

FORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)-BASED OFFICE SKILLS REQUIRED BY OFFICE MANAGERS FOR EFFECTIVE JOB PERFORMANCE IN GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES IN IMO STATE

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Abstract

The study assessed the information and communication technology (ICT)-based office skills required by Office Managers for effective job performance in government ministries in Imo State. Two research questions were raised and two null hypotheses for the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study utilized descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 213 Office Managers from all Federal and State government ministries in Imo State. There was no sampling. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Mean was used to answer the research questions and t-test was used to test the hypothesis. The results of the analysis showed that desktop publishing skills, web page skills, power-point skills, excel spreadsheet etc are all needed for the Office Managers job performance. Office Managers from Federal and State government Ministries did not differ significantly in their rating on the required of ICT skills needed by Office Managers for effective job performance in Government Ministries in Imo State; hence the null hypothesis was accepted. It was therefore concluded that all the ICT skills enumerated in the study are required because they all positively influences the job performance of Office Managers in Government Ministries in Imo State. Consequently, it was recommended that the various Government Ministries should prioritize the training and re-training of Office Managers on ICT skills for effective job performances among other recommendation.

KEYWORDS: *ICT, Skills, Office Manager, Performance*

Introduction

This era has seen very rapid increase in the advancement of technology which has resulted in changes in the way people learn, live and work. The introduction of Information and Communication Technology in the contemporary work environment has necessitated employers to search and only engage Office Managers who possesses competencies, knowledge and skills to handle the intricacies of the ever increasing ICT-based workplace environment. The truth is that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has drastically changed the traditional office functions of the Office Manager, their jobs are now done in new ways with new skills, methods and procedures.

Ugiagbe cited in Olayanju (2016) defined a Secretary (Office Manager) as an assistant to an executive, possessing an impressive mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, which displays initiative, exercises judgment, and makes decisions within the scope of his/ her authority. In the same way, Boladele in Olayanju (2016) equally stated that a Secretary (Office Manager) 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.

Furthermore, a secretary (Office Manager) is seen as the assistant to an executive who has mastery of office skills and the ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision. A professional secretary is expected to possess a wide knowledge of business insight, versatile knowledge in office practice, personnel, accounting, communication and as well in-depth knowledge of the operations of all departments within the institution or ministry where they work. More so, the employability prospect of the secretary depends largely on the work skills acquired for employment; therefore, secretaries can only be relevant if they possess skills in MS office such as- Word Processing, Spreadsheet, PowerPoint, Microsoft Access etc; internet, computer mediated communications such as electronic mail or computer conferences; Database Management, Desktop Publishing, Micrographic, Reprographic and Office Communication skills etc for effective operations of ICT- based equipment and facilities in their work environment (Mayer in Azih, 2013 and Salleh and Sulaima, 2017),

According to Ohakwe cited in Olayanju (2016) whatever be the name given to a Secretary (Office Manager) in a technologically based office environment, it is no longer about a man or woman sitting behind the typewriter, taking shorthand dictations and attending to visitors only but about the exhibition of the use of necessary skills, aptitudes, attitudes and knowledge for carrying out successfully the functions of the office.

ICT is an acronym that stands for Information and Communication Technology. ICT refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. Information and Communication Technology deals with the use of diverse technological tools and resources to convert, store, protect, process, transmit and retrieve information. It comprises of computers, networks, satellite communications, robots, videotext, cable television, electronic mail, electronic games and automated office equipment

Akintonde and Ekechukwu cited in Ezeani and Falade (2018) defined information and communication Technology (ICT) as all computers, ancillary equipment, software, hardware, services and resources bought together to form network for automatic acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control, display, switching, interchange, transmission or reception of information or data. Ohiwerei and Onimawo (2016) postulated that the term Information and Communication Technology (ICT) covers many aspect of computing such as data management, net work, data base and soft ware designs as well as the management and administration of entire system in the workplace and the business environment.

