



# **Strategies For Improving The Competence Of Civil Servants Performance Through Communication And Commitment In Katsina State, Nigeria**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The strategies for developing administrative competence, communication and commitment to the performance of the civil servant at all level has become a necessity. Competences are abilities, behaviors, knowledge and skills that impact the success of employees and organizations. This research has been carried out in public services in Katsina state of Nigeria three arms of government Federal, State and local government have been considered in this research. This study used quantitative approach with explanatory method. To analyze the data, 213 questionnaires are administered across the three secretariats and some teachers working with government in the state. This paper adopted a descriptive research design. The statistical result showed that competence, Communication and commitment has positive and significant effect on the performance of civil servants and it will also increase the performance of civil servants in the state.

**Keywords:** strategies, competency, civil servant, communication, commitment

## **INTRODUCTION**

In providing services to humanity and community, Civil servant are the driving element of government to have a duty and responsibility to serve. Civil servants are human resources who act as planners, implementers, and controllers in government agencies to achieve the goal that has been set. Based on the Law of the federal republic of Nigeria. The State Civil Apparatus is based on several principles such as basic values with respect to communication and cooperation, commitment, moral integrity and responsibility for public services, as well as competencies required in the field of duty. Through the more adequate competence, the employees will be more mastered and able to apply all job tasks in accordance with the job description set practically.

Competent employees are the main resource of any organization in acquiring a competitive advantage. Land, buildings or materials do not yield company productivity, rather, it is „people capital“ that runs a business and produces value from existing resources. Hay Group points out that an organization’s best source of competitive advantage lies with its employees. Strategies, business models, products and services can all be copied by competitors, but talented and competent employees represent a sustainable source of differentiation. The term competency was probably first introduced to psychology literature in 1973 when David McClelland argued in his article „Testing for competence rather than for intelligence“ that traditional tests of academic aptitude and knowledge content in fact predicted neither job performance nor success in life.

The success of the plethora of reform programmes of the federal government of Nigeria will largely depend on the quality of its workforce (public officers) that is statutorily charged with the responsibility to analyzing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policies and programmes of government. For example, if the service fails to deliver to certain standards, a country can lose its competitiveness, lose its direct investments and can lose its talented individuals to other countries (brain drain). While the choices are not always this simple, the ramifications and repercussions of a non-performing public sector are great in its impact and implications to the nation, its people, and its economy. To be able to deliver such levels of service, on the current scale and complexity, the fundamental personal qualities of those who deliver the service becomes imperative and vital. From the varied series of related literature, the definition of competency can be summarized as an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion referenced effective performance in a job or situation. Job competency is a set of behaviour patterns that a job incumbent needs to bring to a position in order to perform its tasks and functions with competence. A job competency can be a motive, trait, skill, self-concept, body of knowledge or an attribute that allows an individual to perform a task or activity within a specific function or job. Skills and knowledge refers surface or technical competencies that can be developed easily by training. Alternatively, motives, traits and self-concept are hidden or behavioral competencies that are difficult to develop. Traditionally, it is essential for an individual to possess the required technical competencies at a verge level in order to adequately perform their job. However, the changing environment and diverse workforce has resulted in behavioral competencies becoming crucial as the greatest determinants of an individual's performance. Thus, in order to be effective in a job, individuals need to possess or acquire both technical and behavioral competencies and use these together in performing their tasks.

#### **Public Sector Reforms in Nigeria**

The leading problem in Nigeria public service is serious employees not the lack of reforms and policies. Rather, our problem is that of too many reforms and policies without the much needed political will for their execution. As a matter of fact, the history of public sector reforms in Nigeria dates back to the pre-independence (colonial) region. Since after independence, we have had several home-grown public sector reforms and policies. But, bothersome is the fact that most of these reforms did not yield concrete results as the country still struggles with high rate of unemployment, poverty, insecurity, unstable power supply, bad roads, ineffective rail system to mention but a few. Industry observers have attributed the failure of the past public sector reforms to poor planning and implementation. This serious problem still facing the country's public service despite past reforms, by the Olusegun Obasanjo administration (1999 -2007) and Umaru Musa Yar'dua and Goodluck Jonathan administration (2007 – 2013) came up with wide-ranging public service reform programmes aimed at repositioning the public service to effectively and efficiently deliver public goods and services. Notable among the reforms of the federal government of Nigeria in the last two decades are: Electoral Reform, Pension Reform, Public Procurement Reform, Banking Reform, Monetisation Policy, Service Compact with all Nigerians (Servicom), Public-Private Partnership (PPP), and National Economic and Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) among others. Pension Reform, National Economic and Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS), Public Procurement Reform, Privatization Policy, Banking Sector Reform, Monetisation Policy.

