An Assessment of the Constraints of Qualitative Secretarial Education in Osun State Polytechnic Iree, Osun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Secretarial education is an area of institution that has been in existence for several decades and it plays very significant role in economic development of any nation. It is a vocational education that is intended to provide the skills and the manpower for the office and other administrative services required by the society. Therefore, this study reviewed the problems of secretarial qualitative education in Nigeria with a view to identify the qualities and functions of a secretary and examine the constraints of secretarial education in Osun State Polytechnic Iree of Osun State, Nigeria. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized for the study. The primary data were collected through questionnaires in which 65 questionnaires were administered to the staff and students of department of secretarial studies of the polytechnic out of which only 50 questionnaires were completed and returned. The questionnaires were administered using simple random sampling techniques such as frequency distribution and percentage. Secondary sources of data were generated from internets sources, relevant textbooks and journal on the field of secretarial studies.

The study revealed that there is plethora of problems militating against qualitative secretarial education in Nigeria. They include infrastructural challenges, ill-equipped school environment, admission policy and operational regulation, inadequate secretarial teachers and facilitators, lack of government commitment to secretarial education, low society value for secretarial education etc. The study concluded that graduates of secretarial education with second class upper should be employed as graduate assistants and be given further training in higher degree. Also, federal and state ministries of education should provide facilities for ICT in institutions of higher learning so that secretarial education graduates can be trained and equipped to face the challenges of modern business office.

Introduction

Secretarial Education

According to Okolo (2001), secretarial education provides students with adequate skills and information needed to function well in office occupation. Amoor and
Magaji (2015) opine that secretarial education is a component of vocational education that provides knowledge and skills needed to perform efficiently and effectively in the world of work. They state further that secretarial education involves acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies and makes the recipient proficient in secretarial profession.

Secretarial education is a tool for alleviating poverty. This means that a secretarial graduate that is well equipped with technological knowledge could be employed and be on his/her own as an employer of labour. Secretarial education is useful to modern business office in the private organization (NGOs), governmental organization and Non-Governmental organization (NGOs) in terms of employment opportunity, job creation and self-reliance.

Despite the role of secretarial education in Nigeria, there are still many problems militating against its survival in Nigeria. It is on this note that this study assessed the constraints of qualitative secretarial education in Osun State Polytechnic Iree of Osun State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of study are to

i. examine the concept of secretarial education in Nigeria.
ii. identify the qualities and functions of a secretary
iii. assess the constraints of qualitative secretarial education in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Secretarial Education

Secretarial education is a component of vocational education that provides knowledge and skills for would be secretaries to perform efficiently and in the world of work.

It also involves acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies that make the recipient proficient in secretarial profession (Amoor, 2009).

Secretarial education is offered in Colleges of Education, Polytechnic and the Universities primarily to educate and train students to become competent professional secretaries (Aliyu, 2006).

National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) (1989) defined secretarial education as the type of education that equips students with vocational skills, effective work competencies and socio-psychological work skills essential for interpersonal relation.

Adelani (2006) described secretarial education as an area of instruction that plays very significant role in national development and a tool to combat unemployment crisis.

Secretarial education is an aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills for employment in various fields of endeavor. Students of this programme are exposed to courses in
the special areas as well as in general education.

In addition to acquisition of vocational skills in secretarial education, the students are equipped with effective work competencies and psychological work skills which are very essential in everyday interactions with others (Amoor, Ibid).

**Qualities and Functions of a Secretary**

Harrison (1979) gave the business qualities of a secretary as secretarial skills, organizing skills, efficiency, reliability, responsibility, discretion, initiative, tact, diplomacy and punctuality. Lauria (1972) highlighted the personal qualities of a secretary as adaptability, level-headedness, good observance, intuitiveness, flexibility, tact, friendliness, accuracy, thoroughness, forethoughtfulness, initiative, self-confidence, good listener, a good telephone personality and a good appearance. Egbokhare (2011) outlined qualities of a good secretary under two classifications of business and personal. Business qualities include secretarial and language skills, organizing punctuality, resilience among others. He stated further that the personal qualities include being smart, tactful, neat, friendly, helpful, well informed or knowledgeable, courteous, polite and observant among others.

According to Abolade (1999), a secretary in a polytechnic or in a university performs inter-alia the following functions.

These are:

1. Taking notes from the head;
2. Taking minutes of meeting;
3. Preparing the LPO;
4. Keeping accurate and up-to-date records of students;
5. Organizing current departmental information to make it easily retrievable;
6. Keeping secret departmental information;
7. Typing with accuracy;
8. Making and receiving telephone calls; and
9. Performing other duties as may be assigned by the head of the department.

Adewale (2001) gave the following functions of a secretary. They include:

- (i) Setting up and administer systems and procedures for a department or unit.
- (ii) Word processing text and information such as letters, reports, memos etc.
- (iii) Composing correspondence, reports and memos.
- (iv) Performing office duties and arranging meetings
- (v) Setting up and maintaining file systems.

**Problems of Qualitative Secretarial Education in Nigeria**

There are myriad of problems facing qualitative secretarial education in Nigeria. Adelani (2006) pointed out some of the
problems militating against qualitative secretarial education. They include infrastructural challenges, ill-equipped school environment teachers/facilitators, lack of government commitment to secretarial education, low societal value for secretarial education.

Nwaokolo (1990) stated that secretarial education lacks basic instructional tools for effective and efficient skills training. He stated further that many institutions teaching secretarial education are without computer for instruction in lecturing rooms and offices.

Okoro (2005) remarked that lack of adequate funding is the bane of secretarial education. Schools, colleges and universities find it difficult to implement business education curriculum to its fullest due to lack of fund.

