

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF SECRETARIES IN AKWA IBOM STATE CIVIL SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influencing factors of professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, while random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The instrument for data collection was administered to 303 respondents and the responses used for the study. The instruments were vetted by the supervisor in the department of Test and Measurement. Data collected were analyzed using pearson moment analysis. The result of the data analyses were all significant and from the results of the analysis, it was concluded that retraining and motivation positively influence professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. It was recommended that more effort be geared towards developing a positive professional attitude among secretaries code of conduct, desisting from any action that can tarnish the image of the profession.

Keywords: Professional; growth; training; motivation; secretaries; performance.

Introduction

Professional growth in a broad sense refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role. More specifically, “secretary development in his or her professional role”. Secretary development is the professional growth a secretary achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her job systematically (Glatthom, 1995). Professional development includes formal experience (such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring, etc.) and informal experiences such as reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to academic discipline etc. (Ganser, 2000).

Professional growth has two main phases: initial preparation and continuing professional development. Initial secretary training most often takes a form of full-time residential pre-service programmes in Colleges or Universities. Initial training may also be available to serving unqualified secretaries through distance education, ‘out of school’ programmes during vacations or on release from schools for extended periods of time. The professional components of initial secretary training programmes can either be consecutive or concurrent with academic subject.

The term civil service is explained as a branch of governmental service in which individuals are employed and retained on the basis of professional merit as proven by competitive examinations (OECD, 1997). Civil service professionalism is defined as “the overall values that guide the civil services-values like loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness and efficiency, impartiality, accountability and others, which are specific to individual country” (United Nations, 2000). From the above definition, we can understand that civil service professionalism is about applying merit principles in career system-merit based recruitment, selection and promotion; keeping the neutrality of the civil service and/or civil servants; enhancing civil service’ competence and excellence through mechanisms like training; insuring system of accountability in the civil service.

Secretaries retraining programmes has been found to be a contributing factor to secretary's professional growth and according to (Garcia, 2005) is the acquisition of skills, knowledge and abilities to enable one function effectively in the performance of one's job. Training of workers is very important to the development and growth of the country, most especially the organization. Training is meant for increasing the usefulness of the workers at the work place. Motivation of secretaries in the workplace is seen as positively affecting secretary's professional growth in the civil service, motivation, as a process, started with a need in human being which creates a vacuum in a person. In an attempt to fill the vacuum, an internal driving force is generated which starts and sustains a chain of action or reaction. It is at that point that the vacuum is also filled. With this background information, Nnabuife (2009), defines motivation as the internal or external driving force that produces the willingness to perform an act to a conclusive end. The professional growth of secretary's has been a challenge in the Nigerian Civil Service. The civil servants are often described as exhibiting a care free work attitude characterized by the low positive, poor dedication, laziness, absenteeism, lateness, negligence and outright inefficiency (Babura, 2013). This non-challant attitude leads to poor performance is observed in every Ministry of the Federation and it is no longer a story. It has become a concern in the minds of many scholars why the aforementioned problems are prevalent among civil servants. Partly, the poor attitude among other factors has been identified to be caused by lack of training and retaining for the civil servants (Ostroff and Bowen, 2000).

It is factual that there exists remarkable relationship between training and retraining, motivation and membership with professional bodies and secretary's professional growth and development by different researchers in different part of Nigeria and the world. Therefore, it is discovered that little or no effort has been made to disaggregate this study to different regions in Nigeria. It is against this background that this research work is conducted to examine the influencing factors of professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Opportunities to Promote Professionalism in the Civil Service

The opportunities that could be utilized to promote professionalism in the civil service are specific to the countries' nature or type of political economy-what is best for one country may be irrelevant for another (Hammer, 1996). The opportunities can be from within-the will and initiatives of the government of the day to advance the civil service. Generally speaking, civil service reform measurement, different management tools and techniques exist from within and outside, which enables the system to right-size the civil service, enhance performance management system, promote professional ethical standards and set appropriate civil service rules. Regulations can be acknowledged as opportunities to realize professional civil service (Hammer and Champy, 1996).

