

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS'  
PERCEPTION OF THE RELEVANCE OF SHORTHAND IN DIGITAL AGE**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*The study investigated OTM students' perception of the relevance of Shorthand in the digital age. To facilitate the conduct of the study, three research questions were raised. The survey method of research design was used. The population of the study consisted of 83 HND II Students of the Department of Office Technology and Management, Plateau State Polytechnic, Barkin Ladi. The study adopted the entire population in view of the fact that the population was sizeable to handle. Data for the study were collected by means of the questionnaire and analyzed using the mean rating on a Four Point Likert scale. The result of the analysis revealed the relevance of shorthand in the technological age to include helps in taking down lengthy verbal instructions accurately, saves time for handwritten drafts and manuscripts, used for recording confidential information, used for fast and error-free information/word processing functions, helps to further develops OTM students grammar and communication capabilities, enhances the student's ability to function effectively and efficiently in the modern office. The study recommended that OTM students should put more efforts and interest towards acquiring relevant skills inherent in the office technology and management curriculum.*

**Keywords: OTM, Shorthand, Digital**

**Introduction**

The secretarial profession has undergone rapid transformation, moving from working with its age-old traditional role of taking notes in shorthand and transcribing on manual typewriter to new and multiple roles of using computer and recording devices. The rapid change in the technology of office work through the use of machines to do the work that was previously done by hand that explains what we call office technology/automation (Sunday, 2013).

Office Technology and Management is a specialized phase of vocational education that prepares students to enter teaching and office occupations as capable and intelligent members of the labor force (Wikipedia, 2012). Office technology and management creates awareness, develops the potentials of students to subdue and harness the resources in their environment for the betterment of themselves and the society. Ekpenyong (2008) defines office technology as the process that involves the use of new inventions or devices in an office to transform, or change the process of office work. Therefore, Shorthand skills which were previously essential to the learning of Office Technology and Management course are now not as important as other skills, because of the review of the curriculum, which is was aimed at producing office technology and management that could be effective on their management roles and have the confidence and practical skills necessary to put theory into practice.

Aromolaran (2005) also described shorthand as any system of writing that is rapid and concise enough to enable the writer to keep pace with normal speech, usually brief strokes, abbreviated, and special characters are used to represent letters, words and phrases. He further expatiate his assertion of shorthand to say that, it is a system which uses a variety of techniques including simplifying existing letters or

characters and using special symbols to represent phonemes, words and phrases (Aromolaran, 2014). It is the core and an anchored for secretarial educators and administrators. Azuka (2000) viewed shorthand as the act of representing words with written signs as briefly and as distinctively as possible.

The attitude of students towards the learning of shorthand is one of the factors affecting the shorthand performance. Most students see the shorthand as difficult subject therefore; they have concluded in their minds that they cannot learn it the basic skill in shorthand is the interest and the mental attitude towards the learning situation at any given time. Nwokeke (1995) stated that the process of change is rapid when the interest is there. The motive underlying our conduct is interest because whatever we seemed to be interested in will capture our attention. According to Harris (1972), interest is an important element in whatever we do especially in teaching and learning of shorthand. Interest on the part of the students will bring about a conducive atmosphere, though it is not possible for all students in a class to have interest at the particular time the subject is being taught, but the teacher can sustain attention though the use of adequate method of teaching. He further confirmed that interest is the greatest motivating force in all learning. The teacher should therefore, stir up interest of the students from the beginning of the course.

Most students have that fear in them that they will not perform well in shorthand. Kanu (1991) opined that students of shorthand behave like children who continue to be frightened by toys when those toys are actually harmless. He envisaged that shorthand occupies a similar position as that of any foreign language studied in Nigeria, because its development and orientation are not indigenous. This is to mean that all the orientation or encouragement given to a beginner in shorthand learning should be seen as more important than two other years spent in learning the subject. Instead students resort to memorizing some passages instead of drilling them to know the outlines. It is importance to mention that such students always get themselves confused during test or examination. Students should know that there is no short-cut to learning the course; hence one should just have a deep knowledge of the course.

The relevance of shorthand in an automated office is one that has troubled the minds of many in the present day Nigeria, especially OTM Students. Azuka (2009) stated that, there are varying opinions about the future of shorthand. He said that, a course is considered to be suitable if it meets the needs of an individual and relevant if it provides the students with the skills, which is perceives to be realistic according to the goal and aspiration; and adequate if the skills acquired can be used to enter an occupation.

In today's modern offices, large numbers of data are created, processed, stored, retrieved and disseminated daily because of technological innovations. That was why Obijile (2006) advised that teachers of secretarial studies and departments must adapt their methods; curricula equipment and facilities to meet the growing demands for competent information/word processing personnel. In line with this recommendation, Azuka (2009) advocated for less emphasis in shorthand in order to make way for the new technological machines. He also requested for the removal of what he referred to as jaw-breaking words, which he said was partly responsible for high failure rate in shorthand examinations. This to him would settle the issue of syllabic intensity that goes along with shorthand speeds. According to Azuka, it is not clear whether the business world would witness the total extinction of shorthand as a result of technological development because traditional secretarial skills like filing and shorthand skills are usually considered important but not required.

