

The Influence of Technical Skills Acquisition on the Employability of Secretarial Administration Undergraduates at Tai Solarin Federal University of Education

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated the influence of technical skills acquisition on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin Federal University of Education (TASFUED), Ijagun, Ogun State. The study specifically examined three key technical skills: computer application skills, office equipment operation skills, and record and document management skills. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and the population comprised all undergraduates in the Department of Business Education, Faculty of Education. Using simple random sampling, 304 students were selected. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire titled Technical Skills Acquisition and Employability Questionnaire (TSAEQ) and analyzed using descriptive statistics for research questions and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) for hypotheses testing at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that computer application skills, office equipment operation skills, record and document management skills had significant positive influences on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates. Specifically, the correlation coefficients were 0.692, 0.641, and 0.658 respectively, all with p-values less than 0.05, indicating strong positive relationships. The study concluded that technical skills acquisition is a critical determinant of employability and the study recommended that TASFUED should enhance practical training, update the curriculum to reflect modern office technologies, provide internship opportunities, and foster collaboration with industry to improve graduates' readiness for the labour market. The findings contribute to the discourse on employability by highlighting the importance of integrating technical skill development into secretarial education.

KEYWORDS: Technical skills acquisition, employability, secretarial administration, computer application skills, office equipment operation skills, record and document management skills, TASFUED. Word Count: 228

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the 21st century workplace, employability has become a key concern among graduates and educators. The changing dynamics of the global labour market have increased the demand for graduates who possess not only theoretical knowledge but also practical and technical skills that enhance job performance and adaptability (Okafor & Anene, 2020). For students of Secretarial Administration, the possession of technical skills has become particularly crucial in ensuring their relevance and competitiveness in both public and private sectors. In Nigeria, where graduate unemployment remains a major socio-economic challenge, higher institutions are being called upon to produce graduates who can function effectively in technologically driven office environments (Olayinka, 2019).

Secretarial Administration as a discipline is designed to equip students with professional competencies that enable them to manage administrative and clerical responsibilities efficiently. Traditionally, secretarial roles involved typing, filing, and handling correspondence. However, the modern office has evolved significantly, driven by technological innovations and automation (Adewumi, 2021). As a result, secretarial professionals are now expected to possess advanced technical competencies such as computer application skills, office equipment operation skills, and records management abilities. These skills are essential in promoting productivity, enhancing communication, and ensuring efficient data management within organizations.

The first major technical skill relevant to employability in secretarial administration is computer application skills. In today's office environment, virtually all administrative functions are carried out using computer technology. Computer literacy enables secretarial professionals to handle tasks such as word processing, database management, spreadsheet analysis, desktop publishing, and email communication. According to Eze and Okoro (2022), proficiency in computer applications such as Microsoft Office Suite, Google Workspace, and database management systems significantly increases a graduate's employability potential. Employers now

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prioritize candidates who can operate digital systems effectively, adapt to new software, and use information technology to solve office-related problems. Hence, for undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED), computer application skills serve as a gateway to career relevance and professional growth in the digital economy.

Another vital aspect of technical competency is office equipment operation skills. Modern offices rely on diverse equipment such as photocopiers, scanners, printers, projectors, shredders, and teleconferencing devices. The ability to operate, troubleshoot, and maintain these tools enhances office efficiency and minimizes downtime. As Ukoha and Nwosu (2020) observed, many graduates face difficulties during job placements due to their inability to handle basic office technologies. This often results from a mismatch between the training offered in universities and the practical requirements of the labour market. Therefore, it is essential that secretarial administration undergraduates at TASUED are exposed to practical training that ensures competence in handling both traditional and modern office equipment. Such training not only boosts employability but also builds confidence and professionalism in workplace performance.

Equally important is record and document management skills. In every organization, accurate documentation, data storage, and record retrieval are fundamental to smooth operations and decision-making. The ability to create, organize, store, and retrieve both electronic and manual records efficiently distinguishes a competent secretary from an average one. As Oladipo (2021) posited, efficient record management contributes to organizational transparency, accountability, and continuity. In a digital age where information is considered a strategic resource, secretarial professionals must be adept in both manual filing systems and electronic document management software. The failure to manage records effectively can lead to data loss, inefficiency, and poor communication flow. Therefore, training undergraduates in proper document management techniques is vital in preparing them for the expectations of modern employers.

