

The Relevance of Shorthand in the Modern Office from the Perspective of Human Resource Managers and Office Technology and Management Lecturers: A Case Study of Nigerian Colleges of Education of North-western States.

Muhammad Yahaya Musa and Kahirol Mohd Salleh

Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
myfawzi@gmail.com, kahirol@uthm.edu.my

Abstract

The art of writing a written symbol to represent a spoken sound is known as shorthand. This art has been around for quite some time. The secretary uses shorthand to record meeting proceedings. Parliament's daily proceedings were regularly documented in shorthand. Shorthand has played an essential role in company operations by providing a quick and precise way to record everyday activities. In addition to secretaries, other shorthand writers are referred to as stenographers. This paper looks at the importance of shorthand in today's secretarial employment. To collect data, the paper used purposive sampling and open-ended interviews. The study included 12 specialists, six from human resource management and six from office technology and management. Thematic data analysis was employed in the study, using pattern coding to establish themes. To assist data analysis, Nvivo 10 was used. According to the findings, shorthand is no longer relevant in the current workplace. Findings also revealed that technology has essentially supplanted the services that shorthand used to perform in offices, therefore, focus on benefits of technology in the teaching of the secretary should be prioritized. According to the recommendations, secretaries should not be taught shorthand during their training. The paper concludes that modern office technology competencies should be given greater attention in the teaching of the secretary, this would enhance productivity in the office.

Keywords:

Shorthand, Stenographer, OTME, HND, ND, NCE, NBTE

1. Introduction

Shorthand is the art of using a written sign to represent a spoken sound. Secretaries, journalists, and court reporters have long employed shorthand to perform sundry official tasks. Shorthand has a long and distinguished history, and it was once widely employed in offices all over the world. Technological improvements have changed the secretary's work pattern and style. When a graduate secretary was looking for work in the past, he had to have learned shorthand and typewriting, as well as a variety of other talents, depending on the role that needed to be filled. The speed with which a person can write in shorthand is measured. Shorthand and typewriting skills are coupled to assess an individual's ability. A shorthand speed of 100 words per minute is combined with a typewriting speed of 50 words per minute for holders of a national diploma (ND) certificate. A shorthand speed of 120 words per minute is paired with a typewriting speed of 60 words per minute for higher national degrees (HND). The national certificate in education (NCE) Qualification for shorthand is linked to shorthand speeds of 100 words per minute and word processing speeds of 50 words per minute. However, stenographers, who learn typewriting and shorthand, are sometimes referred to as secretaries. These varying rates are determined by an organization's secretarial service requirements. Shorthand skills, on the other hand, help secretaries improve their listening skills, focus, and accuracy, according to Amoor and Magaji (2015). Shorthand helps secretaries enhance their vocabulary and improve their spelling skills (Okoro, 2017).

Despite the fact that shorthand skills assist secretaries in becoming better writers and in taking minutes of meetings, the current course outline obtained does not adequately fulfill the desired aims of teaching shorthand in the Nigerian colleges of education to achieve the above-mentioned benefits. Another shortcoming in the present OTME minimum standard is the allotment of credit hours for shorthand theoretical and practical. Four (4) hours per week for shorthand theory and practicals is insufficient to successfully instruct pupils in shorthand. These credit hours are insufficient to deliver the results that Okoro claims to have obtained (2017). Shorthand is given more credit hours in Nigerian polytechnics than what it is in the Nigerian colleges of education, according to the

national board for technical education (NBTE, 2014). Shorthand is given two credit hours in Nigerian polytechnics during the first and second semesters (NBTE, 2014). Before the change of the course nomenclature to office technology and management, the course was given more credit hours in Nigerian polytechnics and colleges of education that used to offer secretarial studies. The course was renamed office technology and management from secretarial studies (OTM). A review and revamp of the secretarial studies curriculum in the Nigerian universities, colleges of education, and polytechnics prompted the name change.