However, Chip (2014) affirmed that nobody can qualify as a professional secretary without adequate skills in shorthand. In view of this, he opined that, curriculum designers should re-design the curriculum for office technology and management education; simplify the teaching of shorthand by breaking down the course into modules that would attract the interest of the OTM students.

### Statement of the Problem

Over the years, students' performance in shorthand is quite not encouraging. Many OTM students have performed below average in shorthand and this has become a notable deficiency to the integration of the course. However, in recent times, most OTM students have shown lack of interest in learning of shorthand even at the mentioned of the name 'Shorthand' rather, they are more interested in learning technological skills. These attitudes of students towards shorthand has post a great challenge to the teaching and learning of the course.

The transformation from manual era to technological era has led to the review of the secretarial curriculum by the NBTE. Much credit load that was allocated to shorthand has been reduced and emphases are now given to technological courses. As a result, shorthand skills appear to have probably been de-emphasized from the curriculum and the focus is now on business/management information technological skills. As evidenced by Igbinola (2003) that office education or office technology management curricula have been reviewed and updated over the years, to keep abreast with new work patterns and emerging information and communication technologies. It is based on these backdrops that this study was conceived to investigate the OTM students' perception on whether or not shorthand skill is relevant in an automated era.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to facilitate the conduct of the research:

1. What is the relevance of shorthand to OTM students in digital age?
2. What are the technologies used in place of shorthand in digital age?
3. What are the factors affecting learning of shorthand by OTM students?

### Methodology

This research work was generally a survey study, as it was based on the natural setting and activities of 2018/2018 HND II Students of the department of Office Technology and Management, Plateau State Polytechnic, Barkin Ladi. The population of the study comprised of the entire HND II students of the department. They are eighty three (83) in number. The sampling size of population the entire population, because that the population was not large. The main instrument that was used in collection of data for this research work was the questionnaire. It was done by the distribution of questionnaire to the respondents to gather relevant information needed for the study. The data collected for the study was analyzed using the mean rating on 4 points likert scale, where options were allocated scores.

### Results

Research Question One: What are the relevance of Shorthand to OTM Students in the technological age?

**Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation of the relevance of Shorthand to OTM Students in digital age**

S/n	Items	SA	A	DA	SDA	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
1	Shorthand helps in taking down lengthy verbal instructions accurately.	36	29	12	0	3.31	Accepted
2	Shorthand saves time for handwritten drafts and manuscripts compared to other usable devices.	28	32	17	0	3.14	Accepted
3	Shorthand can be used for recording confidential information by OTM students.	41	23	13	0	3.36	Accepted
4	For fast and error-free information/word processing functions.	25	28	19	5	2.95	Accepted

5	Taking lengthy verbal instructions from the executive over the phone.	32	14	22	9	2.90	Accepted
6	Shorthand skill helps to further develops OTM students grammar and communication capabilities.	33	28	16	0	3.22	Accepted
7	Shorthand skill enhances the student's ability to function effectively and efficiently in the modern office.	19	26	18	14	2.65	Accepted

**Weighted Average****3.08 Accepted**

Analysis of data in Table 1 reveals that the respondents agreed all agreed that Shorthand helps in taking down lengthy verbal instructions accurately (mean = 3.31), Shorthand saves time for handwritten drafts and manuscripts compared to other usable devices (mean = 3.14), Shorthand can be used for recording confidential information by OTM students (mean = 3.36), For fast and error-free information/word processing functions (mean = 2.95), Taking lengthy verbal instructions from the executive over the phone (mean = 2.90), Shorthand skill helps to further develops OTM students grammar and communication capabilities (mean = 3.22), Shorthand skill enhances the student's ability to function effectively and efficiently in the modern office (mean = 2.65).

**Research Question Two:** What are the technologies used in place of Shorthand in the technological age?

**Table 2: Mean of responses on the technologies used in place of Shorthand in the technological age**

S/n	Items	SA	A	DA	SDA	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
1	Dictation Machines and their accessories for Transcription	42	23	12	0	3.39	Accepted
2	Recording devices with secondary storage units	39	28	6	4	3.32	Accepted
3	Computers for transcription of recorded messages	46	23	8	0	3.49	Accepted
4	Voice recognition capabilities embedded on mobile devices such the GSM	28	37	7	5	3.14	Accepted
5	Text conversion and voice recording applications	30	27	12	8	3.03	Accepted
6	Facsimile transmission (FAX) and scanning devices	26	28	17	6	2.96	Accepted
7	Electronic mails and Chart application	38	19	9	11	3.09	Accepted

**Weighted Average****3.20 Accepted**

Analysis of data in Table 2 reveals that the respondents agreed all agreed that Dictation Machines and their accessories for Transcription (mean = 3.39), Recording devices with secondary storage units (mean = 3.32), Computers for transcription of recorded messages (mean = 3.49), Voice recognition capabilities embedded on mobile devices such the GSM (mean = 3.14), Text conversion and voice recording applications. (mean = 3.03), Facsimile transmission (FAX) and scanning devices (mean = 2.96), Electronic mails and Chart application (mean = 3.09).