The importance of Information Communication Technology to a secretary cannot be over emphasized. The secretarial functions in today's world have undergone a lot of technical changes. Many of the Secretarial duties and which were previously done manually have been mechanized. Thus, the diversities of these office technologies require the secretary to possess new skills to enable him/her be relevant in the modern office. Therefore, ICT competencies are a way to improve the skills of secretaries and prepare them for the global economy and information society. ICT is used to improve delivery of and access to effective and efficient management of office and the organization as a whole.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has greatly improved the productivity of secretaries in their work places. It is expected that today's Secretaries must be capable of performing their day-to-day duties using Information and Communication Technology. Moreover, Secretaries in business environment uses ICT technologies to achieve the goal of such an

organization or government ministry as the case may be. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enables the secretary to perform his or her duties with ease and confidence among many other benefits. According to Chukwumezie (2002) for any secretary to be relevant in today's new technological offices, he or she must understand and know how to use and operate all the services and resources provided through the internet. They must be masters of the new office skills and very competent in the use of Information and Communication Technology resources.

Chukwumezie (2002) and Olowookere and Iyiola (2015) further explained that Office Managers should become ICT competent for the following reasons:

1. The information needs of today's modern office demands the use of modern advanced technologies for all the information processing stages. This means that the previous traditional obsolete manual methods of information processing will no longer be useful in today's work environment.
2. ICT skills acquisition improves access to quality information and dissemination to various recipients. Organizations, institutions and government ministries are in dire need of accurate, timely and reliable information for planning and decision-makings in their various organizations. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) makes processing, editing, retrieving, revising and up-dating of information quicker and more accurate.
3. Most employers now demands that their office managers be skilled in the use of ICT facilities and programmes; this makes it a necessity that every professing Office Manager should be trained in the use ICT facilities in order to get new employment or to stay employed.
4. The use of ICT in performing secretarial functions enhances speed of performance of tasks, reduces tedious repetitive tasks and leads to increased efficiency and productivity.
5. Speed in performance of tasks and assignments, accuracy of work, less fatigue and much more are all the benefits of performing secretarial functions with ICT facilities; the result to this is efficiency and high productivity in the side of the Office Manager.
6. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills acquisition by the Office Manager enables him/her to acquire high order thinking and creativity ability among others.

Skill as stated by Uzor and Ike in Oyinloye, Asonibare and Oluwalola (2021) is the ability to be trained and have adequate experiences to be effective, excellent and efficient in whatever one does; more so, it is regarded as competencies in the performance of specific tasks acquired after a period of training or experience. While Inalgwu in Oyinloye et al (2021) also opined that skill is having expert knowledge, creative reasoning, aptitude and competences necessary for do a specific job.

Office Managers Require ICT Skills

Office Managers need technological skills to perform some varieties of computer-based task such as spreadsheet, document creations and presentations, electronic mail handlings among others. Some of the technological skills that Office Managers must master include, word processing skills, excel spreadsheet skills, power-point presentation skills, desktop publishing skills and Database Management skills etc.

As the office environment swiftly moves towards paperless workspaces, every function of the Office Manager requires at least some level of interaction with computers. Those with sharp

skills in using computers have an edge over those who do not. Accordingly, the following ICT skills are basic necessities for Office Managers.

MS Office Skills: An office would find it difficult to function without Microsoft Office. The suite has a set of tools that almost all functions at all workplaces have some use for. Office Managers, who are still not very confident about their MS Office skills, are advised to go for extra training on MS Word programmes such as:

Spreadsheets- Excel spreadsheets are incredibly versatile tools for storing and organizing tabular data, doing calculations on it and performing some strong analytics. As the focus shifts to data in nearly all workplaces, it will become all the more important for workers at all levels to have to deal with at least some bit of it through Excel files.

