

Assessment of the Relevance of Shorthand on Job Performance of Secretaries in an Automated Office

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Abstract

The study assessed the relevance of Shorthand Skills on Secretaries performance in the automated Office. The paper highlighted the kind of recognition given to secretaries and how they were being elevated in the world of works. The study was guided by one objective and research question. Survey design was adopted for the study. The population for this study comprised of the entire 35 trained secretaries in Federal Polytechnic Damaturu. All the total population was used for the study as the population is not large. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire which was validated by two experts. The researcher administered the 35 questionnaires personally and were all recovered. The Data gathered from the field was computed and used to answer the research question using mean and standard deviation. The result revealed that Shorthand skill is not applied in the routine duties of the Secretaries in their various offices, this is due to the introduction of information and communication technologies, however, it was concluded that the job opportunities and job performance of secretaries will depend on their knowledge, skills and competencies on the shorthand skills and operation of the modern technological facilities found in the modern offices. Also, it is concluded that shorthand is still relevant and there is no other course or application which could be used to replace the writing of shorthand. The paper recommended that secretaries in offices should always take dictations in shorthand so that administrators can appreciate the use of these rare skills especially the aspect of good communication, speed, accuracy and confidentiality of handling office correspondence.

Keywords: Secretaries, Shorthand, Skills, Automated, Office

I. Introduction

Development of secretarial profession has been enhanced by the introduction of information and communication technologies, which are gradually displacing the manual operation of office services. In spite of this, shorthand remains the basic tool for speed attendant and efficient discharge of secretarial duties. Shorthand is an important operational tool for secretaries and are therefore relevant time skill subject in any secretarial training institute (Lawrence, 2000). Eddy (2002) also stated that shorthand is a vocational skill which enables one to obtain and hold interesting and rewarding position in offices and business. O'Dea, Skes, Watson and Williams (2005) stated that shorthand and typewriting are used as a personal tool by business professionals to relieve them of the burden of writing cumbersome longhand when they make notes, compose important memoranda, draft speeches/reports, etc. This implies that knowledge of shorthand is also essential for a smooth running of computerized office.

Secretaries are employed personnel responsible for performing a wide range of jobs that vary greatly in an organization. According to Amoor and Magaji (2015), secretaries are responsible for managing records

and information, answer telephones calls, handle correspondence, schedule appointments, make travel arrangements, and sort mail in an organization. The authors stressed that the ancient secretaries were then more or less stereotyped as the person in the office who types, files correspondence, takes of minutes and correspondence with speed and accuracy. This therefore means that the task of secretaries in an organization is great, enormous and time consuming; hence the need to develop methods of taking abbreviated notes so that they could capture as much as possible of their employers' words at reasonable time become very important. This explained why Sholagbade (2012) maintained that the competency of a secretary was then hinged on his ability to take shorthand notes as dictated by the executive and transcribed same accurately. By implication, excellent knowledge, understanding and demonstration of shorthand skills guaranteed job as professional secretary in an organization. Shorthand also called stenography is one of the core subjects to all students that opted for OTM studies in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

In 1970s shorthand was rated very high to the extent that employers looked for shorthand secretaries who were very scarce. By then if you were a shorthand typist or stenographer, you were hot cake. Employers used to find these types of secretaries because of two major reasons: (i) speed and (ii) confidentiality. During this period in higher institutions, shorthand was a core course which carried nothing less than five units in the secretarial studies curriculum. Failure in shorthand was fail in all courses and students were used to writing of lots of assignments and drilling day and night in order to have a good grade in shorthand which would in turn boost their GPA. In Nigeria today, shorthand is one of the subjects taught at the tertiary levels of education, and a close examination of the curriculum shows that shorthand is given more contact time in many tertiary institutions than other courses.

The Pitman shorthand new course, new Era Edition (1979) also defines shorthand as a way of representing spoken sound with written signs and symbols. Osuala (2012) highlighted that the primary objectives of shorthand is to develop in the students the ability to take dictation with sufficient speed and accuracy to produce mail able transcript. According to Amoor and Magaji (2015), the knowledge of Shorthand aids in the development of skills related to listening, focus, organization, attention to detail and accuracy. Okoro (2017) opined that the knowledge of shorthand enhances vocabulary, reading, phonetics, spelling and other language skills. It is assumed that knowledge and skills in shorthand enable secretaries to become proficient in their duties, increase their writing skills, facilitate the taking of minutes and transcription of the spoken word.

