

ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF MANAGERIAL SKILLS OF SECRETARIES IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF ANAMBRA STATE.

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Abstract

This study was designed to assess the quality of managerial skill of secretaries in the public service of Anambra State. The evaluative survey research design was adopted. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The population of the study comprised 298 respondents drawn from both ministerial and non-ministerial establishments in Anambra State. A researcher developed instrument was used for data collection. Mean was used to answer the research questions while ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis at 0.5 level of significance. The findings revealed that secretaries in the Anambra State public service possess some managerial skills and are less efficient in management skills. In line with this, it was recommended that secretaries in the Anambra State public service should be given the opportunity to attend in-service training programme and seminars regularly in order to improve on the areas of deficiency in office.

Introduction

The office of today requires secretaries who are capable of displaying initiatives, exercising good judgment and making good decisions within the scope of authorities given to them. This, in other words, implies that secretaries are expected to acquire knowledge of business subjects and office management in order to effectively and efficiently organize the work and control the performance of junior workers under them. The above discourse shows that secretaries signify people who possess the mastery of office skills and abilities to assume responsibility with or without direct supervision. The changing nature of business and pressure for results means more responsibility for the secretaries in addition to their traditional roles.

A secretary has been conceptualized in many ways by different authors. Anderson (1976) saw a secretary as one who can think for you, act for you, anticipate your whims, and increase your output phenomenally. From this, a secretary can be seen as a confidant who had been entrusted with the secrets of the boss and of the organization. Performance of managerial functions is potential to achieving the organizational goals but a secretary who cannot carry out functions attached to his office may not likely contribute in realizing the goals or objectives of the organization.

Boytzis (2010) defined a skill as the ability to demonstrate a system and sequence of behaviour that is functionally related to attaining a performance goal. Modern secretary has functions beyond their traditional functions. According to Galadima (1996)

Today's secretary must as a necessity, be a member of the managerial team, and be made to work hand in hand with top level executives, and can capably perform managerial functions (p.240).

Management as a term refers to the process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently through and with people. Managerial skills involves those skills needed to the performance of the management functions. Robins and DeCenzo (2004) observed that there are basically four basic management functions: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. The performance of the above functions require some measures of skills. The ability to work well with people, understand their needs, communicate well and motivate others either individually or in group constitutes managerial skills. Managerial skills also entails the mental ability to analyze and diagnose complex situations and broad perspective to contribute to creative problem solving. Managerial skills also involve the ability to enhance one's power, build a power base and establish the "right" connections in the organization. (Boyatzis 2010). The goal of managerial skills is to integrate productive efforts for proper maximization or utilization of resources and to get optimum output. It is the quality of the output that will show that they are doing well.

Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) saw quality as the totality of the feature of a process, product or service on its performance, in 'customers' or 'clients' perception of that performance. It is not just a feature of a finished product or services but involves a focus on internal processes and outputs and includes the reduction of wasted and the improvement on productivity. Taking a cue from the above definition, Fadokun (2005) characterized quality by three interrelated and inter-dependent strands;

- (i) Efficiency in the meeting of its goals,
- (ii) Relevance to human and environmental conditions and needs,
- (iii) Something more that is the exploration of new ideas, the pursuit of excellence and encouragement of creativity.

Quality is about meeting the needs and expectations of people (customers). When people work in an organization, it is expected that, there should be a way of measuring the quality of their work to know whether they are actually doing the job for which they were hired and paid to do. It is equally important that as work is a social activity involving many people that the contributions of the various individuals are identified. However, when the concept, assessment, is mentioned, what comes to mind is the identification of strength and areas of improvement.

Assessment involves a determination of the extent to which the goals or objectives of an organization are being achieved (Esomonu, 2002). Accordingly, Anaelo (2006) stated that assessment is the process by which the quality of an individual's work or performance is

judged and the copy of testing the value of a thing. Therefore, assessment is expected to give the true worth of a measured trait, performance, skill or achievement. Ajuonuma (2007) also defined assessment as the use of various methods and sources to gather and estimate different types of information about a person, a group or an event in a comprehensive way. This implies that assessment involves not only collecting data from value judgement but also the process of gathering data and fashioning them into an interpretable form for decision-making. It serves as a basis for assigning roles and responsibilities to individuals and groups.

Against the background of the above, this paper aimed at determining the quality of managerial skill of secretaries in the public service of Anambra State. According to Nwanegbo (2006), the public servants are employees of the Federal and State government. These workers are known as civil servants and they perform purely administrative and executive functions (Anyaele 2003). The civil service is divided into departments and each department carries out specific functions. The departments are called ministries. At the federal level this department (ministry) is headed by a minister while at the state level, each ministry is headed by a commissioner. The quality of managerial skills of secretaries can only be understood from the opinion of those they work under. Such individuals include directors and deputy directors in ministries and non-ministerial department. In civil service, a director is a person who rose to the post of heading a ministry or department on account of years of service or experience (Agomuo, 2005). They direct and supervise others in the office.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to assess the quality of managerial skills of secretaries in the public service of Anambra State. Specifically, the study seek to assess;

- (1) The managerial skills possessed by secretaries in the public service
- (2) How efficient the secretaries are in the discharge of their managerial skills.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

- (1) What managerial skills do secretaries in the public service of Anambra State possess?
- (2) In the opinion of directors and deputy directors, how efficient are the secretaries in managerial skills?

Hypothesis:

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho, Directors and deputy directors in ministries and directors and deputy directors in non-ministerial departments will not differ significantly in their mean ratings of secretaries efficiency in managerial skills.

