



INFLUENCE OF APPLICATION OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS ON JOB EFFECTIVENESS OF SECRETARIES IN DELTA STATE POLYTECHNICS

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Abstract

This study was aimed at impact of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries in modern offices in Delta State of Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Three research questions guided the study. A three sectioned research questionnaire relating to administrative functions, human relation functions, and information and communication technology functions were developed by researcher and validated by experts. The results of the analyses revealed that application of professional ethics has positive impact on job effectiveness of secretaries with respect to administrative, human relation and information and communication functions. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that every institutional and business organizations should always lay emphasis on the need for their secretaries and office managers to uphold and always apply all professional ethics in the delivery of official assignment for effectiveness and improved performance; and that office technology and management departments in polytechnics and business educators in universities should intensify training of their students with continuous emphasis on application of professional ethics in delivery of office functions as contained in the OTM curriculum

Keywords: *Professional ethics, job effectiveness, secretaries, modern offices*

Introduction

Office Technology and Management (OTM) programme is the nomenclature for secretarial studies offered in Nigerian polytechnics. The programme came into being in 2004 in response to persistent calls by business educators and employers, that the time to change the curriculum of the programme had long past (Maduabuchi, 2008). The aim of OTM programme as stipulated by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE, 2004) is to produce graduates who should fit properly into the office of any computerized organizations and perform professionally the functions of a secretary. The functions, among others, include relating the functions



of the office to the whole organization, attending meetings and providing information as may be required, making accurate records of proceedings, filing and retrieving information, taking appropriate action independently when faced with challenging secretarial office problems, showing personal qualities and attributes that are conducive and co-exist with the work group.

To realize the above objectives in the curriculum, the NBTE has added the course titled Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility to the curriculum to boost the moral and ethical contents of the curriculum. According to NBTE (2004), the course is designed to develop in the students the desirable professional work ethics required for successful work in modern office. This implies that students who have passed through the contents of the course should be able to apply all the office ethics in the performance of their professional functions. Omole in Joe (2019) defined ethics as shared normative values which any society or group or association holds dearly and they are used to judge the behavior or performance of any member of that society. It sets out the minimum acceptable behavior which any member should attain to be regarded as a good ambassador of the society. Similarly, Obi (2013) noted that ethics is concerned with fundamental principles of morality where some actions are labeled as good or bad, right or wrong, ethical or unethical.

Therefore the ethics of a secretary are moral principles relating to the job that she will be bound by. These requirements are automatically taken on board when one accepts any position as a secretary and one will be expected to uphold them at all times. According to Segunda (2019), some of the professional ethics which secretaries must adhere to include confidentiality, honesty, loyalty, reliability, responsibility, work unsupervised, multi-tasking, flexibility and so on? It is therefore expected that adherence to professional ethics would assist secretaries and secretaries in the performance of numerous office functions including administrative functions, human relation functions information and communication technology functions among others would perhaps enhance performance. Therefore this study was designed to find out the impact of professional ethics on the job effectiveness of secretaries in modern office. In other words, the study sought to determine the whether the objective of the office technology and management curriculum with respect to professional ethics and social responsibility is being realized or not.

Statement of the Problem

The review of office technology and management curriculum as opined by Oborah (2011) was to keep pace with the recent global developments, and produce



secretaries who can function effectively in any office. The goal of OTM is to prepare the graduate for office works in public and private sector of the economy. On graduation, the graduates would occupy position such as confidential secretaries, office manager, personal assistants among others and would be expected to perform professionally various office functions which include among others administration, personnel, human relations and information and communication technology.

It is worrisome that over a decade has passed since the introduction of the curriculum, yet, there is no empirical evidence to show the extent to which the stated objectives are being realized especially with respect to professional ethics and work performance of OTM graduates. Hence, the researchers were motivated to appraise the impact of application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries (OTM graduate workers) in polytechnics in Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1 What is the influence of application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries in administrative functions?
- 2 What is the influence of application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries in personnel functions?
- 3 What is the influence of application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries in information and communication technology functions?

