Publishers Application Skills Required of Secretaries for Job Performance in Public Parastatals in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT
This study sought to determine the publishers’ application skills required of secretaries in public parastatals in Rivers State. A research question and a null hypothesis were formulated and used for the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 1,200 secretaries with sample size of 366 respondents’ selected using stratified random sampling from public parastatals in Rivers State. A structured and validated instrument titled “Publishers Application Skills required of secretaries in public parastatals in Rivers State (PASROSIP)” was used to elicit data for the study. Cronbach Alpha procedure was used to establish the reliability of the instrument with a coefficient of 0.82 which showed that the instrument was reliable. Mean and Improvement Need Index (INI) were used to analyze the responses from the research question, while the null hypothesis was tested using the independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that Publishers’ application skills of secretaries are highly needed with positive improvement index. The following recommendations were given among others: those secretaries in the public service should be given awareness by their employers on the need to acquire Microsoft publishers’ application skills.

Keywords: Secretaries, application skills, Microsoft publishers, graphic art

INTRODUCTION
Publisher software application is a software application which a secretary utilizes to carry out his office duties effectively. Microsoft publisher is also referred to as desktop publishing tool and it is used with the aid of the computer to create documents that have the combination of text and graphics. Ndinechi and Ementa (2013) noted that publisher entails an application software that allows for the combination of text and graphics which aim at producing typeset quality documents such as: newsletters, flyers, brochures, magazines and so on. McGoldrick (2010) noted that publisher allows users to manipulate, typeset, and align images, graphics, and page layout with a single integrated system. According to Nwaosa, Egbule and Olannye (2013) office information managers need to develop their competencies on the use of desktop publishing application in order to be able to create documents that have the combination of charts, graphic, text and headlines with variety of typefaces. Ugiagbe (2002) defined a secretary as an assistant to an executive, possessing an impressive mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision and who displays initiative and exercises judgement and makes decisions within the scope of his/her authority. In the same vein, Nwosu, Anaka and Eleoba, (2003) opined that secretaries today require new sets of skills and competencies in the application of office functions for information processing, management employment, office productivity, job retention, job success and job satisfaction. The authors also observed that secretaries who are not well-equipped with these skills, knowledge and abilities will soon render themselves obsolete, redundant or can even be thrown out of jobs. It is important to note that secretaries who are not compliant in acquiring these needed information application skills will find it difficult to perform effectively in their assigned office duties. The traditional pattern of carrying secretarial functions is fast fading away. The introduction and invention
of sophisticated office equipment and machines has placed a demand on secretaries to acquire certain information systems skills so as to enhance their job performance. Oguejiofor and Umeh (2016) opined that the stereotype picture of the secretary of the past completely with traditional office competencies is beginning to fade and the image of the new secretary with electronic competencies is emerging.

**Statement of the Problem**

It has been observed that in order to take advantage of the advancement in technologies, most parastatals across the nation has invested in the procurement and maintenance of information communication and technology facilities used for information collection, processing, maintenance, storage and dissemination. Most offices have one form of computer system or the other as well as networking cables or wireless connection. However, the researchers observed that most secretaries lack publishers’ application skills as to enable them effectively utilize the publishers’ skills for effective job performance. The researchers thereby observed that utilization of Microsoft publishers are applications neglected. Secretaries find it difficult to utilize pushers in their offices. Most secretaries in public parastatals in Rivers State seems not to be trained, most of them lack the basic skills for utilizing the publishers for effective job performance. In same vein, most of the secretaries find it difficult to utilize and apply the skills for effective job performance. This is because most of them lack the required publishers’ application skills that will enable them effectively carry out their duties. Why will a trained secretary find it difficult to utilize publishers for job performance? Were they not taught and trained for it? If these problems are to be solved, there is need to ascertain the training and facilities used in training secretaries as to help to determine why they find it difficult to utilize publishers’ application skills to enhance productivity in the public parastatals.

