

Time Management: an Antidote for Efficient Service Delivery in Public Organisations in Nigeria, a Study of Anambra State Local Government System

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Abstract

Time is merely a convention, a convenient yardstick for measuring the flow of life and for indicating the transition of living. It helps us to plan our day to day activities and as such there is need for time to be allocated, utilized and controlled by the individual, groups or organizations. This paper therefore examined some of the factors which causes poor time management in the Anambra state local government councils which hinders service delivery and as well as the measures to be adopted by this level of government to ensure proper time management. The paper relied on the secondary sources of data collection and discovered that factors such as the politicized recruitment procedures, the monoculture economy, lack of participation of the employees in the decision making process, negative attitude to work among the local government workers as some of the factors which causes poor time management. However, in order to ensure proper management of time for efficient service delivery some strategies were identified such as planning, division of labour, motivation, listing what to do, delegation, supervision among others.

Keywords: Time Management, Service Delivery, Public Organization

INTRODUCTION

A worker according to Ogunna (2007) should wake up early from bed to start his morning duties, go to work early, come back from work early and go to bed early. He maintained that every employee should be guided by this as this is the only way of achieving the goals of the organization. Nevertheless, time is merely a convention; it is a convenient yardstick for determining the flow of life, and for indicating the transition of living. There are 24 hours a in a day and this has remained constant. As we all know that time is an intangible factor of production which must be properly managed to achieve our numerous goals both at our work places and in homes. According to Osawe (2017) the efficiency and effectiveness of any public organization depends largely on the effective utilization of the most precious assest, “time”, by organizations employees. In view of the above, Pehlivan (2013) in futile and Boniface (2017) were of the view that the high performance that is needed by competitive conditions made organizations and directors to utilize their time effectively and hence the need to control time. In the olden days for example, time is kept in terms of distinguishing between day and night time, mark phases of the moon, observe the various seasons of the year and thereafter match these periods with relevant activities they intend to pursue. Today, time is kept in minutes, hours, weeks, months, years, century and millennium.

This process of keeping time helps people all over the world to plan one activity or the other. Time according to (Anaud 2007) is continuum of experience in which events pass from the future through the present to the past. Its supply is very limited while the demand for it is limitless Ali and Baba (2015). When time allocated for achieving a particular task is lost, it is lost forever, hence time is life, to waste it is the same as wasting life. Time to a typical European is money, but to an average Nigerian man, it is a snail. This implies that time is nothing to an average Nigerian man who always believe in “African time” in whatever he does.

To Ali and Baba (2015), time must crawl and wait for him and hence nothing happens until after two to three hours of the agreed time. However, for the Nigerian public organization to achieve its objective of efficient service delivery that will improve the lots of the citizenry there is need for efficient time management. Time management therefore is the skill and technique in which time is allocated, utilized and controlled by individuals, groups, institutions, and organizations, in order to achieve the best results. To Fatile and Boniface (2017) time

management involves keeping a schedule of the tasks and activities that have been deemed important. What is important in proper time management is self discipline as this will help in no small way in helping us to stay focus Ojukwu and Obasan (2011) posited that time management is the conscious usage of time to deliver set objectives. It is a tool which is made up of a wide range of rules and personal skills which impacts directly on stress reduction in work places and homes (Akhavan and Eynolghozat 2013). This therefore enhances performance levels of employees which lead to efficient service delivery. Also, Douglass and Goodwin (1980) argued that, time is our most precious resources and until it is efficiently managed, nothing else can be achieved and that was why McKay (1958) was of the view that we feel a shortage of time simply because we are not in control of ourselves and to him, time management is concerned with how to efficiently use the available time in order to actualize our objective within time given. Time management depicts the ability to use the time consistently well in order to complete an assigned task, thereby achieving long- time goals. It is all about managing our day to day activities effectively so that one can achieve all the assigned tasks within the allocated time.

Nevertheless, though time management is required for achieving both short and long time objective of public organizations in Nigeria especially at the local government level which is the only level of government close to the people in the rural areas, this level of government do not treat time management as a useful ingredient of organizational survival. Despite all the reforms carried out in order to make this level of government serve as the instrument of rural transformation, yet, lots of man- hour is wasted on unproductive activities. This is because, though the official working hours starts by 8.00 am in the morning, evidence however showed that employees at this level of government seem to disregard this rule and as such people go to work anytime ranging from 10:00 am to 11:00am some 12 pm and leave before official close of work by 4pm.