PowerPoint: Presentations are a means of succinctly communicating the results of your work or an idea with others. Being able to quickly put up decent presentations without faltering is a necessary skill an Office Manager can show case during office presentations.

QuickBooks: QuickBooks is accounting software useful in accomplishing a range of tasks like managing bills, invoicing, tracking miles, managing contracts, reporting, inventory management and capital management. It finds applications most commonly in small to medium sized businesses. Owing to its versatility and reliability, QuickBooks has become a very popular tool and being able to use it will be an add-on in an Office Managers resume.

Email: Almost all of business communication happens on email. Writing mails that put your point across without being wordy make you come across as professional and well put together.

Web and Social Skills: Web skills include being able to do an effective research on data, acquires a new skill of the Internet, or quickly get images or graphics to support your presentations. Even though nearly everybody can accomplish these tasks, those with real skills will be able to do so considerably faster than the others. Social media skills too are exceptionally important in today's workplace. This is the space where a significant number of leads are obtained, networks are formed and even hiring takes place.

Database Management System Skill: A database management system (DBMS) skill is the ability to organize large numbers of records in a database. Database is a collection of programs that allow users the ability to create, query and modify the structure in the database and to control access to it. Database is used for keeping personnel records, customer's records and assets records.

Desktop Publishing Skills: Desktop Publishing skills is the ability to use modern printing process that combines personal computers and design software to create and edit layouts for producing all kinds of materials such as reports, books, magazines, brochures, flyers, and newsletters. Desktop publishing is the ability to produce high quality printed documents that include both text and graphic. It is closely related to word processing and requires many of the same skills. (Ile & Abi, 2021; Ubulom & West, 2021 and "JobCluster.com", 2022)

Challenges in Using ICT Facilities

The Secretarial profession has become highly demanding than it used to be due to the highly sophisticated ICT facilities in today's work environment and despite the huge benefits presented by new technologies Office Managers are still facing some challenges in the performance of their duties. The challenges are as enumerated by Ayinde and Afolabi (2021) and Asogwa and Agusiobo (2022);

- **Lack of Funds:** lack of funds to acquire needed ICT devices and equipment has been identified as one of the serious challenges facing the Office Manager. Funds are needed to buy new technological equipment in ministries. If these equipment are not acquired then there is no how the Office Manager can perform his/her duties effectively.

- **Constant Power Failure:** Modern Technologies used by Office Managers cannot be effectively used without constant power supply. Constant power supply is therefore needed for the Office Manager to effectively perform and utilize the benefits of those technologies. Incessant power supply has been a serious concern in Nigeria.
- **Lack of Training and Re-training for Office Managers:** Organizations or Institutions that do not have the culture of sending their Office Managers on training and re-training programmes from time to time are indeed frustrating the acquisition of needed ICT skills and competencies for the operation of ICT equipment. The constant flow of new technologies in the market calls for constant retraining programmes for users in order to acquire needed ICT skills.
- **Inadequate modern facilities and equipment and dearth of it in most organizations:** It is a fact that the modern offices and organization are expected to equip their office with sophisticated technologies which can provide information faster. But in most government office, there seem to be inadequate or lack of these modern office facilities and equipment as the case may be.

It is on this note that this paper intends to examine information and communication technology (ICT)-based office skills required by Office Managers for effective job performance in government ministries in Imo State.

Statement of the Problem

As Information and Communication Technology (ICT) continues to increase and expand in the workplace all over the world, the role of Office Managers (Secretaries) in the same way has continued to make more tasking demands on them. In fact, these advancements in ICT has led to the need for office managers 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.