As these are challenges, there are also opportunities to promote and ensure professionalism in the civil service. The very complex nature of the civil service system makes it difficult to control and assess all the factors or variables positively or adversely affecting the smooth functions. In the previous part, the challenges facing to the civil service professionalism is examined from the merit based recruitment and selection, promotion, neutrality, training effectiveness and system of accountability point of view. On the contrary, in this part the major opportunities that are available in the external and/or internal environment to promote and realize professionalism in the civil service are addressed. The findings and discussion are made based on the data obtained from interview, surveyed questionnaire, focus group discussion and review of secondary sources. The following pillars opportunities are presented based on the opinions, attitudes obtained from the questionnaire, interview, FGD, and secondary data.

Retraining of Secretaries and Professional Growth

In the real world, organizational growth and development is affected by a number of factors. In light with the present research during the development of organizations, employee training plays a vital role in improving performance as well as increasing productivity. This in turn leads to placing organizations in the better positions to face competition and stay at the top. This therefore implies an existence of a significant difference between the organizations that train their employees and organizations that do not. Existing literature presents evidence of an existence of obvious effects of training and development on employee performance. Some studies have proceeded by looking at performance in terms of employee performance in particular (Purcell, Kinnie & Hutchinson, 2003) while others have extended to a general outlook of organizational performance (Guest 1997). In one way or another, the two are related in the sense that employee performance influences general organizational performance since employee performance influences general organizational performance. In relation to the above, Wright and Geroy (2001) note that employee competencies change through effective training programs. It therefore not only improves the overall performance of the employees to effectively perform their current jobs but also enhances the knowledge, skills and attitude of the workers necessary for the future job, thus contributing to superior organizational performance.

The branch of earlier research on training and employee performance has discovered interesting findings regarding this relationship. Training has been proved to generate performance improvement related benefits for the employee as well as for the organization by positively influencing employee performance through the development of employee knowledge, skills, ability, competencies and behaviour (Appiah 2010). Moreover, other studies elaborate on training as a means of dealing with skill deficits and performance gaps as a way of improving employee performance. According to Swart, (2005), bridging the performance gap refers to implementing a relevant training intervention for the sake of developing particular skills and abilities of the employees and enhancing employee performance. He further elaborated the concept by stating that training facilitates organization to recognize that its workers are not performing well and as thus their knowledge, skills and attitudes need to be molded according to the firm needs. It is always so that employees possess a certain amount of knowledge related to different jobs. However, it is important to note that this is not enough and employees need to constantly adapt a new requirement of job performance. In other words, organizations need to have continuous policies of training and retraining of employees and thus not wait for occurrences of skill and performance gaps.

Most of the benefits derived from training are easily attained when training is planned. This means that in the organization, trainers and trainees are prepared for the training well in advance. According to Kenney and Reid (1986), planned training is the deliberate intervention aimed at achieving the learning necessary for improved job performance.

Motivation of Secretaries and Professional Growth

Motivation is fundamentally meant to facilitate behavioral alteration. It is a force that enables an individual to act in the direction of a particular objective. According to the study of Grant (2008) held on employee motivation; motivation forced such result as productivity, performance and persistence (Grant, 2008). Motivation employees are more oriented toward autonomy and freedom and are more self driven as compared to less motivated employees which lead to availing developmental opportunities more correctly. Similarly employee commitment with their work and jobs is more, if they are motivated compared to less motivated employees (Vansteenkiste, 2007). Topic of motivation is more discussed in the subject of organizational behaviour which contains a variety of models and theories relevant

to motivation. Development and growth of employees is significantly focused. According to Maslow, Alderfer, McClelland, Hackman and Herzberg; the growth is a most influential motivator for individuals that exploit the potential of employees. It is found that an undeniable link exists among employee motivation and their satisfaction with the jobs and also to organizational commitment (Basset-Jones and Lloyd, 2005). Employee motivation is a most important element for all organizations to attain achievement whether these are public or private (Chintallo & Mahadeo, 2013).

According to the outcomes of the study accompanied on the association between motivation and job satisfaction of employees by Sirota, (2005) having 135,000 respondents from different groupings and countries, organizations implementing various motivation programs involving three constructs as camaraderie, equity and achievement were considered to be more effective than organizations that had no or twice as many 'enthusiastic' employee (of total 45%). A study was done to find the effect of employee motivation on employee performance in which it was concluded that if employees are more motivated then their performance will increase (Asim, 2013).