Method

The research design used for this study is descriptive survey design to determine the impact of application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries or OTM graduate workers in polytechnics in Delta State. The population of the study consisted of all the 77 secretaries in polytechnics in Delta State. As a result of the limited size of the population, all the secretaries in the polytechnics were studied. Hence, there was no sampling of respondents. A 30 item questionnaire was used as research instrument for the study. The research instrument has two parts Part A and Part B. Part A contains information on the respondent's biographic data. Part B is divided into two sections in line with research questions raised for the study. The instrument was structured to elicit information from the assessment of respondents on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) 4; Agreed (A) 3; Disagreed (D) 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) 1. The research instrument was validated by three



experts and reliability of the instrument was determined using Chronbach Alpha Correlation Formula which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.89. This in the view of the researchers was high enough to consider the instrument reliable. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher to the respondents with the aid of research assistants. In analyzing the data collected from the instrument administered, mean statistic was used to analyze the responses for research questions for the study.

Results

In analyzing the data for the study, the items were grouped according to the research questions which guided the study.

Research Question 1

What is the influence of *application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries in administrative functions?*

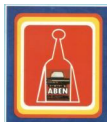
To answer Research Question 1, data collected were analyzed and the results of the computation are shown in the table below:

Table I: Respondents' Rating on Influence of Professional Ethics on Job Effectiveness of Secretaries Delta State Polytechnics

S/N	Administrative Functions	Mean	Remark
	<i>Application of professional ethics enhances your job effectiveness in the following areas</i>		
1.	Supervising junior staff	3.20	Agreed
2.	Ensuring that work schedule is accomplished	3.80	Agreed
3.	Ensuring all materials needed to do work are available at the right time	3.42	Agreed
4.	Composing and type letter and inter office memos	3.60	Agreed
5.	Preparing disciplinary notices	3.60	Agreed
6.	Interviewing visitors coming to office	3.20	Agreed
7.	Keeping attendance and personnel records	3.19	Agreed
8.	Preparing invoices for account payable	3.20	Agreed
9.	Delivering letters and memos typed	3.60	Agreed
10.	Preparing itinerary for boss	3.32	Agreed

Source: Field Research Data (2019)

The data in Table I reveals that the respondents agreed with all the items that application professional ethics has remarkable positive impact on administrative functions performed by office technology and management graduate workers in polytechnics in Delta State. These functions includes: Supervising junior staff, ensuring that work scheduled is accomplished, ensuring that materials needed to



perform any job are available at the right time, composing and typing letters, composing, typing and delivering inter-office memos, preparing disciplinary notices, interviewing visitors calling in the office keep attendance and preparing itinerary for boss.

Research Question 2

What is the influence of *application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries in personnel/human relation functions?*

To answer Research Question 2, data collected were analyzed and the results of the computation are shown in the table below:

Table II: Respondents' Ratings on Influence of Professional Ethics on Job Effectiveness of Secretaries in Delta State Polytechnics

S/N	Human Relation Functions	Mean	Remark
	<i>Application professional ethics enhances job effectiveness in the following areas</i>		
11	Assigning job schedule to junior staff	4.77	Agreed
12	Training junior staff	4.34	Agreed
13.	Having self-control & offering useful suggestion when need	3.40	Agreed
14.	Welcoming superiors, colleagues and visitors cheerfully and according respect to everybody in the organization	3.29	Agreed
15.	Screening of telephone calls	3.51	Agreed
16.	Preparing of itinerary for his executive	4.04	Agreed
17.	Sharing experiences and discussing developmental issues with colleagues	4.10	Agreed
18.	Maintaining movement register	3.56	Agreed
19.	Labeling all official records	3.00	Agreed
20.	Organizing meetings and handling of minutes	3.95	Agreed
21	Handling file action page appropriately	3.69	Agreed

Source: Field Research Data (2019)

The data in Table 2 presents the impact of application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries with respect to human relation functions. The data analysis indicates that application of professional ethics has positive impact on job effectiveness of secretaries with respect to human relation functions. These functions include assigning job schedule to junior staff, training junior staff, having self-control and offering useful suggestion when need arises, welcoming superiors, colleagues and visitors cheerfully and according respect to everybody in the organization screen telephone calls, preparing itineraries, controlling skills inventory, sharing experiences and discussing developmental issues with colleagues



maintain movement register, organizing meetings and handling of minutes as well as handling file action page appropriately.

