

## Developing Office Management Techniques in Nigeria: Perspective, Profile and Prospects

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### Abstract

Office Management in developing countries is germane considering the inexhaustible and dynamic need to meet global competitiveness in terms of service delivery, effective planning and execution of day to day activities by organizations. This is in recognition of the fact that robust political, economic and social development in any nation cannot be accomplished without calculated office management techniques. This paper therefore empirically evaluates the perspective, profile and prospects of developing office management techniques in Nigeria. The researchers elicit data from both primary and secondary sources. Simple percentages, mean scores, standard deviation and co-efficient of variation were used in data presentation and analysis. The study revealed that the development of office management techniques is pivotal to enhancing service delivery. Thus, the paper recommends that there should be adequate training of employees in improving their techniques in office management and infrastructure should be improved to encourage office automation towards better service delivery.

**Keywords:** Office, Office Management, Management technique, productivity.

### Introduction

Most organizations find it extremely difficult if not impossible to achieve their targeted objectives without aggressively initiating and applying effective and efficient office management techniques. Thus, lack of office management techniques would result to increased organizational dispute, decreased moral, weak productivity, loss of co-operate organizational image and pre-matured organizational death. Stoner and Freeman (1989) see organization as an institution or functional group. Whereas, Bedeian and Zamnuto (1991) identified four key elements in conceptualizing the word "organization" such as: social entities, goal directed, deliberately structured activity systems and permeable boundary.

Office organization is the allocation of duties, authorities and responsibilities to individuals working as a team in an establishment (Amos, 2005). Hence, office organization is the technical and management of office integration of sectoral and holistic activities in order to achieved the desired goals. Office management is the branch of management which is concerned with services of obtaining, recording and analyzing information through the planning, organizing, directing and controlling of human and material resources (Amos, 2005).

Consequently, management functions of planning, organization, directing and controlling is performed from a location called office hence management functions and office can be said to be interdependent because of their complementary roles. The researchers shall explore some basic concepts of office management such as communication, organizational structure, office automation and filing so as to identify their pivotal roles to the functionality of an office in any organizations.

### Statement of the problem

Management functions of planning, organizing, directing and controlling are very significant to the effective functioning of an office hence, while office is perceived as the soul of an organization management could be likened to the spirit of an organization. However, evidence had shown that these functions are not been put into practice effectively to actuate the functionality of office practices towards effective service delivery. The resultant effects are decreased morale, inconsistency in organizational policies, increased industrial dispute and low productivity. It is against this backdrop that this research is being carried out.

### **Objectives of the study**

This research will specifically explore the perspective, profile and prospect of office management techniques in Nigeria and how it has enhanced organizational productivity. However, the researchers shall also proffer lasting solutions to the identified constraints which has mar effective functioning of office management.

### **Research proposition**

Development of office management techniques such as planning, organizing, directing and controlling of both human and materials resources will enhance optimality of output and resourcefulness in organizations.

### **Scope of the study**

The study examined government establishment in Nigeria. In doing this, employees in secretarial and executive cadre in Federal Polytechnic, Idah were selected. More so, the period of 2003 – 2012 was considered because this period is reasonable enough to measure the variables being discussed by the researchers.

### **Research hypotheses**

Two hypotheses were formulated on this work such as:

- Ho:** Office management techniques have not improved productivity in the organization.
- Hi:** Office management techniques have improved productivity in the organization.
- Ho:** Office management techniques do not improve employee morale.
- Hi:** Office management techniques improve employee morale.

### **Conceptual clarification**

An office is a place in which business, clerical, or professional activities are conducted. Amos (2005) defined office as any place either a building or a room in which clerical activities are carried out. Follet (1918) also posits that an office is a place where the functions relating to receiving, recording, arranging and giving out information are carried out vis-à-vis a place for safekeeping the properties of organizations.

Amos (2005) noted that the historical evolution of the office is as old as the ancient civilization and the evolution of man because human brain itself has been functioning not only as think-tank but also the reservoir of knowledge, innovation, skills and information since human brain has long being recognized as a channel of processing information cum dissemination and retrieval.

