
**THE IMPACT OF OFFICE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ON THE
PERFORMANCE OF THE PROFESSIONAL SECRETARY AT THE GHANA PORTS AND HARBOURS
AUTHORITY, TAKORADI**

Elisha D'Archimedes Armah

(Lecturer)

Department of Mathematics, Statistics & Computer Studies

Cape Coast Polytechnic

P.O. Box AD 50

Cape Coast

Ghana

ABSTRACT

This study basically aims at gathering information on the impact of office Information and Communication Technology on the performance of the professional secretary at the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, Takoradi. The descriptive survey method was used for this study. A total sample of 100 professional secretaries was used in this study. Questionnaires involving both open and closed ended questions were used to collect data. This study showed that there are computers, photocopiers and telephones in every office of the professional secretaries in the harbour, however, not all the offices have electric typewriters, scanning machines, shredding machines, fax machines and duplicating machines. The result of the study also showed that all the secretaries accepted that the introduction of Information and Communication Technology in their offices has ensured increased in efficiency in their performance and has also made it possible for them to implement major changes as well as making corrections easily. As a result, it has and also ensured accuracy and uniformity in their performance. The secretaries strongly agreed that, the introduction of Information and Communication Technology has positively improved their performance level in their offices and this has contributed positively in the office.

Key words: Harbour, Office, ICT, Secretary, Productivity, Performance Level

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become a vital engine of growth for organizations. It has created opportunities for many individuals, firms and communities globally. It has transformed the nature of organizational work and has equally changed work itself. The computer has metamorphosed from being a mainframe to the mainstream office use. It has certainly made office work more interesting and more productive. Computers are replacing typewriters, and mobile (cell) phone are computing with calculators, as well as fax machines are struggling with e-mails. The way businesses operate these days have changed all due to the advancement of ICT.

Advances in Information and Communication Technology have allowed devices such as computers to become smaller and more effective, and eventually have become a necessity to every

business today. Instant messaging, the Internet, internal and external telephone systems especially mobile devices and Intranets are now integral to the workings of office life. These advances in Information and Communication Technology have shaped the development of the modern office. Most business offices of today have turned their desks into "workstations," with desktop computers or laptops connected to a network of other PCs in the same office and even beyond.

Reference [17], in their work defined Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as the use of electromechanical equipments like the computer, telephone, internet and other gadgets for the collection, analysis, processing, storage and retrieving of data / information for the attainment of a particular objective(s) in all aspects of life. More specifically, ICTs refer to the conveyance of micro-electronics, computers and telecommunications which make it possible for data including text, video and video signals, to be transmitted anywhere in the world where digital signals can be received. They include networks such as fixed, wireless and satellite telecommunications, broadcasting networks and applications such as the internet, database management systems and multi-media tools [9].

The typewriter, and to some extent the pen and paper belongs to a different era in office history. Since the 1980s, the advent of the computer has revolutionized the design of the office. Reference [8], as a result of changes in technology, the role of secretaries in business has changed tremendously from that of typewriting and shorthand dictation, answering of telephone calls and processing of mails. Today's secretaries are exposed to office technology including the internet that make work much easier and knowledge more accessible. ICT has changed the equipment and work groups, of course; nobody today would like to work in an office where information processing and other secretarial activities are done manually or mechanically. So, the mechanized office is gradually given way to the automated office. Investment in networks of computer based workstations and other automated equipment is transforming traditional Manual office methods and paper communications media.

Reference [7], observed that due to the introduction of sophisticated technological (electronic) office equipment into today's office and the role secretaries need to play in ensuring accuracy and efficiency in their jobs, the secretaries need to meet the challenges by acquiring new skills and competencies for efficient operations in the electronic office. The roles of secretarial professionals have been turned around by technology. It has provided the tools that shift the role of secretaries from that of information recorders to business strategists [1], [4], and [10]. Therefore, secretaries are supposed to be abreast with modern technologies to meet present challenges in the office. As the office becomes increasingly dependent on technology, computers have become standard equipment.

The effective performance of the Professional Secretary depends upon the office equipment, knowledge and skills, of Professional Secretary. Electronic information and financial records and computerized processes such as document production and statistical calculations have made many offices much more efficient without compromising quality.

