THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ON SECRETARIES AT CAPE COAST POLYTECHNIC

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to investigate on the impact of Information and Communication Technology on secretaries at Cape Coast Polytechnic. The objectives are to determine the types of Information and Communication Technology equipment used at Cape Coast Polytechnic and to establish how the secretary's performance and productivity level has been enhanced by using Information and Communication Technology in the office. The descriptive survey method was used for this study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of 100 out of 120 professional secretaries for the study. Questionnaires involving both open and closed ended questions were used to collect data. The data obtained from the field were analyzed and the responses were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of tables and mean to give clear picture of the survey. The result indicated that a greater number of respondents strongly agreed that Information and Communication Technology equipment helps in saving time, as compared with the old ways of doing things before the modern office equipment were introduced. It had the highest mean of 4.62. Many of the respondents strongly agreed that, the introduction of Information and Communication Technology has improves positively their performance level in their offices, recording a mean of 4.43 and this also affected productivity level in the organization. While ICT is productive on its own, it is more productive in firms that combine high levels of ICT with high levels of organizational changes in the areas of production and efficiency practices.

Keywords: Office, ICT, Secretary, Productivity, Performance Level

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become a vital engine of growth for organizations. It has created opportunities for many individuals, firms and communities globally. It has transformed the nature of organizational work and has equally changed work itself. The computer has metamorphosed from being a mainframe to the mainstream office use. It has certainly made office work more interesting and more productive. Computers are replacing typewriters, and mobile (cell) phone are computing with calculators, as well as fax machines are struggling with e-mails. The way businesses operate these days have changed all due to the advancement of ICT.

Adedoyin (2010) and Appah and Emeh (2012) argued that information technology have affected every profession in the last twenty years. The accounting profession is not left out in these profound changes to business and methods of communication.

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According to Uzoka (2002), information technology is the harnessing of electronic technology in its various forms to improve the operations and profitability of the business as a whole. It provides significant improvements with facilities such as word processing, communication facilities in the form of electronic mail, databases in relation to filling and data retrieval. Such advances improve business efficiency, eliminating unnecessary delays in communication between routine filling and correspondence.

Advances in Information and Communication Technology have allowed devices such as computers to become smaller and more effective, and eventually have become a necessity to every business today. Instant messaging, the Internet, internal and external telephone systems especially mobile devices and Intranets are now integral to the workings of office life. These advances in Information and Communication Technology have shaped the development of the modern office. Most business offices of today have turned their desks into "workstations," with desktop computers or laptops connected to a network of other PCs in the same office and even beyond.

Van-Ark *et al.* (2002), in their work defined Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as the use of electromechanical equipments like the computer, telephone, internet and other gadgets for the collection, analysis, processing, storage and retrieving of data / information for the attainment of a particular objective(s) in all aspects of life. More specifically, ICTs refer to the conveyance of micro-electronics, computers and telecommunications which make it possible for data including text, video and video signals, to be transmitted anywhere in the world where digital signals can be received. They include networks such as fixed, wireless and satellite telecommunications, broadcasting networks and applications such as the internet, database management systems and multi-media tools (Howell and Lundall, 2000).

The typewriter, and to some extent the pen and paper belongs to a different era in office history. Since the 1980s, the advent of the computer has revolutionized the design of the office. Edwin (2008) noted that as a result of changes in technology, 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. ICT has changed the equipment and work groups, of course; nobody today would like to work in an office where information processing and other secretarial activities are done manually or mechanically. So, the mechanized office is gradually given way to the automated office. Investment in networks of computer based workstations and other automated equipment is transforming traditional Manual office methods and paper communications media.

Duniya (2011) observed that due to the introduction of sophisticated technological (electronic) office equipment into today's office and the role secretaries need to play in ensuring accuracy and efficiency in their jobs, the secretaries need to meet the challenges by

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acquiring new skills and competencies for efficient operations in the electronic office. The roles of secretarial professionals have been turned around by technology. It has provided the tools that shift the role of secretaries from that of information recorders to business strategists (Adedoyin, 2010; Appah and Emeh, 2011; Jaiyeola, 2007). Therefore, secretaries are supposed to be abreast with modern technologies to meet present challenges in the office. As the office becomes increasingly dependent on technology, computers have become standard equipment.

The effective performance of the Professional Secretary depends upon the office equipment, knowledge and skills, of Professional Secretary. Electronic information and financial records and computerized processes such as document production and statistical calculations have made many offices much more efficient without compromising quality.

Problem Statement

The efficiency and effectiveness of the secretary in every business organization depends on the availability of office technologies as well as the skills and competencies of the secretary (Akpomi, 2003). Modern business organizations have come to appreciate the role and importance of the secretary as well as the need to providing the needed and necessary office machines and equipment for the efficiency of the secretarial functions.

Aim of Study

The aim of the study is to investigate on the impact of Information and Communication Technology on secretaries at Cape Coast Polytechnic.

Objectives of the Study

The intention of the researcher was to achieve the following objectives:

  i. To determine the types of Information and Communication Technology equipment used at Cape Coast Polytechnic.
  ii. To establish how the secretary's performance and productivity level has been enhanced by using Information and Communication Technology in the office

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Collins English Dictionary (2003) defined secretary as a person who handles correspondence, keeps records, and does general clerical work for an individual, organization, etc. Mayer (1997),on the other hand defined a secretary as an executive assistant, who possesses a mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility with or without supervision, exercises initiatives and judgment and makes decision within the scope of assigned authority.

In Modern Office Technology the role of the secretary is crucial in the life or progress of an organization hence, needs some technological and human backing from the work place. The effective performance of the Professional Secretary depends upon the office equipment, knowledge and skills, of Professional Secretary (Akpomi and Ordu, 2009).

