



Perception of the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking among secretarial students in federal polytechnic, mubi

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Abstract

Shorthand is one of the major skilled courses in secretarial office education or office technology management programme in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study was carried out to determine perception of the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking among secretarial students in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi. The major objective was to determine perception of the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking among secretarial students in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi. Research questions were respectively formulated to facilitate the study. Survey design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised 90 students of the National Diploma in office technology management (OTM). Purposive sampling was used for the study. The instrument used was a structured questionnaire, which was validated and reliably established (reliability coefficient of 0.05) by the staff of the Faculty of Education, Adamawa State University Mubi. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the bio-data of respondents. Frequency tables and mean were used to analyze the research questions. Among the major findings were: shorthand skills in note-taking have significant relevance on secretaries' job for employment purpose, it also has significant relevance on confidentiality of secretaries in record keeping in public and private institutions in Mubi. The conclusion drawn from the finding of the study was that: even with the introduction of modern technology in offices; secretaries with shorthand skills in note-taking are of higher standard in effectiveness and efficiency in discharging their duties than those without shorthand skills. It was recommended, among others, that students should be engaged in more practical exercises to enable them learn more shorthand skills in note-taking in order to become more effective and efficient in their jobs in the future.

Keywords: perception, shorthand, secretarial, polytechnic

Introduction

Shorthand is a quick way of writing using special signs especially to record spoken words. Shorthand is one of the major subjects in business education in the Nigerian secondary and tertiary institutions. It is one of the core courses for students specializing in Office Technology and Management (OTM) and also a major course in the field of business education. According to Ezenwafor (2009) ^[10], shorthand is the bedrock of Secretarial/Office Education in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Shorthand provides a way of representing every sound uttered as briefly and distinctively as possible. Shorthand has been used for non-business purposes for over two thousand years by the ancient Greeks and Romans for verbatim reporting of political speeches or sermons, conferences, seminars, and for court trials.

Shorthand has been facing so many challenges since the emergence of ICT where the learning of shorthand has been de-emphasized both at the lower and higher levels of education. Students have lost interest in learning shorthand due to lack of qualified and professional teachers/lecturers. The overall effect is that students lost interest in shorthand resulting to mass failure and were looked upon as never do well students in the society.

A secretary is a trained person in shorthand, typing and office management procedures to assist top management staff. He undertakes administrative tasks for the smooth running of an organization. According to Oyeyiola (2005) in Omotunwase (2014), a secretary is clerical worker who takes and transcribes dictations, makes appointments for his/her superior, meets people who call to see his/her superior and who is responsible for minor

executive or supervisory duties. Thus, secretaries are considered as the "mirror" through which an organization sees.

Prior to the 21st century, one of the main functions of a secretary was to take down dictation in shorthand and transcribe same in longhand, using manual typewriter. The emergence of information and communication technology (ICT) in the 21st century calls for a drastic change in all aspects of human endeavour including OTM and Office/Secretarial Education. Nwanewezi (2005) reiterated that in 21st century, interest in learning shorthand skills suddenly declined due to the introduction of sophisticated office machine, where shorthand machine, speed recognition, dictating machine, tape recorder try to render shorthand unnecessary.

Ibrahim (2011) ^[12], noted that 21st century witnessed an unprecedented advancement in science and technology in which the revolution in ICT played a central and vital role. It was noted by Salami (2009) ^[15], that in the United States of America, there are two schools of thought about the future of shorthand. The first school of thought believes that despite technological revolution, shorthand skill is important to secretaries' jobs. The second school of thought holds that with 21st century technological advancement in offices, shorthand skill will be highly de-emphasized. In Nigeria, shorthand is offered in junior senior secondary schools under business studies, colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. Many of the secretaries have been trained in the old fashion way of dictation and transcription. The advent of ICT and the introduction of sophisticated office

Machine the future of shorthand may be threatened in terms of secretaries' job performance. It is therefore against this background that this study was conducted to assess secretaries' perception of the relevance of shorthand skills to secretaries' job performance in Mubi.

Many studies relating to relevance of shorthand skills to secretaries' job performance have been conducted. Ezenwa for (2009) ^[10] carried out a study on civil servants' perception of the relevance of shorthand to the effectiveness of confidential secretaries in the era of office automation in Anambra and Enugu States. In his findings the researcher concluded that shorthand is very important to confidential secretaries' effectiveness notwithstanding the type of office.