A competency is an individual characteristic that can be measured or counted reliably and that can be shown to differentiate significantly between superior and average performers, or between effective and ineffective performers. Lotunani et al. (2014) said that the competence of civil servants can provide added value, especially to support the performance of civil servants, therefore it is important that the competence of civil servants is enhanced and maintained in accordance with the work plan of the regional apparatus unit. Another factor that affects performance is communication. The operational and management system is driven by communication because every action taken within the organization must be accompanied by communication, and all those who communicate should be encouraged to be good listeners for the good communication Shonubi and Akintaro (2016). In this direction, this study aims to examine the strategies on how to improve the competence, communication and commitment on the civil servants' performance in Katsina state and Nigeria at large.

#### **Concept of Competency**

competency was perhaps first introduced to psychology literature by McClelland (1973) argued in his article "Testing for competence rather than for intelligence" that traditional tests of academic aptitude and knowledge content in fact predicted neither job performance nor success in life. The quality of a company's management

is reflected by its employees' process of communicating Razi et al. (2010). Femi (2014) reveals that effective communication creates a mutual understanding between management and workers that helps in building sincere relationships between the two sides of the organization. Atambo and Momanyi (2016) argue that effective communication will improve employee performance and strong communication systems should be emphasized to ensure communication effectiveness. Agencies should eliminate communication barriers and create efficient, participatory, and transparent communication media to improve employee performance. In addition to competence and communication, commitment also affects the performance of employees. Syauta et al. (2012) says that commitment affects performance. Highly committed employees will provide the best by devoting all of their thoughts, abilities and skills to complete tasks quickly and appropriately. According to Lotunani et al. (2014), civil servants who have affective commitment, normative commitment, and continue commitment are able to strengthen their performance because they have the will and drive to defend themselves in the organization. Employee commitment must be sustained for organizational success. Based on these statements it can be said that agencies can easily achieve their goals with the support of employees.

### **Performance and its Relationship to Competency, Communication and Commitment**

Kennedy and Dresser (2005) defined competencies as anything employees have or acquire that contributes to organizational success. Employee competencies are characteristics associated with successful performance. These characteristics should manifest themselves in observable behavioral patterns that make a positive difference Femi (2014) examined the relationship of effective communication and employee performance in Nigeria and found positive relationship. Nebo et al. (2015) and Shonubi and Akintaro (2016) also found similar evidence. Ayatse (2005) in his study observed that communication is needed to establish and disseminate the goals of the enterprise. This is because the competencies and skills they possess will enable them to exhibit work behaviours appropriate and relevant to the performance of the job. Ongori (2007) described employee commitment as an effective response to the whole organization and the degree of attachment or loyalty employees feel towards the organization. Akintayo (2010) stated that employee commitment is the degree to which the employee feels devoted to their organization. Commitment is a mental relationship between an employee and organization that decreases the possibility of his voluntary departure from organization

#### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the strategies for improving the competence of public service officials in Katsina state in moving public management beyond bureaucracy?
- ii. What are the strategies for improving communication and commitment among civil servant in Katsina state?
- iii. What are the possible ways to promote greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery?

#### **Objectives of the study**

The specific objective of the research is to identify strategies for improving the competence of public service officials in Katsina state moving public management beyond bureaucracy, to identify the strategies for improving communication and commitment among civil servant in Katsina state and to promote greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **Research Area**

The research was conducted in Katsina state of Nigeria, located in Northwest region of the country, Katsina state borders Kaduna, Zamfara, Kano and Jigawa state it also serve as a border to the Niger republic it has a total land mass Area of **24,192km<sup>2</sup>**. The study was carry out among some of the civil servants in some selected Government Organizations (Bodies) from different arm, such as federal government, state government and local government, within Katsina state. Selected from the secretariat. Federal, state and local government secretariats. The study also includes some selected government schools in the state.

#### **Research Design and sampling techniques**

The study can be classified as explanatory research. The population of the research will include some selected civil servants from the different Government Organizations in Katsina State. The study will be a descriptive

type. This study employ the stratified random sampling techniques method which comprises of 240 questionnaire in all using Yamane formula for deriving sample size of the whole population, and the researcher was able to recovered 213 which make (88.8%) and remaining 27 were not returned to the researcher.