Also, those who managed to be earlier enough usually engage in other activities that are not related to their job schedule and some move from one office to another gossiping. Indeed, their problem of wasted man hour seems to have been taken for granted as no effort is made to discipline the employees leading to poor service delivery in the local government system. The major cause of the above stated problem may largely be due to the highly politicized nature of the recruitment process at the local government level in Nigeria.

However, this paper examined the factor which causes poor time management in public organizations in Nigeria, the relationship between time management and service delivery, strategies for effective time management as an antidote for efficient service delivery.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR POOR TIME MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM IN ANAMBRA STATE

One of the factors responsible for increased productivity in public organization is proper time management as this will help in no small way in ensuring that the resources of the organization is put in proper use. However, white and Paul (2008) argued that employees can only put in their very best towards achieving organizational goals if the employees are motivated, trained and retrained, provided with adequate resources to make them function effectively and proper time management to ensure that no time is wasted, career development plans and sound performance appraisal system.

However, some of the factors which hinder proper time management in Nigerian public organization especially at the local government level in Anambra state are over politicized recruitment process which encourages the recruitment of unqualified personnel into the system and this leads to low productivity. Politicization of personnel recruitment according to Onah (2014) is the process of recruiting only party faithful and political associates to run the affairs of the local government. This according to him was possible because the federal civil service commission, the local government service commission of the state and board of public enterprises are made up of politicians and all other persons that are loyal to the ruling political party either at the centre or at the state level. Also, he posited that politics at the federal level affects politics at the state level and politics at the state level affects that of the local government level. Also part of the politicized nature of the public service which hinders service delivery is the activities of the traditional rulers. The powerful traditional rulers however influence the recruitment process and this contrast the use of merit principles as a criteria for appointment into the system. Matters regarding promotion, placements, transfers, and disciplinary actions are politically motivated and this poses a great challenge to proper time management that will enhance efficient service delivery because officers do not take their job serious. Public servants come to work when they like and leave when they like, go to work very late and sometimes the

rate of absenteeism is very high. There is poor planning and scheduling, no goal setting, lack of prioritizing of one's duties and so on. This therefore breeds low morale, corruption, dereliction of duty, lack of commitment to one's duty. Also public servants use their official time to trade in their various offices and hence serve themselves rather than the public.

Also, another factor responsible for poor time management in public organization is the monoculture economy having moved from agricultural to petroleum products (Uduma 2003). The Nigeria crude oil export accounts for about 80% of revenue to the federal government of Nigeria and as such government at all levels in Nigeria depends on federal allocation from the sale of crude oil for survival and sustenance. With this therefore, the public service according to Osawe (2017) becomes redundant, lazy, lack of sincerity and unproductive as it does not participate in any productive venture that will yield revenue since the revenue from oil seem to be surplus and sometimes each of the tiers of government will have excess money to share. He therefore pointed out that there is no need for proper time management when the people are not willing to put in maximum efforts towards achieving the goals of the organization.

Also, thus dependent on oil, which makes Nigeria a mono economy causes poor time management as it makes, the Nigeria public service become redundant and this encourage poor performance among the employees. This may have prompted the Nigeria president to refer to the youths as being lazy. A situation where they expect the government to do everything for them without thinking of what to do to earn a living because Nigeria has oil in abundance. Among the public servants, no one is talking about prioritizing what to do but expect to be paid huge salary at the end of the month without doing anything, as this is seen as their own part of the share of the National cake. This is the reason why instead of going to work early people go to work by 11am and leave before 4 pm hence there is no need for productivity albinitio.

Nevertheless, another factor which causes poor time management in the local government is lack of participation of the employees in taking decisions which affects them as participation gives them a sense of belonging. Participative management on the other hand means or is defined as the process by which people contribute ideas towards the solution of problems affecting the organization and their job (Beach 1975).

This according to Ogunna (2007) makes organizational decision making more rational and objective as more and more people of diverse knowledge, altitude and values contribute to

the decision making process. The employees themselves exerts real influence in shaping the decisions that affects them. Indeed without the workers taking part in the decision making process, the employees may likely misunderstand new policies and new systems by management. When this occurs therefore, it will affect the proper time management by the workers as they will tend to devise other means of sabotaging the policies and programmes of the organization simply because they were not carried along in taking decision that affects them. The Anambra state local government system today is being managed by transition committees instead of elected officials.