This review has resulted in the course name being changed from "secretarial studies" and "secretarial education" to "office technology and management, or office technology and management education, as the case may be" in Nigerian tertiary institutions (Ejekaand and Ebenezer-Nwokeji, 2016). Several curriculum changes in Nigerian higher institutions occurred from the shift in the secretarial studies nomenclature. A new ICT-focused curriculum was established as a result of the transition (Olukemi and Boluwaji, 2014; Kepeghom, Joseph, Godpower, and Tamunoibuomi, 2018). The OTM's curriculum, on the other hand, has been modified to include ICTs. ICT is given a high priority while credit hours for shorthand and keyboarding have been drastically reduced to make room for ICT courses that are more relevant to the modern office routines. The introduction of ICT into secretarial practice has transformed secretarial jobs, making shorthand obsolete (Akpomi, 2003). The use of ICT into secretarial education has significantly increased the efficiency and effectiveness of secretarial tasks. Secretarial activities, according to Victor (2010), include planning and managing meetings, seminars, and other official events. Previously, these jobs were performed using the secretary's shorthand abilities. Prior to the invention of technology, the secretary used shorthand to record meeting minutes, take notes at official events, seminars, and other official gatherings. Shorthand abilities aided the secretary in performing a variety of secretarial tasks.

However, with the introduction of various office automation technologies, significant changes in the operations and disposition of secretarial activities have occurred in both the private and public workplaces (Oludele, 2008). With the emergence of video and audio recording equipment, as well as speech recognition software, shorthand services have been substituted by these technologies with greatest efficiency, speed, and precision (Sholagbade, 2012).

According to James (2013), the secretarial profession has seen major changes as a result of technological advancements. Increasing business practices and the pursuit of current worldwide markets are just a few of the factors that have contributed to new expectations on today's secretaries' commitments to use ICT. The modern approach to secretarial profession has evolved from the previous traditional method. The transition has resulted in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge via ICT, which is a crucial tool for the secretarial profession's work execution. Shorthand is no longer relevant to the secretary due to the development of technology and what is required in the modern workplace. This is due to the fact that the art is no longer used in the office. In the office, bosses do not dictate, and secretaries do not take notes in shorthand. Instead of using shorthand, secretaries record voice messages on contemporary recording equipment and then transcribe the recorded sounds to text (Justina, 2015; Christina, 2009).

1.1. Problem Statement

Business education is a program among others, offered in the Nigerian colleges of education. The office technology and management (education), (OTME), is a course formerly known as secretarial education. This course is offered in the department of office technology and management (education). The course is designed to produce teachers that would teach business education courses in secondary schools, or secretaries that work in the offices.

Business education is one of the programs offered at the Nigerian colleges of education. The Office Technology and Management (Education), often known as secretarial education, is a course that was previously known as secretarial education. This course is offered by the office technology and management department. The program is intended to train teachers who will teach business education courses in secondary schools or produce secretaries who will work in offices.

With the advancement of technology, however, the shorthand system has become outdated. Shorthand services are now easier, more effective, and more precise thanks to technological advancements. Instead of employing shorthand, many video and audio recording technologies are now used to do secretarial jobs. With maximum efficiency, simplicity, and accuracy, these recording devices have supplanted shorthand. A significant difficulty is that, in today's office, managers and superior officers no longer dictate to secretaries while composing official

communication. Secretaries now use recording devices during meetings to record entire meeting proceedings and jot down some key points with which they might emphasize in the minutes.

As a result, the emergence of technology has supplanted the secretarial activities that were previously handled using shorthand. Although shorthand is no longer utilized in offices, it is still taught in the Nigerian colleges of education while training the secretaries. As a result, this has produced a lacuna in the training of secretaries. Because shorthand is taught at colleges, while it is not useful in the workplace.

However, as a result of the emergence of technology, shorthand has become obsolete in the workplace, necessitating the elimination of shorthand from secretary training in order to make room for other appropriate courses that are more relevant to the modern office.

