

Emmanuel Kutorglo

Assistant Registrar (Webmaster) Publications Unit, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

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Seth Tompoli

Assistant Registrar, Student Records Office, Division of Academic Affairs, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

User proficiency levels in three selected Microsoft packages among Senior Members in the Registrar's Department (Winneba Campus) of the University of Education, Winneba

Abstract

This report looks at the proficiency level of Senior Administrators of the Registrars Department at the University of Education, Winneba in MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Forty items grouped under Word, Excel and PowerPoint were used to collect data on personnel in the department. While 91% of personnel were proficient in basic skills in Ms Word, only 51% and 54% respectively were proficient in intermediate and advance Ms Word skills. 65% were proficient in basic excel skills and 33% proficient in intermediate skills in excel. For PowerPoint, 58% were proficient in basic skills with only 25% in the intermediate/advance skills. Looking at the important roles administrators play in the University system, it is recommended that, remedial programmes are planned to enable them update their knowledge in the areas they lacking in.

Introduction

With the proliferation of information today, schools the world over, including the University of Education, Winneba, are confidently using Information and Communication Technolgy in their everyday practices to improve teaching, learning and administration (Selly et al, 2006, David Richard, 2009, Morrison et. al., 2007).

ICTs are being used to:

- engage students in ways previously not possible,
- create new learning and teaching possibilities,
- enhance achievement, and
- extend interactions with local and global communities.

Here at the University of Education, Winneba, students' records have fully been automated. The use of campus FM stations for lesson delivery is fast catching up with lecturers. Studies are also underway on the impact of online lesson delivery – an indication that, soon, the University might be adopting the online lesson delivery mode.

The question that comes to mind is, are all stakeholders of the University ready for these innovations?

One group that sustains the day-to-day activities of the university is the administrator. The administrator ensures that, the institutional goal of creating an environment that provides the best opportunities for learning and exchanging of ideas is achieved. In addition to promoting inclusion; in

terms of attracting a diverse group of students to the university, s/he monitors students' progress while in the university to ensure that they successfully graduate.

The administrator among other things is responsible for the:

- Coordination of Academic Course accreditation process within the School
- Processing of applicants for admission into courses
- Running of class lists for academic staff
- Coordinating the supply of teaching learning materials
- Coordination of School/Faculty examiners board meetings
- Coordination of Student/Staff conduct
- Attending to Student grievances within the School
- Coordinating students grades
- Liaisons between external clients and institution
- Reproducing School publication materials
- Coordinating responses to students requesting information
- Recording school meetings etc.

The Administrator ensures that, the institution at all times is abreast with modern trends that ensure that the University remains at the forefront of national development.

The Registrar and his lieutenants; the propellers of the system, therefore must necessarily be informed in the use of basic ICT tools so as to enable them continue to provide leadership to the teaching staff and students of the University. It is in this light we embarking on a series of studies to find out the ICT readiness of personnel at the registrars outfit to enable us plan possible remedial actions that will bring them to speed with the 'ICT revolution'.

In this first study, we sought to find out the proficiency level of Senior Administrators the Registrars Department in using Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

Research Question

To what extent can Assistant registrars at the University of Education, Winneba use Word, Excel and PowerPoint?

Relevant Literature

Proficiency as captured in the BusinessDictionary.com¹, is mastery of a specific behavior or skill demonstrated by consistently superior performance, measured against established or popular standards. There are three levels of proficiency in using Microsoft Office Packages: the *Basic*, *Intermediate* and *Advance* (Baycon Group, Inc²). At each level, users are expected to perform specific skills. For instance in Microsoft word, individuals at the basic level are expected to use basic formatting, editing, printing functions and understands the document page set-up. At the intermediate levels, s/he is expected to use and create a variety of templates, complex tables, merges, manage table data, sort and filter merges and also perform basic work with existing macros. This individual is able to customize tool bars, import and insert graphs and embed excel data in a document. Then at the advance level, s/he is expected to produce very large, complex formal documents that require a table of contents, footnotes, endnotes, bookmarks, and other special elements. This person is able to use and crate a wide range of graphic effects and have full mastery of Macro Commands.

¹ Is an online dictionary. It explains business terms as they relate to the current information age.