One of the requirements for the job of Secretaries in Nigeria is Shorthand skills. The use of shorthand is not only limited to stenographers, but has been and is still used by many Journalists, court clerks, clergies and some individuals who have the knowledge and would want to keep their records secret. Akomi and Ordu (2009) defined a secretary as "an office-staff with a mastery of skills in typewriting, shorthand and routine office functions. Office secretaries should be able to take down dictations in shorthand and later transcribe it into longhand by either pen, typewriters or presently computers. This skill enables them to produce professional, standard and authentic documents. A traditional secretary actually acted as a memory aid to their bosses, in addition to answering telephone calls and processing mails. Some secretarial roles such as taking dictations and recording minutes of meetings may not be easily replaced accurately by the advent of information technology. The need for quick and accurate information for decision making has

resulted in modern offices acquiring machines to ease the work of a secretary (Agboola, Ademiluyi, and Ademiluyi, 2014).

In the recent past, several changes have taken place in private and public offices as regards the roles and functions of the secretary due to innovations in technology (Aliata & Hawa, 2014). The inventions and innovations in computer, according to Onifade (2010), have taken over many jobs being performed by the secretaries in the office. Rapid developments in office technology have resulted in new terminologies in the field of computer and computer applications. Kanu (1990) opines that emergence of computer in business created an impression that many workers will be relieved of their jobs since automation is likely to take over the jobs hitherto being performed by many office workers. According to him, marketable skills for office Technology and Management students in the information age will be data and word processing skills. Technological influx to the society demands continuous and regular monitoring of skills that employers of labour want and prefer for maximum productivity.

Sholagbade (2012) opines that technologies, such as speed typing and voice recognition software have taken the place of the former administrative art known as Shorthand. Innovations in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), according to Oludele (2008), have changed the nature of office works and the office today is being largely automated with modern technologies. Daily use of Shorthand has been greatly reduced in the public sector because more managers are getting involved in word processing, resulting from office automation. Word processing software provides features for spelling and grammar check, auto-margin set and templates for various display of work. The stereotypical picture of the secretary with notepad and pencil, according to Clark (1997), is fading. These innovations in Information and Communication Technology, which revolutionized the operations of the office, coupled with general opinion that Shorthand is problematic for students and so excessive labour on it is unnecessary in the information age, influenced change in curriculum for the training of secretaries at the Polytechnics. This was to reflect the realities of the modern world of work. Hence, the curriculum was loaded with Information and Communication Technology-based courses (NBTE, 2004). However, the idea of abandoning the use of Shorthand is intriguing.

Empirically, the study of Aliata and Hawa, (2014) revealed that the emergence of technological innovations in office has created an impression that many secretaries will be relieved of their jobs since automation is likely to take over their jobs. As a result of the growing trend, the role of secretaries in the business set up has changed tremendously from that of typewriting, shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails to the usage of computers and other modern gadgets (Mumuni and Sam 2014). The aspects of the job and responsibilities such as making travel arrangements, scheduling conferences, and transmitting staff instructions are now conducted online. The technological innovations in the offices as resulted in the deemphasizing of shorthand led to the integration of technological innovations into curriculum of secretarial Programme in tertiary institutions in Nigeria (Oguntimehin and Oludele, 2017). Therefore, there is no gainsaying that technological changes have altered the procedures and techniques for office functions to include the computers, electronic mail, voice mail, and the internet.

Accordingly, Agboola, Ademiluyi and Ademiluyi (2014) reported that despite the technological age, shorthand assist secretaries to compile minutes, prepare reports and office management. Similarly, Amoor (2014) reported that secretaries with shorthand skills are more efficient in handling of paperwork and correspondence in an office. Earlier, Okoji (2008) argued that a person cannot be a secretary without attaining acceptance level of proficiency to the core subjects of secretarial training in shorthand among others. In Nigeria, among the skills required of a secretary, much emphasis is often laid on shorthand. This can be testified by the numerous newspaper advertisements for the post of secretaries demanding various speeds in shorthand. It is surprise that professional secretaries and scholars are still emphasizing shorthand skills despite the technological innovations in the modern offices.

