



DIGITAL EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS REQUIRED BY FUTURE SECRETARIES FOR OPTIMUM PRODUCTIVITY IN BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

The advances in Information and Communication Technology combined with lifestyle trends, points to a future workforce that is more productive and more capable than ever before. Employers of labour are presently on the lookout for future secretaries who possess digital employability skills for optimum productivity in business organizations. This paper therefore, is a literature review aimed at identifying digital employability skills required from future secretaries for optimum productivity in business organizations. Digital employability skills required by future secretaries for optimum productivity include: electronic record management, application of photo based social media, the use of video based social media among others. The researchers recommend that: the curriculum used for the training of secretaries should be reviewed to include skills in electronic records management procedures, training institutions should be adequately funded to enable them install modern ICT equipment for effective training and proper acquisition of social media application skills, short training programmes should be organized for secretaries at intervals to enable them keep abreast of new technologies in the office among others.

Keywords: Employability, Secretaries, Skills, Productivity

Introduction

Disruptive innovation and new opportunities and challenges in the world of work are some of the examples of the impact of the fourth industrial revolution. Today, organizations have moved forward using digital technologies such as the internet of things, artificial intelligence and big data. Many jobs will automatically be with digital technologies, (Manyika, Lund, Chui, Woetzel, Batara and Sanghvi, 2017). The authors assert that less than 5 percent of jobs will be fully automated; however, about 60 percent of work will be semi-automated. The authors further stated that over the next few years, the employment landscape will change, with the world of work emphasizing the importance of digital employability skills as regards the employment of secretaries.



Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019), asserted that occupation specific skills are no longer sufficient for graduates of Office Technology and Management to meet the needs of digital world of work, and that, it takes a set of employability skills. Employability skills and qualifications will be able to contribute positively in the digital age workplace. Many jobs in the digital business will be required to have more complex skills known as employability skills. These skills are personal qualities that make people employable. They are sometimes referred to as soft skills, transferable or non-technical skills because they are different from technical knowledge and skills and can be applied to almost any job in any industry (Chowdhury & Miah, 2019). Demands of the new contexts and trends such as current day industry requires OTM graduates who can fulfill the demands of the new contexts and trends, such as digital business. Higher vocational education institutions are increasingly expected to engage with the challenges of the digital business world. Employability skills are not just to get a job, but also how to succeed and survive in a career in the work place. Higher vocational educational institution are often criticized for not preparing graduates of OTM who are supposedly future secretaries with various skills according to the contexts and trends in the current world of work. The facts show that there is employability skill gap between those possessed by the graduates and those needed by the world of work (Jewell, Reading, Clarke & Kippist, 2020). Graduate employability has become one of the central issues since the last two decades. Training institutions need to make various efforts to meet the identified challenges one of which is by making a grand design to develop students' employability skills.

The functions of the secretary has become broader in recent times. The secretaries' responsibilities in utilizing digital skills in the performance of their duties cannot be overemphasized. Ubulom, in Okpokwasili (2018) stated that the duties of a secretary have gone beyond performing the normal daily official routines. According to the author, secretaries who work in today's automated office environment are expected to acquire digital skills in order to be proficient in their duties.

Although technology have revolutionized the traditional roles of secretaries, professional secretaries with digital skills are highly indispensable in any establishment since secretarial roles are the pivot of office activities (Olagunju, 2015).

Yakubu and Ugwu (2015), asserted that the efficiency and effectiveness of the secretary in every business organization depends largely on the availability of office technologies as well as digital skills and competencies of the secretary to handle these office technologies. The authors further stated that the current automated offices have made it that, for the secretary to be relevant and functional in the office of today and the future, she must be competent in manipulative technology, communication and professional skills.



For future secretaries to thrive, certain skills are required for their effective operation. Hull in Ugwuanyi (2014) defined skill as manual dexterity through repetitive performance of an operation. It is an organized sequence of actions and proficiency executed and usually displaying a flexible but systematic temporal patterning. To possess a skill is to demonstrate the habit of acting, thinking and behaving in a specific activity in such a way that the process becomes natural to the individual through repetition or practice. Skill comprises of the two general components – the knowledge component and the activity component. The knowledge component is the underlining theory that backs a skill without which the activity component will be meaningless (Ugwuanyi, 2014). The knowledge and skills learnt by OTM graduates in formal schools are not adequate to meet every demand of their daily activities. As a result of this, there is need for continuous improvement as human learning is continuous and lifelong. More so the tremendous rates at which scientific and technological changes are taking place make it essential for secretaries to constantly learn and re-learn new skills through training.