This was further confirmed by Edwin (2008) that, today's secretaries are exposed to office technology including the internet that makes work much easier and knowledge more accessible. It is now easier to send messages by telex, electronic mails (e-mails), fax and telephones. Other office gadgets available to the secretary are photocopy machines, duplicating machines, dictating machines, printers, among others. Technological changes have altered the procedures and technique for office functions includes the computers, electronic mail, voice mail, and the Internet. Wayne and Dauwalder (1997), said, although in the past, people could not even imagine the wonders wrought by modern electronic and computer technology, these tools are now nearly indispensable in modern offices.

Nwaokwa and Okoli (2012) indicated that the introduction of ICT has changed the roles of secretaries. They orated that ICT has influenced the performance of secretaries in delivery of information, accuracy and effectiveness at the work place.

Osuala (2004) and O'Neil (1999) argued that electronic information and financial records and computerized processes such as document production and statistical calculations have made many offices much more efficient without compromising quality. What used to require hours or even days of painstaking human effort can often be completed in minutes. In addition, accuracy and uniformity are often improved with technology-enhanced measurements and calculations. This is further stressed by Merony (1998), that technological advances have made it possible to transmit more data more quickly to more people than workers during the early 20th century even thought possible. Technology has had a positive effect on the internal operation of organization and has changed the manager's job. By linking computers, telephones, fax machines, copiers, and the like managers can get complete information quickly. With that information, managers can better formulate plans, make faster decision, more clearly, defined the workers need to perform, and monitor work activities as they happen.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative research that will involve the use of descriptive statistics. To accomplish the objectives of this study, a simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of 100 out of 120 professional secretaries for the study.

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Instruments and data collection procedure

In order for respondents to give precise and specific answers to the questions, both the opened and closed ended questions/structured type of questionnaires were used. The opened ended question sought for the opinions of the respondents to enable them provide their own answers to the question which was asked and the close- ended questions helped the respondents to chose the precise answers from the alternatives which was given.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the field were analyzed and the responses were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of tables and mean to give clear picture of the survey and the final analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher wanted to find out about the type of Information and Communication Technology equipment's at their disposal. Respondents were asked about the types of Information and Communication Technology equipments at their office. The responses to the question are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the availability of Types of ICT Equipments.

Types of modern Office Equipment	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Electric Typewriters	20	20
Computers	100	100
Scanning Machines	40	40
Photocopiers	100	100
Shredding Machines	25	25
Telephones	100	100
Duplicating Machines	60	60
Fax Machines	40	40

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

From Table 1, all the respondents 100 (100%) have computers, photocopiers and telephones in their offices. From Table 1 it shows that not all the respondents have electric typewriters, scanning machines, shredding machines, duplicating machines and Fax machines in their various offices.

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Table 2: The distribution of ICT Equipment and Time Saving

No	Item ICT Equipment has helped:	SD 1	D 2	NA 3	A 4	SA 5	Total	Mean
1	to work faster than before	1(1)	2(4)	6(18)	16(64)	75(375)	462	4.62
2	flexibility and capacity in the secretary's office	10(10)	20(40)	8(24)	12(48)	50(250)	372	3.72
4	made corrections of errors easy at the office	6(6)	10(20)	4(12)	15(60)	65(325)	423	4.23
5	increased my performance level at work	5(5)	5(10)	0(0)	22(88)	68(340)	443	4.43
6	Affected Productivity level	10(10)	8(16)	2(6)	17(68)	63(315)	415	4.15

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

From Table 2, a greater number of respondents strongly agreed that Information and Communication Technology equipment helps in saving time, as compared with the old ways of doing things before the modern office equipment were introduced. It had the highest mean of 4.62. Many of the respondents strongly agreed that, the introduction of Information and Communication Technology has improves positively their performance level in their offices, recording a mean of 4.43 and this also affected productivity level in the organization. The result shows that Information and Communication Technology equipment has helped in increasing productivity at the organization under study. In terms of assisting in correcting their mistakes easily respondents indicated that the use Information and Communication Technology equipment has made it possible for them to implement major changes, as well as making corrections easily recording a mean of 4.23. Though some of the respondents strongly agreed that Information and Communication Technology equipment have enhanced flexibility and capacity at their departments a mean of 3.72 was recorded.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that there are computers, photocopiers and telephones in every office of the professional secretaries in the institution, however, not all the offices have electric typewriters, scanning machines, shredding machines, fax machines and duplicating machines. The result of the study shows that all the secretaries accepted that the introduction of

Information and Communication Technology in their offices has ensured increased in efficiency in their performance and has also made it possible for them to implement major changes as well as making corrections easily. As a result, it has and also ensured accuracy and uniformity in their performance.

Information and Communication Technology in the office helps them save time when working thus they are able to perform task in the quickest possible time in order to attend to other schedules. This is because most of the work is done by machines which are more versatile than humans.

Buseni (2013) acknowledge that ICT use is also found to be correlated with organizational innovations in production and efficiency practices, Human Resource Management practices and product/service quality related practices, supporting the view that ICT and organizational changes are complements. More important, our findings seem to suggest that to be successful, firms typically need to adopt ICT as part of a "system" or "cluster" of mutually reinforcing organizational approaches.

Buseni (2013) indicated that while ICT is productive on its own, it is more productive in firms that combine high levels of ICT with high levels of organizational changes in the areas of production and efficiency practices, Human Resource Management practices, product/service quality-related practices. The firms that combine ICT with organizational changes have a high incidence of productivity improvement and have high rates of innovation.

The introduction of Information and Communication Technology has positively improved their performance level in the offices and this has contributed positively in the office. And this has helped in increasing the productivity level in the institution.

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