**Publisher Skills Need of Business Education Graduates and Job Performance**

The publisher software application is a software application which a secretary can use in carrying out his office duties effectively. Microsoft publisher is also referred to as desktop publishing tool and it is used with the aid of the computer to create documents that have the combination of text and graphics. Ndinechi and Ementa (2013) noted that publisher entails an application software that allows for the combination of text and graphics aimed at producing typeset quality documents such as: newsletters, flyers, brochures, magazines and so on. West (2016) opined that Microsoft publisher is a software that uses a combination of hardware and software to enable the user to combine text and graphics on the same page in a professional looking, publishable format, and print it, using a page description language. McGoldrick (2010) noted that it allows users to manipulate, typeset, align images, graphics, and page layout with a single integrated system.

The desktop publishing package can be use by secretaries to produce office documents for printing purposes. Ubani (2008) stressed that desktop publishing packages are used together with printer to create a print (prepared) multicolour flashing picture documents such as newsletter and magazines pages, greeting cards etc. that is needed and used for further printing at the printing press. Desktop publishing is an important electronic-driven tool which a secretary is expected to utilize for enhancement of communication by making it possible to quickly and efficiently produce printed and electronic documents. It is desktop publishing software package that enables secretaries manipulate and arrange a type text and graphics for the purpose of producing an organized document. The text and graphics can be changed on the screen in order to beautify and make a document look better. Microsoft publishing software application is needed by for preparation of academic brochures, admissions, graduations, conferences and meetings invitation cards and programmes. The Microsoft publisher terminates the problem of multiple typing, re-typing and reprinting huge numbers of materials and enables secretaries to print the needed materials and documents without delay and waste of too many materials.

There are many applications skills related to this application software which secretaries are expected to develop for redesign of the pre-designed publisher’s documents in order to make them comply with the functions in public parastatals. Quible (2011) stated that a number of desirable skills that secretaries must develop to be able to use publisher software as:

1. Ability to manipulate design templates, which enable the users to construct pages without having to create their basic design.
2. Ability to use clip library, which consists with hundreds of perhaps thousands of ready-to-use images.
3. Ability to set font type from font library, which provides the users with perhaps hundreds of different type faces in different sizes and with different characteristics, such as bold, italics, and so on.

**Purpose of the Study**
The main purpose of the study was to determine the publishers’ application skills required of secretaries for job effectiveness in public parastatals in Rivers State.

**Research Question**
This research question guided the study
1. What is the Publishers’ application skills need of secretaries for job effectiveness in public parastatals in Rivers State?

**Null Hypothesis**
This null hypothesis was tested at $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

$H_0$: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of OTM Lecturers and secretaries on the Publishers’ application skills required of secretaries for job effectiveness in public parastatals in Rivers State.

**METHODOLOGY**
The study employed descriptive survey research design. A survey research design involves gathering information from the sample size through the population that is familiar with the ideas and issues relating to the objectives of the study. It is the act of eliciting questions from the respondents. The study was carried out in Port Harcourt, the capital city of Rivers State of Nigeria. Rivers State is made up of 319 wards, three (3) senatorial district and 23 Local Government Areas. The population for the study comprised 1200 secretaries from public parastatals in Rivers State. While the sample size of the study comprised (366) secretaries selected from public parastatals in Rivers State. A structured 4 points scaled questionnaire titled “Publishers Application Skills required of secretaries in public parastatals in Rivers State (PASROSIPP)” was developed and used for the study. The instrument was face validated by two experts in the faculty of Education, their comments for the instrument indicated that the instrument was suitable for use in for the study. A coefficient of 0.82 was Obtained using Cronbach Alpha method. The instrument was administered to the respondents. A return rate of data collected was 95.5%. Mean and Improvement Need Index were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistical tool was utilized to test the hypotheses.

**Table 1: Mean and INI on Publishers’ Application Skills Required of Secretaries for Job Performance (N=366)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>$\bar{X}_1$</th>
<th>$\bar{X}_2$</th>
<th>$\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2$</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ability to produce business documents</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Skills in manipulating documents</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ability to produce magazines</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ability to produce news letters</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Skills in typesetting of images</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>Not Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Cluster Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.62</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.51</strong></td>
<td><strong>.11</strong></td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in Table 4.5 showed that the INI for Microsoft publisher applications are positive except on skills in typesetting of images with INI of -.20 in which the performance level of secretaries exceeds the level of skills required. The positive cluster INI of .11 implies that the level at which the Microsoft publishers application skills are needed are higher than the level at which the secretaries could perform.