2. Methodology

Methodology is a set of approaches for conducting research in order to identify solutions to challenges (Merriam, 2009). Data was collected from 12 participants through an open-ended interview. Human resource managers make up six of the participants, while office technology and management professionals make up the other six.

To get in-depth insights from specialists, this study used open-ended interviews for data collection (Karim, 2013). Rich data was acquired since the experts were chosen based on a set of criteria. Relevant experience in the experts' relevant fields, years of competence in the subject, and willingness to participate in the study were among the factors.

The participants indicated their willingness to participate by signing a consent form. According to the consent form, their voice would be recorded and used purely for the purposes of this study. According to the form, their real names would not be disclosed; instead, pseudonyms would be used to represent them. The participants were fully informed about why they were chosen to participate, the expected duration of the interviews, the use of audio recording equipment to record their voices during the interviews, and how the information obtained from them would be treated in confidence (Edward and Holland, 2013). However, in order to avoid data loss and ensure the interviewer's entire attention, the audio recording of the participant's speech was required (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006; Valeria, Symonds, and Brown, 2016).

Thematic data analysis was used in conjunction with Nvivo 10 to make the data analysis process. The interview protocol was created with ethical considerations in mind, as is customary in qualitative research. The selection of qualitative approach was motivated by the study's goal to conduct an in-depth investigation of the study gap.

2.1 Data Analysis

Thematic data analysis was employed in this study using pattern coding to establish emergent themes. To facilitate the data analysis process, Nvivo 10 was employed. The interview notes were transcribed verbatim before the commencement of the analysis. This is to ensure that the participants' actual statements are accurately conveyed. Some unnecessary responses were filtered during the data processing phase. Vague statements and other information that did not fit the interview's theme were also sorted out. Nvivo's inherent features aided the study in developing a hierarchical model that displays the link between participants responses during data collections.

3. Discussions

An open-ended interview was used to get information from experts. Experts have contested the value of shorthand in modern secretarial employment. As a result of technological improvements, shorthand, according to experts, is no longer relevant in the training of secretaries. According to experts, the OTM curriculum should be revised to replace shorthand with a more relevant course that meets current office technological requirements.

Experts offered compelling arguments for why shorthand should no longer be taught in Nigerian colleges of education to secretaries. The participants' submissions were judged to be valid, and their views were found to represent a global dissemination of the rising new office management methods keeping with advanced office management practice. Shorthand is no longer necessary to perform the functions that were previously performed using it, according to the participants' general perceptions as stated in their numerous comments. Also, according

to the participants views, in performing secretarial duties, technology has proven to be more precise, faster, more effective than shorthand.

Shorthand, on the other hand, was deemed obsolete by the participants and should be eliminated from the OTM curriculum. Shorthand is no longer utilized in the office, executives no longer dictate letters to secretaries, and secretaries lack the ability to take down dictation, transcribe, and produce a document, according to the participants.

The inability of secretaries, particularly graduate secretaries of Nigerian colleges of education, to take down shorthand dictation was due to a lack of sufficient instruction in the subject. Shorthand contact hours in colleges of education are occasionally two (2) or four (4) hours per week, whereas the contact hours for a secretary to be taught and be able to take down dictation at a required pace should not be less than eight (8) contact hours per week. Another argument given by a participant is that shorthand teaching in the colleges of education, as provided in their curriculum is dominated by theories. Practical classes are only held on days exam days. However, exam days are not the only days that practical class should be held. The OTM curriculum should be examined, and shorthand should be eliminated, according to the participant.

For these and other reasons, the secretary is unable to acquire the mastery of taking dictations, transcribe and produce document(s).

An extract from a participant response is shown below:

“{From my view the teaching of shorthand in our colleges is not properly done. Practical drills do not take place, and you know it is through drills that students could develop their speed and accuracy, so I think the curriculum should be adjusted and shorthand should be removed}” (P10TM).