Despite the technological revolution in offices, the Association of Professional Secretaries in Nigeria insists that Shorthand is an anchor that every professional secretary must possess. High proficiency in Shorthand skill remains "indispensable criterion for selection and promotion of professional secretaries in most organizations in Nigeria. Amoor and Magaji (2015) reported that Shorthand is still relevant in the office operation of secretaries. The author stressed that no technology has completely render Shorthand obsolete. The arguments among scholars urge the researchers to undergo a study on the continued relevance of Shorthand on secretarial services in today's modern office.

II. Statement of Problems

Shorthand is a core course and indispensable to the secretarial profession because it helps students to develop reading and writing abilities. More importantly, the knowledge of shorthand, is very essential especially in situations where the job demands secrecy in official transactions or where a quick recording of information is necessary (Okoro, 2017). However, it is observed that students are not performing well in shorthand and this is in line with the fact that the performance of students in Shorthand has persistently remained discouraging over the years. The factors contributing to poor performance of students in shorthand have not been completely addressed (Silvia, 2011). For a number of times, during Academic Board meetings to consider students results, so many members have been mentioning lack of competences in Shorthand as one of the major factors that affect the performance rates of students who pursue OTM Programme at both levels. The Board would then mumber as those seated close by turn to one another and ask the common question, "*But do we still need this shorthand?*" The public remains at cross-roads, whether or not the country is applying and still need to train its citizens on Shorthand system of writing.

The task of jotting down executives' speeches, minutes of meetings, conference proceedings and office correspondence' dictations are but the functions of secretaries. Secretaries achieve these, through the use of high speed writing skills known as Shorthand. It is a skill highly priced by fast writers. Standard Organizations, Companies, Government Parastatals and higher institutions of learning cannot operate functionally without the services of confidential secretaries. Consequently, for executive to live up to his maximum responsibilities they need the help and cooperation of a competent secretary. Their services usually lighten the bureaucratic burden of most organizations in terms of documentation and preservation of policies, resolutions and extracts of meetings. While these functions are found wherever administrative works exist, the secretaries are expected to transcribe all the captured Shorthand notes from the spoken

words into text and document them for further action. Presently, there is acute shortage of confidential secretaries in most organizations. This may not be unconnected to the fact that high proficiency in Shorthand which includes the ability to take notes/minutes in Shorthand (which most of today's secretaries and aspiring secretaries lack) is still an important criterion for employment, selection, placement and promotion of secretaries (Sarki, 2015). Oden (2018) stressed that even where they are found – in business offices, courtrooms, government offices and committee meetings, they are mostly incompetent to handle their jobs as few of them make use of Shorthand skills which easily allows them to take accurate notes at a great speed over a long period of time. The attitude of secretaries towards the application of their Shorthand skills is attributed to their poor Shorthand achievement in schools Okoro (2018). This research therefore has the objective of assessing if shorthand is still relevant and being used by the Secretaries in modern offices.

Research Question

In line with the objective, the study has raised this question:

1. What is the perception of Secretaries on the relevance of shorthand skills on secretarial services in automated offices?

III. Literature Review

Concept of Shorthand

Shorthand is any system of rapid handwriting which can be used to transcribe the spoken words. Shorthand systems use a variety of techniques including simplifying existing letters or characters and using special symbols to represent phonemes, words and phrases Aromolaran (2011) in Awak (2015). Shorthand is a system of rapid handwriting employing symbols to represent words, phrases, and letters. The training of secretaries in Nigeria has been associated with shorthand for many years now. This is because shorthand is useful in taking down instructions from a boss quickly and accurately and has been known to improve the concentration and ability to improve Secretaries' memory, which enhances the listening ability as opined by Chip (2013) in Awak (2015). Shorthand which is also called Stenography, is any form of rapid writing using symbols in place of letters of the alphabet, phrases or words Russons (2017). Ager (2015) referred to this system of writing as stenography (*narrow writing*), brachygraphic (*short writing*) or tachygraphy (*swift writing*).