Methods

The evaluative survey research design was adopted in this study. The reason for adopting this design is that the design is concerned with making decisions about the value or worth of programmes, methods and materials on the basis of available data. The study was conducted in Anambra State. It covered all the ministries and non-ministerial departments in the state. The population comprised of 298 (two hundred and ninety eight) respondents made up of 80 directors and 80 deputy directors in the ministries and 69 directors and 69 deputy directors in non-ministerial departments in the state. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. It was validated by two lecturers from the department of business education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. It was pilot tested on 15 ministerial and 5 non-ministerial heads in Enugu State. A reliability co-efficient of 0.85 was obtained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. The researcher employed both self delivery technique and the help of research assistants in the administration of the questionnaire. Mean was used to analyse the research questions while ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Mean ratings between 1.00 1.49 were regarded as not efficient or strongly disagreed. Mean ratings between 1.50 2.49 were regarded as less efficient or disagreed. Mean ratings between 2.50 3.49 were regarded as efficient or agreed while mean ratings between 3.50 4.00 were regarded as highly efficient or strongly agreed. Mean scores of the respondents on the managerial skills of secretaries in the public service of Anambra State.

Table 1: Managerial skill acquired by the secretaries

S/N	Mean Rating					Remarks
	SA	A	D	SD	X	
1. Allocating of resource in the organization	60	36	10	19	1.90	Disagreed
2. Directing and Motivating subordinates	37	190	59	12	2.82	Agreed
3. Coordinating and resolving conflicts in the Organization	194	58	11	37	3.39	Agreed
4. Setting target in the organization	50	21	198	29	2.31	Agreed
5. Initiating Improvement projects in the Organisation	52	51	12	183	1.91	Disagreed
6. Identifying the new ideas in the organization	56	192	28	22	2.93	Agreed
Average of mean	2.55					Disagreed

Data in Table 1 show that directors and deputy directors agreed on the statement for items 2, 3, 4 and 6, while they disagreed on the statement for items 1 and 5. On the average, they agreed that secretaries in public service of Anambra State possess managerial skills Mean (X) scores of the respondents on secretaries efficiency in managerial skills.

Table 2: Efficiency of Secretaries in Management Skills

S/N	Mean Rating					Remarks
	HE	E	LE	NE	X	
1. Exhibiting leadership qualities in the office	50	198	30	20	2.93	Efficient
2. Being enthusiastic in working less in the office	34	42	52	170	1.80	Efficient
3. Striving to complete a given lesstask	12	50	53	183	1.59	Efficient
4. Being innovative in accomplishing a given task less in the office	37	12	59	190	1.65	Efficient
5. Showing interest in the progress of the ministry/ department	195	53	29	21	3.42	Efficient
6. Making sure that each day's job or task is completed	28	194	54	22	2.77	Efficient
Average of mean (x)					2.36	

Data in Table 2 show that the secretaries were efficient in items 5, 1, and 6. They are less efficient in items 2, 3, and 4. This implies that the secretaries are less efficient in management skills (2.36).

Test of Hypothesis: Directors and deputy directors in ministries and directors in non-ministerial department will not differ significantly in their mean ratings of secretaries efficiency in management skills.

Table 3: ANOVA summary of mean ratings of Directors and deputy directors in ministries and directors and deputy directors in non-ministerial departments on the quality of managerial skills of the secretaries.

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F - Cal	F.Crit	P
Between groups	0.04	2	.02			
Within groups	7.11	145	.118	4.72	3.15	<.05
Total	7.15	147				

Decision: $P < .05$, Reject.

Discussion of Results

The results of research question one shown in Table 1 show that directors and deputy directors agreed that secretaries coordinate and resolve conflicts in the organization (3.39), direct and motivate subordinates in the office (2.82), set target in the organisation (2.31), and identify new ideas in the organization (2.95). However, they disagreed on the statements that secretaries allocate resources in the organization (1.90) and initiate improvement projects (1.91). On the average, they agreed that secretaries in Anambra State Public Service possess managerial skills.

The results in Table 2 show that the secretaries were efficient in showing interest in the progress of the ministry/department (3.42), exhibiting leadership qualities in office (2.93)

and making sure that each day's job or task is completed (2.77). They were however less efficient in being enthusiastic in working in the office (1.80), striving to complete a given task (1.59) and being innovative in accomplishing a given task in the office (1.65). On the average, the secretaries were less efficient in managerial skills (2.36). The present findings agrees with the study by Ryan (1977) which found that secretaries are less enthusiastic to work, are inefficient in making decisions without asking for direction and as a result, seek to improve their abilities through reading secretarial hand books, periodicals and other related literature or materials.

The results presented in Table 3 show that the directors and deputy directors in ministries and directors and deputy directors in non-ministerial departments rated the secretaries differently and the computed *f* value of 4.72 is greater than the critical value of 3.15. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

Conclusions

From these findings, the researcher concludes that the secretaries lacked some skills necessary for high performance in office. Since there are areas where the secretaries perform well and there are areas where they need improvement, it is therefore concluded that the secretaries should continue to improve on the areas of strength while engaging in-service training to overcome areas of deficiencies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Regular seminars, workshops and symposia should be organized for secretaries, with a view to explaining and inculcating in them, new approaches, or discoveries to ensure quality.
2. Secretaries in Anambra State Public Service should attend in-service training programmes on managerial skills to enable them perform efficiently in their positions.

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