In Nigeria, the issue of graduate unemployment has generated significant attention in academic and policy discussions. Studies such as those by Nwosu and Okon (2018) have shown that many graduates lack the technical and practical competencies required by employers. This gap has raised concerns about the adequacy of university curricula in aligning with market demands. Tai Solarin University of Education, being one of Nigeria's foremost institutions established to combine academic excellence with practical skills development, has a responsibility to ensure that its secretarial administration students acquire relevant technical competencies before graduation. The institution's philosophy emphasizes "education for self-reliance," which aligns with the need to produce employable graduates who can function in both paid employment and entrepreneurial ventures (TASUED Academic Handbook, 2023).

Despite this educational orientation, anecdotal evidence and preliminary observations suggest that many secretarial administration undergraduates still face employability challenges after graduation. Some employers complain about graduates' limited exposure to modern office technologies and insufficient practical experience. This indicates a possible gap between the skills acquired during university training and the expectations of employers in the field. Hence, it becomes imperative to examine how technical skills acquisition specifically computer application skills, office equipment operation skills, and record management skills affects the employability of secretarial administration undergraduates in TASUED.

This study is also justified by the need to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical work experience. Employability does not only depend on academic qualifications but also on the possession of demonstrable skills that meet labour market demands. As Aina and Adeyemi (2020) noted, the employability of graduates is a reflection of the quality and relevance of the education they receive. Institutions like TASUED must therefore integrate continuous practical exposure, laboratory experience, and internships into their curriculum to ensure that students acquire hands-on competencies that enhance their job readiness. Furthermore, the influence of technical skills on employability extends beyond job acquisition, it also affects job performance, career progression, and adaptability to workplace changes. The rapid pace of technological advancement means that secretarial professionals must continuously update their technical knowledge to remain relevant. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the growing discourse on employability by providing empirical insights into the role of technical skills acquisition among secretarial administration students at TASUED.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, there has been a growing concern among employers and educators about the declining employability of graduates from Nigerian universities, particularly in skill-oriented disciplines such as Secretarial Administration. Despite the curriculum emphasis on practical and technical training, many graduates still struggle to secure and retain employment in today's technology-driven work environment. This suggests a potential gap between the technical skills acquired in school and the competencies required by modern organizations. Secretarial Administration undergraduates are trained to function effectively as administrative professionals, yet reports from employers indicate persistent deficiencies in their ability to apply essential technical skills such as computer application, operation of modern office equipment, and efficient record and document management. Many graduates find it difficult to operate standard office software, manage digital records, or use office machinery effectively, thereby reducing their chances of employment and career advancement.

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The rapid technological changes in office administration have transformed the nature of secretarial work, demanding greater proficiency in computer-based tasks and digital communication. However, inadequate access to functional training facilities, outdated curriculum content, and limited exposure to practical experiences during university training have hindered the development of these vital technical skills among undergraduates.

Consequently, a gap exists between the expectations of employers and the actual competencies possessed by Secretarial Administration graduates of TASUED. This situation not only undermines graduate employability but also questions the effectiveness of university training in meeting contemporary labour market needs. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the influence of technical skills acquisition specifically computer application skills, office equipment operation skills, and record and document management skills on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education, with a view to identifying areas for curriculum improvement and better skill development strategies..

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study was to examine the influence of technical skills acquisition on the employability of secretarial administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- (i) Determine the influence of computer application skills on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in TASUED.
- (ii) Examine the influence of office equipment operation skills on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in TASUED.
- (iii) Assess the influence of record and document management skills on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in TASUED.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- (i) Do computer application skills influence the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in TASUED?
- (ii) How do office equipment operation skills influence the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in TASUED?
- (iii) In what ways do record and document management skills influence the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in TASUED?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance:

