern technology

In today's organizations one of the things that make organizations unique is the use of modern technological gadgets. In today's business world, every office requires facts and accurate information for quick decision making (Akpomi and Ordu, 2009). In Modern Office Technology the role of the secretary is crucial in the life or progress of an organization hence, needs some technological and human backing from the work place. The effective performance of the Professional Secretary depends upon the office equipment, knowledge and skills, of Professional Secretary. The introduction of modern technologies and programmes has lessened the onerous tasks for the modern secretary. These range from production, reproduction, storage and retrieval among others. With this advancement of technology, the use of the computer and software programmes facilitates the work of the professional secretary. These include the use of machines such as printer, fax, pen drive, cell phones, photo copier, telex and internet. These requisite knowledge and skills make the position of the secretary rather challenging. With

the improvement in technology and recent development in office, it is envisaged that the work of the secretary will be easier.

2.3 Self efficacy

Self-efficacy is the “belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required for managing prospective situations” (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). An individual’s perception plays an essential role in behavioral outcomes since there is personal efficacy in exercising influence over what is done and the outcome of the events (Bandura, 1982). An individual’s level of confidence or perceived self-efficacy influences how that individual sets professional goals, influencing not only the initiation of behavior, the expended effort, and also the persistence of behavior in the presence of impediments (Bandura, 1982; Bandura, 1984)^[4]. These studies explored how individuals choose what to engage in and how they utilize resources available to them (Buchanan & Likness, 2008; Heale & Griffin, 2009). The findings from these studies have demonstrated the critical value of self-efficacy in life achievements. Broadly, people will avoid activities they believe exceed their capabilities and engage in activities they judge themselves competent to handle (Bandura, 1977b).

2.4 Threats and Challenges of New Technology on Secretarial Profession

Onifade (2010)^[9] confirmed that there is no doubt that these modern technologies have thrown some secretaries out of job and the trend will continue for some time. The innovations and inventions in computer and its facilities have made the office to reduce the number of secretaries. The jobs which the secretaries perform in the office and the errands they run have been taken over by the computer. The functions of the computer and its facilities which aided the reduction in the number of secretaries needed in the office as spelt out by Onifade (2010)^[9] are:

- a. Information which is the most important ingredient of the office can be stored, processed and retrieved by the computer facilities.
- b. It can be used to produce fast and accurate information.
- c. It provides very cheap services.
- d. Messages can be sent to many people simultaneously with the use of computer’s internet.
- e. Security of information is assured.
- f. Time, effort and money are saved.
- g. Stress is minimized.
- h. You can purchase office items online.
- i. You can book airline tickets and hotels online.
- j. Space is saved as little or no paper is used in the office.

The most recently manufactured laptops accept voice whereby you talk; your message is typed without having any need to use the computer’s keyboard. In the same vein, this computer accepts handwriting whereby you can write with a particular pen and all that you write is typed on the screen ready for editing and printing. An executive who does not know how to type may use either his voice or pen to produce his document. An office that has two or more secretaries can afford to sack one of them and keep just one of them. Looking at these functions, the secretary is not mandated to go to the airport to book flight for his/her boss. Many jobs which were hitherto performed by the secretary are

now performed by the computer but with the help of the secretary herself or an operator computer, left alone cannot do this.

Technological changes have tremendously transformed the traditional role of secretaries in offices. The traditional roles which involve typewriting and taking shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails have been greatly revolutionized. In recent times, modern secretaries are exposed to high technology such as the internet which simplifies duties and enhance knowledge and the performance of the secretaries. According to Olayanju, V. T. (2018)^[8], these technologies make it easier to send messages by fax, telex and electronic mails and boost the morale of secretary in the following ways:

- The secretaries have access to, and are able to manipulate information; hence they are becoming more powerful. Secretaries are more proactive with new roles and responsibilities.
- It also enables the secretaries to exhibit more positive attitudes toward new office technology and welcome the changes. The secretaries are able to communicate with all levels of employees. Encourages extensive personal interactions as secretaries not only prefer personal contacts but finding the technology becomes a means of making this happen.