Another factor which causes poor time management in the Anambra state local government system is the negative attitude to work by employees which ranges from abuse of official time as employees comes to work anytime neglecting 8:00am official commencement of work, as people go to work by 10:00am, 11:00am and even 12pm as well leave before 4pm closing time, dereliction of duty, gossiping, moving from one office to another chatting, all these amounts to poor time management which hinders organizational growth.

THE NEXUS BETWEEN TIME MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN ANAMBRA STATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

The issue of employee productivity is one of the most contentious issues in public organization in Nigeria. This is because; productivity is associated to goal attainment which according to Nnadozie (1986) is rooted on one hand in achieving desired outcome or results and on other hand in the belief about cause and effects relationship. However productivity according to Ogunna (2007) could be seen as the capacity or situation where an individual or organization produces maximum result with available human, financial and material resources to achieve set organizational objectives. Productivity is what every organization desires whether private or public. This is because a productive organization enriches both the owners, the management of the organization and the employees as well. The productivity of any organization is dependent on two major variable which includes the availability of technology and employees performance. On the other hand, an employee's performance is also dependent on the professional and technical competence of the workers that is possession of the necessary skills to discharge one's responsibility, i.e. relevant knowledge skills, proper time management and motivation. According to Ezech (2013) he pointed out that low productivity is real and it occurs in so many

organizations in Nigeria. He stressed that it occurs when the personnel of any organization lacks the capacity to impact desirably on productivity.

However, time management according to Popescu, Avram and Dana (2013) is seen as an instrument for ensuring the productivity of employees. In the same vein, also, Schneider, White and Paul (2008) posited the employees of any organization can only be productive if the management of the organization supports the employees through adequate motivation, training and retraining, effective management assistance and proper time management. Nevertheless time management on the other hand means the process of organizing and planning how much time you spend on specific activities. To Lucchetti (2010) Time management is the process of exercising conscious control over the amount of time spends on specific activities, most especially to increase efficiency or productivity. Time management according to Osawe (2017) may be facilitated to enhance productivity in public organization by possession of adequate skills by the workers, adequate tools and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing a specific task. It is the act of managing our daily activities by ensuring that we accomplish our task within a specific time allocated. This is what individuals usually adopt in order to help them make conscious decisions about any activity which they undertake.

However, the Nexus between time management and employee productivity is that time is tied to every human activity in any public organization. According to Fatile, and Boniface (2017) Employees sets smart goals and measure its successes and failures taking into consideration time. This means that misuse of time in any human activity will automatically lead to failure. In order to ensure effective usage of time by the workers so as to enhance their performance, employees should first and foremost decide which of their daily task falls into categories of essential task, important task and low value tasks by determining which task is most important which needs immediate attention. This is because time management is the ability to decide what is important in your life both at work, at home and in the personal life of every employee. Therefore the employees of the Anambra state government system should be able to take this important decision so as to achieve the goal of services delivery. Time management is defined to utilize the available time skillfully to achieve set goals within timeframe. Time keeps all events from happening at once as it increases productivity as well as profits. Effective time management

helps the employees to achieve a specific task which is key to achieving organizational goals irrespective of location, size, and nature of business (Adejo 2013).

STRATEGIES FOR EFFICIENT TIME MANAGEMENT AS AN ANTIDOTE FOR EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKERS

Time is an essential resource, when lost, it is irrecoverable and it cannot be saved for later. Nevertheless, for the local government system to accomplish its objectives within available time, the following strategies should be adopted.