ICT has made Office Managers to assume a wider range of new responsibilities, new assignments or tasks. According to Adeshina (2011), the office is a place of action, where various functions necessary for information handling are performed, and each function involves the use of one form of technology or another by the Office Manager. Therefore, in such office or business environment, Office Managers are expected to possess adequate skills to be able to operate all office technologies available in their office environment. However, the reports on loss of data of various kinds in most government ministries in Imo State brings to question on the extent to which ICT is used by their Office Managers for processing, storing, retrieving and communicating information in these government offices. The cases of frauds, disclosing of confidential and secret information, insecurity of financial and personnel records as well as the delays experienced in these government ministries over the sending time and receipt of messages, circulars and memos adds to the doubt and question on whether their Office Managers has adequate ICT skills in this technological era or that they have been encountering challenges or constraints in effective utilization of ICT facilities in their various Ministries. To overcome these problems of an ICT-based office, Office Managers are expected to possess adequate ICT skills for effective modern office operations. Therefore this study determines to investigate the ICT-based office skills required by Office Managers in government ministries in Imo State for effectiveness in their functions,

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated the Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-Based Office Skills required by Office Managers for Effective Job Performance. Specifically, the study

1. Examined ICT skills required by Office Managers for effective job performance in Federal and State Government Ministries in Imo State?

2. Determined the constraints or challenges in the use of ICT facilities by Office Managers for effective job performance in Federal and State Government Ministries in Imo State?

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the ICT skills required by Office Managers for effective job performance in Federal and State Government Ministries in Imo State?
2. What are the constraints or challenges in the use of ICT facilities to enhance job performance of Office Managers in Federal and State Government Ministries in Imo State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses formulated for the study was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between ICT skills required by Office Managers in Federal Government Ministries and those in State Government Ministries in Imo State.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Office Managers on the constraints to their effective use of ICT facilities for job performance.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey design. The population of the study comprised two hundred and three (213) Office Managers from Federal and State Government Ministries in Owerri, Imo State. There was no sampling as the researcher considered the population to be sizeable and manageable. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire tagged- ICT Based-Office Skills required by Office Managers (ICTBOSOM). It was validated by two research experts. The researcher personally administered 213 copies of questionnaire with the help of two Assistance Researchers and collected 191 copies representing 90% return rate and used for the study. Percentage, Mean and Standard deviation were the tools used for data analysis. The study adopted a four point rating scale of Highly Required (4), (3), Required (2) Rare Required and Not Required (1) for research question 1 and Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Strongly Disagree (2) and Disagree (1) for research question 2. The decision rule for the mean of research question one was set at 2.50 and above as Required and any mean below 2.50 was considered Not Required. For research question 2, the decision rule for the mean was set at 2.50 and above as Agree and any mean below 2.50 were considered Disagree. The null hypothesis was tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The findings of the study are presented in the tables below based on the research questions and hypotheses that were formulated and tested in the study respectively.

Research Question 1: What are the ICT skills required by Office Managers in Federal and State Government ministries in Imo State?

Table 1: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation of ICT Skills required by Secretaries in Federal and State Government Ministries in Imo State?

S/N	ITEMS	FEDERAL		STATE			
		Mean	SD	DECISION	Mean	SD	DECISION
1.	Use PowerPoint to produce electronic slides	3.56	0.87	REQUIRED	3.60	0.24	REQUIRED
2.	Connect and use internet services skills and their applications and services.	3.71	0.73	REQUIRED	3.10	0.28	REQUIRED
3.	Store and recover documents in the PC's	3.66	1.02	REQUIRED	2.70	0.24	REQUIRED
4.	Scan documents	2.87	0.57	REQUIRED	2.84	0.70	REQUIRED
5.	Use Database Management skills to create, extract, sort and maintain all records.	3.70	0.89	REQUIRED	3.80	0.25	REQUIRED
6.	Operate teleconference facilities	3.04	0.97	REQUIRED	2.50	0.24	REQUIRED
7.	Compose, send and receive electronic mails (e-mails)	3.45	1.11	REQUIRED	3.59	0.58	REQUIRED
8.	Use MS word for document preparations.	3.93	1.03	REQUIRED	3.69	0.62	REQUIRED
9.	Use Web Browser to download information from the net.	3.52	1.03	REQUIRED	3.01	0.81	REQUIRED
10.	Use Excel spreadsheets tools for storing and organizing tabular data, doing calculations etc.	2.82	0.69	REQUIRED	2.88	0.72	REQUIRED
11.	Use QuickBooks accounting software for managing bills, invoicing, managing contracts, inventory management etc.	2.81	0.93	REQUIRED	2.59	0.99	REQUIRED
12.	Use Desktop Publishing skills to produce reports, books, magazines, brochures, flyers, and newsletters etc.	2.77	0.69	REQUIRED	2.67	0.67	REQUIRED
13.	Use facsimile machines and security devices.	3.16	0.81	REQUIRED	3.08	0.92	REQUIRED
	GRAND MEAN	3.31			3.08		