Employee motivation is one of the policies of managers to increase effectual job management amongst employees in organizations (Shadare, 2009). A motivated employee is responsive of the definite goals and objectives he/she must achieve, therefore he/she directs its efforts in that direction. Rutherford (1990) reported that motivation formulates an organization more successful because provoked employees are constantly looking for improved practices to do a work, so it is essential for organizations to persuade motivation of their employees (Kalimullah, 2010). Getting employees to do their best work even in strenuous circumstances, is one of the employees most stable and greasy challenges and this can be made through motivating them.

Purpose of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between motivation and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.
2. To determine the relationship between retraining and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between motivation and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.
2. There is no significant relationship between retaining and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

METHODS

This work adopted the descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised all the staff of Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. Out of the entire population, 300 staff were strategically used for the study. An instrument called questionnaire was used to obtain data on the independent and dependent variables presented in both Section A and B of the questionnaire. Section A measured the demographic data of the respondents such as gender, age, educational level, department, faculty while section B measured the independent variables. The content validity of the instrument was determined by experts in test and measurement who marched the items of the instrument with the research purposes in order to determine whether or not the instruments measured what they are supposed to measure. The reliability was determined through experts in test and measurement and statistics were given the instrument for rating in respect of the consistency with the research objectives. Items in which at least two experts agreed upon were regarded as suitable, the reliability coefficients

was 0.87 and was considered substantially high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The exercise lasted for fourteen days. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Moment correlation analysis while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha levels.

Data Analysis and Results

Hypothesis one

The null hypotheses state that there is no significant relationship between motivation and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. In order to test the hypothesis, two variables were identified as professional growth as the independent variable and motivation as the dependent variable. (See table 1)

Table 1

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between motivation and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum XY$	r
	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$		
Professional Growth(X)	9011	270655		
			134663	0.95*
Motivation (y)	4486	67072		

***significant at 0.05 level; N=303; Critical r-value = 0.159**

The above table 1 presents the obtained r-value as (0.95), this value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.159) at 0.05 level with 198 degree of freedom. The obtained r-value (0.95) was greater than the critical r-value (0.159). Hence, the result is significant; the result therefore means that there is significant relationship between motivation and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significance between retraining and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. In order to test the hypothesis, two variables were identified as professional growth as the independent variable and retraining as the dependent variable. (See table 2)

Table 2

Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between Retraining and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service

Variables	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum XY$	r
	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$		
Professional Growth(X)	9011	270655		
			140204	0.72*

Retaining (Y) 4683 73009

***significant at 0.05 level; N=303; Critical r-value = 0.159**

The table 2 presents the obtained r-value as (0.72), this value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.159) at 0.05 level with 198 degree of freedom. The obtained r-value (0.72) was greater than the critical r-value (0.159). Hence, the result is significant; the result therefore means that there is significant relationship between retaining and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Discussion of findings

The result of the data analysis in table 1 was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value (0.95) was greater than the critical r-value (0.159) at 0.05 level with 301 degree of freedom. This implies that there is significance between motivation and professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The significance of the result is in agreement with the opinion of Swart, (2005) who said that bridging the performance gap refers to implementing a relevant training intervention for the sake of developing particular skills and abilities of the employees and enhancing employee performance. The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

The result in the data analysis in table 2 was significant due to the fact that the obtained r-value (0.72) was greater than the critical r-value (0.159) at 0.05 level with 301 degree of freedom. This implies that there is significant relationship between motivation and professional growth of the secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The significance of the result is in agreement with the opinion of Vansteenkiste, (2007) who said that motivated employees are more oriented toward autonomy and freedom and are more self driven as compared to less motivated employees which lead to availing developmental opportunities more correctly. Similarly employee commitment with their work and job is more, if they are motivated as compared to less motivated employees. The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, it was concluded that, influencing factors like motivation, retaining etc. enhances professional growth of secretaries in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service

Recommendation

Based on the results obtained from findings in this study, the following recommendations are made:

- More effort should be geared towards developing a positive professional attitude among secretaries. Such attitude includes having high regards for the profession, upholding the secretaries code of conduct, desisting from any action that can tarnish the image of the profession.
- The state and federal government should give an upward review of secretary's remuneration package that would motivate them to give their best to profession.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) should be effectively utilized by secretaries to facilitate job performance.

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