- A. PLANNING:** Planning according to Conyers and Hills (1980) is seen as a continuous process which involves decisions and choices about alternative ways of using available resources with the aim of achieving particular goals in future. To Ogunna (2007) it is the process of setting a series of actions which have to be taken in order to achieve a set goal. It can also be seen as the process of identifying the problem to be solved, searching for both financial and material resources to be used, methods and techniques to be adopted so as to achieve the desired objective. To achieve an assigned task, the public administrator will set out the strategies to be used and the amount of time that should be used to achieve the objective. For the local government administrators in Nigeria, who do not take their work serious, only go to work when salary is to be paid, the issue of utilizing their precious time and deliver services to the people is not taken serious. Planning as a means of achieving the goal of any organization require total commitment and diligence to one's duty as this will help the administrator to set up the steps to be taken to accomplish a given task. This will not only help the administrator set out the measures to be adopted but will help him to utilize available time and as well eliminate waste. Planning at the local government will help save both human and material resources needed for accomplishing a given task. Planning helps the administrator at the local government level to prepare a time schedule which all activities are to be carried out and this will guide the officer concerned to ensure that all activities are completed within a record time. However in the Anambra state local government system, officers fall short of adequate planning to achieve set objectives. This is because, there is high rate of

absenteeism and lateness at this level of government as officers come to work anytime they like and as such there is no efficient service delivery to the people

- B. DIVISION LABOUR:** Bureaucracies all over the world is based on the systematic breaking down of jobs into various components in such a way that individuals are identified with a particular action. Also, the functions to be performed by any individual are determined by their position in such organization. Adam Smith in his book, titled “the wealth of Nations” the work of an organization is broken down into different tasks and allocated to different individuals to accomplish such tasks within a specific time frame. The local government system however operates within various departments, units and sections with given set goals and time frame to achieve the desired objectives, with this, it is expected that the local government system will achieve its objectives if the various units discharges its functions in accordance with the rules. This will also lead to specialization of functions. However, the reverse is the case as many officers does not have job schedule.
- C. EFFICIENT FILLING SYSTEM:** The major problem many organizations face is its storage system, that is, how efficient the filling system is. This is because, poor filling system, makes retrieval difficult and often a times misplacement of sensitive documents leading to unnecessary delays which bureaucracy s known for. There is huge flow of information into every organization and the file is the memory of the organization. Therefore there is need for efficient filling system as this will not only help in ensuring efficient service delivery but also help make the memory to be alive. Good filling system helps in no small way in enhancing the performance of the employees as it will make the job to be faster. To Ogunna (2007) when organizations files are neatly numbered, organized and arranged in cabinets, it will save a lot of time during retrieval.

There is always a poor filling system at the local government level and this causes unnecessary delays as some employees at this level of government lacks the commitment to their assigned duties hence there is poor service delivery. The reason according to them is attributed to poor motivation and as well as poor working environment. To ensure efficient service delivery at

the local government level, files should be coded, and numbered serially and placed orderly in file cabinets which will make retrieval easy and accessible, (Ogunna 2007).

D. AVIOD PROCRASTINATION: For efficient management of time at work places employees are advised to avoid procrastination even when the task to be performed becomes overwhelming or unpleasant. In order to be focused and deliver the necessary services thereby saving time, try and breakdown the task into smaller segments that require less time commitment and result in specific, realistic, deadlines. Always collect material or organize your notes if you are having problems in starting the task. However procrastination is the order of the day.

E. DELEGATION OF FUNCTION: Delegation according to Dim (2018) means the transfer of the duty of performing a particular job to another person i.e. a subordinate. When this is done, the subordinate is held accountable to the supervisor who delegated such duty and authority while the supervisor remains ultimately responsible for the job being done. This is necessary since the chief executive of cannot perform all the task all alone within a specific time. Indeed, Ogunna (2007) was of the view that delegation does not only save the time of the chief executive, but it will however help in developing the subordinates which encourages high productivity. He further posited that lack of delegation not only wastes the time of the chief executive but at the same time demoralizes the subordinates who feels not being carried along in running the affairs of the organization. However, some administrators in the local government level finds it extremely difficult to delegate functions to their subordinates for reasons best known to them as this will hinder the accomplishment of the desired objective of rendering efficient services to the people.

F. LIST WHAT TO DO

The best way to save time in the discharge of one's duty is to list out the task to be performed each working day. To achieve this objective, this must be in line with the time of performance of the task. For us to accomplish the goal this should go beyond listing the task to be performed but effort must be made to ensure that we adhere strictly both in the order of performance of any particular task and the time assigned to such activity. Listing of what to do helps employees to ensure that priority and urgent tasks are given

attention and as well help the administrator not to forget any activity. However, it is sad to point out here that administrators at the local government have no time of their own as most of them usually come to their duty post very late and leaves too early for other personal engagements, hence abandoning their duty schedule. This in no small way hinders effective and efficient use of time for the accomplishment of organizations goals.