The Office Technology and Management education offered in the Polytechnics and few universities emphasizes the acquisition of skills needed to manipulate office machines and serve as supporting staff to management of organizations where they are employed. (Igbinedion 2012). Government in collaboration with UNESCO reviewed the secretarial education curriculum with a view to keeping pace with modern realities with emphasis on technology revolution thereby renaming the course from Secretarial Studies to Office Technology and Management. Office Technology and management is an efficient, effective, productive and functional education which leads to self employment, self reliance, paid employment and consequently, self actualization (Ezeahurukwe and Omale 2017). Office Technology and Management is a programme designed to equip students with secretarial skills for employment as office managers in various organizations. Students in the programme will be offered professional, foundation and general education courses, which will enable them, acquire vocational and interpersonal skills in Office Technology and Management for effective work competencies and optimum productivity (UNESCO – Nigeria Project 2014).

Electronic Record Management Skills for Future Secretaries

An electronic record is a record that can be manipulated, transmitted or processed by a computer (International Records Management Trust IRMT 2011). It is written on magnetic or optical medium (including magnetic tapes, Cassettes, CD-Roms, hard disks e.t.c) recorded in binary code, accessed using computer software and hardware. This can be easily manipulated either updated, deleted e.t.c. Tafor, (2016) defines electronic records as that records that are dependable on relevant machines for access or reading through computer software and hardware. McDonald, (2018) opined that an electronic record is an intangible soft record created, managed, shared and preserved through the usage of an information and communication Technology ICT System. The Author asserted that the term electronic records reflects the reality of today's world of work where most activities depend on the availability of machines. Electronic records management often referred to as ERM or Records Information Management (RIM) is an essential part of organizational business compliance effort. The ability to digitize records saves time, money and physical space.



Wamukoya and Mutula (2014), observed that lack of knowledge about electronic records keeping and management is a major obstacle in the employment of secretaries today and in the future. Records should always be available, protected and managed effectively so as to ensure effective performance of job in modern office. This according to the authors is true because records by their very nature provide proof of the activities of the organization or personnel records. Records support the effective and efficient management of establishment, therefore an indispensable skill required of future secretaries.

Mnjama & Wamukoya (2015) opined that records are valuable assets that need to be managed and protected. Besides providing essential evidence of organizational activities, transactions and decision making, records also support business functions and are critical for the assessment of organizational performance. Without reliable records, organizations cannot effectively manage and record their transactions to measure their level of productivity.

According to World Bank (2017) records provide a reliable legally verifiable source of evidence of organizational decisions and actions. They document compliance or non-compliance of organizational aims and objectives, rules and procedures. Records play a crucial role in almost all human endeavors and they are essential to all business and social interactions.

The major electronic record used in organizations are electronic organizer which is a record keeping device brought about by Information and Communication Technology. It was formally an address book but now developed into small electronic machine with fax accessories not only for sending and receiving messages but also sorting information such as address, phone numbers, appointments any other information than can be recorded on a diary (Baba, 2018).

Another electronic record keeping device is the magnetic Disk. This comprises of hard disk and floppy disk. The hard disk is a device that provides a long term and high speed storage which lasts longer and is more expensive than the floppy disk. Floppy disk is a removable disk that is used to store and re-create information. This device can be accessed electronically and they are of various sizes and storage capacities. Hard disk drive is most often used to store information such as application on programmes that are frequently accessed by users.

Compact disk popularly known as CD was introduced for the recording of music but quickly became useful in computing.

Magnetic tape and tape cartridges are generally associated with mainframe or minicomputers. The records residing in computers are increasingly being transferred to tape on larger computers to provide a backup copy. Computers often use cartridges or streaming tape for a backup instead of floppy disks. Magnetic tape is coated with an emulsion of magnetic oxide particles. Other chemicals are also used in the manufacturing process to give the tape good operation characteristics such as flexibility, conductivity and softness. The computer magnetic tape is a fragile medium, highly susceptible to generation of error by improper care and handling.