Statement of the Problem

The efficiency and effectiveness of the secretary in every business organization depends on the availability of office technologies as well as the skills and competencies of the secretary [2]. Modern business organizations have come to appreciate the role and importance of the secretary as well as the need to providing the needed and necessary office machines and equipment for the efficiency of the secretarial functions. This study therefore examines The impact of office Information and

Communication Technology on the performance of the professional secretary at the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, Takoradi

Objectives of the Study

The intention of the researcher was to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To determine the types of Information and Communication Technology equipment used at Takoradi Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority.
- ii. To establish how the secretary's performance and productivity level has been enhanced by using Information and Communication Technology in the office

Limitation of the study

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to cover all the ports under the care of Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA), especially that of the Tema. This study was limited to Takoradi harbour only.

Profile of Takoradi Harbour

The Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) is the national port authority of Ghana, responsible for the governance, maintenance and operation of the ports of Ghana, principally the Port of Sekondi-Takoradi, and Port of Tema, and the Fishing Harbour at Tema. GPHA main offices are in Sekondi-Takoradi, and Tema.

The Takoradi Harbour is in the Western region of Ghana. It is located in the industrial district of Sekondi-Takoradi and is the oldest harbour in Ghana. It is strategically located 225km west of Accra the capital city of Ghana and 300km east of Abidjan the capital city of La Cote d'Ivoire.

The idea for the construction of the port was first advocated in 1895 by consulting engineers of the British government. Construction of the Port of Takoradi began in 1923 by then governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Gordon Guggisberg and was completed and officially opened on 3rd of April 1928 by Right Honourable J.H. Thomas, P.C LLD, MP. Secretary of State for the Colonies. Operations started on the 3rd of December 1928. The Port was constructed as the base of navy operations and trade and was capable of handling annually one million tonnes of cargo – both imports and exports.

It is well connected to its hinterland which makes it the preferred and ideal gateway to the middle and northern parts of Ghana and the Sahelian landlocked countries of Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Collins English Dictionary (Complete and Unabridged 2003) defined secretary as a person who handles correspondence, keeps records, and does general clerical work for an individual, organization, etc. Reference [11], on the other hands defined a secretary as an executive assistant, who possesses a mastery of office skills, demonstrates the ability to assume responsibility with or without supervision, exercises initiatives and judgment and makes decision within the scope of assigned authority.

In Modern Office Technology the role of the secretary is crucial in the life or progress of an organization hence, needs some technological and human backing from the work place. The effective performance of the Professional Secretary depends upon the office equipment, knowledge and skills, of Professional Secretary [3].

This was further collaborated by [8] that, today's secretaries are exposed to office technology including the internet that makes work much easier and knowledge more accessible. It is now easier to send messages by telex, electronic mails (e-mails), fax and telephones. Other office gadgets available to the secretary are photocopy machines, duplicating machines, dictating machines, printers, among others. Technological changes have altered the procedures and technique for office functions includes the computers, electronic mail, voice mail, and the Internet. Reference [16], said, although in the past, people could not even imagine the wonders wrought by modern electronic and computer technology, these tools are now nearly indispensable in modern offices.

Reference [13], the introduction of ICT has changed the roles of secretaries. They opined that ICT has influenced the performance of secretaries in delivery of information, accuracy and effectiveness at the work place.

Reference [15] & [14], electronic information and financial records and computerized processes such as document production and statistical calculations have made many offices much more efficient without compromising quality. What used to require hours or even days of painstaking human effort can often be completed in minutes. In addition, accuracy and uniformity are often improved with technology-enhanced measurements and calculations. This is further stressed by [12], that technological advances have made it possible to transmit more data more quickly to more people than workers during the early 20th century even thought possible. Technology has had a positive effect on the internal operation of organization and has changed the manager's job. By linking computers, telephones, fax machines, copiers, and the like managers can get complete information quickly. With that information, managers can better formulate plans, make faster decision, more clearly, defined the workers need to perform, and monitor work activities as they happen.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study basically aims at gathering information on the impact of office Information and Communication Technology on the performance of the professional secretary at the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, Takoradi.

This study therefore used the descriptive survey method. Descriptive research methods can best be used to *describe* a set of observations or the data collected. It is usually the best methods for collecting information that will demonstrate relationships and describe the world as it exists. Reference [5] suggests that descriptive studies can answer questions such as "what is" or "what was." Experiments can typically answer "why" or "how."