² Baycon Group, Inc provides free online tutorials in using Word and other online learning packages

In excel, individuals operating at the basic level are expected to work with data worksheets. He is able to enter and correct data, modify a workbook, format a worksheet and use printing functions. At the intermediate, s/he is expected to work with multiple worksheets, filter data, use integrate functions and manipulate databases. This individual understands the concept of databases and is able to work with charts and uses the list management capability of Excel. At the advance level, this individual is expected to use advance techniques for analyzing and manipulating data I excel. s/he is able to automate some operations, manage Macro commands and create MS Excel applications.

In PowerPoint the basic skill level is required to create a simple presentation, run it and print it. Those operating at the intermediate and advance levels are able to customize templates and the PowerPoint environment. They are able to make interactive presentations by using hyperlinks and action buttons.

Methodology

We embarked on a quantitative study to determine the proficiency of Assistant Registrars in the Registrars Department at the University of Education, Winneba in the use of Ms Word, Ms PowerPoint, and Ms Excel.

The target population was Senior Members (Registrar, Deputy Registrars, Assistant Registrars etc.) at the Registrars Department at the University of Education, Winneba. A purposive sampling was used to sample all Senior Members of the department located at the Winneba Campus for the study. This group was selected because; they were easily accessible to the researchers. Additionally, they constitute more than two-thirds of the entire population of Senior Members at the Registrars department.

The study looked at their proficiency in using Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Senior Members of the Registrars Department use mainly Word, Excel and PowerPoint applications in their daily activities. They use word to composing *Memos, Letters, Minutes, Announcements* etc. They compile students records in excel. In cases where databases are used for record keeping, these are exported often into excel for most of their analyses and communications across board. They use PowerPoint to disseminate their reports and findings of committees they serve on as secretaries to stakeholders.

Data collection

Fifty questionnaires to test the various skill levels were used to collect data. Respondents were expected to answer **yes** or **no** to forty one items grouped under Word, Excel and PowerPoint. The first seven items were meant to test basic skill in word, items eight to ten were for intermediary level skills in word, the last three items were to test the advance level skills in word. Under Excel, the first five items were meant to test the basic skills in excel and the remaining items to test their intermediary level skills. Under PowerPoint, the first fourteen items tested the basic skills with the remaining items testing the Advance/Intermediate level skills of respondents.

To ensure validity of the questionnaire items, we sent the items to three lecturers who have been using Word, Excel and PowerPoint in their instruction. They made constructive suggestions that were incorporated before the items were administered to the respondents.

The questionnaires were distributed at the meeting of Assistant Registrars (ARs) of the Registrar's Department. Some were retrieved the same day at the end of the meeting and the rest were collected following a visit to the offices of the remaining ARs.

Data analysis

Items in the three categories (Word, Excel and PowerPoint) were grouped under basic, intermediate and or advance level skills. Excel was used to analyze and draw charts from the data collected. A simple percentage score was used to determine population that operated in the various skill levels. Below is the summary of findings.