Another participant claims that because the nature of secretarial work has changed, shorthand is no longer applicable. Some secretaries, according to the participant, use recording equipment to record voice and then transcribe the recorded voice with ease, as opposed to shorthand, which is difficult to match. Shorthand should be removed from the OTM curriculum, according to this participant.

An extract from the participant’s responses is presented below:

{“I don’t think honestly with the current development technology, some are even recording the voice so when they go, they just extract what is important and just form a minute for that honestly shorthand is another write up which gave a lot of headache in this country. We don’t use it we don’t dictate in shorthand in the office. I will advise that the course to be removed from the teaching of the secretaries, this will be okay”.} (P10HRM).

According to one participant, in Nigeria, there was a time when there was no technology, and everything had to be done manually. The participant provided the example of a bank, where customer transactions were recorded on ledgers. The participant retorted, "Should we go back to the analog age now that our financial system has been replaced by computers and other technologies?" As a result, shorthand is analogue in comparison to current technology advancements around the world. According to the expert, shorthand should be abolished from secretaries' training in order to stay up with current global needs.

According to the participant, everything is done technologically in today's offices, and one may utilize technology to do jobs that were formerly performed using the art of shorthand with a high degree of accuracy and efficiency. As a result, the participant proposed that shorthand be removed from the OTME curriculum because it is no longer relevant. This will make it possible to introduce new courses that are more relevant in today's workplace.

An extract from the response of the participant is presented below:

{“I have worked in a bank then we had no single computer bank of the north, there was no computers everything we are doing we do it manual. Ledgers were used in a box to keep records of customers transactions. It is just like you asking me now how relevant is using those ledgers in the banking transactions. How relevant is that where there is technology, today everything is done within seconds”}. (P11OTME)

According to another participant, a human resource expert, shorthand has become a threat to students since some students' desire to study business education, but shorthand has kept them away from the department. The subject is no longer used in our offices, and it should be eliminated from secretarial education.

Extract from the participants responses is quoted below:

{“Shorthand, shorthand, you see I have been in shorthand number one thing that scared students in this OTME. They will say shorthand, I even prefer to even learn Arabic more than this, that is the thing is very difficult and now a days shorthand to me I don't know is running out of time because there other means of communication gadgets of taking minutes why bothering yourself drawing all those kind things saying you are writing shorthand, in the fat that you even write some of them as you are writing very fast you may even miss, because a small curve will mean a different thing, but with this current gadgets now, I think shorthand should go out”}. (P12HRM).

Shorthand is no longer important in the training of modern secretaries, according to a human resource expert. The P10HRM, P11OTME, and P12HRM all agree, according to a human resource expert. This is why the experts suggested that the secretary should be trained based on the available office resources; both parties agreed that shorthand is no longer useful and should be eliminated from the OTME program. Because shorthand is no longer used in the office, it should be removed from secretaries' training.

An extract from the response of the participant is presented below:

{“This is a very fundamental question. To me shorthand is not relevant considering the modern secretarial needs. The art was relevant before, but the present modern office of nowadays, does not require shorthand”}. (P7HRM).

On the other hand, although agreeing with the aforementioned arguments that shorthand is no longer required in offices, one participant believes the course is still useful in secretarial training. Although shorthand is no longer utilized in workplaces, the participant believes that the training is still valuable since it develops students' communication abilities. Another OTME participant believes that shorthand should be taught to secretaries in Nigerian colleges of education.

The response of the participant is presented below:

{“Some people they are taking shorthand is outdated, but from my own perception or from own contributions on this, shorthand is not the only learning skill course, there are some issues that are normally derive from shorthand. if somebody is good in shorthand definitely his spelling will improve”}. (P6OTME).

The response of the above participant (P6OTME) was not accepted. The majority of participants believe that shorthand is irrelevant and that it should be removed from the OTM curriculum.

Another participant was quoted saying:

{“Well, I cannot say shorthand is still relevant especially in this our modern office, because if you go out to our offices, quite frankly there is no boss that dictate letters or any document to the secretary to take in shorthand to type, maybe due to the emergence of ICT gadgets, so quite frankly it is not relevant, the emergence of ICT has taken care of what shorthand can offer”}. (P3 OTM). (2nd Round Interview).

