

## Information of Communication Technology on the Influence Performance of Secretaries in Government Ministries in Nasarawa State, North-Central Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study examined the influence of ICT on secretaries' performance in government ministries in Nasarawa State. ICT has enhanced the proficiency of secretaries on their jobs by enabling them to process accurate and relevant information within the shortest possible time. The advent of ICT has dramatically changed the roles and effectiveness of secretaries in government offices; hence there is need for availability of ICT resources/equipment in government offices as well as acquisition of requisite skills and competencies by the secretaries. Four research questions guided the study. Structured questionnaire was the only instrument used for data collection and 84 copies of this questionnaire were administered in the (14) government ministries in Nasarawa state. With the population of 84 secretaries, no sampling was drawn due to the small number. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. The study revealed that ICT has influenced the performance of secretaries in much different ways-speedy delivery of information, accuracy and effectiveness at work. The researcher recommended among others that government ministries should procure the latest model of ICT facilities to enhance secretarial functions and create opportunity for training and re-training of the secretaries to be abreast with the new changes and advancement.

**Keywords:** Government, influence, information communication technology, ministries, performance, secretaries

### INTRODUCTION

The introduction of sophisticated office technology equipment like computers, word processors and other information technology resources coupled with new management techniques have completely changed old work habits in the office and triggered off a new business orientation thus making moribund the older methods of business transaction.

According to Okute (2001), Information Communication Technology is concerned with the aspect of managing and processing information through the use of electronic computers and computer software to convert, store, protect, process, transmit and retrieve information. It is the handling and processing of information for use by means of electronic and communication gadgets such as computers, cameras, telephones etc.

Atakpa (2010) stated that secretarial functions everywhere in the world have undergone a lot of technical changes. As a result, modern office equipment which gives the secretary the opportunity to increase her efficiency abound. Many office functions and secretarial duties which were previously done manually have been mechanized. Thus, the diversities of these office technologies require the secretary to possess new

skills and sub-skills to enable him/her to be relevant in the modern office.

ICT has changed the equipment and work groups, of course; nobody today would like to work in an office where information processing and other secretarial activities are done manually or mechanically. So, the mechanized office is gradually given way to the automated office. Investment in networks of computer-based workstations and other automated equipment is transforming traditional manual office methods and paper communications media. This transformation has resulted in the development of automated systems that rely on electronic collaboration and communication networks, text processing, image processing and other information and communication technologies.

According to Okwuanaso and Obayi (2003), information communication technology has posed challenges to secretaries as they communicate in the present day office. In the past, secretaries' functions were performed manually such that documents and records were maintained on papers, stored in files and drawers.

The consequences of global development in the modern information and communication technology area, calls for corresponding development of new skills in office communication by all secretaries and office managers.

Information is a basic resource in today's society. We are living in a global information society, with a global economy that is increasingly dependent on the creation, management and distribution of information resources. People in many nations no longer live in agricultural societies, composed primarily of farmers, or even industrial societies, where a majority of the workforce consists of factory workers. Instead, the workforce in many nations consists primarily of workers in services occupations or knowledge workers, that is, people who spend most of their workday creating, using and distributing information, (O'Brien, 1996).

Today, the Information and Communication Technology revolution has dramatically changed all these and is moving quickly towards changing the work itself. The following are the modern ICT devices found in most offices for secretarial functions. They are, electronic computers with modern office accessories or packages and internet facilities for on-line communication and collaboration, computer printers, plotters, digit-memo, fax machine, photo-copier, Digital video camera, close circuit television, large-screen video projector, etc.

Similarly, the days of relying primarily on ICT professionals to meet our information processing needs are over. Today's secretarial staff is expected to use net-worked microcomputers as professional workstations to acquire the information they need to accomplish their jobs successfully.

**Statement of the problem:** Communication technologies are new innovations in offices that enable the discharge of office functions more rapidly and efficiently. The emergence of office technologies in modern day organizations has challenged the occupational skills of the employees including the secretaries. Hence, these communication technologies have recently revolutionized office skills and rendered some skills such as transcription skills, typing on the manual typewriter obsolete and has also given rise to previously unknown skills such as webpage design, desktop publishing, networking, internet skills etc., in modern organizations. This development has obviously challenged the skills and functions of secretaries.

Again these advancements in communication technologies has led to the need for secretaries to reposition themselves in order to continue to be relevant in their performance of office functions as well as cope with the trend of technological changes in today's modern offices.

The modern world of high technology could not have come about except for the development of computer. Information technology has opened up a new era in managing information/communication through

the techniques of automation and this has enhanced communication systems. Information technology has made secretarial job more competitive.