2.5 Reason for Choosing a Secretarial Career

To start with, before asking the students their perception of the profession, an investigator felt it was important to know why they had chosen a secretarial career. Their reasons for choosing a secretarial career were varied. Many had previously worked in a secretarial position through high school work placements. The following were some of their submissions:

- One said that “my experience in high school, which was working as a secretary/receptionist for my work experience class. I did a job placement and enjoyed it so much that I checked into the program. I took the testing and was thrilled when I was accepted.”

Many others commented on liking the work involved and felt they had a natural aptitude for organizing, keyboarding and computer related work. All of these skills relate to traditional skills required in the job and that, the job requires organization, efficiency, reliability, responsibility, etc. These are my strengths.

- I've always enjoyed playing "secretary" as a child. I enjoy the human relations as well. I am an orderly person. I enjoy organizing and working with information, so I assumed this would be a good choice.

Many chose the profession because they enjoyed working with people. Secretaries are seen as assisting and meeting the needs of others. It is a profession that involves working with people and I am a major people person.

Another group of students saw the profession as a quick way to obtain a career but only a temporary career that would eventually move to other career options.

Two students commented that they chose this career because they did not have the academic skills to pursue other careers. This is a very archaic notion that should not be surfacing today. Their comments were:

- Because I had low marks in science and math classes my career choice was limited so I chose the office and technology management course because I still got to deal with people. I felt that it was something I could handle because I am not very good at some math and sciences.

2.6 A summary of the name “secretary” in the world over:

According to Adam, A. K. (2015) [2], published in Jayee Voice, think that everyone in this world would recognize the most popular and life-time titles in the super power countries such as United Kingdom and the USA and also the UN as a global organization. In the hierarchy of these countries governance, they have Home SECRETARY and SECRETARY of State respectively whereas the UN has SECRETARY General. As such that, we have Company Secretaries who are Chartered Secretaries especially dominating in the United Kingdom and are known as Corporate Secretaries in the US.

2.6.1 Home Secretary

The Secretary of State for the Home Department, commonly known as the Home Secretary, is the minister in charge of the Home Office of the United Kingdom, and one of the country's four Great Offices of State. The Home Secretary is responsible for internal affairs within England and Wales, and for immigration and citizenship for the whole of the United Kingdom: that is Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

2.6.2 Secretary of State

Department Mission Statement

Advance freedom for the benefit of the American people and the international community by helping to build and sustain a more democratic, secure, and prosperous world composed of well-governed states that respond to the needs of their people, reduce widespread poverty, and act responsibly within the international system.

2.6.3 UN Secretary General

The Secretary-General of the United Nations is the head of the Secretariat of the United Nations, one of the principal organs of the United Nations. The Secretary-General also acts as the de facto spokesperson and leader of the United Nations.

Role

The Secretary-General was envisioned by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a "world moderator," but the office was defined in the UN Charter as the organization's "chief administrative officer" (Article 97). Nevertheless, this more restricted description has not prevented the office holders from speaking out and playing important roles on global issues, to various degrees.

2.6.4 Company Secretary Defined

Officer appointed by the directors of a firm as responsible for ensuring that firm's legal obligations under the corporate legislation are complied with. His or her formal duties include (1) calling meetings, (2) recording minutes of the meetings, (3) keeping statutory record books, (4) proper payment of dividend

and interest payments, and (5) proper drafting and execution of agreements, contracts, and resolutions. A company secretary is a senior position in a private company or public organization, normally in the form of a managerial position or above. In the United States it is known as a corporate secretary. The Company Secretary is responsible for the efficient administration of a company, particularly with regard to ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and for ensuring that decisions of the Board of Directors are implemented.

3. Methods and Materials

The population comprised secretaries and offices in Federal Polytechnic, Kaura Namoda. The sample size for the study is 200 respondents randomly selected from Federal Polytechnic, Kaura Namoda. The techniques used for data collection were questionnaires and interviews.