Office management is synergy of two words office and management. Having defined the concept of an office, the concept of management means the art of getting things done through people (Follet, 1918). Therefore, office management is the planning, organizing, directing and controlling of office activities to ensure that various resources (human and materials) are put into optimal utilization to ensure that the organizational aims are achieved (Yalokwu, 2006). Amos (2005) also sees office management as the branch of management which is concerned with services of obtaining, recording and analyzing information of planning, and of communication, by means of which the management of an organization preserves its assets. In the same vein, office management according to Koontz and Weirich (1988) is an integral part of management which concerns itself with information function in an organization. Nwachukwu (2006) defined organization as an entity and also a process of coordinating individual efforts to accomplish a common objective. Meanwhile, Amos (2005) sees office organization as the allocation of duties, authorities and responsibilities to individuals working as a team in an establishment. Thus, office organization means the systematic organization of an office in order to get an effective and efficient productivity.

### **Office management techniques: perspective, profile and prospects**

Planning according to Nwachukwu (2006) means a blueprint for action. Thus, it entails determination of control, direction and methods of accomplishing the overall organizational objective. This according to Yalokwu (2006) is a process that involves the establishment of objectives, strategies to achieve organizational objectives. Organizing on the other hand is the formal pattern of working relationships and coordination designed by management to link the activities of individual and groups so as to accomplish the organization objectives (Bartol and Martin, 1991).

Directing means, actuating, motivating and inducing the employees to work enthusiastically without coercion (Nwachukwu, 2006). The concept of controlling is defined as that phase of the management process which maintains organization activities within allowable limits as measured from expectations (Fayol 1929). The techniques discussed above were not exhaustive however, these are the basic meanings and they perform pivotal role to the survival of office management even though they have not gain prominence in terms of financing the functionality of office largely relied on the techniques since that is the only way continuity of an office can survive in organizations.

### **Functions performed in an office**

The functions performed in a modern office can be divided into two main categories, they include:

- i. Basic or routine functions
- ii. Administrative management or ancillary functions

The basic functions include the following:

- To receive or collect information
- To prepare a record of such information.
- To process and arrange such information.
- To supply readymade information to the authorities when asked for.

The administrative and management functions of an office are:

- Management functions.
- Development of office system and procedures.
- Form designing and control.
- Selection and purchase of office appliances.
- Personnel functions.
- Controlling office cost.
- Maintenance of records.
- Planning schemes and policies.
- Safeguarding the assets.
- Public relations Amos (2005), Lerner (1982).

### **Some basic tools used in an office**

Filing means keeping documents in a safe place and being able to find them easily and quickly. Filing system is the central record-keeping for an organization and it aid systematic handling of mails. Ajiboye (2002) sees communication as a process by which an idea is transferred from a source to a receiver with the intention of changing his behavior. The office is responsible for receiving and communicating information both internally and externally, office correspondence thus take the form of business letters, official letters, memo, circular, minutes, telegrams, cable grams, telex, Email etc.

Hicks and Gullet (1987) also observed that organizational structure is a formalized intentional structure of roles which therefore structures the process of interaction and authority relationship in an organization. Finally, office automation involves the substantial use of computers in connection with other equipment to automate the basic secretarial, executive and clerical duties of an office. This involves the integration of computer, computers and associated technologies to provide an efficient service delivery in an office.

### **Validity and Reliability of the instrument**

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the researchers employed the services of two Academic Staff, two Chief Executive Officers, and two Chief Confidential Secretaries and on Chief Clerical Officer from Federal Polytechnic, Idah for validity. The questionnaire was validated after thorough scrutiny and valuable contributions made duly incorporated. To estimate the reliability of the instrument employed for data collection, the instrument was administered twice to staff of secretarial and executive cadres numbering 20 from Federal Polytechnic, Idah. The second administration of the instrument was two weeks after the first and the resulting scores were correlated using Pearson's product moment correlation ( $\rho$ ) approach. This yielded the co-efficient ( $r$ )  $r = 0.58$ . This score indicates that the instrument is reliable.

### **Research instrument**

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire titled "the Efficiency level of Office Management Techniques (EOMT). The questionnaire has two sections. Section "A" demands information on the efficiency of application of office management techniques, and section "B" contains information on the problems and prospects of office management techniques in Nigeria. The instrument is in form of Likert five-point rating scale. The response options have the values of 5,4,3,2 and 1 as follows: Strongly agree 5, Agree 4, Undecided 3, Disagree 2 and Strongly disagree 1.

