

**PERSONNEL'S PERCEPTION OF CONTINUED RELEVANCE OF SHORTHAND AND TYPEWRITING SKILLS TO OFFICE MANAGEMENT IN OSUN STATE OWNED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS, NIGERIA.**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Shorthand and Typewriting are two major skilled courses in Office Education Programme in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Acquisitions of skills in these two subjects were regarded as trade-in-stock for secretarial practitioners in managing offices. But with the current applications of Information and Communication Technology to manage in offices, the relevance of Typewriting and Shorthand skills became a subject of discourse. The main objective was to determine the continued relevance of the two subject's skills to office management in Osun State owned tertiary institutions. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Five research questions and five hypotheses were raised for the study. The population comprised 171 executives with their individual secretaries, making 342 participants. The entire population was used as the sample size. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data and descriptive statistics to analyse. The findings among others revealed that Shorthand and Typewriting were still relevant to office management. Based on the findings, it is recommended that secretarial training institutions should intensify efforts towards the training of students in these "twin" subjects.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Shorthand, Typewriting Skills, Office Management, Osun State, Tertiary Institutions, Nigeria*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The relevance of Shorthand and Typewriting in traditional office management cannot be overemphasized. Acquisition of knowledge and development of skills were recognized as kits for gainful employment. Ndinechi (1990) citing Krevolim (1970), summarising the relevance of Typewriting stated that

*... Typewriting benefits vocabulary, reading, spelling and other language skills. Typewriting also influences positively the subject matter acquisition. It helps develop favourable attitudes and habits, reinforces basic English knowledge... and contributes to remedial education. Pg 13.*

Learning Typewriting requires students to develop good work-habit, learn to arrange materials in orderly manner and manage time wisely. Shorthand on the other hand, is highly technical, however its technicality bothers on producing error-free mailable documents. Davis and Oladunjoye (1990), noted that Shorthand is a difficult subject for learners. Although, there are many instructional and supplementary materials for use, Shorthand instructors and learners in Nigeria find it difficult to lay hand on them.

Traditionally, secretarial practice involved taking shorthand dictation and transcribing it on the typewriter using necessary typewriting skills to produce professional, standard and aesthetic documents for internal and external communication. An efficient secretary is expected to be able to manage correspondence, make and keep records of appointments for the boss, and act as memory aid for the smooth running of the office. He/she, according to Edun and Ajetunmobi (1986), composes letters, prepares reports and attends to people who visit the office to transact one business or the other. Typing materials from longhand or shorthand notes dominated traditional secretarial practice. A secretary, then “was more or less stereotyped as the person in the office who types, files correspondence...” (Sholagbade, 2012). In fact, the competency of a secretary, was hinged on her ability to take shorthand notes as dictated by the executive and transcribed same accurately on the typewriter. Consequently, secretarial education in the polytechnics, about ten years ago, accorded five credit units with ten teaching hours to Shorthand while typewriting carried five credit units with eight teaching hours (NBTE, 2004). Prospective secretarial personnel faced interview with practical tests in Shorthand and Typewriting, excellent demonstration of these two skills guaranteed employment.

In the recent past, several changes have taken place in private and public offices as regards the roles and functions of the secretary due to innovations in technology (Aliata & Hawa, 2014). The inventions and innovations in computer, according to Onifade (2010), have taken over many jobs being performed by the secretaries in the office. Rapid developments in office technology have resulted in new terminologies in the field of computer and computer applications. Kanu (1990) opines that emergence of computer in business created an impression that many workers will be relieved of their jobs since automation is likely to take over the jobs hitherto being performed by many office workers. According to him, marketable skills for business education students in the information age will be data and word processing skills.

In a dynamic society, “things change fast, techniques and technology easily become obsolete making fresh demands on new skills and procedures” (Arukwe, 1990). Technological influx to the society demands continuous and regular monitoring of skills that employers of labour want and prefer for maximum productivity.