Future secretaries who is to contribute to maximum productivity of their organizations should be abreast of proper care and handling and maintenance of the magnetic tape knowing that even under ideal conditions of controlled storage, it is not expected to retain data in a readable state longer than ten years. Future secretaries should therefore have proper backup to avoid loss of information. (Baba, 2018). The author further stated that optical disk technology offers a stable media environment compared to magnetic hard drives. Read/write optical disk systems provide a supplement or alternative to magnetic storage media in a broad spectrum of data and document storage applications which the secretary handles on a daily basis. These systems permit the direct recording of information which the secretary generates by keyboards, document scanners and other input devices. They can also record information transferred from magnetic media and other optical media or download from a mainframe.

Photo Based Social Media Skills for Future Secretaries

For OTM graduates to remain relevant in tomorrow's office, there is need for the acquisition of skills on the application of photo based social media resources. Photo based social media resources is a great resource that can enhance secretaries duties in the modern office for optimum productivity (Pavlik, 2015). Social media and technology are integral parts of daily office routine and integrating the use into the classroom and office is more natural than before. Social media platform offers many different ways to be used for learning and working, sharing announcement in form of circular letters, memo, bulletin and more. Over the last few years, the explosion of image-based social media sites like tumbler, Pinterest and Instagram have understood the old saying "image is everything" and text only media as a result is quickly becoming outdated. Thus, where social media strategy is concerned, brands are beginning to focus more time, effort and resources on image based social media hoping that the rising popularity of these sited will boost online engagement and interaction.

One of the reasons for the boom in image e-based social media is the prevalence of smartphone photography. An increasing number of smartphone users mean more people are empowered to take their own pictures and also enhance them dramatically through artistic filters and this translates into more people felling compelled to share their photos and look at those taken by others. Psychologically, clients love imagery and seeing visually appealing things creates positive emotions. Most people between 65 and 85 percent also describe themselves as visual learners forming meaning and organizing thoughts based on what they see more so that what they need. This explains the popularity of pinterest as more users choose to follow organizations based purely on the organizational images they post, rather than on the user's profile or background. Images centric social media, therefore has become a powerful force in boosting organizational image and activities. It is a game changer which has already proven itself: According to recent statistics, pinterest is the fastest growing social network today, and Instagram has grown to 40 million users worldwide in just two years. Other image-based platform are also coming to the fore such as Mobil which takes inspiration from Instagram but itself as a visual engine that enables users to see a 360-degree view of what other people are doing around the world in various places and times. Even Facebook launched its own version of pinterest with its pinview app which allows users to see their Facebook timelines in a pinboard – style format.



The photo based social media resources for the performance of secretarial duties for tomorrow's OTM graduate secretaries include:

Facebook which is an American online social media and social networking service based in Menlo park, California and a flagship service of the namesake company Facebook Inc. it was founded by Mark Zuckerberg, alongside fellow Harvard College students and roommates Eduardo Saverin, Andrew Mccollum, Dust in Moskovitz and Chris Hughes (Ugwoke B.C).

WhatsApp messenger, or simply WhatsApp is an American freeware, cross platform messaging and voice over service owned by Facebook, Inc. it allows users to send photos, text messages and voice messages, make voice and video calls, send documents to individuals, organizations and other media. WhatsApps client application runs on mobile devices but is also accessible from desktop computers as long as the user's mobile device remains connected to the internet while they use the desktop or laptop. The service requires users to provide a standard cellular mobile phone number for registering with the service. In January 2018, WhatsApp released a standalone business app targeted at small business owners called WhatsApp Business to allow companies to communicate with customers who use the standard WhatsApp client. (Matsumoto, 2017).

The Author further stated that it has become the primary source of electronic communication for advertising, sending notice, sales promotion e.t.c in countries and locations including America, Asia, Large parts of Europe and Africa. The underlying purpose of WhatsApp is to facilitate communication and at its most basic level business is nothing but communication WhatsApp can provide a channel through which business enterprises can achieve faster services communication with customers all over the world and provide avenue for promoting organizational activities. Unfortunately some secretaries still find it difficult to combine these features. For secretaries to continue to be relevant, there is need to possess ability in this regard.

Some of the ways of utilizing WhatsApp are: Use of group chats features for meeting with clients, making audio advertisement and sending directly to customers, stay in contact with customers outside your location, send pictures and other graphics like charts directly to customers, facilitate real-time communication among organization workers and clients, sending minutes, memos, bulletin, newsletter e.t.c.