Sunday (2005) also described it also as invisible communications. The Greek historian, Xenophon used shorthand to write down the memoirs of Socrates. In Great Britain, Shorthand evolved as a means of taking down confidential reports in coded forms, the system which over time developed and became a trade of an academic study. The contributions of Isaac Pitman and John Robert Gregg particularly gave rise to writing of shorthand in English. Both Pitman and Gregg used a phonographic approach and they wrote words according to how they are sounded instead of abbreviated spelling. In Pitman system the position, length and thickness of the strokes are all crucial. Pitman system became the predominant shorthand system in the English speaking with the exception of the USA which adopted the Gregg system right up to the present day Ager (2015) and Leedham, Ma and Blumenstein (2009).

Shorthand as the representation of sounds by signs and symbols does not use alphabets or letters. Shorthand outlines cannot be written on plain sheets because we deal with positioning of outlines and this is done in three ways namely: first place outlines are written above the line - Second place outlines are written on the line while third place outlines are written through the line.

IV. The Relevance of Shorthand in the Technological Era

Shorthand for all will mark the beginning of self-sufficient improved productivity in office. The emphasis given to shorthand is one of the glaring constraints that have existed in the process of the education of the secretary over the years. Sunday (2005) said that it is worthy to note that shorthand is indispensable to the secretarial profession and much emphasis is given to it. For the OTM student, shorthand helps in developing his reading and writing abilities, especially in the area of written and oral English. Shorthand is also used in recording speeches at meetings. And for the graduate secretary, proficiency in shorthand is very essential especially in situations where the job demands secrecy in business or where a quick recording of information is necessary. Agbionu (2014) stated that, despite the automated machines being in offices, shorthand skills enhance secretary's ability to write comprehensive reports, describing in detail how the information is obtained, difficulties encountered. He further emphasized that only secretaries with shorthand skills can follow the steps involved in report writing one at a time.

Adamu (2010) noted, that shorthand skills develop OTM student's consciousness for speed and accuracy. As the student continues to strive to write and transcribe shorthand with speed and with minimum errors, it creates in him the consciousness for speed and accuracy. Any secretary that possesses these skills handles his functions efficiently and effectively. Ambrose (2011) supported the idea that shorthand skills is still relevant in the composition of correspondence and effective in communication skills despite the introduction of sophisticated machines in offices which was also affirmed by Sunday (2005) who opined that, shorthand skills are indispensable to the secretarial profession, as it helps secretaries in developing their written and oral English communication.

Anderson (2011) in Awak (2015) believed that shorthand skills will continue to be needed and that it is noteworthy that the purpose of training is to enable an individual acquire the skills that will be relevant for his job performance and that every curriculum is expected to make beneficiaries apply the skills acquired in solving problems in the workplace. Macnicol (2000) said that a sound skill of shorthand is essential to note taking-shorthand has the ability of molding life and that it instills discipline and confidence by being careful when writing. Ogunyinka (2001) said that shorthand has come to stay, though seen as a vocational and not educational course, yet it has been discovered that shorthand has educational values as it works through the medium of language and for many students it is often a key to understanding English Language. It also helps in the development of reading, writing, language and spoken abilities.

It is also useful to note taking in other subjects faster than longhand. It can be used to record speeches at meetings or as a means of keeping secret writing. Adebayo (2000) observed that, shorthand has been a saving grace for many graduates roaming the streets without jobs, and have had to go for evening short courses in shorthand and typing to be employed as secretaries. Many women today who would have had nothing to do are now breadwinners because of the shorthand skills they have acquired. It is believed that

shorthand skills will continue to be needed. It is noted that even with the support of word processors, it is questionable whether dictating equipment can make Shorthand achieve job requirement in the foreseeable future. It is also pertinent to state that there is no other method of note taking than shorthand.