**Research Question Three:** What are the factors affecting the learning of Shorthand by OTM Students?

**Table 3: Mean of responses on the factors affecting learning of Shorthand by OTM Students**

S/n	Items	SA	A	DA	SDA	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
1	Poor attitude of students towards the learning of shorthand	32	14	22	9	2.90	Accepted
2	Initial fear and wrong perception by students that shorthand is a difficult subject	29	27	16	5	3.04	Accepted
3	Low contact hours (four hour a week) in the OTM curriculum affect learning of shorthand	26	28	17	6	2.96	Accepted
4	Lack of rudimentary knowledge of the course on the part of students	25	28	19	5	2.95	Accepted
5	Inadequate shorthand skills and poor teaching methods on the part of some teachers	21	19	29	8	2.69	Accepted
6	Inadequate teaching facilities and infrastructure for teaching shorthand	53	24	0	0	3.69	Accepted
7	Over admission of students beyond approved carrying capacity into shorthand class	36	29	12	0	3.31	Accepted
<b>Weighted Average</b>						<b>3.08</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Analysis of data in Table 3 reveals that the respondents agreed all agreed that Dictation Machines and their accessories for Transcription (mean = 3.39), Recording devices with secondary storage units (mean = 3.32), Computers for transcription of recorded messages (mean = 3.49), Voice recognition capabilities embedded on mobile devices such the GSM (mean = 3.14), Text conversion and voice recording applications. (mean = 3.03), Facsimile transmission (FAX) and scanning devices (mean = 2.96), Electronic mails and Chart application (mean = 3.09).

### Discussion of Findings

The study investigated into Office Technology and Management Student's perception on the relevance of Shorthand in Digital Age in Plateau State Polytechnic, Barkin Ladi, Nigeria. The result of the study revealed the relevance of shorthand to include helps in taking down lengthy verbal instructions accurately, saves time for handwritten drafts and manuscripts, used for recording confidential information, used for fast and error-free information/word processing functions, used for taking lengthy verbal instructions from the executive over the phone, helps to further develops OTM students grammar and communication capabilities, enhances the student's ability to function effectively and efficiently in the modern office. This finding corroborates that of Anderson (2011) who believed that shorthand skills will continue to be needed and that it is noteworthy that the purpose of training/development is to enable an individual acquire the skills that will be relevant for job performance and that every curriculum is expected to make beneficiaries apply the skills acquire in solving problem in the work place. Ogunyinka (2001) said that shorthand has come to stay. Even though it has been seen as a vocational course, yet it has been discovered to have educational values as it works through the medium of language and for many students, it is often a key to understanding English language

The study also revealed that technologies which includes Dictation Machines and their accessories for Transcription (mean = 3.39), Recording devices with secondary storage units (mean = 3.32), Computers for transcription of recorded messages (mean = 3.49), Voice recognition capabilities embedded on mobile devices such the GSM (mean = 3.14), Text conversion and voice recording applications. (mean = 3.03),

Facsimile transmission (Fax machine) and scanning devices (mean = 2.96), Electronic mails and Chart application (mean = 3.09) are some of the technological innovation used in place of Shorthand in the technological age. This finding is in line with that of Chip (2014) who pointed out that there are wide range of office machines and equipment that now enable secretaries to improve their performances. The author added that new technological equipment that have altered the procedures and technique for office functions especially shorthand include the computers, electronic mail, and the Internet.

The findings revealed factors affecting learning of Shorthand by OTM Students includes; poor attitude of students towards the learning of shorthand, initial fear and wrong perception about shorthand, low contact hours for teaching of shorthand, lack of rudimentary knowledge of shorthand, inadequate shorthand skills, poor teaching methods, inadequate teaching facilities and infrastructure and over admission of students. This findings was supported by (Nna, 2012) who stated that other factors that affects learning shorthand in school and colleges include: inadequate trained personnel to teach the skills and competencies, too many students admitted into one class, poor maintenance culture, lack of electricity and dishonest students and leaders.

### Conclusion

The need for the OTM students to acquire shorthand skills is critical towards effective and efficient performance in the digital age, because of new technological equipment has altered the procedures and technique for office functions. Combining the dexterity of shorthand skills and the capabilities of new technologies are critical for the achievement of the goals and objective of the organization. The need to strengthen the acquisition of shorthand skills cannot be overemphasized, hence the need for training institutions to strategize towards improving on the process of skill acquisition by OTM students in digital age.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Office Technology and Management students should put more efforts and interest towards acquiring relevant skills inherent in the office technology and management curriculum. This they can achieve through dedicating more time to practicing and reading relevant materials.
2. Management of Polytechnics should ensure the adequate provision of facilities and ensuring that students are adequately equipped with the necessary skills needed for work in a modern work environment
3. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should ensure that the OTM curriculum is regularly reviewed, revised and adjusted with inputs from the academia and industry to address the challenges affecting effective implementation of the curriculum content.
4. There should be conscious effort towards evaluating and assessing the OTM programmes to facilitate the determination of the degree and direction of effectiveness. This will go a long way towards ensuring that the required skills are adequately acquired by the students.

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