**Hypothesis1:** There is no significant difference between Mean responses of OTM lecturers and secretaries for publishers’ application skills required of secretaries for job performance.
Table 2: The t-statistic testing the difference between the mean responses of OTM lecturers and secretaries on Microsoft publishers’ application skills need of secretaries ($N_1 = 57$, $N_2 = 310$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>$\bar{X}_1$</th>
<th>$\bar{X}_2$</th>
<th>SD$_1$</th>
<th>SD$_2$</th>
<th>t-cal</th>
<th>t-crit</th>
<th>Decision</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ability to produce business documents</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Skills in manipulating documents</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ability to produce magazines</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ability to produce news letters</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Skills in typesetting of images</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>-1.41</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>NS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cluster t</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
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</table>

NS= Not Significant at 0.05 alpha level and df = 364

Data in Table 4.12 showed the t-statistic testing the difference between the mean responses of OTM lecturers and secretaries on Microsoft publishers’ application skills need of secretaries for job performance. The test yields calculated t-values that are less than the t-critical value (1.90) at .05 level of significant and df = 364. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference the mean responses of OTM lecturers and secretaries on Microsoft publishers’ application skills need of secretory for job performance is retained.

Data in Table 4.5 showed that the INI for Microsoft publisher applications are positive except on skills in typesetting of images with INI of -0.20 in which the performance level of secretaries exceeds the level of skills required. The positive cluster INI of 1.1 implies that the level at which the Microsoft publishers application skills are needed are higher than the level at which the secretaries could perform.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Microsoft publishers’ application skills of secretaries have been revealed by this study to be highly needed for job performance. The skills need yields a positive INI and is statistically significant at .05 level of significance. This result is influenced by the fact that secretaries need these skills to manipulate, typeset align images, graphics and page layout with single integrated system.

The result of the study also supported the findings of Nwaosu, Egbule and Olannye (2013) that office information managers (secretaries) need to develop their competencies in Microsoft publishers’ application otherwise referred to as desktop publishing application to be able to create document that has the combination of charts, graphic, text and headlines with variety of typefaces. The author further stressed that as a new version of this software emerge overtime, secretaries would have to review their skills need and embark on a career development programme that would enable them update their skills. This implies that Microsoft publishers’ application skills need has a positive improvement need index as it is occasioned by emerging technologies.

**CONCLUSION**

Microsoft publishers enable the secretary to design and produce secretarial documents that has both text and graphics. Waggoner (2002) opined that Microsoft publisher produces documents, such as newsletters marketing literature, technical manuals, and annual reports that contain art as well as text. He stressed that documents of this type were previously created by slower, more expensive traditional publishing methods such as typesetting. Microsoft publisher also enable secretaries to create professional some official documents using their various information systems which will enable them to produce documents that could only be produced using graphic users. Waggoner (2002) also stated that the graphic art used in the document created with desktop publishing usually comes from one of three sources:

1. Art can be selected from clip art collections. Clip art refers to collections of art that are stored on disks and are designed for use with popular desktop publishing packages.
2. Art can be created on the computer with software packages that are specifically designed to create graphics, or through software such as spreadsheet packages that can create pie, line, and bar charts.

3. An input device called a scanner can be connected to the computer and used to electronically capture copies of pictures, photographs, and drawings and store them on a disk for use with desktop publishing software.

Nwaosa, Egbule and Olannye (2013) emphasised the need for office information managers to develop their competencies in the use of desktop publishing application in order to be able to create documents that has the combination of charts, graphic, text and headlines with variety of typefaces. However, is new versions of this software emerge overtime, secretaries would have to review their skills need and embark on a career development programme that would enable them update their skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Employers of secretaries in the public service should be given awareness on the need to train their employees on publishers’ application skills for effective job performance.
2. Training institutions should develop programmes that would assist secretaries update their computer application skills.
3. Employers of labour should collaborate with training institutions on developing contents and instructional strategies for improving the Publishers application skills.
4. Federal and State governments should come out with policies that will ensure standards in the training and employment of secretaries for job performance in public parastatals.

REFERENCES