Adebayo (2006) opined that good communication skills makes secretaries more productive and the ability to communicate well allows secretaries to better compose correspondence to capture what is expected of them by their management. Prince (2004) said listening skills acquired through teaching and learning of shorthand helps the secretary to cultivate the habit of good report writing and composing of correspondence including minutes of meetings in automated offices. This, to a large extent helps the manager to concentrate on other issues. Agbionu (2014) affirmed that, shorthand skills enhance secretaries' ability to write detailed reports, by describing how the information in reports are obtained, difficulties encountered and acknowledgement of help and assistance. He further emphasized that only secretaries with shorthand skills can follow the steps involved in report writing one at a time.

Russon (2014) opined that shorthand skills tend to reduce the burden of workload in the office and promote confidentiality in service delivery. In line with this, Teeline (2010) affirmed that, shorthand is a vital tool for secretaries in keeping secret and confidential matters of the organization. He stressed that despite the digital age, shorthand skills are still regarded as an absolutely essential skill that make secretaries more productive in automated offices. Adebayo (2011) affirmed that, shorthand skill is still very relevant in maintaining documents than automated machines that can be operated by anyone who is literate in manipulating the office machines.

According to scholars, a shorthand skill improves the efficiency, credibility, accuracy, effectiveness, time management and job performance of secretaries. Amoor (2014) indicated that shorthand skills is relevant to secretaries in report writing, minute taking, recording of instruction, writing down telephone messages, processing information and time management of secretaries. The proponents of the relevance of Shorthand such as Whitehead (1977) maintained that the qualities required by the graduate office secretary include among others a wide range of shorthand skills of 100-120 wpm. The skills according to the author assist secretaries in area of spelling, sound knowledge of reprography, report writing and minute taking.

V. Methodology

The design used in this study was descriptive survey. This design was considered appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to collect data from respondents and subject it to statistical analysis. The population for this study comprised of the entire 35 secretaries who had Shorthand skills in Federal Polytechnic Damaturu. Due to manageable size of the population, the researcher adopted Total Population Sample (TPS) for the study. In this study, the 5-Likert scale was adopted for all the items of the research question. This is because the five scale is likely to produce better results than scale with no midpoint (Sorrel, 2010). Hence, the respondents were asked to indicate their responses to each question on a five-point Likert scale that is, Strongly Disagreed (1 point), Disagreed (2 points), Undecided (3 points), Agreed (4 points) and Strongly Agreed (5 points). In order to ensure the validity of the instrument, it was presented to two experts in research and management fields who vetted the instrument and considered it suitable for the study. The benchmark of five points Likert scale is 3.0 (Okolocha & Nwadiani, 2015). Following their

recommendation, any item of questionnaire with mean value of 3.0 and above was considered agreed while any item with mean value of less than 3.0 was considered disagreed.

Table One: What is the perception of Secretaries on the relevance of shorthand skills on secretarial services in automated offices?

S/N0.	RELEVANCE OF SHORTHAND	MEAN	SD	REMARKS
1.	Shorthand skills is used in taking minutes of meeting in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	62	1.77	Rejected
2.	Shorthand skills is used in report writing in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	68	1.94	Rejected
3.	Shorthand skills is used in recording confidential information in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	93	2.66	Rejected
4.	Shorthand skills is used in taking notes from telephone calls in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	75	2.14	Rejected
5.	Shorthand skills is used in writing instruction received from the superior officer in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	68	1.94	Rejected
6.	Shorthand skills is used in effective time management in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	93	2.66	Rejected
7.	Shorthand skills is used in developing good listening skills in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	100	2.86	Rejected
8.	Shorthand skills is relevant to secretaries in developing good listening skills	103	2.94	Rejected
9.	Shorthand skills is used in developing good reading skills in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	98	2.80	Rejected
10.	Shorthand skills is used in developing good writing skills in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	98	2.80	Rejected
11.	Shorthand skills is used in developing good speaking skills in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	100	2.86	Rejected
12.	Shorthand skills is used in developing good language skills in the office and relevant to Secretaries duties	93	2.66	Rejected
GRAND MEAN			2.50	

Source: Field survey (2023)

The above table shows that, the grand mean score is 2.50 which is less than the cut off scores of 3.00. Majority of the respondents have rejected the statements advanced as to the usefulness and relevance of shorthand in the automated offices. Shorthand skills even if acquired in the schools is not in use in the present day offices, this is as a result of the introduction of ICT facilities which forces out majority of the manual office operations and shorthand is among them.