**Statistical Analysis**

The data were collected from this study is subjected to statistical analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23.0) for windows. The research also uses descriptive statistics in the analysis and presentation of data.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The research used questionnaire, interview and information obtained from the respondents of different department from federal secretariat, state secretariat and local government secretariat, more especially the research include the teachers of public schools, since the research work involved the entire civil servant. Two hundred and forty (240) questionnaires were administered within Katsina state. Out of which we only recovered 213 making (88.7%) and used by researcher.

**Demographic profile of the respondents**

The personal data of the respondents under the research. The data include: Gender, Age of the respondent, grade level of the respondent and marital status of the respondent.

**Table 1 Demographic profile of the respondents**

<b>Gender of the respondent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	175	82.2%
Female	38	17.8%
Total	213	100%
<b>Age of the respondents</b>		
18-20	20	9.4%
21-25	48	22.5%
26-30	63	29.6%
31 and above	82	38.5%
Total	213	100%
<b>Marital status of the respondents</b>		
Married	155	72.8%
Single	49	23.0%
Divorce	9	4.2%
Total	213	100%
<b>Grade level of the respondents</b>		
04-05	43	20.2%
06-07	72	33.8%
08-17	98	46.0%
Total	213	100.0%

Table 1 analysed the Demographic profile of the respondents, the data gathered reveals that 175 (82.2%) of the respondents are male while 38 (17.8%) are female. the analysis simply indicate that the male civil servant are clearly more than the female civil servant in Katsina state and Nigeria at large. while 82 (38.5%) are 31 years and above. These clearly show that 31 years and above are the most respondents to the questionnaire distributed, and clearly indicate that the number of youth bellow 30 years in the civil service is less. Which urgently need to be considered by the government of all level to recruit the young and energetics Nigerian in to the civil service. The respondents of the research indicate that the highest percent 155 (72.8%) are married, followed by 49 (23.0%) that are single, while only 9 (4.2%) are divorced. Which simply mean that, Government need to be considering the marital status of the applicant before recruiting them in to civil service in other to reduce the biasness of married people against the single, the interview with some of the respondent reveal that single civil servant are more committed and dedicated to work frequently more than those that are married. Though, the religion of the respondents was not considered in this research, since the research comprise all the resident in the state. It was observed from result that among the respondent 43 (20.2%) are on grade level 04-05, 72(33.8%) are 06-07, while 98(46.0%) are senior staff from grade level 08-17.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

This was done using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 23.0) to obtained the percentage of every questions answered. The respond of the respondent from the questionnaire are discuss in the tables below.

**Research Questions 1:** *What are the strategies for improving the competence of public service officials in Katsina state in moving public management beyond bureaucracy?*

**Table 2 The strategies for improving the competence of public service officials in Katsina state moving public management beyond bureaucracy**

Questions	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Strongly Disagree	%
Being timely to (every things) improves competence in public service	111	52.1 %	53	24.9%	36	16.9 %	13	6.1 %
Setting goals is effective for enhancing competence in the public service	71	33.3 %	98	46 %	30	14.1 %	14	6.6 %
Organization is an important strategy in improving competency in the public service.	21	9.9%	95	44.6%	82	38.5 %	15	7.0 %
Assessing risk improves competency in public service	31	14.6 %	36	16.9%	114	53.5 %	32	15.0 %
Work planning and scheduling can improve competency in public service	41	19.2 %	130	61.0%	41	19.2 %	1	0.5 %

Table 2 analysed results on the strategies for improving the competence of public service officials in Katsina state moving public management beyond bureaucracy.

This indicate that government should provide the means of Setting goals in other to have effective for enhancing competency in the public service. From the analysis it was observed that very good number of the respondents 95 (44.6%) agreed that Organization is an important strategy in improving competency in the public service, while a good number of the respondents 82 (38.5%) disagreed with the opinion, believing that Organization cannot be an important strategy in improving competency in the public service, but another means should be detected.

On the concept of whether Assessing risk can improves the competency in public service of the state, the highest percentage 114 (53.5%) disagreed and 32 (15.0%) strongly disagreed, while 31 (14.6%) strongly agreed as 36 (16.9%) agreed with that. Which simply mean Assessing risk cannot improves competency in public service as recorded by the respondents.

The high percentage 130 (61.0%) agreed that Work planning and scheduling can improve competency in public service, as 41 (19.2%) strongly agreed with that. While 41 (19.2%) disagreed with that as only 1(0.5%) strongly disagreed with that.

It was observe during the study that lack of being timely to work has cripple many activities in the different sectors of government especially in the local government secretariat and teachers under the local government education authorities (LGEA), urgent action needed to be taken to recover the menace. This clearly show that any work that is planned and scheduled well, will be delivered more confidently than un planned and un scheduled work.

