Trainers’ and Trainees’ Assessment of the Implementation of ICT Program for Secretaries at the Staff Training Centers in Southwestern Nigeria

Raymond Uwameiye, University of Benin, Nigeria
Janet Adegbuenro Bolaji, University of Benin, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to assess the extent of implementation of an ICT (ICT) program for secretaries at the staff training centers in southwestern Nigeria. Based on the available literature, a 29-item questionnaire using a four-point scale was developed and used in this study. The population of this study was made up of all ICT teachers and all secretaries in training at the Staff Training Centers in southwestern Nigeria. The findings of this study revealed that there is urgent need to recruit more competent ICT teachers to teach in the Government Staff Training Centers in southwestern Nigeria and for supply of adequate and modern equipments for the training of secretaries in ICT.

Keywords: corporate training; ICT; ICT teachers

INTRODUCTION

Training in vocational business education, or what came to be known later as commercial education in Nigeria, started in about 1930 with the establishment of a clerical training center at Oshogbo in the former Western Region, now Oyo State. The purpose of the center was to train clerical officers that were badly needed at that time to fill positions in the offices. By 1955, several government training centers and privately owned evening and day business schools were established in various parts of the country. The curricula of these various training schools were not structured to adequately meet the needs of the office (Ehiametalor, 1990).

Organizations in modern societies need the services of efficient and competent personnel in all fields of human endeavor. The case of well-trained secretaries is no exception. An attempt to define who a secretary is may link the secretary with the secretarial skills he or she is expected to perform in the office. In this respect,
a secretary is a person who has acquired the basic secretarial skills of shorthand and typewriting in addition to enough knowledge and practical experience in office work to be able to cope with filing, simple office machines and reception. Secretarial studies is an integral part of vocational business education, as enunciated in the national policy on education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981). According to the policy, one of the objectives of vocational education is to give training and impact the necessary skills leading to production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled professionals who will be enterprising and self-reliant. In recent times, technological advancement and innovation have been brought into the office.

Many changes and reformation in office machines are increasing daily, thereby making office machines more complex and sophisticated to facilitate secretarial duties in the office and to make secretaries information managers and communication technologists, and not just secretaries called with the bell at intervals. Modern ICT implies that manual equipment for processing information and communication is being replaced by the use of sophisticated electronic equipment, processing and transferring of information conveniently around the globe. For example, today it is possible through ICT for secretaries in different countries to exchange information between and among themselves. It is easy for three or four persons in different parts of the globe to engage in telephone conservation at the same time.

Shorthand and typewriting are no longer enough to make today’s secretary. The secretary should be acquainted with all the competence required in ICT and be able to apply such knowledge effectively on his or her job in the office. For secretaries whose skills have become obsolete, they will have to be retrained. In southwestern Nigeria, there are cases of secretaries in offices after leaving the training centers who may not be able to use these modern machines effectively, or operate on international networking, which seems quite disheartening. Also, some senior officers at the state government offices complain about their secretaries after going through a process of retraining at the staff training centers, and still look strangely at some of this modern equipment, such as fax machines, electronic mail (e-mail), Internet Explorer and so on. These are some of the prevailing problems that need to be addressed at the staff training centers. Thus, the focus of this study is to assess the information technology (IT) program in the area of availability of modern equipment and facilities, competent and experienced instructors, and the utilization of material resources. The shortage of competent staff in the executive and secretarial cadre is part of the prevailing circumstances that led to the establishment of staff training centers in the Western region. The Staff Training Centers were established at the inception of the states in 1976 to train and meet the manpower requirement of the state civil service in the secretarial cadre. The main objectives of the Staff Training Centers as spelled out by the Ondo State Government were:

1. To provide courses for public officers to become qualified stenographers and confidential secretaries
2. To conduct refresher courses for various grades of secretaries
3. To organize induction courses for new entrants in the State Civil Service (Ondo State Ministry of Establishment and Training, 1976).

The training process in the Staff Training Center involved exposing students to shorthand, typewriting, secretarial duties, English language and ICT. The secretarial studies curriculum (National Board for Technical Education, 1989) emphasized the acquisition of such traditional skills of shorthand writing, effective typewriting on manual/electronic typewriters, arrangement of meetings, file management, information storage and provision. However, because of obsolescence of typing and shorthand in modern office management, there became the need for retraining of secretaries in ICT. The retraining program started in 2001, with a focus on training professional secretaries from the state civil
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