Result from Table 1 show the mean response on the required ICT-based office skills for Office Managers effective job performance in Federal and State government ministries in Imo State. The 13 items of ICT-based office skills which had their mean scores ranging from 2.50 to 3.93 were all considered by the respondents as necessary and required by office managers for their effective job performance.

Research Question 2: What are the constraints in the usage of ICT facilities for effective Job Performance by Office Managers in Federal and State Ministries?

Table 2: Mean Score of Office Managers on the Constraints in the usage of ICT facilities

S/N	CHALLENGES OF USAGE OF ICT FACILITIES	Mean	SD	REMARKS
1.	Inadequate ICT facilities for secretarial staff	2.41	0.92	ACCEPTED
2.	Lack of good background knowledge of the ICT equipment	2.3	1.10	ACCEPTED
3.	Lack of ICT connectivity to secretarial offices	2.24	0.94	ACCEPTED
4.	Lack of fund to purchase necessary ICT consumables (modern, airtime data etc)	2.42	0.92	ACCEPTED
5.	Lack of maintenance of ICT facilities/equipment	2.26	0.83	ACCEPTED
6.	Unsteady electricity power supply	2.28	0.92	ACCEPTED
7.	Inadequate training opportunities for Office Managers	2.24	0.94	ACCEPTED
8.	Phobia for ICT training	2.45	1.05	ACCEPTED
9.	Lack of space and accommodation	3.23	0.65	ACCEPTED
10.	Lack of internet and slow connectivity,	2.37	0.94	ACCEPTED
	GRAND MEAN	2.42		

Table 2 above, showed that item 1-8 and item 10 agreed that inadequate ICT facilities for secretarial staff, lack of good background knowledge of the ICT equipment, lack of ICT connectivity to secretarial offices, lack of fund to purchase necessary ICT consumables such as modern, airtime data, lack of maintenance of ICT equipment, unsteady electricity power supply, inadequate training opportunities for Office Managers, phobia for ICT training and lack of internet and slow connectivity of internet were all the challenges hindering the usage of ICT facilities in the Federal and State government ministries in Imo State. On the other hand, lack of space and accommodation was not a challenge in those ministries as indicated by the mean of 3.23.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant difference between ICT-based office skills required by Office Managers in Federal Government Ministries and those in State Government Ministries in Imo State.

Table 3: t-test analysis of the ICT-based office skills required by Office Managers in Federal and State government ministries in Imo State.

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Office Managers in Federal Govt Ministries	57	3.31	0.82				ACCEPT
Office Managers in State Govt. Ministries	134	3.08	0.65	128	0.85	1.96	

The data in table 4 reveals a t-calculated value of 0.465 which is less than t-critical value of 1.653. This implies that we retain the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the problems associated to the use of new technology in teaching business education.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Office Managers on the constraints to their effective use of ICT facilities for job performance.

Table 4: t-test analysis of difference between male and female office managers on the challenges in the usage of ICT-based

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Male	71	2.83	0.83	112	0.35	1.96	ACCEPT
Female	120	3.16	1.32				

The data in table 4 reveals a t-calculated value of 0.465 which is less than t-critical value of 1.653. This implies that we retain the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female respondents on the problems associated to the use of new technology in teaching business education.