Elijah (2009) ^[9] conducted a research work on the "relevance of shorthand to students of secretarial studies in the 21st century" (case study of Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna). The study was carried out to investigate the relevance of shorthand to students of secretarial studies in the 21st century. The findings was that shorthand should be eradicated and be replaced by modern office technology, the use of shorthand was archaic, both shorthand and modern office technology should be encouraged, shorthand was still used as a criterion for employing secretaries, modern office technology storage was not better than shorthand, the notes taken down in shorthand were more authentic and accurate than machine. Akpomi and Ordu (2009) ^[11] conducted a research on the "modern office technology and the secretaries' productivity in private business organizations". Based on the researcher's findings, it was concluded that many private business organizations have computers and other modern office technological gadgets. Some however have none and this affected the productivity of secretaries in such business organizations. The skills of the secretaries in the use of technological gadgets are basically portrayed in virtually all aspects of the working environment in a modern business office.

A research carried out by Nnamani (2009) ^[14] on "public perception of secretaries and receptionists in an organization". The finding revealed that secretaries were indispensable to the organization. Alikali (2011) ^[3] conducted a research on "secretarial tasks required in modern business offices and their implication on secretarial education curriculum of tertiary institutions in the north central zone of Nigeria". Some of the findings included: secretaries and executives did not differ on the job-tasks required by the secretary in modern business offices; the performance of secretarial education students in job-tasks in modern business offices depended on the correction of lapses in the current curriculum.

Statement of the Problem

The use of shorthand brings confidentiality as dictated matters can be kept from public knowledge. It was argued by Luke and Sleigler (1982) ^[13] that shorthand is useful even in offices with word processing systems, many companies still prefer to employ staff with shorthand skills because shorthand is useful for recording minutes of meetings. Vundi, Nasongo and Majanga (2010) ^[16], argued that shorthand is relevant to secretaries' job in all ages because it promotes their speed efficiency in the office. Most times a trained secretary corrects many spelling errors made by his boss. With the advent of automated office equipment, it is feared that secretaries might no longer be needed. This is based

On the premise that once an executive can possess a computer and a recording machine, for example, he does not need a secretary since he can produce his correspondence using his computer. In line with this view, Salami (2009) ^[15] asserted that secretaries view office automation as a threat to their jobs because technology has affected every aspect of secretarial work from the origination of documents to the production, revision, reproduction, distribution and storage of documents and therefore secretaries do not seem to need shorthand skills to perform their duties. In a study conducted by Bashir (2018) ^[5] on "secretaries' perception of relevance of shorthand skills to job performance in public and private institutions in Mubi", it revealed that shorthand skills still have significant relevance on secretaries' job for employment and confidentiality.

It is against these conflicting views that the researcher carried out this study to ascertain the perception of the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking among secretarial students of Federal Polytechnic Mubi

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the perception of the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking among secretarial students in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi, The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Find out the perception of secretarial students on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking for employment purpose in Mubi.
2. Find out the perception of secretarial students on the relevance of shorthand skills in confidentiality of secretaries in record keeping.
3. Determine the views of secretarial students on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking for accuracy of taking minutes.
4. Ascertain whether any difference exists between the opinions of secretarial students in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking for job performance.
5. Establish whether there is a difference between the Perception of secretarial students on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking to confidentiality of secretaries in record keeping.
6. Evaluate whether there is a difference between the perception of secretarial students on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking for the accuracy of secretaries in taking of minutes.

Research Questions

In the course of the study, answers were sought to the following research questions:

1. What is your perception with regards relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking for the purpose of obtaining employment in public and private institutions in Mubi.
2. Is shorthand skills in note-taking relevant to confidentiality of record keeping in public and private institutions in Mubi.
3. How relevant is shorthand skills in note-taking to the accuracy of taking of minutes in public and private institutions in Mubi.
4. What is the difference between the perception of secretarial students on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking for job performance.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study covers National Diploma students in Office Technology Management (OTM), Federal Polytechnic, Mubi.

Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. According to Bello and Ajayi (2000) [6], descriptive survey is (the best way of collecting information from members of a large population who are located in different places. Francis (2003) [11] explained that descriptive survey research enables the researcher to describe events, situations or phenomena as they are at the time of the study. Descriptive research also helps the researcher to systematically document current opinions and information on research work. Alamu and Olukosi (2008) [2] state that descriptive research enables the researcher to collect all data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions, prevailing practices, beliefs, attitudes and on-going process. This study involved the collection of data through the use of questionnaire, and the data collected were subjected to statistical analysis.

Population of the study

The population of the study was 90. For research purpose, population is a group of people, objects or institutions that possess one or more characteristics of interest to the researcher. The population of the study was National Diploma students offering Office Technology Management (OTM) - Federal Polytechnic, Mubi.

Table 1: Population of the Study

S/No.	Gender	Number
1.	Male	33
2.	Female	57
	Total	90

Sample and sampling technique

The entire population was used for the study. This decision is in line with the suggestion of Douglass (2006) who opines that sample size has to be big enough to enable a researcher detect the smallest worthwhile effect or relationship between variables. This was affirmed by Buba (2007) [7] who opined that estimate of relationship was less likely to be biased if a researcher had a high participation rate in a study.

Research instrument

Structured questionnaire was developed to collect the data. The questionnaire was divided into four sections "A, B, C, and D". Section 'A' consisted of gender of students, section 'B' consisted of 12 questionnaire items: Item 1-12 which sought data on the perception of secretaries on the relevance of shorthand skills in

note-taking for obtaining employment in public and private institutions in Mubi, section 'C' consisted of items 13-19 which sought data on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking to secretaries' confidentiality in record keeping and section 'D' consisted of items 20-26 which sought data on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking for the accuracy of secretaries in taking of minutes. Twenty six (26) questionnaire items were close ended statements. The instrument was constructed based on 4-point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and, Strongly Disagree (SD), scored as follows: SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2 and SD =1. The questionnaire was administered to National Diploma students offering Office Technology Management (OTM).

Validity of the instrument

The instrument was validated by experts in research methodology in Faculty Education, Adamawa State University, Mubi not below the rank of Senior Lecturer. The corrections and suggestions they made were incorporated into the final copy of the instrument.

Reliability of the instrument

The Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. This method is most appropriate for Likert because of its interval nature. The result of the analysis was 0.76. This reliability coefficient is high and the instrument for which it is calculated is reliable and stable because it is higher than 0.5.

Result and Discussion

The data collected were analyzed in three stages. In stage one the researcher used frequency tables and percentages to analyze data on the gender of students. Frequency tables and mean was used to answer the research questions. In the course of answering the research questions, Strongly Agree and Agree were merged as Agree, while Disagree and Strongly Disagree were taken as Disagree: Mean score of 2.50 and above considered as Agree, while mean score of 2.49 and below were considered as Disagree.

Table 2: Analysis of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	33	36.67
Female	57	63.33
	90	100

From the above table 33 (36.67%) of the secretarial students who responded were males while 57 (63.33%) were females.

Research Question One: What are the secretaries' perceptions about obtaining relevant shorthand skills in note-taking for the purpose of obtaining employment in public and private institutions in Mubi.

Table 3: Mean Analysis to Research Question One

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Std. Dev.	Mean Agree	Mean Disagree	Decision Rule	Remark
Shorthand skills in note-taking is relevant to obtaining employment in public and private institutions in Mubi	1,744	1,395	180	56	3.3	34.8	2.6	3.1>2.5	Agree
	3039		236						

Note: A mean of less than 2.5 is regarded as disagree while 2.5 and above is regarded as agree.

The summary of the respondents' opinion on research question one in Table 3 showed scores of 3039 mean score 34.8 for

secretaries who opined that shorthand skills in note-taking is relevant for the purpose of obtaining employment in public and

private institutions in Mubi. Those that had contrary opinion had 236 scores representing 2.6 mean score with standard deviation of 3.3. Therefore the calculated mean value of 34.8 was greater than 2.5 benchmark for agree. Hence, the analysis indicated that shorthand skills have significant relevance on secretaries' job for the purpose of obtaining employment.