Sholagbade (2012) opines that technologies, such as speed typing and voice recognition software have taken the place of the former administrative art known as Shorthand. Innovations in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), according to Oludele (2008), have changed the nature of office works and the office today is being largely automated with modern technologies. Daily use of Shorthand and Typewriting skills has been greatly reduced in the public sector because more managers are getting involved in word processing, resulting from office automation. Word processing software provides features for spelling and grammar check, auto-margin set and templates for various display of work. The stereotypical picture of the secretary with notepad and pencil, according to Clark (1997), is fading. These innovations in Information and Communication Technology, which revolutionized the operations of the office, coupled with general opinion that Shorthand is problematic for students and so excessive labour on it is unnecessary in the information age, influenced change in curriculum for the training of secretaries at the Polytechnics. This was to reflect the realities of the modern world of work. Hence, the curriculum was loaded with Information and Communication Technology-based courses (NBTE, 2004). However, the idea of abandoning the use of Typewriter and Shorthand is intriguing. Hence, the need to undergo a study on the continued relevance of Typewriting and Shorthand in today's office management techniques.

The following research questions and hypotheses guide the study

### Research Questions

How relevant are Shorthand and Typewriting skills to mails and information processing functions of office managers in Osun State-owned tertiary institutions?

1. How relevant is Shorthand skills to handling telephone calls and messages in the contemporary offices?
2. How relevant is Shorthand skills to handling telephone calls and messages in the contemporary offices?

### Research Hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: There will be no significant difference in the perception of executives and their secretaries on the relevance of Shorthand and Typewriting skills to management of meetings in a modern office.

H<sub>02</sub>: There will be no significant difference in the perception of executives and secretaries on relevance of shorthand and typewriting skills to mails and information processing functions of office managers in Osun State-owned tertiary institutions.

H<sub>03</sub>: There will be no significant difference in the perception of executives and the secretaries on continued relevance of typewriting skills to modern document management in Osun State-owned tertiary institutions.

### Population and Sample of the Study

The population consists of three hundred and forty two (342) personnel; one hundred and seventy one (171) executives, also one hundred and seventy one (171) secretaries. The breakdown is as presented below:

Table 1: Executives and Secretaries in Osun State-owned Tertiary Institutions

Name of Institutions	Number of executives	Number of secretaries	Total
Osun State University, Osogbo	30	30	60
Osun State College of Education, Ilesa	39	39	78
Osun Polytechnics, Iree	26	31	62
Osunc Coolege of Education, Ila-Uragun	45	26	52
Osun College of Technology, Esa-Oke	171	45	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>342</b>

Source: Registry records of the Osun State-owned institutions, 2015

The total population was used for the study since it was not too large to warrant sampling.

### Research Instrument

A set of questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire-Shorthand and Typewriting Skills Relevance Survey (STSRs), contained thirty seven (37) items to elicit responses necessary to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The response mode was structured on 4-point Likert rating scale.

Three hundred and forty-two (342) copies of questionnaire were administered but three hundred and ten (310), representing 90.6% were correctly filled and returned.

### Research Questions

Research Question 1: How relevant are Shorthand and Typewriting skills to mails and information processing functions of office managers in Osun State owned tertiary institutions?

Table2: Relevance of Shorthand and Typewriting Skills to Mails and Information Processing Functions of Office Managers ( $N = 310$ ) Test Value  $Is = 2.50$

S/N	Item	Mean	STD	Remarks
1	In taking down lengthy verbal instructions accurately	3.29	0.747	Very Relevant
2	In saving time for handwritten drafts and manuscripts compared to other usable devices	3.25	0.718	Very Relevant
3	In taking down oral information via the telephone as backup for auto-recording facility	3.28	0.690	Very Relevant
4	In recording confidential information	3.41	0.690	Very Relevant
5	For fast and error-free information/word processing functions	4.59	0.511	Very Relevant
6	For production and presentation of documents in standard formats in spite of the availability of computer voice recognition software	3.58	0.550	Very Relevant
7	For effectiveness and accuracy of electronic mail processing	3.54	0.605	Very Relevant
8	For production of error-free correspondence in spite of availability of computer spell and grammar check	3.59	0.530	Very Relevant

Source: Field survey, 2015

The result showed that Shorthand and Typewriting skills are still very relevant for mails and information processing functions of office managers. The mean calculated values for all items are far greater than that of the test value.