Shorthand is no longer relevant, and it should be removed from secretarial training in Nigerian colleges of education, according to the above statements. Shorthand should be replaced with other courses that are relevant to modern office needs, according to another participant, given today's increase of technologies and desire for flexibility in secretarial job.

Below is an extract from the participants response:

{“If we look at the changes of technology nowadays and the changes of curriculum of the time and the need for the flexibility of the curriculum nowadays, and what is happening in the working

environment now, I think that the shorthand need to be replaced with other courses that would be relevant with the current working situation”}. (P5 HRM). (2nd Round Interview).

Participants agreed, however, that shorthand is no longer useful in the modern secretarial profession and that it should be removed from the OTM curriculum in favor of more technologically advantageous courses.

4. Findings

The importance of shorthand to the secretary in today's office was explored by the participants. According to many participants, shorthand is not used in offices and should be removed from the OTME curriculum because the secretary should be trained based on what is learned in the offices. Other participants, on the other hand, considered shorthand as essential in the secretary's education, despite the fact that technology is phasing it out. According to the participants, the course should be provided to secretaries on training in Nigerian educational institutions. The findings revealed that most participants agreed that shorthand is no longer useful in the modern secretarial profession. The course should also be removed from the OTME minimum standard, according to the findings.

Despite the fact that the findings of an Ogwang (2020) study done in Uganda contradict the previous findings of this study, Owang (2020) findings revealed that shorthand is still essential in the secretarial profession since supervisors still dictate memos and letters to their secretaries. Despite the fact that a large majority of secretaries use longhand at the office for note-taking and personal records, the survey found that secretaries rarely use shorthand. Secretaries, on the other hand, do not use shorthand in their offices because of difficulties with service delivery.

Shorthand is no longer useful in modern secretarial practice, according to a study conducted by Ma'aji, Istifanus, and Adamu (2020) in North Eastern Nigeria. Ma'aji, Istifanus, and Adamu's findings (2020) also had shown that secretaries' future success is dependent on their ability to learn new technologies. According to Ma'aji, Istifanus, and Adamu (2020), the secretaries' curriculum should be reviewed by removing shorthand from the training of the secretary. However, Ma'aji, Adamu, and Istifanus (2020) agree with the findings of this study, arguing that shorthand is no longer relevant in modern secretarial practice, and that, as a result of the aforementioned conclusions, shorthand should be removed from the OTME minimum standard.

Figure 1 below is a hierarchical model which depicts the link between various participants' responses on the relevance of shorthand. The hierarchical model revealed a general consensus among participants' responses, demonstrating that shorthand is no longer relevant in today's modern office. The model also showed that participants agreed to have the OTM curriculum reviewed so that shorthand could be removed.

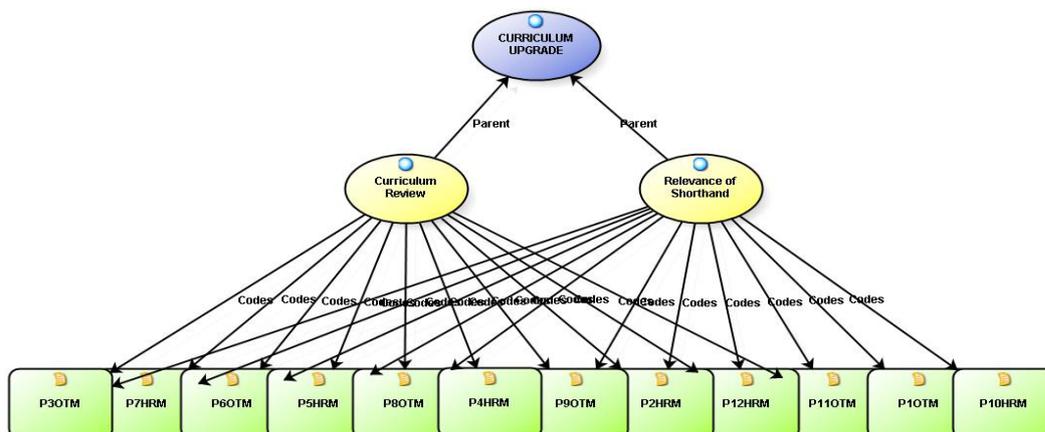


Figure 1: Hierarchical model showing relationship of participants responses on the relevance of shorthand

