

Integrating the Internet with the Curriculum of Office Education Programme in Tertiary Institutions In Nigeria

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Abstract

The Internet is one of the latest technological breakthroughs in the history of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Many government establishments, parastatals and private organizations use it for business transactions. Consequently, these organizations demand secretaries that are very knowledgeable and versatile in the use of Internet. Unfortunately, many secretaries do not possess Internet skills. The paper looks at the role of the Internet in office education programme and the justification to integrate the Internet studies into the curriculum of office education programme at the tertiary institutions so as to expose the secretarial students to the knowledge and competencies of the Internet in the school environment before they face the world of work. It recommends among others the Internet courses to be integrated into the curriculum of Secretarial Education programme that will make secretarial graduates very relevant to the labour market.

Introduction.

For the products of office education programme to effectively and efficiently discharge their technological duties and responsibilities in ultra modern office, they need, in addition to the relevant computer applications packages, the knowledge, skills and competencies in the Internet. Many organisations today demand for secretaries who are very knowledgeable and versatile in the use of modern office technology and information systems. Unfortunately, many secretarial graduates do not possess these skills and competence. Atakpa (2002) in her view stated that the world of change heralded in recent times by technological innovations has equally enveloped Business Education particularly in training of secretaries. She stressed further that the current role of business education, therefore, is to include the new technologies in the teaching and learning of Business Education particularly office education.

The duties of the graduates of office education (Secretarial) in office occupation today have tremendously changed from the traditional duties (manually operated equipment) to modern duties (automatically operated equipment). This, according to Bureau of Labour (2006) is as a result of technological innovation in office administration. Thus, for the graduates of office education to cope with the new office technology and administrative responsibilities, the Internet

studies has to be integrated into the curriculum of office education programme in the tertiary institutions.

Concept of the Internet.

The Internet is a global collection of many different types of computers and computer networks that are linked together. According to Awake (1997), the Internet is a gateway into the world of seemingly inexhaustible resources. He said it is sometimes referred to as information super highway.

The Internet, according to Whatis.com, is sometimes called simply the net. It is a worldwide system of computer networks – a network of networks in which users at any one computer can, if they have permission, get information from any other computer (and sometimes talk directly to users at other computer). Also wikipedia defines the Internet as a global system of interconnected computer networks that interchange data by packet switching using the standardize Internet protocol suite. It is a network of networks that consists of millions of private and public, academic, business and government networks of local to global scope that are linked by copper, wire, fibre-optic cables, wireless connections and other technologies. Wikipedia stresses further that the Internet carries various information resources and services, such as electronic mail, online chat,

file transfer and file sharing, online gaming and the inter-linked hypertext documents and other resources of the World Wide Web (www). Wikipedia said the term **Internet** and **World Wide Web** are often used in every day speech without much distinction. However, the Internet and the World Wide Web are not one and the same. The Internet is a global data communication system. It is a hardware and software infrastructure that provides connectivity between computers. In contrast, the web is one of the services connected via the Internet. It is a collection of interconnected documents and other resources, linked by hyperlinks.

According to Pedroni (1996), the Internet began in the late 1960's as a network of computers that the United States Department of Defence developed, using communication technology that could continue to function even then it was partially damaged. The Internet started in 1969 with four hosts: the University of California at Los Angeles, the Stanford Research Institute, the University of California at Santa Barbara, and the University of Utah. In 1972, e-mail was invented to send mail across a distributed network. In 1973 transatlantic connections were established to England and Norway. In the 1980's, the National Science Foundation used this same technology to create its own network which allowed researchers to share data and access resources located on remote computers. Eventually many educational, governmental, commercial, and other organizations connect their own local computer networks to the National Science Foundation Net (NSFNET) to form what is now known as the Internet.

The growth of the World Wide Web has been very rapid with the appearance of Mosaic, and later Netscape, graphic browsers, which allow for point and click network-accessible information. This is what makes the web easy for anyone to browse, roam, and make contributions, as well as transferring of multimedia, including sound and video. Most of the educational institutions, government agencies, commercial companies, and other organizations around the world are moving into the World Wide Web.

Curriculum of Office Education.

Curriculum is an organized course of study undertaken by students under the aegis of a

college, university or other institutions of learning. Ibrahim (2006) said in the school where formal education takes place, the document in which learning activities and/or experiences are sequentially arranged to bring about permanent change in behaviour and to make learning easier for the learner is referred to as curriculum. He stressed further that it is an intention, a plan, or prescription about what people thought should happen in school or the totality of activities carried out under the guidance of the school in response to societal needs and aspirations. It is a field that addresses distinct and important issues that relate to education. The questions related to curriculum programme are: what should be taught in school? Why should it be taught? And to whom should it be taught?

Office education curriculum, according to Nolan et al (1970) is a group of courses or planned experiences in proper sequence of topics designed to prepare an individual to acquire specific skills and competencies for efficient services. Office education Curriculum could be reviewed and reformed so as to take care of the environment, child development, cultural heritage and the demands of technological progress and economic development. Therefore, rapid technological advancement calls for the restructuring of office education curriculum in tertiary institutions.

The concept of office education.