To accomplish the objectives of this study, only the professional secretaries at Takoradi port were used in the study. And to obtain accurate information from the respondents, a simple random sampling technique was used to select a total of 100 out of 120 professional secretaries for the study.

Instruments and data collection procedure

In order for respondents to give precise and specific answers to the questions, both the opened and closed ended questions/structured type of questionnaires were used. The opened ended question sought for the opinions of the respondents to enable them provide their own

answers to the question which was asked and the close- ended questions helped the respondents to chose the precise answers from the alternatives which was given. The data obtained from the field were analyzed and the responses were presented in tables to give clear picture of the survey and the final analysis.

Results and Discussion

The researcher wanted to find out about the type of Information and Communication Technology equipment's available at Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (Takoradi). Respondents were asked about the types of Information and Communication Technology equipments at their office. The responses to the question are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the availability of Types of ICT Equipments.

Types of modern Office Equipment	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Electric Typewriters	20	20
Computers	100	100
Scanning Machines	40	40
Photocopiers	100	100
Shredding Machines	25	25
Telephones	100	100
Duplicating Machines	60	60
Fax Machines	40	40

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

From Table 1, all the respondents 100(100%) have computers, photocopiers and telephones in their offices. From Table 1 it shows that not all the respondents have electric typewriters, scanning machines, shredding machines, duplicating machines and Fax machines in their various offices.

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of Information and Communication Technology equipments available at their office. This result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of the Number of ICT Equipments available in respondent's offices

Number of Modern Office Equipment in the Office	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Between 1-3Equipments	9	9
Between 4-6Equipments	21	21
Above 6Equipments	70	70
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

Table 2, shows that, 70(70%) of the respondent, specified that they have more than 6 equipments in their offices while 9(9%) of the respondents indicated that they have 3 or less equipments.

An investigation on how Information and Communication Technology equipment has contributed to the secretary's performance level in their offices was also conducted. The time factor of working with Information and Communication Technology equipment was considered. A 5 point Likert scale type questions were provided for them to respond to. The result is summarized in Table 3

Table 3: The distribution of ICT Equipment and Time Saving

Item	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
ICT office equipments have helped me to work faster than before	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Undecided	0	0
	Agree	0	0
	Strongly Agree	100	100
Total		100	100

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

From Table 3, all the respondents 100(100%) strongly agreed that Information and Communication Technology equipment helps in saving time, as compared with the old ways of doing things before the modern office equipment were introduced. This findings confirms the research findings by [8] who said today's secretaries are exposed to office technology including the internet that make work much easier and knowledge more accessible.

How Information and Communication Technology equipments have enhanced flexibility and capacity. They were presented with a 5 point Likert scale type questions to respond to. The responses have been shown in Table 4.

Table 4: The distribution of how ICT Equipment has enhanced flexibility and capacity in the secretary's office

Item	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
ICT Equipment has enhanced flexibility and capacity in the secretary's office	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Undecided	0	0
	Agree	9	9
	Strongly Agree	91	91
Total		100	100

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

From Table 4, it is clear that 91(91%) respondents strongly agreed that Information and Communication Technology equipment have enhanced flexibility and capacity at Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (Takoradi).

How Information and Communication Technology equipment has made corrections of errors made by professional secretaries easy were also investigated. The respondents were once again presented with 5 point Likert scale type to choose from. This is indicated in Table 5.

Table 5: The distribution of how ICT Equipment has contributed towards corrections of errors

Item	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
ICT Equipment has made corrections of errors easy at the office	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Undecided	0	0
	Agree	0	0
	Strongly Agree	100	100
Total		100	100

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

Table 5 shows that, all the 100(100%) respondents indicated that the use Information and Communication Technology equipment has made it possible for them to implement major changes, as well as making corrections easily.

An investigation was also conducted to determine how ICT has improved the secretaries performance level (positively or otherwise) in the office was considered. A 5 point Likert scale type questions were provided for them to respond to. Table 6 summarizes the responses provided by the respondents.

Table 6: The Distribution of how ICT has improved the secretary's performance level

Item	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
ICT has increased my performance level at the harbour	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Undecided	0	0
	Agree	11	11
	Strongly Agree	89	89
Total		100	100

Source: Field Survey, March 2014`

Table 6, shows that, 89(89%) respondents strongly agreed that, the introduction of Information and Communication Technology has improves positively their performance level in their offices. None of the respondents disagreed.