G. MOTIVATION

This according to Dim, (2018) is the Zeal or urge in people to do more than what is usual to achieve a goal. She however posited that the degree of motivation given to employees of any organization determines to a great extent those who come to work early or those who seek more responsibility or dodge responsibility. She stated that motivated employees are always diligent in the discharge of their official duties. To Ogunna (2007) motivation is a time saving instrument in every human organization. He however argued that when workers are adequately motivated, they work very fast. This therefore means that if employees are rewarded for a job well done, it will energize them to work harder and very fast to accomplish any given tasks. There are usually very poor motivations of the Nigeria workers and this seems to hinder effective use of time in the discharge of official task and this hinders service delivery. Usually more and more time is being wasted in a task that requires urgent attention in the service of the Anambra State local government as there is high incidence of negative attitude to work amongst the workers.

H. SUPERVISION

This means the act of overseeing the day to day activities of the subordinates to know what they are doing in order to correct them, motivate them socially and psychologically by way of praising and rewarding them when they do well and putting them on the right track if need be to accomplish organizational goal. There is need to supervise local government officials so as not only to save time for efficient service delivery but to ensure that the right thing is done at the right time. However, for supervision to really serve as an instrument of time management at the local government there is need for effective training and retraining of the staff. This is however lacking at this level as employees at this level see training as avenue of making money or as a means of

additional income, hence training is not taken serious. Also selection of participants is not based on the training need of the organization but on whom do you know.

I. TIME LOG

This means the act of recording how an officer's time is being used on daily basis. This is usually expected to commence in the morning as the officer arrives his/her office and continues till afternoon where the officer records all activities with it accompanying time. At the end of the day, the officer summarizes all the activities for the day and analysis it systematically. With this analysis, it helps the officers on the days working plan as this will help the officer to actualize the task and ensure time rationalization. However public administrators at the local government level does not keep time log as a guide to their days activities and even if they keep, these are not adhered to as they spend little time in their offices. Most of the staff come to office very late and leave early.

J. COORDINATION

Coordination according to Nwankwo (2006) is a management function which unites, harmonizes, and directs all effort of the members of the organization towards achieving a common objective. Ogunna (2007) posited that. Coordination is a technique adopted by an administrator to hold the operating members intact so as to achieve its objectives. It helps to ensure that organizational conflicts are reconciled reconciling individuals and groups interest with overall objectives of the organization. This therefore helps to ensure that individual and group interests are not placed above organizational interest. However, in the local government system, there exists a lot of conflicts and tension due to lack of money, and materials dispute caused by inappropriate allocation of resources and functions and also conflict arising from the exercise of power. As coordination is the only instrument for reconciling this divergent interest in the local governments, efforts should be made to ensure that this is achieved through effective communication, leadership style and skills, professional knowledge and supervision hierarchy. Nevertheless, for the local government to achieve all these, their shall be weekly coordination meetings of local government officials for conflict resolutions. Unfortunately, this is lacking in the local government system in Anambra State as the appointed transition committee members are far away from the people as they stay in beg Hotels in the city and rarely go to their

offices. This however, makes it difficult for them to know the happenings at the council areas.

However, coordination helps to redefine and delimit functions and objectives and also help to expand the policies and programmes of the government to the people when all conflict situations are resolved, it saves a lot of time for the organizations.

CONCLUSION

Time is as old as the world itself. It is the regulator of all human activities, and for the accomplishment of a given task, by either an individual or groups of individuals, must treat time very carefully because nothing affects the bottom-line of any organization more than time effectiveness of its people. For public organizations to achieve its objective, management should develop effective skills and measures for efficient time management for the achievement of set objectives. Effective time management will in no small way help to improve employees service delivery, make scheduling of job easy for accomplishing task, makes them perform better and as well guides the organization towards achieving its objective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the forgoing, the following recommendations were made as some of the ways of ensuring effective time management in organizations. There should be adequate and proper motivation of the employees in form of higher remuneration and also the working environment should be conducive as well.

Effective delegation of functions is also recommended since the chief executive cannot perform all the task alone within specified period of time.

Leadership of any organization should also avoid procrastination; anything that should enhance service delivery should be done at the appropriate time.

Training and retraining of employees are also key to achieving organizations objectives.

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