Okomanyin (2002) agreed with the above statement, he states further that secretarial education is capital intensive expenditure in terms of equipment, laboratory workshop as well as manpower training and retraining. Uzo (1998) also agreed that it would be a mere white wash for secretarial education to be included in a school curriculum without a studio equipped with different types of office machines.

Uzo (Ibid) pointed out that instructional materials are essential for secretarial education but many higher institutions teaching secretarial studies lack these materials for effective and dynamic instruction.

Alilaki (2012) opined admission policy is a great challenge to business education and secretarial education in particular. He asserted that entire qualification is compromised to accommodate frustrated candidates who choose to study office education as last resort. He pointed out further that when some of the alumni of colleges of education who major in secretarial education and wants to further their education to university level always have mathematics as a big obstacle militating them and therefore their admission seekers to switch to another field of endeavours.

Moreover, there is inadequate quality and quantity of secretarial teachers and facilitators in Nigeria higher institutions. It is unusual for a secretarial graduate to wish to make a career out of teaching when he can conveniently secure a job as a secretary in oil companies, banks and telecommunication companies. This poses or compels higher institutions to employ sub-standard or half-baked graduates to fill existing vacancies. The effect of this is that the half-baked graduate cannot fit in to the world of work and be productive because he has not been put in his rightful place.

Amoor (2009) ascertained that the federal and state governments are not exonerated from the accusing fingers that are partly responsible for the collapsing foundation in Nigerian institutions. This is because its attention and priority is wholly focused on sciences thereby neglecting this aspect of education.
Usman (2008) concurred with the statement and stated that governments at all level must improve the status of secretarial education by giving it’s a high priority.

Lastly, Nigerian parents of today do not encouraged their wards to offer secretarial education at all levels. This is because the society does not place any significant value or dignity on the secretarial profession. In the support of the above statement, Clark (2002) said that secretarial education programs have been deprived of the prestige by the society because of their reluctant to expunge themselves of the colonial grammar education and white-collar jobs where secretarial education graduates are referred to as “typists” because the programme is associated with typing and shorthand.

Research Methodology

The study was carried out in Osun State Polytechnic Iree of Osun State, Nigeria. Data survey method was used in selecting the respondents for the study. 65 questionnaires were administered to the staff members and students of department of secretarial studies of the polytechnic out of which only 50 questionnaires completed and returned. The questionnaires were administered using simply random sampling techniques such as frequency distribution and percentage. The analysis is based on the Yes or No option.

Result and Discussion

Based on the data collected and the responses received the results of the analysis are presented and discussed below:

Table 1: Infrastructural Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field survey, 2016

Table above shows that the entire respondents are of the option that infrastructural challenges are qualitative secretarial education in Nigeria.

Table 2: Ill-equipped School Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 2 above clearly shows that 40 (80%) respondents agree that ill-equipped school environment is one of the constraints facing qualitative secretarial education in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

Table 3: Admission Policy and Operational Regulation

<table>
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<th>Responses</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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Table 3 above clearly shows that 40 (80%) respondents agree that ill-equipped school environment is one of the constraints facing qualitative secretarial education in Nigeria tertiary institutions.
The table 3 above clearly shows that 46 (92%) respondents agree that one of the constraints of qualitative secretarial education is admission policy and operational regulation while only 4 (8%) disagree with this assertion. This shows that admission policy and operational regulation is one problems of secretarial education in Nigeria higher institutions.

Table 4: Inadequate Secretarial Teachers/Facilitators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the respondents attest to the fact that lack of government commitment to secretarial education is one of the problems of qualitative secretarial education in Nigerian higher institutions.

Table 5: Lack of Government Commitment to Secretarial Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

According to table 6 above majority the respondents agree that low society is one of key challenges of secretarial education in Nigeria tertiary Institutions.

Table 6: Low Societal Value for Secretarial Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the respondents attest to the fact that lack of government commitment to secretarial education is one of the problems of qualitative secretarial education in Nigerian higher institutions.

Conclusion

The study assessed the constraints of qualitative secretarial education in Osun State Polytechnic Iree of Osun State, Nigeria. It reviewed existing literature on concept of secretarial education qualities and function of a secretary and constraint facing secretarial education in Nigeria. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage. It discovered that there are many constraints mitigating against qualitative secretarial education in Nigeria higher institutions such
as infrastructural challenges, ill-equipped school environment, admission policy and operational regulation, inadequate secretarial teachers and facilitators, lack of government commitment to secretarial education, low societal value for secretarial education etc.

The study concluded that graduates of secretarial education with second class upper should be employed as graduate assistants and to give further training in higher degree.

Also, federal and state ministries of education should provide facilities for ICT in institutions of higher learning so that secretarial education graduates can be trained and equipped to face the challenges of modern business office.

**Recommendations**

In line with the findings, it is recommended that the:

(i) Seasoned business educators in tertiary institutions of learning and secretarial administrators in office occupation should consistently and persistently organize and sponsor mass media publicity on the importance of secretarial education and secretarial profession. This will certainly go a long way to create public awareness about secretarial education in tertiary institution of learning hence public awareness on the secretarial profession is very important.

(ii) Secretarial education teachers should acquire new technologies in order to be able to teach secretarial students using relevant equipment.

(iii) Federal and state ministries of education should provide adequate fund for the provision of equipment and facilities to higher institutions offering secretarial education in the institutions.

(iv) Graduates of secretarial education with second class upper division should be employed as graduate assistants in order to solve the problems of acute shortage of secretarial lecturers in Nigerian higher institutions.

(v) Government should review the admission policy through removing problem of mathematics as one of the requisite subjects for admission.

(vi) Federal and state ministries of education should provide awareness of both the society and students on the benefits of secretarial education to the society and the practitioners with the intention to popularize the profession.
References