4. Results and Discussion

In the methodology, 210 questionnaires were prepared and distributed for responses. But only 200 questionnaires were answered and returned, hence, the presentation and analysis of the data findings would be calculated based on the actual figures compiled.

Table 1: Understanding of secretarial role

Possible choices	Description	No. of Response	% Responds
a	Secretaries are only women job to serve as company servants.	0	0%
b	Secretarial work is not for men to do or perform.	0	0%
c	Secretaries know everything about a company.	171	85.5%
d	Secretaries keep secrets and meet and talk to outsiders to a company.	29	14.5%
e	Secretarial course are not common in the universities.	0	0%
Total		200	100%

From the above table, shows that many people thought of a secretary to be c and d as they indicated.

Table 2: Secretarial positions that respondents are most familiar with in their working career

Possible choices	Description	No. of Response	% Responds
a	Typist	0	25%
b	Stenographer	0	0%
c	Receptionist	50	0%
d	Secretary	150	75%
e	Company Secretary	0	0%
Total		200	100%

This presentation finding shows clearly that the respondents are more familiar with typist and secretary position in their working career. This means that throughout their working history they only know of a typist and secretary positions more than any other secretarial position. It was 25% who choose typist and 75% choose secretary.

Table 3: FPTKND Secretarial course programme as acknowledged by respondents.

	Yes	No
No. of Response	200	0
% Responds	100%	0%

The 200 respondents acknowledged that they know secretarial course programme under FPTKND. Representing 100% of the element responded.

Table 4: The highest position of a secretary within FPTKND

Possible choices	Description	No. of Response	% Responds
a	Senior Typist	20	10%
b	Senior Stenographer	0	0%
c	Administrative Officer	150	75%
d	Executive Secretary	0	0%
e	Others	30	15%
Total Responds		200	100%

The highest secretarial position within FPTKND is administrative officer with 75% response rate followed by senior typist with 10% responses rate.

Table 5: How important a secretary position is in FPTKND according to the knowledge of respondents?

	Yes	No
No. of Response	200	0
% Responds	100%	0%

200 representing 100% responded yes that the secretary's positions are highly important in the operations of FPTKND.

5. Summary of findings

The findings were inconclusive. Literature have shown that many people have different opinion about the term secretary and its role together with the career path for secretaries. Those who have not studied secretaryship are a bit bias about the importance of the term secretary but those who are professionally trained in the field have constructive opinions and ideas about the complexity and roles and responsibilities that a secretary can perform. Throughout the literature there is no any link of the word secretary to any high academic qualification such as MPhil in Secretarial studies or MBA in secretarial studies or a PhD in secretarial studies.

5.1 Conclusion

Secretarial practice has been an important position within an organizational structure of any organization but it always faces challenges and dilemmas and inferior perception granted to the studies of secretarial studies. The following are the basic conclusions that can be drawn as a result of the empirical research findings. Generally, there is no enough publicity about the progress and career achievements of secretarial professionals. Secretary's position seems to be under appreciated by many people in an organization. There is inefficiency and lack of competence in terms of secretarial knowledge by the educational institutions and supervisors or managers and therefore fails to know how to give responsibilities and promoting the secretary within the organizational structure. It also seems secretaries are always stack with their role and don't move up of the

organizational ladder because the structure limits their growth within the organization.

5.2 Recommendation

From the conclusions and presentation of the data analysis and literature review, it is clear that people don't understand who is a secretary, secretary role, duties and responsibilities in an organization. But as it stands, there should be an emphasis on the tertiary institutions (FPTKND) to train people in the highest professional position to enable them to fulfill the corporate governance processes and knowledge needed for proper accountability and management efficiency. Institutions have to expand their field of courses established to cover the secretarial practice up to professional standard. It is clear that lack of chartered secretaries in the country affect the corporate decision making and hence poor governance in the country economic policies. The skills, knowledge, talents and style of a secretarial practice contain everything about a company business and hence must be considered serious as any other position. A very serious organizational modification is required by FPTKND Secretarial roles and career paths. Also, the secretarial courses and its professional studies as associations must be established to define and direct the career path for secretarial practitioners.

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