Microsoft Word

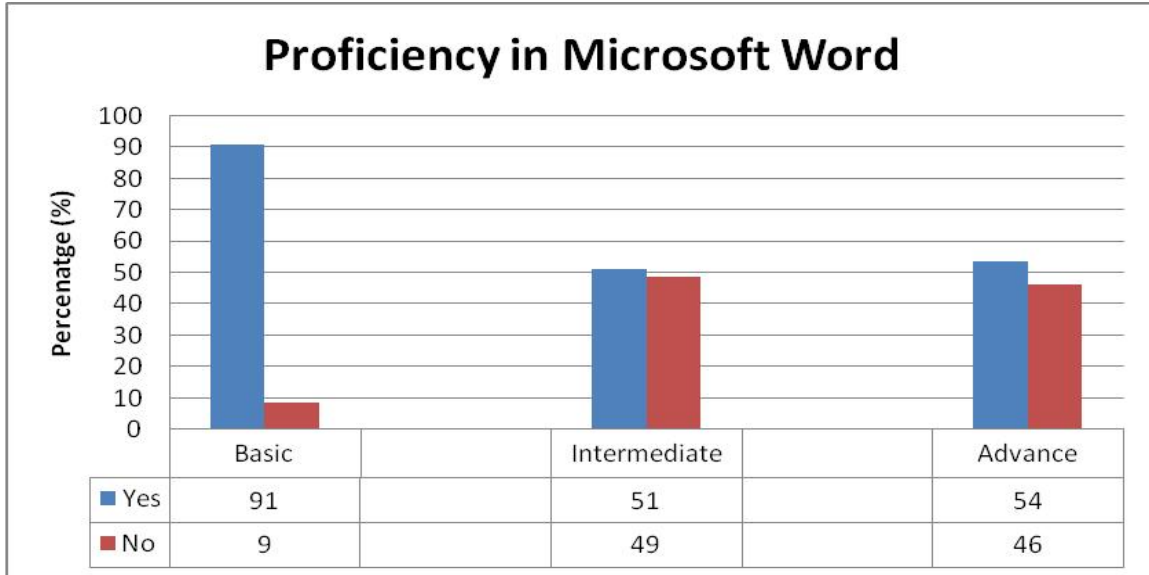


Figure 1: ARs Proficiency in Word

In figure 1., 91% of ARs are proficient in basic skills and 9% are not. 51% are proficient in intermediate skills with 49% lacking these skills. 54% are proficient in advance level skills with 46% lacking in this skills.

Excel

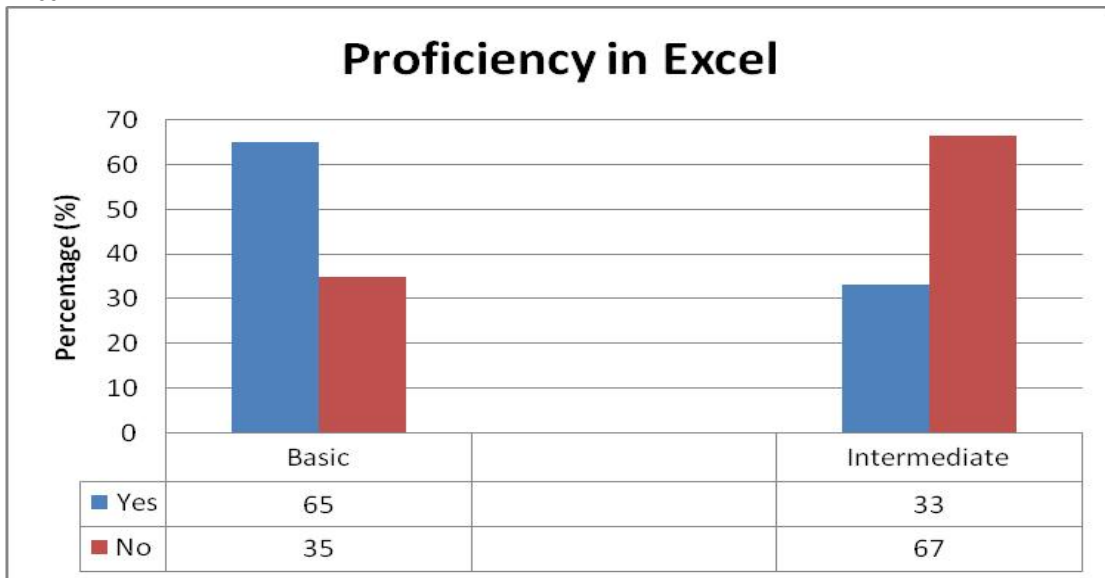


Figure 2: ARs Proficiency in Excel

Figure 2. shows that, 65% of ARs are proficient in basic excel skills with 35% lacking in these skills. 33% are proficient in intermediate excel skills with 67% lacking in this skills.