**Research Question 2:** *What are the strategies for improving communication and commitment among civil servant in Katsina state?*

**Table 3 The strategies for improving communication and commitment among civil servant in Katsina state.**

Questions	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Strongly Disagree	%
Consistency in communication helps enhance competence in public service	129	60.6 %	65	30.5 %	19	8.9 %	-	-
Meeting enhances communication which improves communication in the public service.	32	15%	96	45.1 %	71	33.3%	14	6.6 %
Active listening enhances and improves communication in the public service.	190	89.2%	13	6.1%	6	2.8 %	4	1.9 %
Training of staff on effective communication helps promote competence in the public service.	22	10.3%	171	80.3 %	13	6.1 %	7	3.3 %
Using the right tool and technology helps to improve communication in the public service	82	38.5%	101	47.4 %	12	5.6 %	18	8.8 %

Table 3 analysed the strategies for improving communication and commitment among civil servant in Katsina state. The result clearly show that public servant should always enhance and improve their communication strategies through active listening. More also, the highest percentage 171(80.3%) of the respondents agreed that Training of staff on effective communication helps promote competence in the public service, followed by 22 (10.3%) that strongly agreed with that as only 7 (3.3%) strongly disagreed with the idea. But on using the right tools and technology to helps in improving communication in the public service very good number of the respondents 101 (47.4%) agreed followed by 82 (38.5%) that strongly agreed, but about 12 (5.6%) disagreed with that. The analysis, simply means the way to enhance competence among the civil servant is to have communication consistency. It also indicates that Meeting may enhances communication and improves communication strategies in the public service. This simply means that governments should always embark on the Training and re-training of staff on effective communication in other to promote competence in the public service and introduce the modern technological tools that may help to improve the communication strategy in the state.

**Research Question 3:** *What are the possible ways to promote greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery?*

**Table 4 Promoting greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery**

Questions	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Strongly Disagree	%
Good organizational policies help to promotes greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the public service	135	63.4 %	65	30.5 %	13	6.1 %	-	-
Transparency to promotes greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the public service	21	9.9%	157	73.7 %	29	13.6%	6	2.8 %
Institutional capacity building help to promote greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the public service	21	9.9%	83	39.0 %	86	40.4%	23	10.8 %
Technological advancement promote greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the public service	10	4.7%	174	81.7 %	19	8.9 %	10	4.7 %
Administrative competence helps to promote greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the public	104	48.8 %	82	38.5 %	20	9.4 %	7	3.3 %

Table 4 analysed the concept of Promoting greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery. The analysis of the research indicate that Technological advancement promote greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the public service as the high percentage 174 (81.7%) agreed that it will promote the greater economy, but only 19 (8.9%), and 10 (4.7%) disagreed and strongly disagreed with the idea. Finally, the very good number of the respondents 104 (48.8%) strongly agreed, followed by 82 (38.5%) agreed that Administrative competence helps to promote greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the public, even though only 7 (3.3%) strongly disagreed with the concept.

The analysis simply means that Transparency should serve as key to promote and have effective public service. And having Good organizational policies always help to promotes greater economy, efficiency in our public service, Therefore, government are expected to deploy new and modern technological equipment's to our public services department in other to promote effectiveness in the services. But from the analysis of the research it shows that if government will visit and re-build the Institutional capacity it will definitely help to promote greater economy in the public service.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Civil servant is the driving element of government having a duty and responsibility to serve by providing services to the community. Civil servants are human resources who act as planners, implementers, and controllers in government agencies to achieve the goals that have been set.

This study seeks to examine the effect of competence, communication and commitment on the civil servants performance in Katsina state of Nigeria The empirical result indicates that competence, communication and commitment have positive and significant effect on their performance. This research contributes to knowledge regarding how to motivate employees to work hard, show better competence and communication, it also to exhibit a high level of commitment to their organizations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Researcher make the following recommendations for Katsina state government and federal government, to improve the competence and communications of public service officials in Katsina state and Nigeria at large.

Government should boost efficiency and effectiveness in the sector, Establishment of Public Service Training and Leadership Development Centres (PSLDCs) in the state and extend their work to all the local governments to prepare senior managers, executives for a progressive career in leadership and governance, the Public Service Training Institutes (PSTIs) should be established in the state, to improved performance and productivity in current roles and to assume new responsibilities, Government should established appropriate foundation or formal funding devices, Government should Offered jobs to the young and energetic Nigerian that can access the modern technology and apply it to the assign job in other to improve the competency in the government agencies.

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