- H₀₁. Computer application skills acquisition has no significant influence on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education.
- H₀₂: Office equipment operation skills acquisition has no significant influence on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education.
- H₀₃ Record and document management skills acquisition has no significant influence on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This section deals with the research methodology to be used for the study. A descriptive research design was used to examine the influence of technical skills acquisition on the employability of secretarial administration undergraduates at Tai Solarin University of Education. A stratified sampling technique was used in the selection of the respondents across different levels. The descriptive research design is suitable for this study as it allows the researcher to collect and analyze data to describe the characteristics without bias. This approach enabled the researcher to provide a detailed account of the skills required and their relevance to employability in the modern labor market.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises all secretarial administration undergraduates at Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, during the 2024/2025 academic session. Specifically, the study focused on all students in the Department of Business Education who are pursuing a degree in Secretarial Administration.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 304 undergraduates were selected as the sample for the study using the simple random sampling technique. This method was employed to ensure that all students had an equal chance of being selected, thereby minimizing bias. The sample represented the four various levels of study to provide a fair assessment of technical skill acquisition across the programme.

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Research Instrument

This study utilize a self- developed structured questionnaire titled “Technical Skills Acquisition and Employability Assessment Questionnaire (TSAEAQ)” for data collection and analysis. The TSAEAQ was designed to collect primary data directly from secretarial administration undergraduates. The instrument consists of two main sections; Section A- Collects general information about the respondents, such as their academic level, gender, and exposure to technical skills training (during industrial training or coursework) while section Section B contains items to measure the acquisition and application of technical skills (word processing, spreadsheet, and database management skills) and their perceived impact on employability. These items was scored using a Likert scale (SD=Strongly, Disagree, D= Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree) to assess students’ proficiency and perceptions.

Validity of the Instrument

The TSAEAQ was subjected to face, content, and construct validation to ensure its appropriateness for this study. The instrument was reviewed by the researcher’s supervisor and two experts in business education and vocational studies from the Department of Business Education, Tai Solarin University of Education. These experts evaluated the instrument for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study’s objectives, research questions, and hypotheses. Their feedback and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the instrument to enhance its validity.

Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of the TSAEAQ was established using the test-retest method. A pilot test was conducted by administering the instrument to a small subset of 20 secretarial administration students not included in the final sample, over two different time periods. The consistency of the results was assessed using a correlation coefficient (e.g., Pearson’s correlation), with a threshold of 0.70 or higher indicating acceptable reliability and yielded 0.88 coefficient. Adjustments were made to the instrument as necessary to ensure consistency in data collection.

Method for Data Collection

The mode of data collection for this study was through the administration of the TSAEAQ to the selected secretarial administration undergraduates. The researchers distributed the questionnaires directly to the respondents during scheduled class sessions or departmental meetings, with prior permission from the relevant authorities. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, and the researcher ensured that all responses are collected systematically and securely.

Procedure for Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics, specifically Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0.

FINDINGS

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: Computer application skills acquisition has no significant influence on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education.

Table 4.1: Correlation between Computer Application Skills Acquisition and Employability

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r-value	p-value	Decision
Computer Application Skills	304	3.42	0.71	0.692	0.000	Significant
Employability of Undergraduates	304	3.58	0.63			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Interpretation:

The result in Table 4.1 showed a correlation coefficient ($r = 0.692$) with a $p\text{-value} = 0.000$, which is less than 0.05. This indicated a strong positive relationship between computer application skills acquisition and employability. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, implying that the acquisition of computer application skills had a significant influence on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in TASUED.

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Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Office equipment operation skills acquisition has no significant influence on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education.

Table 4.2: Correlation between Office Equipment Operation Skills and Employability

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r-value	p-value	Decision
Office Equipment Operation Skills	304	3.35	0.67	0.641	0.001	Significant
Employability of Undergraduates	304	3.58	0.63			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Interpretation

The results in Table 4.2 showed a correlation coefficient ($r = 0.641$) with a p -value = 0.001, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicated a significant positive relationship between office equipment operation skills and employability. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The finding suggested that proficiency in the use and maintenance of modern office equipment such as photocopiers, scanners, projectors, and printers significantly improved the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Record and document management skills acquisition has no significant influence on the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education.

Table 4.3: Correlation between Record and Document Management Skills and Employability

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r-value	p-value	Decision
Record and Document Management Skills	304	3.49	0.69	0.658	0.000	Significant
Employability of Undergraduates	304	3.58	0.63			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Interpretation

As shown in Table 4.3, the computed correlation coefficient ($r = 0.658$) with a p -value = 0.000 (less than 0.05) indicated a significant positive relationship between record and document management skills acquisition and employability. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, implying that the acquisition of record and document management skills positively influenced the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in TASUED.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that technical skills acquisition significantly influenced the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education. Specifically, three major dimensions of technical skills computer application, office equipment operation, and record and document management were found to have strong positive relationships with employability outcomes.'