5. Conclusion

Shorthand is no longer relevant in today's modern office, thanks to the introduction of office technologies. In Nigerian institutes of education, the technique of teaching shorthand has also changed, resulting in the reduction of credit hours previously assigned to the subject in order to produce secretaries who are strong writers and English speakers.

Shorthand, however, is no longer useful in current secretarial practice, and its teaching should be discontinued to make place for other courses that are more relevant to the modern office, according to the results of this research.

6. Recommendations

The study's findings imply that shorthand is no longer useful in the current secretarial office, hence this report suggests the following:

1. that the subject should be expunged from the Nigerian colleges of education OTM curriculum.
2. that office technologies that are more relevant and more result oriented to the secretary should be Taught to the secretaries on training.

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Biographies

-Muhammad Yahaya Musa is a master's degree graduate at University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia and currently a PhD student in the same university. Muhammad is a student with interest in Office Technology and management (Secretarial Studies). Born in the city of Kano, Nigeria. His working career spanned a period of two decades serving as senior secretarial staff in various organisations within Kano State. Presently Muhammad is an academic staff at Federal College of Education (Technical), Bichi, passionate about imparting his secretarial practice experiences. A professional member of Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN) and member, Nigeria Association of Vocational and Technical Educators (NAVTEd). Muhammad has authored some papers in both local and international journals.

As a young researcher, Muhammad is learning to develop his research skills and knowledge through collaboration with other researchers to conduct research projects to gain from their experiences and learn about their research perspectives.

Beside his native language, he speaks English, Muhammad is happily married with children.

-Kahiroh Mohd Salleh currently serves as an Associate Professor at Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia and also as Principal Researcher at Advanced Center for Technical and Vocational Education (ACTiVE), Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia. He has earned almost 22 years of experience working as faculty member and assistant director with higher learning institutions including Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia. Apart from that he is actively participating in numerous research which involves national and international levels, relatively to his expertise in Research Methodology and Applied Statistic, within Career and Technical Education field. His substantive education background has influenced his career path especially after his PhD graduation in 2012.

Kahiroh received a B.Sc. (Hons) in Mechanical Engineering with majoring in Plant Engineering from University of Technology Malaysia, an M.Ed. in Technical Education also from University of Technology Malaysia, and a Ph.D. in Education and Human Resource Studies specialized in Organization, Performance and Change from Colorado State University (CSU). After completing his doctoral program, he was granted CSU Presidential Fellowship award for his noble contributions in his area of research. Due to his success stories, he was selected as post-Doctoral student in Research Methodology where he also worked as Teaching Assistant at the same university, CSU. He returned to School of Education, CSU in 2017 as post-doctoral fellowship and visiting professor in Research Methodology for two years.

Some of his success stories in research career are Malaysian TVET policy project under the Ministry of Higher Education, Uniform terminology of service that incorporate horses to benefit people under PATH International, USA, the university council for workforce and human resource education Biennial survey analysis, USA and others. Likewise, he has worked with colleagues from Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Germany in research, publications, and consultations within his area of expertise. He has an experience teaching different graduate research classes and subjects including Quantitative research, Mixed-method research, Research methods, Data analysis, and Qualitative research. He is appointed as Visiting Professor at the Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia having taught research methods courses for graduate students. His publications include articles in various academic journals and presentations of more than 100 papers in both local and international. As a Malaysian who is still developing his research knowledge and skills, he wishes to continue conducting more research with other researchers to learn more about their research perspectives and cultures.