Research Question 2: How relevant is Shorthand skill to handling telephone calls and messages in the contemporary office?

Table3: The Relevance of Shorthand Skill to handling Telephone Calls and Messages ( $N = 310$ ) Test Value  $Is = 2.50$

S/N	Item	Mean	STD	Remarks
1	For taking telephone messages to save callers' time.	2.80	0.892	Slightly Relevant
2	For taking telephone messages to serve as backup for unto recording facility.	2.76	0.836	Slightly Relevant
3	Keeping confidential telephone messages.	2.87	0.937	Slightly Relevant
4	Recording oral discourse over telephone lines.	2.78	0.855	Slightly Relevant
5	Taking lengthy verbal instructions from the executive over telephone line.	2.89	0.932	Slightly Relevant

Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

In all items listed above, the mean calculated is just slightly higher than that of the test value as shown in the Table 3. To some extent Shorthand skill is slightly relevant to handling telephone calls and messages in the contemporary offices.

### Research Hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: There will be no significant difference in the perception of executives and their secretaries on the relevance of Shorthand and Typewriting skills to management of meetings in a modern office.

Table 4: The Perception of Executive and their Secretaries on the Relevance of Shorthand and Typewriting Skill to Management of Meetings in a Modern Office

Designation	N	Mean	STD	Df	T	Sig. of t
Executives	146	25.47	3.27	308	3.310	0.001
Secretaries	164	24.15	3.70			

Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

Table 4 revealed significant outcome ( $t= 3.310$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This outcome implied that there is a significant difference in the perception of executive and their secretaries on the relevance of shorthand and typewriting skill to management of meetings in a modern office. The mean perception score of 25.47 recorded by the executives is significantly higher than the mean perception score of 24.15 recorded by the secretaries. Thus, the difference is statistically significant; therefore, we reject the null hypothesis.

H<sub>02</sub>: There will be no Significant difference in the perception of executives and secretaries on the relevance of Shorthand and Typewriting Skills to mail and information processing functions of office managers in Osun State-owned tertiary institutions.

Table5: The perception of executives and their secretaries on the relevance of Shorthand and Typewriting skill to mail and information processing

Designation	N	Mean	STD	Df	T	Sig. of t
Executive	146	28.116	3.176	308	2.957	0.0003
Secretary	164	27.024	3.301			

Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

Table 5 revealed significant outcome ( $t= 2.957$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This outcome implied that there is a significant difference in the perception of executives and their secretaries on the relevance of shorthand and typewriting skills to mail and information processing. The mean perception score of 28.116 recorded by the executives is significantly higher than the mean perception score of 27.024 recorded by the secretaries. Thus, the difference is statistically significant, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. Statistically, there is a significant difference in the perception of the executives and their secretaries on the relevance of shorthand and typewriting skills to mail and information processing functions of office manager .

H<sub>03</sub>: There will be no significant difference in the perception of executives and the secretaries on continued relevance of typewriting skills to modern document management in Osun State-owned tertiary institutions.

**Table 6: The perception of executives and their secretaries on the continued relevance of typewriting skills to modern document management**

Designation	N	Mean	STD	Df	T	Sig. of t
Executives	146	19.79	3.07	308	0.375	0.708
Secretaries	164	19.65	3.44			

Source: *Field Survey, 2015*

Table 6 revealed a non-significant outcome ( $t= 0.375$ ;  $p >0.05$ ). This outcome implied that there is no significant difference in the perception of executive and their secretaries on the relevance of typewriting skill to modern document management. The mean perception score of 19.79 recorded by their executives is not significantly different from that of 19.65 recorded by the secretaries. Thus, the difference is not statistically significant, therefore the null hypothesis was accepted.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings on the first research question reveals that Shorthand and Typewriting skills are very relevant to mails and information processing functions of office managers in Osun State-owned tertiary institutions. It was revealed that availability of auto-recording facility does not remove the relevance of Shorthand in taking down oral information via the telephone, neither do computer voice recognition software, spell and grammar check facility displace the relevance of Typewriting skills in mail processing. Thus, in agreement with Ndinechi (1990), it implies that secretaries' display and proofreading skills are still required in presentation of documents in standard format and in correction of errors that are beyond the capabilities of computer spell and grammar check.