Research Question 3

What is the influence of *application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries in information and communication technology functions?*

To answer Research Question 3, data collected were analyzed and the results of the computation are shown in the table below:

Table 3: Respondents' Mean Ratings on Influence of Professional Ethics on Job Effectiveness of Secretaries in Delta State Polytechnics

S/N	Information and Technology Functions	Mean	Remark
	<i>Application professional ethics enhances your job effectiveness in the following areas</i>		
21	Saving documents	3.20	Agreed
22	Reorganizing text or images	3.60	Agreed
23	Editing information	3.00	Agreed
24	Inserting columns and rows	3.80	Agreed
25	Paginating documents	2.60	Agreed
26	Printing documents	3.20	Agreed
27.	Inserting borders and shading	3.70	Agreed
28	Managing organization website	2.85	Agreed
9	Maintaining e-mails	3.70	Agreed
20	Changing page orientation and formula	3.65	Agreed

Source: Field research data (2019)

The data in Table 3 indicate the influence of application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries with respect to information and communication technology functions. According to the results, the respondents agreed that application of professional ethics enhances job effectiveness of secretaries with respect to information and communication technology functions. The identified functions included: saving documents, re-organizing text or images, adding, deleting or replacing text or images, editing information, inserting borders shading, , managing organization web-site, maintaining e-mails and changing page orientation of documents.

Discussion of Results

The results of the analysis of the data relating to the first research question indicated that application of professional ethics on job effectiveness of secretaries in terms of administrative functions. The study revealed that the respondents agreed with all the items on administrative functions like supervising junior staff, ensuring that work



schedule is accomplished and all materials needed to do work are available at the right time, composing and typing letter and inter office memos. Others are preparing disciplinary notices, interviewing visitors coming to office, keeping attendance and personnel records, preparing invoices for account payable, delivering letters and memos typed and preparing itinerary for boss. This result is in agreement with Segunda (2019) who submitted that administrative functions in modern office is evolving hence required professional and personal development on the part of office workers for effectiveness.

The result of the analysis of data to the second research question indicated that application of professional ethics enhances job effectiveness of secretaries with respect to human relation functions. The result is in line with the submission of Obi (2013) who maintained that professional ethics and office etiquette are the foundation for good human relation in modern day office work. Human relation, according to Shuaibu (2009) involved among others having self-control, avoid being snobbish to junior staff, sharing experience with colleagues discuss developmental issues with colleagues, having a cordial relationship with superiors, colleagues and visitors/callers, identifying and solving routine and non-routine problems. By doing this, secretaries save executives time and also enhance the goodwill of the organization. A cursory look at the table revealed that the O.T.M. graduate workers in the Delta State of Nigeria agreed with all the items on human relation that application of professional ethics enhances secretaries' effectiveness in human relation functions.

The result of the analysis of data relating to the third research question showed that application of professional ethics has remarkable positive impact on job effectiveness of secretaries with respect to information and communication technology functions. This finding corroborated with the submission of Christensen (2009) who held that the application of professional ethics has succeeded in enhancing and increasing the output and productivity of secretaries and office managers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that Application of professional ethics enhances the job effectiveness of secretaries in terms of administrative functions, human relation functions and information and communication technology functions. Therefore the job performance and effectiveness of secretaries and office managers will be greatly enhanced if they apply and adhere to professional ethics in discharging their official responsibilities.



Recommendations

On the basis of the findings made and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. Every business organization should always emphasis on the need for their secretaries and office managers to uphold and always apply all professional ethics in the delivery of official assignment for effectiveness and improved performance.
2. Office technology and management departments in polytechnics and business educators in universities should intensify training of their students with continuous emphasis on application of professional ethics in delivery of office functions as contained in the OTM curriculum.
3. The lecturers should be effectively supervised by the most senior lecturers to ensure strict adherence to all aspect in the curriculum especially ICT and Professional Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility.
4. University business education curriculum planners should ensure the professional ethics and social responsibility are adequately encapsulated in the curriculum to ensure OTM educators are adequately prepared to implement this aspect of the OTM curriculum.

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