Video based Social Media Resources for Future Secretaries

Video, the moving image has been keeping us entertained well over a century. Today, however a look at any social media platform will display video clips that give clues about businesses. Video based social media resources has influenced the ways in which messages are communicated on the social media. Infact, video has become one of the most teaching and learning and advertising channels on the social media. The importance of video content is rising rapidly and it is particularly prevalent in the social media video tutorial learning. Video content is now integral to teaching and learning organizational behavior (Aichner, 2015).



Graduates of OTM can greatly benefit from the use of video based social resources for many things in the office as this helps secretaries to have access to replay or watch videos related to secretarial practice and principles. As the popularity of social media has risen over the last few years, office procedures have seen a shift as well. Secretaries now have access to any area of office procedure which they do not understand through YouTube channels where they can download related video which can aid their understanding. There are more than one billion users on YouTube, which makes up nearly one third of the total internet users. However, more than 500 million hours of videos are watched on YouTube daily (Chen, 2018). Video use is not just limited to YouTube either. Over 80 percent of twitter users watch video content and more than 500 million people watch videos on Facebook everyday.

Social media is continuously changing the way we communicate and consume information. The most successful online learning system is delivering content consistently through multiple social media channels. It comes as no surprise that with all the content that is posted across these channels, that visual content is more than 40 times likely to get shared than all-text content, video is no exception. It is becoming an increasingly important part of the promotional artillery with 65 percent of educational programme considering it the most engaging channel for studying new techniques in business as well as secretarial practice. (Obar & Wildman 2015).

Video is a fantastic tool used for effective learning. Unlike a long winded text paragraph, it is extremely easy to consume and comprehend. Secretaries can learn new office procedures which will continue to make them relevant in office of the future. Video allows a user to be concise and capture viewers interest in the first few seconds. Social media success lies in the ability to condense information down to easily digestible snippets of contents that is long enough to maintain viewers attention but short enough to leave them wanting more. Clear indicators of the video intention should be placed at the beginning before users have the chance to scroll away. Since social media users find it more convenient to watch video content, than reading through long content of text, this shows that learning which is a continuous process even after school will become more interested when converted into video format with fascinating concepts and ideas. Secretaries spend spare time, chatting and watching YouTube on social media to enable them to be acquainted to new office procedures. Recording and videoing teaching and learning sessions and the production of video tutorials can tremendously increase effective learning process as secretaries have the option to download and play video tutorials over and over again until the content stick to their head. Watching video tutorials on social media can greatly aid the retention capability of graduate secretaries as they can easily imagine and visualize what they have watched. From the foregoing, it is seen that the utilization of the video based social media resources can greatly enhance training and learning process in the office. (Boyd & Nicole, 2018). Some of the video based social media resources are discussed as follows:



Facebook tickle algorithm changes fake news controversy and video metric miscalculations posed as a threat to the video platform long-held reign. Although their release of Lasso Facebook's answer to TikTok failed to compete, facebook watching is booming. According to U.S.A today, Facebook watch nearly doubled its viewership in six months with 140 million daily users and 720 million monthly users (Wopereis, 2019). Facebook already partners with major celebrities like Jada Pinkett Smith on shows like "The Red Table" and plans to bring more contents to the platform like "The voice Germany". (Wopereis, 2019). The author further stated that facebook watch also focuses on social engagement and features to bring audience together. Their watch parties bring groups together to watch a video together. Videos can also synchronize up, so everyone watches content together at the same time.

2019 and 2018 were very rewarding years for instagram as they continued their heavy focus on optimizing user's video experience. Instagram, the visual story telling video platform hit 1 billion active monthly users as a result of game changing updates they made over the last few years. 60 second video, Instagram stories and Instagram stories templates, live videos and messages, hands free video and more recently, IGTV all of which have contributed to an exceptional growth of their advert business that will not stop anytime soon. Businesses are also at an advantage, with 200 million Instagram users visiting at least one business profile per day. (Philip, 2019).