Discussion of Findings

The findings as shown in Table 1 revealed that the office managers in both Federal and State Government ministries accepted that the ICT skills needed for effective job performance includes PowerPoint skills, internet services skills, database management skills, electronic mails skills, excel spreadsheet skills, quick-books accounting software skills, desktop publishing skills, web browsing skills, document scanning skills and ms word skills among many others. Office Managers from the State government ministries reacted to all the items too with acceptance.

This present findings is in agreement with the findings of Appah and Emeh (2011) and Aliata and Hawa (2014) who stated that some of the ICT skills required of today's Office Managers include; project management, word processing, desktop publishing, software training, internet based, web site maintenance database management, negotiation and mediation, personal computer trouble shooting, writing, editing, and proofreading skills among other skills. Hypothesis one of the study equally revealed that there is no significant difference between office managers working in federal government ministries and office managers in State government ministries on the ICT-based office skills required by the office managers for effective job performance. This finding is also in line with the work of Olaniyi and Mukoro (nd) which revealed that there is no significant difference that existed between private and public offices in the ICT skills required by the secretaries in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This means that the use of modern office automation gadgets improves information processing activities which lead to improved office managers productivity.

The findings on the challenges faced by office managers revealed that inadequate ICT facilities, lack of good background knowledge of the ICT equipment, lack of ICT connectivity to secretarial offices, lack of fund to purchase necessary ICT consumables such as modern, airtime data, lack of maintenance of ICT equipment, unsteady electricity power supply, inadequate training opportunities for Office Managers, phobia for ICT training and lack of internet and slow connectivity of internet were all the challenges hindering the usage of ICT facilities in the Federal and State government ministries in Imo State. This is in line with the findings of Adakole and Lasisi (2018) and Ayinde and Oluwatunmise (2021) who stated that lack of training and retraining, lack of new technological equipment, poor power supply, unreliable internet connections, poor knowledge of new technologies etc are the challenges facing the utilizing of new technologies by secretaries in selected public organizations in Bida metropolis.

Conclusion

The study examined the information and communication technology (ICT)-based office skills required by Office Managers for effective job performance in Federal and State government ministries in Imo State. The result of the study showed that PowerPoint skills, internet services skills, database management skills, electronic mails skills, excel spreadsheet skills, quick-books

accounting software skills, desktop publishing skills, web browsing skills, document scanning skills and ms word skills among many others are all ICT based office skills required by Office Managers. The study also found that the challenges faced by office managers revealed that inadequate ICT facilities, lack of good background knowledge of the ICT equipment, lack of ICT connectivity to secretarial offices, lack of fund to purchase necessary ICT consumables such as modern, airtime data, lack of maintenance of ICT equipment, unsteady electricity power supply, inadequate training opportunities for Office Managers, phobia for ICT training and lack of internet and slow connectivity of internet were all the challenges hindering the usage of ICT facilities in the Federal and State government ministries in Imo State. Based on the findings of the study, the paper concludes that *that all the ICT skills enumerated in the study are required because they all positively influences the job performance of Office Managers in Government Ministries in Imo State.*

Recommendations

Having examined the Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-based office skills required by office managers for effective job performance the following recommendations are made:

1. The Federal and State governments should put ICT trainings and re-trainings for Office Managers among high priorities list on their staff training and development budgets.
2. That various Federal and State government ministries should purchase modern office technological gadgets to help the job of Office Managers.
3. Recruitment and retention of qualified maintenance and support service staff to is obvious and necessary.
4. Government should make electricity available in all ministries since power supply is the key fact for ICT development in any economy.
5. Secretarial training institutions such as polytechnics etc should be provided with necessary support and adequate ICT facilities with which to train and prepare potential Office Managers for the world of work in a technological advanced world.

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