Research Question Two

What are the opinions of secretaries on the relevance of shorthand skill in note-taking to confidentiality of record keeping in public and private Institutions in Mubi. To answer this question research questionnaire items (13-19) were raised

Table 4: Mean Analysis to Research Question Two

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Std. Dev.	Mean Agree	Mean Disagree	Decision Rule	Remark
Shorthand skills is relevant to secretaries' confidentiality in public and private institutions in Mubi	926	626	124	13	3.2	17.4	1.5	2.8>2.5	Agree
	1562		137						

Note: A mean of less than 2.5 is regarded as Disagree while 2.5 and above is regarded as Disagree

The summary of secretaries opinions on whether shorthand skills is relevant for their confidentiality in record keeping revealed a score of 1562 with a mean score of 17.4 for agree. Those that disagreed scored 137 with a mean score of 1.5 with standard deviation of 3.2. The analysis indicated that shorthand skills are relevant to secretaries' confidentiality in record keeping in Mubi and private Institutions.

Research Question Three: What are the views of secretaries on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking for the accuracy of taking minutes in public and private institutions.

To determine the opinion of respondents' questionnaire items (20-26) were raised. Analysis of the view of respondents used is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Analysis to Research Question Three

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Std. Dev.	Mean Agree	Mean Disagree	Decision Rule	Remark
Shorthand skills in note-taking is relevant to secretaries' accuracy in public and private institutions in Mubi	1,088	762	104	21	3.0	20.6	1.4	3.0>2.5	Agree
	1,850		125						

Note: a mean of less than 2.5 is regarded as disagree while 2.5 and above is regarded as agree.

The summary of the respondents' opinion used to answer question three showed scores of 1850 with mean score of 20.6 that opined that shorthand skills in note-taking is relevant to the accuracy of taking minutes while those with contrary view had score of 125 with a mean of 1.4 with standard deviation of 3.0. The calculated mean value of 3.0 is greater than 2.5 benchmark score for agree. Therefore the analysis indicated the relevance of short Hand skills to

accuracy in taking minutes.

Research Question Four: What are the perceptions of secretarial students of Office Technology Management on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking to job performance.

To answer research question four, questionnaire items (1-12) were used. The analysis of the data generated is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Analysis to Research Question Four

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Std. Dev.	Mean Agree	Mean Disagree	Decision Rule	Remark
Perception of secretarial students on the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking to job performance	1,744	1,395	180	56	3.3	34.8	2.6	3.1>2.5	Agree
	3039		236						

Note: A mean of less than 2.5 is regarded as disagree while 2.5 and above is regarded as agree.

The summary of the respondents' opinion on research question four in table 5 showed scores of 3039 with the mean score 34.8 for secretaries who opined that shorthand skills is relevant to job performance while those with contrary view had 236 scores representing 2.6 mean score with standard deviation 3.3. Therefore the calculated mean value of 3.1 was greater than 2.5 benchmark for agree. Hence the analysis indicated that shorthand skills is relevant to job performance in public and private institutions in Mubi.

Summary and Recommendations

Summary

The study was on the perception of the relevance of shorthand skills in note-taking among secretarial students in Federal Poly technic Mubi. The study had six objectives and four research questions that were answered. The researcher adopted survey design method for the study. Ninety (90) students of national

diploma in Office Technology Management (OTM) were used in the study. Four point rating structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected from ninety (90) copies of questionnaire w subjected to statistical analysis. The researcher used weighted mean score of at least 2.5 to answer research questions Strongly Agree and Agree were classified as Agree while Disagree and Strongly Disagree were classified as Disagree. The study revealed the following findings:

1. Research question one revealed that shorthand skills in note-taking have significant relevance to secretaries' job performance for obtaining employment in Mubi.
2. Based on the result of research question two, it is evident that shorthand skills in note-taking is essential in the confidentiality of records in the office.
3. From the result of the study, it was affirmed that taking down minutes in shorthand is faster and more reliable than recording devices.

4. The research also revealed that shorthand skills in note-taking is essential to secretaries job performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study the following recommendations are made by the researcher:

1. There is need for curriculum planners at tertiary institutions to lay more emphasis on shorthand skill in note-taking.
2. Secretaries should be vicariously trained to take minutes in shorthand because it helps to keep the companies record secret.
3. Seminars, workshops, in-service training should be constantly organised for practicing secretaries.
4. Employers of labour should make shorthand skills in note-taking a criterion for employing secretaries.

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