The result of analysis on research question two indicates that both the executives and the secretaries viewed Shorthand skill as slightly relevant to handling telephone calls and messages in the contemporary office. This seems to contradict Davis and Oladunjoye's (1990) findings of high-level executives' preference of acquisition and application of shorthand skills for accurate note-taking.

The test of hypothesis one reveals a significant difference in the perception of executives and their secretaries on the relevance of Shorthand and Typewriting skills to the management of meetings in a modern office in favour of the executives. This shows that the executives viewed application of Shorthand and typewriting's skills to meeting management to be of greater importance. The secretaries' perception might result from the stress associated with acquisition of the skills.

Similarly, findings on hypothesis two indicates a significant difference in the perception of executives and their secretaries on the relevance of shorthand and typewriting's skills to mail and information processing functions of office manager in Osun state-owned tertiary institutions. This agrees with Davis and Oladunjoye (1990) who viewed Shorthand and Typewriting skills as being necessary for secretaries to work with high-level executives who prefer secretaries who can handle high-level responsibilities of taking notes, lengthy instructions and recordings confidential matters accurately.

Findings on hypothesis three reveals that there is no significant differences in the perception of executives and their secretaries on the relevance of Typewriting skill to modern document management. Both categories of office personnel viewed Typewriting skills to be very relevant to document management in the contemporary office.

Adebusi (2001), in his study on relevance of shorthand and typewriting in the curriculum for higher education, states that the use of shorthand skills cuts across a wide range of professionals and formal training on shorthand will enhance better productivity. Also, Agboola, Ademiluyi and Ademiluyi (2014), while assessing the continued relevance of the secretarial profession in the age of office technology, viewed effective secretarial practitioner as one who is able to arrange meetings, compile minutes and reports. In their reports, they concluded that secretarial practitioners are still needed in the office for taking telephone messages, taking dictations, recording minutes of meetings and receiving information in different formats. Since the abbreviated system of writing i.e shorthand, is used where accurate and immediately legible recording of spoken English is required as is still the case in the contemporary office, it was concluded that shorthand would still be relevant in office management.

The findings of this study were also in line with that of Ohakwe (2001) who examined the place of manual office skills in an Information Technology era. The findings reveal that typing skills are required of secretaries for typing business letters, mimeographs, memorandum and drafts. According to him, the executives considered typing form tape recorders, typing minutes of meetings and reports among others, as important typing competencies in the office. Other office management duties where Typewriting skills were viewed to be relevant by the executives include preparation and production of programmes and itineraries, time table, complex tabulations, display work and statistical drafts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the above, the following recommendations are given:

1. Despite the fact that we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which is ICT dominated, the use of Typewriting and Shorthand should not be totally put aside by secretarial personnel.
2. Training institutions (Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Universities) offering secretarial education should redirect their efforts towards impartation of Shorthand and Typewriting skills into secretarial students to meet employers' requirements.
3. Employers should regularly organize on-the-job training for secretaries to update their knowledge on major Typewriting and Shorthand skills.
4. The curriculum planners should note the executives' expectations and requirements from secretarial personnel and adjust the curriculum content in line with the reality of the world of work.
5. Practicing and prospective secretaries should be aware of the continued relevance of Shorthand and Typewriting skills and be ready to pay the price for professional competence.
6. In addition to ICT competence, acquisition and competent application of Shorthand and typewriting should be considered by employers in employing secretarial personnel for effective office management.

## CONCLUSION

It is obvious from the study that Shorthand and Typewriting skills are very relevant to managing the traditional office and that the duo are still perceived, especially by the executives, to be very relevant to modern office management in spite of the availability of modern office technologies. However, they perceived Shorthand skills to be slightly relevant to management of telephone calls and messages. Generally, the acquisition of knowledge and development of these skills should be given adequate attention. This suggests that effective office management requires acquisition and competent application of Shorthand and Typewriting skills on the part of the office managers/secretaries.

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