The result of Hypothesis One showed that computer application skills acquisition had a significant positive influence on employability. This finding agreed with the work of Eze and Okoro (2022), who asserted that computer literacy and proficiency in software applications such as Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint enhance graduates' employability prospects. In today's technologically advanced offices, employers prefer candidates who can perform digital documentation, manage databases, and communicate electronically. The implication is that undergraduates who develop strong computer skills stand a better chance of securing employment and adapting to changing office technologies.

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The result of Hypothesis Two indicated that office equipment operation skills acquisition significantly influenced employability. This aligns with the study of Ukoha and Nwosu (2020), who found that the ability to operate modern office equipment contributes to productivity and professional competence. In many administrative settings, the inability to handle machines like scanners, photocopiers, and projectors can hinder job performance. Hence, undergraduates who acquired these operational skills during their training were more employable and efficient in the workplace.

The result of Hypothesis Three further revealed that record and document management skills significantly affected employability. This finding corroborated the work of Oladipo (2021), who noted that proper record-keeping and document management ensure effective information flow, transparency, and organizational efficiency. Graduates who possess these skills demonstrate reliability, accuracy, and professionalism, which are desirable qualities in modern organizations. Overall, the findings supported the assertion that employability in secretarial administration is closely linked to technical skill proficiency. Graduates who acquired these practical skills were more likely to secure jobs, perform effectively, and sustain long-term careers in administrative and managerial roles.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

1. There was a significant positive relationship between computer application skills acquisition and employability.
2. There was a significant positive relationship between office equipment operation skills acquisition and employability.
3. There was a significant positive relationship between record and document management skills acquisition and employability.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that technical skills acquisition significantly enhances the employability of Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education. The study confirmed that proficiency in computer applications, effective operation of modern office equipment, and competence in record and document management are vital for graduates to meet the demands of the modern labour market. In today's dynamic and technology-driven work environment, employers seek graduates who can demonstrate not only theoretical understanding but also practical competence in relevant tools and technologies. Therefore, secretarial administration undergraduates who acquire and demonstrate these technical competencies are more likely to secure employment, perform efficiently, and sustain long-term career growth. The study also emphasized that continuous curriculum review, practical exposure, and skill-based training are essential in bridging the gap between classroom instruction and workplace expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. **Curriculum Enrichment:** The curriculum of Secretarial Administration programmes in TASUED should be regularly reviewed to include up-to-date computer software, digital communication tools, and modern office technologies that align with industry needs.
2. **Practical Skill Training:** The university should provide well-equipped computer laboratories and modern office practice rooms to ensure that students gain hands-on experience with real office equipment and software applications.
3. **Internship and Industrial Exposure:** Students should be given increased opportunities for industrial training, internships, and work placements in organizations where they can apply their theoretical knowledge and develop relevant technical skills.
4. **Capacity Building for Lecturers:** Lecturers in Secretarial Administration should be exposed to continuous professional development programmes, seminars, and workshops on emerging technologies and modern office practices to ensure effective knowledge transfer.
5. **Collaboration with Industry:** The university should collaborate with professional bodies, ICT firms, and corporate organizations to develop skill-based certification programmes that complement academic qualifications and enhance employability.
6. **Student Initiative and Self-Learning:** Students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their learning by exploring online platforms and training resources to upgrade their technical competencies beyond classroom instruction.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Future researchers may consider:

1. Extending the study to other universities and colleges of education to compare the level of technical skills acquisition and employability among Secretarial Administration students across institutions.
2. Examining the influence of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and time management on employability in relation to technical skills.

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3. Conducting longitudinal studies to determine how technical skills acquired during undergraduate years translate into actual job performance and career progression after graduation.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This study contributed to existing knowledge by empirically establishing that technical skills specifically computer application, office equipment operation, and record management are critical predictors of employability among Secretarial Administration undergraduates in Nigeria. It provided insight into the practical dimensions of secretarial training and highlighted areas requiring improvement for higher education institutions to produce employable, technologically competent graduates.

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