Snap chart another video based social network media allows users to watch 10 billion videos per day on the video platform. This figure is 2 billion more than Facebook's number of daily video views. Snapchat was also doubling its acquisition with innovative companies like augmented reality startup, imagine media, 3D & VR company obvious engineering and mobile discovery app verb, and with their launch of spectacles, the first wearables on the market with social media video capacities (Emma, 2018). while snap's future did not seem so bright (Especially with their "redesigned redesign" snafu, which had them making drastic design choices – much to the dismay of their users), it has bounced back with addition of shows and popular features like stickers, geotilters, lenses, snap map and discover.

Wechat, a one-stop-shop social video platform is massively gaining popularity and has increased 20 million viewers each quarter with over 1.15 billion monthly active users from a diverse range of age groups. This versatile video platform incorporates features like group messaging, voice and video calls, mobile wallets and moments where users are able to share pictures and looping videos up to ten seconds (Boyd, 2018). The author further stated that Wechat broad international users offers organizations a great opportunity to expand their business offices abroad. Several pioneers like Huffington post, vogue China, Buzzteed, Vice and BBC News have started their subscription channels already, and more businesses are expected to come onboard as the video platform expands.



Software Management skills for Future secretaries.

Software is a collection of data or computer instructions that tell the computer how to work. This is in contrast to physical hardware from which the system is built. In computer and software engineering, computer software is all information processed by the computer systems, programmes and data computer softwares include programmes, libraries and related non-executable data, such as online documentation or digital media. Computer hardware and software require each other and neither can be realistically used on its own thereby the need for the modern secretary to possess knowledge on how to manipulate the two. (Pree, 2018)

The system software of a computer is a program that runs on the hardware components of the computer. Without the system software, it is extremely difficult for the secretary to make use of the computer. One of the basic functions of the system software is to save information from the computer memory to an external devices and to recognize text from external devices such as keyboard to be displayed by the monitor. There are different kinds of system software programmes that make the computer a fascinating and complex device (Palvia, 2017).

According to Szyperki, (2018), the majority of software is written in high-level programming languages. They are easier and more efficient for programmers because they are closer to natural languages than machine languages. High level languages are translated into machine language using a compiler or an interpreter or a combination of the two software may also be written in a low level assembly language which has strong correspondence to the computer's machine language instructions using an assembler.

Software development has many phases. These phases include requirements, engineering, architecting design, implementation, testing, software deployment and maintenance. Maintenance is the last stage of the software life cycle. After the product has been released, the maintenance phase keeps the software up to date with environmental changes and changing user requirements. The earlier phases should be done so that the product is easily maintained by the secretary. The design phase should plan the structure in a way that can be easily altered. Similarly, the implementation phase should create code that can be easily read, understood and changed by the secretary.

The maintenance can only happen efficiently if the earlier phases are done properly. There are four major problems that can slow down the maintenance process: unstructured code, the maintenance programmers having insufficient knowledge of the system, documentation being absent, out of date or at best insufficient and software maintenance having a bad image. The success of the maintenance phase relies on these problems being fixed earlier in the life cycle (Keremerer, 2016). Maintenance consists of four parts. Corrective maintenance deals with fixing bugs in the code, adaptive maintenance deals with adapting the software to new environment. Perfective maintenance deals with updating the software according to changes in user requirements. Finally, preventive maintenance deals with updating documentation and making the software more maintainable. According to the author, all changes to the system can be characterized by these four types of maintenance. Connective maintenance is the traditional maintenance while the others are considered as software evolution. For efficient maintenance of the software, there must be adequate training of the secretary in this regards to enable her meet the requirement of the office of the future.



CONCLUSION

The advent of Information and Communication Technology which has led to acquisition of digital skills has made it highly imperative for secretaries to update their digital professional skills. To enable their continuing relevance in the modern office, they should acquaint themselves with new digital skills in the areas of manipulative technology and communication competencies in order to sell their organizational image to the wider world and also to be more relevant, functional and efficient in the performance of their secretarial duties. The acquisition of these digital competences is of paramount importance since it will make them have job satisfaction achieve maximum result which will in turn lead to optimum productivity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The curriculum used for the training of secretaries should be reviewed to include Electronic Records Management procedures and process.
2. Training institutions should be adequately funded to enable them install modern ICT equipment for effective training and proper acquisition of social media application skills.
3. Short training programmes should be organized for secretaries at interval to enable them keep abreast of new technologies in the offices.
4. Organization should organize training inform of workshops, conferences, symposia e.t.c that will enable them train secretaries on software application and maintenance.



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