PowerPoint

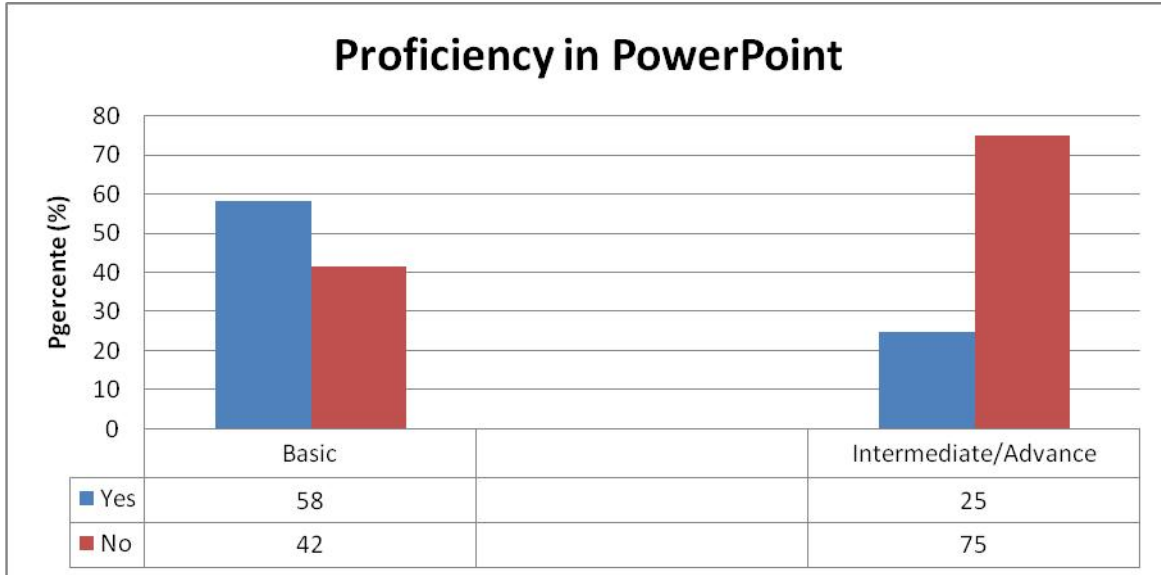


Figure 3: ARs Proficiency in PowerPoint

In figure 3., 58% of ARs at the University of Education, Winneba are proficient in the basic skills in PowerPoint with 42% lacking in this skills. 25% of them are proficient in the intermediate/advance skills with 70% lacking in these skills.

Discussions

Proficiency in Word

The study revealed that, 91% of ARs are proficient in basic skills in word with only 9% lacking in these skills. By this, it means majority of ARs are able to use basic formatting, editing, and printing functions in word. This might be due to the constant use of word in their daily work. Looking at the intermediate skills however, it was observed that, close to half the population lacked the intermediate skills in using word; only 51% are proficient with 49% lacking in these skills. By implication, half the population can create a variety of templates, complex tables, merges, manage table data, sort and filter merges and also perform basic work with existing macros. They can customize tool bars, import and insert graphs and embed excel data in a document.

Then for the advance level, 56% of ARs were observed to be proficient with about 46% lacking in these skills. What this means is that, 56% of the population are able to produce very large and complex formal documents that requires a table of contents, footnotes, endnotes, bookmarks, and other special elements. The results for the advance skill level suggest that, possibly, the percentage of the population proficient in the intermediate skill level are also proficient in the advance skills with those lacking in the intermediate skills also lacking in the advance ones. What was buffing however was the rise in percentage of those who have the intermediate word skills from 51% to 54% for those who are proficient in the advance skills. This can be explained by the fact that, whereas majority of task performed by ARs does not require the creation of templates, complex tables and sorting and filtering of tables, the use extensively table of contents, footnotes, endnotes, bookmarks, and other special elements in their work.

Proficiency in Excel

While majority (65%) of ARs are proficient in the basic skills, over half the population (67%) lack the intermediate skills in excel. There were no items to test their advance skill level in this study. We are therefore not able to tell how they would fare in this area. This imply that, majority of ARs are able to work with data worksheets. They are able to enter and correct data, modify a workbook, format a worksheet and use printing functions. However, most of them might not be able to work with multiple worksheets, filter data, use integrate functions and manipulate databases. They are not able to work with charts and use the list management capability of Excel.

Proficiency in PowerPoint

Half the population (58%) is proficient in the basic level skills in PowerPoint which include being able to create a simple presentation, run it and print it. However, majority of them (75%) cannot operate in the intermediate/advance levels which require that, they customize templates and the PowerPoint environment, make interactive presentations using hyperlinks and action buttons and also create some animations in PowerPoint.

Suggestion

Looking at the proficiency of ARs in using Word, Excel and PowerPoint, it appears that, majority of them are proficient in the tools they use more often. The Microsoft office suite however is there to make office work more effective and efficient. It is therefore important ARs are assisted to improve on their skill levels. Some remedial training in Word, Excel and PowerPoint for a start will be appropriate to bridge the gap in proficiency that currently exist in the use of Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

Conclusion

Today, computer use has increased considerably in our daily communications and work. Knowledge in computer systems, and the ability to work with word processors, data management software, spreadsheets and data analysis programmes should be of essence to Assistant Registrars at the University of Education, Winneba. Unlike the teaching staff and other professionals of University of Education, Winneba, who have specialized skills for their roles, ARs world need to know a bit of everything to remain dynamic. It is therefore important that, they have sound knowledge in the use of the Microsoft Office Suite so as to enable function whether they operate in the Students Records Office or at the Hall or Faculty levels.

References

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