One of the main causes of poor performance among secretaries in most organizations is their abject lack of communication technology skills as highlighted above. Many of them do not possess communication technology skills required in the various offices and have continued to negatively affect their general performances. Lack of skills in the area of webpage design, desktop publishing, office application, networking, proficiency in accessing the internet, etc., among secretaries in government offices have often been a source of worry to the management of such organizations. Eze (2000) maintains that any office staff of today that is lacking in Information Communication Technology would be boring, repetitive and would produce very little. Secretaries have to get themselves acquainted on how to operate new office automation such as information storage systems, the internet and other new software packages.

In view of the aforementioned problems the researcher tends to study those communication technology skills required by secretaries in their various offices and the influence they have on their job performances.

**Purpose of the study:** The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the influence of Information Communication Technology (ICT) on the performance of secretaries in government ministries in Nasarawa State. Specifically the study sought to:

- Determine ICT resources available for use by secretaries in government ministries in Nasarawa State.
- Ascertain ICT skills required by secretaries in government ministries in Nasarawa State.

**Scope of the study:** The scope of ICT is a very wide one that covers office automation, transaction processing, management reporting, decision support system, ICT for strategic competitive advantage, etc. This study however, restricts itself to office technology skills required by today's secretary in carrying out his/her duties in a modern office environment.

**Research questions:**

- What ICT resources are available for use by secretaries in government ministries in Nasarawa State?
- What ICT skills are used by secretaries in government ministries in Nasarawa State?

**METHODOLOGY**

The survey method was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in (14) government ministries in Nasarawa, Nasarawa State. The population consisted of 84 secretaries working in the various departments and units. The entire population was studied.

A set of structured questionnaire consisting of 34 items based on the research questions was used to collect data from the secretaries. This was face validated by three specialists in business education, Ebonyi State University.

The instrument was subjected to a test retest to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire items. The Spearman Correlation-coefficient was used to compute the consistency of the instrument. The computation gave a correlation-coefficient of 0.75 which was considered high enough for the study.

Copies of the questionnaire designed for the study were administered on the 84 secretaries in the ministries personally by the researcher and two assistants. A4-

point response scale of degree of agreement/disagreement based on the options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A); Disagree (DA); and Strongly Disagree (SD) were used.

The mean statistics and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions. Items with mean score of 2.50 and above on the 4-point response scale were accepted while those below 2.50 do not qualify to be accepted.

**RESULTS**

The results obtained were presented in the Table 1:

**Analysis of data:** Table 1 showed the responses of the respondents on the ICT resources available for use by secretaries in government ministries. The data indicated that 12 out of the seventeen items relating to availability of ICT resources in government ministries were accepted. Items 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16

Table 1: Mean scores on the ICT resources available for use by secretaries in government ministries (N = 84)

S/no	Items	FX	X	S.D.	Decision
1	Software that produces printer-based products	256	3.1	0.28	Accepted
2	Networking devices	186	2.2	0.25	Rejected
3	Internet facilities	213	2.5	0.24	Accepted
4	Telecommunication gadgets	226	2.7	0.24	Accepted
5	E-mail facilities	281	3.3	0.30	Accepted
6	Video-conferencing	183	2.2	0.25	Rejected
7	Word processing facilities	257	3.1	0.28	Accepted
8	Database management resources	232	2.8	0.25	Accepted
9	Desktop publishing software	246	2.9	0.26	Accepted
10	Voice mail facilities	208	2.4	0.24	Rejected
11	Spreadsheet program	274	3.2	0.28	Accepted
12	Personal information managers	242	2.8	0.25	Accepted
13	Photocopiers that sorts out pages of documents	172	2.0	0.26	Rejected
14	Micrographics	190	2.2	0.25	Rejected
15	Electronic typewriters with visual display	274	3.2	0.41	Accepted
16	Electronic calendar scheduling	222	2.6	0.24	Accepted
17	Dictating machine	212	2.5	0.24	Accepted

Table 2: Mean scores on ICT skills required by secretaries in government ministries? (N = 84)

S/no	Items	FX	X	S.D.	Decision
18	Ability to enter, edit, store and retrieve information properly	295	3.5	0.32	Accepted
19	Ability to show accuracy in inputting information	386	4.5	0.50	Accepted
20	Ability to install network services	177	2.1	0.26	Rejected
21	Ability to download information from the net	253	3.0	0.26	Accepted
22	Ability to handle server and host	192	2.2	0.25	Rejected
23	Ability to manage correspondence through the computer	284	3.3	0.30	Accepted
24	Ability to receive and link outside calls with the right executive concern	298	3.5	0.32	Accepted
25	Ability to use facsimile machine, security devices and other modern means of communication	266	3.1	0.28	Accepted
26	Ability to use accounting programs such as spreadsheet, lotus etc	237	2.8	0.25	Accepted
27	Ability to organize video-conferencing, tele-conferencing etc leading to fast and accurate conference and efficient information exchange	242	2.8	0.25	Accepted
28	Ability to use desktop publishing	276	3.2	0.28	Accepted
29	Ability to use power point to produce electronic slides	224	2.6	0.24	Accepted
30	Ability to connect/log on properly to the internet	217	2.5	0.24	Accepted
31	Ability to browse the web and perform web simple search	213	2.5	0.24	Accepted
32	Ability to use scanner, digital camera etc	217	2.5	0.24	Accepted
33	Ability to share and transfer file/documents over a network	205	2.4	0.24	Rejected
34	Ability to use e-mail/upload a text file and send it as e-mail	237	2.7	0.24	Accepted