VI. Discussion of Findings

On the question as to the relevance of Shorthand and needed for effective Secretarial services in the modern offices, majority of the respondents responded negatively. The findings revealed that Shorthand skill is not relevant on Secretaries in minute-taking activities. The finding agrees with the study of Adebayo (2000) who reported that, improvement in technology has made Shorthand less useful in automated offices. Study conducted by Kombol (2006) revealed that in most cases, electronic mail has replaced letters in the post, faxes have outmoded telegrams, computers are more efficient than typewriters and the traditional Shorthand has been overtaken by digital system. Abosede and Akintola (2015) reported that the emergence of ICT which bring about modern office equipment has transformed not only the management functions but also imparted the secretarial duties and time management. The type of machines and gadgets that were used to produce, duplicate and store information has undergone a great transformation to cope with the growing world technology, as a result, the role of secretaries in the business set up has changed tremendously from that of typewriting, Shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails to the usage of computers and other modern gadgets (Mumuni and Sam 2014).

It is also revealed that Shorthand skill is not relevant on Secretaries in report writing operation. The result agrees with the report of Dulek and Fielden, (1999) which states that secretaries now have many technologically advanced office gadgets to ease their jobs and enhance proficiency such as computer software programmes which helps the secretary to write and edit memos, letters and report, data management programs or databases, which help the secretary to use long list of data and spreadsheet programs which handle tables and numbers. Hensan and Means (2009) reported that, electronic organizer or dictating machine takes down speeches through a microphone that is connected to a recorder, record speeches and then reproduces it like a photograph at a higher speed than with shorthand.

Further findings indicated that secretaries disagree that Shorthand skill is relevant on taking down telephone calls. The result is in line with the report of Akpomi (2003) which revealed that in the era of computers and information technology which has become an enabler of greater convenience have affected the place of shorthand. The author stressed that secretaries now have many technologically advanced office gadgets to ease their jobs and enhance proficiency and productivity leading to improved access to goods and services globally. The study of Hensan and Means (2009) revealed that electronic organizer or dictating machine takes down speeches through a microphone that is connected to a recorder, record speeches and then reproduces it like a photograph at a higher speed than with shorthand.

The findings of the study also showed that Shorthand skill is not relevant on Secretaries recording instructions in modern offices. The result of the study affirmed the earlier report of Oludele (2008) who opined that technologies have changed the nature of office works and the office today is being largely automated with modern technologies has rendered Shorthand outdated. The author added that daily use of Shorthand and Typewriting skills has been greatly reduced in the public organizations because more Managers are getting involved in word processing, resulting from office automation. The role of secretaries in business has changed tremendously from that of typewriting and Shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails. Today's secretaries are exposed to office technology including the

internet that make work much easier and knowledge more accessible (Edwin, 2008). Sholagbade (2012) opines that technologies, such as speed typing and voice recognition software have taken the place of the former administrative art known as Shorthand.

Also, the findings disagree that Shorthand skill is relevant on mails and information processing function of Secretaries in modern offices operation. The outcome of the study is in line with the earlier study conducted by Agomuo (2005) which revealed that modern office skills which allow words, sentences and paragraphs to be manipulated through the use of word processor has rendered Shorthand less relevant. The efficiency and effectiveness of the secretary in every business organization nowadays does not depend on Shorthand skills rather the availability of office technologies as well as the skills and competencies of the secretary (Okoji, 2008). According to Azuka (2014) secretarial functions which were previously done manually using Shorthand skills for mailing and recording have been mechanized or automated.