Office Education is also known as secretarial education. It is a vocational education programme that provides skills and competencies for office occupation and self reliance. In support to this definition, National Board for Technical Education (1987) states that Secretarial Education revolves around job skills, employability and self dependency. Secretarial education is a course that is very practical and comprehensive in nature. Ilo (2002) said secretarial education is a practical course and must be taught practically by making the teaching situation as real as to help the recipients to be useful to themselves immediately they graduate. It provides the would-be secretaries the knowledge to adjust to work environment in terms of how his technological skills will be utilized, how he will be expected to relate to his co-workers, supervisors and others, appearance, decorum and manner of speech. Secretarial education also provides its graduates with the

administrative support skills for their managers or teams in all kinds of companies and organizations. –

The Role of Internet in Office Education Programme in tertiary institutions

The role of Internet in office education programme in tertiary institutions cannot be overemphasized. It

- serves as a source of information for teaching and learning.
- provides students with the ability to search and evaluate relevant information, (Woolfolk, 1993).
- improves the motivation of the students and secure the social contact with other personalities that could serve as valuable sources of information.
- Connects secretarial students' learning to the real world.
- Provides students with educational opportunities to tap into their natural curiosity.

Justification to integrate the Internet studies with curriculum of office education programme at the tertiary institutions.

The justification to integrate the Internet studies into the curriculum of office education can be ascertained by the comparison of the **traditional** and **modern** office administrative responsibilities for the graduates of office education from the tertiary institutions. According to the National Board for Technical Education (1989) the traditional duties of the graduates of office education (Secretarial) in office occupation are:-

- typing of correspondences.
- Taking dictation and transcribing it.
- Arranging files and various information into appropriate headings.
- Answering phone calls and booking hotel accommodation.
- Making travelling arrangements (itineraries) for his boss.
- Arranging meetings and booking hotel accommodation.

According to Aromolaran (1996), the above list is not exhaustive; that there are other traditional roles such as keeping petty cash on behalf of the department, creative role of cutting articles that are relevant to his department from newspapers and magazines.

The modern office administrative responsibilities for the graduates of Office Education (Secretarial) in office occupation according to the Bureau of Labour (2006) are:-

- conducting research on the Internet.
- filing and distributing information, using the Internet
- managing travels arrangements using the internet
- handling incoming and out going mails, using the Internet.
- recruiting and training of junior staff (in many organizations)
- delegating work to junior staff as required
- manipulating complex statistical data;
- traveling with the team or manager to take notes at meetings,
- arranging both in-house and external events.
- Creating spreadsheets and data bases and developing presentation.
- typing letters and other documents
- Upgrading records using computer database and spreadsheet software.
- answering the telephone and dealing with enquiries.
- making appointments and keeping diaries.
- taking minutes at meetings, possibly using shorthand.
- drafting letters and other documents.

A critical comparison of traditional and modern office responsibilities for the graduates of office education (Secretarial) in office occupation as shown above reveals that the confidential secretary today performs more scientific duties than in the past. He/she reserves and distributes information scientifically using modern office technology such as the Internet. Therefore, the skills acquired in the Internet studies will increase his/her productivity and make his her work efficient and effective.

Conclusion.

It is concluded that integrating Internet studies into the curriculum of office education (Secretarial) will in no small measure make the work of confidential secretaries in office occupation very easy, faster, effective and efficient. Good skills in the Internet manipulation by the confidential secretary will increase his productivity, saves time and reduces cost.

Recommendations.

Based on this paper, it is recommended that:

1. the curriculum of office Education (Secretarial) should be restructured to accommodate the suggested Internet courses as follows:

(a) **Basics of The Internet.**

- The definition of the Internet
- The usefulness of the Internet in business.
- The new trends in the use of Internet.
- The important of Internet to secretarial education
- Significance of websites to secretarial education.

At the end of this course, secretarial students should be able to know how the internet influence business, the new trends in the internet usage and why it is necessary to have website

(b) **Internet Concepts**

- Overview of the Internet.
- Internet connectivity.
- IP addressing and common protocols.
- Web browsers and the Internet.
- Information search on the Internet.
- Electronic mail.
- Newsgroup.

At the end of the course, students should be expected to trace the historical background of the internet, differential between the internet, intranet and extranets, describe how the clients/server model works on the internet, List the hardware and software required to access the Internet, List the common Internet protocol, use the common tools and features of web browsers to access the Internet. They should also be able to personalize browser setting, perform simple and advanced searches on web, use e-mail clients to send message and files, read and post messages to newsgroups and access and download files using FTP.

(c) **Advanced Internet Concepts**

- Objects and active content.
- Browser plug-ins.
- Web players and viewers.
- .Internet security and cookies.
- secured data transmission.
- E-commerce.
- Legal, regulatory and International issue.
- project management.

This course introduces the students to the technologies that provide dynamic Web content. Additionally, the students will be able to understand security issues relating to the Internet and how to deal with them using the browser tools, proxy servers, and firewalls. The course will also enable the students to understand the different types of e-commerce systems and their underlying technologies. After the completing the course, the students will be able to define objects and their relation to active content, Identify the web technologies for creating active content, describe plug-ins and list popular browser plug-ins and list other popular file formats used for distributing content on the internet etc.

Secretarial students, who are adequately exposed to the above course contents, will be able to function effectively and efficiently in the ultra modern office after graduation and will have greater job opportunities in the world of work.

2. The departments of secretarial education should establish a Café with adequate number of computers with Microsoft Internet explorer 5.0 or above or Netscape/ communication 4.78 or above; plug-in requirement: macromedia flash plug in for windows for IE/NN.
3. Lecturers with good background in ICT should be employed, and be re-trained for the teaching of the Internet studies.
4. The Secretarial education departments should create a technical unit to maintain and service the computers to constantly keep them functional for teaching and learning.

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