**Research Design**

The survey research design was adopted in this study. This design was employed because of its exploratory nature. The researchers also employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary data were collected through the administration of questionnaire while secondary data were gathered from related literatures, textbooks, journals, periodicals etc. The sample size is 151 out of 242 based on judgemental sampling. The respondents were secretarial, executive and clerical staff of the Federal Polytechnic, Idah. The Yaro Yamani statistical formula for the determination of sample size was used. The formula is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size  
 N = population  
 e = allowance error  
 1 = constant

Thus, N = 242 and e = 5%: 0.05  
 Hence

$$\frac{242}{1 + 242 (0.05)^2}$$

$$\frac{242}{1.605}$$

$$= 151$$

**TABLE I: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS IN RESPECT OF EFFICIENCY OF OFFICE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

S/N	VARIABLES	EXPECTED MEAN-3					PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES				MEAN SCORES OF RESPONSES	
		5	4	3	2	1	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	COEFFICIENCY OF VARIATION			
		%	%	%	%	%			%			
1	There is adequate application of office management techniques	54	21	12	8	5	4.11	0.71	17.27			
2	Communication is highly effective in the organization	62	24	10	3	1	4.43	0.82	18.51			
3	Office management techniques do improve productivity in the organization	58	23	10	7	2	4.28	0.76	17.76			
4	There is adequate provision of facilities in the organization	60	19	14	4	3	4.29	0.79	18.41			
5	The employees need adequate supervision	5	7	9	19	60	1.78	1.15	64.61			

Source: Field Research (2014)

Decision criterion: Accept any value with cal mean ≤ 3.0 and CV ≤ 30.0 otherwise reject.

Table I above shows that 75% of the respondents were of the view that there is adequate application of office management techniques in the organization. 86% of the respondents were of the opinion that communication is highly effective in the organization. 81% of the respondents agreed that office management techniques have



improved productivity in the organization. 79% of the respondents agreed that there is adequate provision of facilities to the employees to enhance their performance and 12% of the respondents were of the opinion that the employees need adequate supervision. Hence, item 1,2,3,4 are accepted considering the mean and coefficient of variation values while item 5 is rejected.

**TABLE II: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS IN RESPECT OF IMPROVING EMPLOYEES MORAL THROUGH OFFICE MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

S/N	VARIABLES	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES					MEAN SCORES OF RESPONSES		
		5	4	3	2	1	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	COEFFICIENCY OF VARIATION
		%	%	%	%	%			%
1	The employees are adequately motivated	62	18	9	5	6	4.25	0.86	20.24
2	Industrial dispute is imminent in the organization	6	10	11	12	61	1.88	1.05	55.85
3	Employees are sent for training	60	19	8	9	4	4.22	0.82	19.43
4	The working environment is very attractive	58	21	7	5	9	4.14	0.81	19.57
5	The employees are involved in the decision making process of the organization	4	9	8	20	59	1.79	1.13	63.13

Source: Field Research (2014)

Decision criterion: Accept any value with cal mean  $\geq 3.0$  and CV  $\leq 30.0$  otherwise reject.

Table II above shows that 80% of the respondents agreed that the employees are motivated. 16% of the respondents were of the view that there is frequent industrial dispute in the organization. 79% of the respondents agreed that employees are sent for training. 79% of the respondents were of the view that the working environment is attractive while 13% were of the view that the employees do involved in the decision making process in the organization. Hence, item 1, 3 and 4 are accepted considering the mean and coefficient of variation values while item 2 and 5 are rejected.

### Conclusion

From the results of data analysis and subsequent discussion of findings, the paper concludes that development of office management techniques is pivotal to enhancing improved service delivery in Nigeria but considering the dynamic nature of organization in this jet-age, consistent training of employees need to compliment such organizational ideas.

### Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions of this paper, the researchers recommend that:

1. The employees should be involved in the decision making process so as to create sense of belonging and sincere commitment by members of the organization.
2. There should be provision of more incentives to employees so as to motivate them for improved productivity.
3. Automation of all offices should be priotise so that the intellectual capability of the employees could be properly harnessed.
4. In other to sustain the current industrial harmony, the organization should be proactive in foreseeing likely areas of dispute and timely addressing same.
5. There should be periodic review of the organizations human resource programmes so as to identify likely areas of strengths and weaknesses.

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