and 16 recorded mean scores of 3.1, 2.5, 2.7, 3.3, 3.1, 2.8, 2.9, 3.2, 2.8 and 2.5 and the corresponding standard deviation of 0.28, 0.24, 0.30, 0.28, 0.25, 0.26, 0.28, 0.25, 0.41, 0.24 and 0.26. On the other hand, items 2, 6, 10, 13 and 14 in the Table 2 the criterion mean and were thus rejected.

Table 2 showed that 14 out of the listed ICT skills are required by secretaries in government ministries. From the table, items 18, 19, 21, 23-32 and 34 were accepted with the mean scores of 3.5, 4.5, 3.0, 3.3, 3.5, 3.1, 2.8, 2.8, 3.2, 2.6, 2.5, 2.5, 2.5, 2.7 and standard deviation of 0.32, 0.50, 0.26, 0.30, 0.32, 0.28, 0.25, 0.25, 0.28, 0.24, 0.24, 0.24, 0.24, respectively, while items 20, 22 and 33 were rejected with the mean scores of 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4 and standard deviations of 0.26 and 0.25, respectively. Judging from the cut off mean, it is evident that fourteen items were accepted and three rejected.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings in Table 1 showed that most of the ICT resources are available for secretaries' use in government ministries and these have enabled the secretaries to manage and process information effectively and contributed significantly to the growth of the ministries. They have also helped to equip them with necessary operational competencies. This finding is in line with the views of Okute (2001) who noted that ICT is concerned with the aspects of managing and processing information through the use of electronic computers, computer software and other communication gadgets as cameras, telephones etc. Information Communication Technology has become an integral part of modern offices which enables deadline and other office schedules to be met on targets.

It was discovered that most of the ICT resources which are not available such as networking devices, video conferencing, voice mail facilities, copiers that sort out pages of documents and micrographic equipment are being considered to be purchased by the ministries.

Table 2 revealed the skills required by secretaries in offices. These included the ability to enter, edit, store and retrieve information and ability to use power point to produce electronic slides etc. The findings of this study are in line with the views of Nworgwugwu (2002) who opined that the technological equipment and machines have at present mechanized so many office functions and secretarial duties, which were previously done manually. For this reason, there is a complete job re-designation and the need for acquisition of new skills by the secretaries.

Due to the introduction of sophisticated technological (electronic) office equipment in today's

office and the role secretaries need to play in ensuring accuracy and efficiency in their jobs, the secretaries need to meet the challenges by acquiring new skills and competencies for efficient operation in the electronic office.

Agomuo and Isu (2003) enumerated a variety of office skills in electronic offices as the ability to use facsimile machine and other modern means of communication; accounting programs such as spreadsheet, desktop publishing, power point, organize video conferences, use of the internet etc. As stated by Nwosu (2000a, b), the challenges in modern office situation have altered the skills required by Nigerian workers. The result is that certain professional skills were no longer suitable for the automated office, hence the need for acquisition of new skills. Buxbaum (2002) asserted also that ICT skills enable an individual to use computer software application, database and other technologies to achieve a variety of academic, work related and personal goals.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study examined the influence of ICT on the performance of secretaries in government ministries in Nasarawa state. The result of the study showed that most of the ICT resources such as software that produces printer-based products, e-mail facilities, telecommunication gadgets, internet facilities etc are available in government ministries and these have greatly enabled the secretaries to manage and process information effectively and has also contributed significantly to the growth of the ministries.

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusion was made:

Advances in ICT and availability of ICT resources such as internet, e-mail, videoconferencing etc have made information and communication processes a lot easier in modern organizations. The secretaries on their part need to acquire new and requisite skills to remain relevant on their jobs.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Having examined the influence of ICT on secretaries' performance in government ministries, the following recommendations are made:

- Organizations should endeavor to organize training and development programmes that will further enhance the effective performance of secretaries through acquisition of additional skills. Job training is the ultimate purpose to reach a level of productivity. Therefore, there is need for training

and re-training of secretaries on ICT in order to achieve maximum output.

- Secretaries should always be ready and open-minded to acquire additional training/skills development, bearing in mind that changes occur frequently in the line of their chosen career and they are not left behind in the use of ICT in this digital age.

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