An investigation into whether ICT has affected productivity as a result of the increase of the secretary's performance was also done. A 5 point Likert scale type responses were provided for them to choose from. Table 7 summarizes the responses provided by the respondents.

Table 7: Distribution of whether the Usage of ICT has Affected Productivity level

Item	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The Use of ICT has Affected Productivity level at the port	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Undecided	0	0
	Agree	20	20
	Strongly Agree	80	80
Total		100	100

Source: Field Survey, March 2014

Table 7, indicates that 80(80%) respondent strongly agreed that ICT has affected productivity level in the organization. The result shows that Information and Communication Technology equipment has helped in increasing productivity at the port. None of the respondents thought otherwise.

Conclusions

This study showed that there are computers, photocopiers and telephones in every office of the professional secretaries in the harbour, however, not all the offices have electric typewriters, scanning machines, shredding machines, fax machines and duplicating machines. The result of the study shows that all the secretaries accepted that the introduction of Information and Communication Technology in their offices has ensured increased in efficiency in their performance and has also made it possible for them to implement major changes as well as making corrections easily. As a result, it has and also ensured accuracy and uniformity in their performance.

Information and Communication Technology in the office helps them save time when working thus they are able to perform task in the quickest possible time in order to attend to other schedules. This is because most of the work are done by machines which are more versatile than humans.

The introduction of Information and Communication Technology has positively improved their performance level in the offices and this has contributed positively in the office. And this have helped in increasing the productivity level in the harbour.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adedoyin,T. (2010). I.T. Productivity Tools for Managing the Accounting Function. *The Nigerian Accountant*, 43(4): 30-36.
- [2] Akpomi, M.E. (2003). *Effects of Modern Office Technology as Perceived by secretaries Business Education Journal.iv (i),161-169*
- [3] Akpomi, M. and Ordu, P. (2009). Modern office technology and the secretary's productivity in private business organizations. *African Journal of Business Management*. Vol. 3 (8), pp. 333-339.
- [4] Appah, E. and Emeh, Y. (2011). Information Technology and Internal Auditors' Activities in Nigeria, *Asian Journal of Information Technology*, 10(6): 201- 208.
- [5] Bickman, L., & Rog, D.J. (1998). *Handbook of applied social research methods*. Newbury Park, CA.
- [6] Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged © HarperCollins Publishers 2003
- [7] Duniya, A.P. (2011). Electronic office skills required by secretaries in polytechnics in Kogi state. *Bus. Educ. J.*,8(1): 169.
- [8] Edwin A.E, (2008). *Self-employment: An option for professional secretaries in Nigeria*. *Journal contemporary Business Education*.Res (JOCBER1(1):25-30.
- [9] Howell, A. B. & Lundall, S. T. (2000). *Introduction to the evaluation Study*,.

-
- International Development Research Centre. Htm ICT in Africa 3(2) 67 - 69.
- [10] Jaiyeola, R. (2007). Information Communication Technology as a Tool for Effective Performance of Chartered Accountants. *The Nigerian Accountant*, 40(1): 48- 49.
- [11] Mayer, R.N. (1997), A progressive Approach to Secretarial Classification. *Pers J.* 11 (3): 28-32
- [12] Merony J.W, (1998). *Managing Information technology resources in organizations. Z699 G66 1985, Groneman.*
- [13] Nwaokwa, E. and Okoli, B.E. (2012). Information of Communication Technology on the Influence Performance of Secretaries in Government Ministries in Nasarawa State, North-Central Nigeria. *Research Journal of Information Technology*, 4(3): 93-97.
- [14] O'Neil L, (1999), *Information system, (1972-2006)*. BELL, JAMES: O'NEIL, JOHN D, Professor, Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering. (1970-2002).
- [15] Osuala E.C, (2004). *Principles and methods of business and computer education.* Publishers. Aiyeduso,A.O (2004)
- [16] Wayne, D. S & Dauwalder, K. (1997), *Communication in Business.* An action Orientation. Approach, USA; Richard D. Iwin, Inc. in a Joint venture with Austen Press.
- [17] Van-Art, B, Inklaar, R. and M. Guckin, R. H. (2002), "Changing Gear" Productivity, ICT and Service Industries: Europe and the United States; Research Memorandum G D-60 Groningen Growth and Development Centre, University of Groningen.