Adam (2011) reported that technology which is replacing the traditional ways of data processing has provided new sources of information, new ways of collecting it, storing it, and processing it, and new methods of communicating it. The study conducted by Okoro (2017) revealed that improvement in office technology may make Shorthand less useful in modern offices; there was no empirical evidence to suggest that Shorthand skill is archaic. Today's secretaries are exposed to office technology including the internet that make work much easier and knowledge more accessible (Edwin, 2008). The author added that it is now easier to send messages by telex, electronic mails (e-mails), fax and telephones compare to the traditional method of posting.

Finally, the findings disagree with the relevant of Shorthand skill on time management of secretaries in modern offices operation. The finding is in line with the report of Akpomi (2003) which states that the use of Shorthand is time wastage. The author added that technological advanced office equipment enhance proficiency and productivity. An automated office, obviously, grants the secretary new roles and responsibilities and help in time management. According to Oludele (2008) technological innovations have changed the nature of office works and the office today is being largely automated with modern technologies. Daily use of Shorthand has been greatly reduced in the public sector because more managers are getting involved in word processing, resulting from office automation. Word processing software provides features for spelling and grammar check, auto-margin set and templates for various display of work. Akpomi and Ordu (2009) which states the use of Shorthand is waste of time. The author stressed that new technological equipment has altered the procedure and technique for office functions. They mentioned electronic mail/commerce, voice mail, smart phones and internet as examples.

However, the findings revealed that the mastery of shorthand enable Secretaries to acquire skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and good command of the language. This corroborates with the study of Adebusi (2001) who reported that Shorthand cuts across a wide range of professionals and formal training on Shorthand will enhance better productivity. Study conducted by Silvia, Joseph and Eunice (2011) revealed that Shorthand as imparting skills of work organization and mental alertness that are crucial in the undertaking of the multiple tasks of a secretary irrespective of whether there will be Shorthand dictation or not. This finding is however supported by a number of researchers who did similar studies.

Aldrich (2000) in his study of continued relevance of the secretarial practitioners in the age of office technology stated that shorthand was accurate and is still relevant in office management, especially in document preparations and executive assistance. Aldrich (2000) further recommended that traditional secretaries who are competent in shorthand should rapidly adapt to the new ICT age in order for them to remain relevant to modern offices. Oguntimehin and Oludele (2017) studied the relevance of shorthand to office management and found that the emergence of voice recording technology does not remove the relevance of shorthand in taking down oral telephone call information. The present finding therefore confirmed that, shorthand is still very useful in the modern offices, but that the secretaries required additional ICT skills to enhance their productivity in technology laden offices.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper will conclude that shorthand is still relevant and there is no other course or application which could be used to replace the writing of shorthand. The results of the study showed that the relevance of Shorthand skills on the job performance of secretaries in the technological era has reduced as a result of availability of modern office technology. Generally, the acquisition of knowledge and development of these skills should be given adequate attention. This suggests that effective office management requires acquisition and competent application of Shorthand skills on the part of the office managers and secretaries. It is not farfetched to infer from the foregoing that office technology which provides the secretary with additional opportunity for automatic fine tuning of concrete documents or transmission of information devoid of uncertainties has rendered Shorthand skills obsolete. It therefore means that the efficiency and effectiveness of the secretary in office functions depends on their knowledge and skills on operation of modern office technology. By implication, future secretaries without requisite skills on operation of modern office gadgets will have no place in the labour market. This will increase the number of unemployment in the country.

In the light of the above, the following recommendations are given:

1. Despite the fact that we are in the 21st century which is ICT dominated, the use of Shorthand should not be totally put aside by secretarial personnel.
2. Shorthand should still remain in the school curriculum of OTM programme because of its relevance to secretaries in taking accurate minutes of meetings but to adjust the curriculum content in line with the reality of the world of work.
3. Employers should regularly organize on-the-job training for secretaries to update their knowledge on Shorthand skills.
4. Secretaries in offices should always take dictations in shorthand so that administrators can appreciate the use of these rare skills especially the aspect of good communication, speed, accuracy and confidentiality of handling office correspondence and matters.
5. In addition to ICT competence, acquisition and competent application of Shorthand should be considered by employers in employing secretarial personnel for effective office management.

Secretaries should acquire skills for using modern technology and facilities such as computer, internet facilities, scanners and photo copier that make office operation easier, better and faster.

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