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Personnel Utilization: A Major Challenge in Nigeria Local Government System

Ayotunde David Odewale^{[a],*}; Oluwatobi Adeyemi^[a]; Banji Marcellinus Adepoju^[b]

^[a]Ph.D, Department of Local Government and Development Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.

^[b]Ph.D, Department of Local Government and Development Studies, The Polytechnic, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

The success of any organization rely more in ability to utilize its human and material resources to achieve the desired objectives. Local government in Nigeria has a mandate of proper utilization of her personnel in an efficient and effective manner in order to meet the developmental demands at the local level. This particular objective has suffered a setback particularly in a result-oriented manner. The paper adopted secondary and primary source of data. The paper revealed some issues that have been major clogs to effective utilization of personnel in Nigeria local government, which range from lack of: adequate policies; proper job description; proper developmental orientation; and proper innovation among others. It recommends a re-adjustment of policies, proper job descriptions, in terms of task and responsibility to each employee, and that the state government should allow local government to strive more in order to effectively maximizes their personnel utilization. The paper concluded that the personnel utilization rate in Nigeria local government is at low ebb.

Key words: Personnel; Personnel utilization; Personnel management; Local government; Effectiveness; Efficiency

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INTRODUCTION

In all organizations, nothing is more important than to effectively manage the people who work in the establishment (Robert, 2014). Though, availability of all other resources are also essential in achieving organizational goal but most importantly is the utilization of human resource in an efficient and effective manner either in private or public sectors. An organisation does not exist in vacuum, it make use of both human and material resources to achieve the set objectives and goals. Adequate utilization of the available resources leads to efficiency performance (Ishola & Babatunde, 2001). All over the world, governments tends to be labour-intensive organization. Government ministries, departments and agencies and corporations provide services, enforce laws, regulations and solve problems. Similarly, local government particularly in Nigeria, also provides services, enforce laws, regulations and attend to the needs of the populace at the grassroots level which require the activities of employees or personnel. The challenge here boil down to how efficient and effective are these employees is being utilized to perform their stated functions. Despite the critical importance of human resources, the hiring of public employees often seem to bund up in rules and regulations that make the effective management to be extremely difficult especially in public sector.

Human resources practices in the public sector are different from those of private and nonprofit sectors. The differences are based primarily in law and politics (Robert, 2014). In discussing personnel administration in local government, it is important to first of all appreciate the nature of government functions whether at the national or local levels (Mohamed, 2006). By nature, the functions of government are always built around the laws, rules and bureaucratic procedures that regulate their performances. Local government in Nigeria has series of functions that require personnel which is stipulated clearly in the

constitution range from service delivery, enforcement, taxation, administrative etc. The questions arise from this is that how well are these employees being managed. What is the rate at which these personnel are being utilized? Then if the utilization level is at the low ebb, what is the cause and what are the ways forward for proper, effective and efficient utilization of personnel at the public sector, especially at the local government level in Nigeria?

Until recently, manpower in the Nigerian local government was statistically of low quality and quantity, resulting from so many constraints like: inadequate and unskilled manpower; traditional nature with emphasis on mere routine administration of tax collection, maintenance of law and order; poor condition of service especially the salary structure, thereby diminishing attractiveness and motivation, leading to low prospect and poor staffing arrangement; low technological development among others (Mohamed, 2006). However there are paradigm shift from the listed above constraints because local government in Nigeria does not only have adequate and skilled manpower but the overstaffing of personnel has become a tradition in most of Nigeria local government. Moreso, local governments had moved from just mere tax collector or routine administration but are there to provide some social service delivery to the populace which is clearly stipulated in the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. Not only that, salary structure of local government has been harmonized with their counterpart at the state government level which is pensionable. Also, the technology advancement at local government has been improved from what it used to be, though there is need to drastically improve in this area and which is not peculiar to local government alone but to all other tiers of government i.e state and federal government.

Monehin (2015) also emphasizes that the 2006 fourth edition of the Approved Scheme of Service for Local Government Employees, published by the Federal Government of Nigeria, Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, Youth Development and Special duties, aimed to create a scheme of service that will not only attract the right caliber of Personnel, but retain and motivate them to maximum efficiency, creativity and productivity, with outlined job description, entry qualifications and experience required, salary scale attached, and condition to be fulfilled for career progression. This is also adopted and stipulated in the scheme of service in various Local Government Service Commission across the state governments of the federation.

The 1988 national civil service reform articulated professionalism, manpower utilization approach, target setting and achievement, inter and intra-operational government relationships etc in the local government service with the aim of establishing a firm local government system with particular reference to proper utilization of the available manpower for efficient and effective local government capable of meeting

the developmental demands at the local level. These objectives has been suffered a serious setback particularly the proper utilization of personnel in a result-oriented manner. This paper argues that when personnel or human resources are properly utilized especially at the local government level, government would works well. However, failure to utilize the personnel properly, effectively and efficiently would lead to low productivity and a lack of accountability to the public.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Personnel Management

The concept of Personnel Management and Human Resource Management is synonymous to each other. The term Human Resource seeks to emphasize the fact that person employed in an organization are one of the most vital resources, whose management should include in the same way as the management of financial and material resources. Armstrong (1995) defines Personnel Management as being essentially about the management of people in a way that improves organizational effectiveness. Obisi (1996) also views Personnel Management as all the activities of an organization in terms of recruiting, training, developing, motivating and preserving its human resource. Jucius (1973) extensively defines Personnel Management as that field of management which has to do with Planning, Organising, and Controlling various operative functions of procuring, developing, maintaining, and utilizing a labour force in such a way that: (a) objectives for which the organization is established are attained economically and effectively; (b) objectives of all levels of personnel are served to the highest possible degree; and (c) objectives of the community are duly considered and served.

Adamolekun (1983), categories the common activities under personnel management into three broad groups i.e personnel utilization, personnel motivation and personnel protection. The activities like; Recruitment, Selection, Deployment, Promotion, Appraisal, Training and Development are grouped under personnel utilization. Job Design, Job Satisfaction, Remuneration, Fringe benefits, Consultation, Negotiation, and Participation were also grouped under Personnel Motivation, while Working Condition, Welfare Services and Safety were grouped under Personnel Protection. He also emphasis that these three broad functional categories are closely inter-related to each other. The activities under personnel utilization constitute some kind of prerequisites for activities under motivation.

Robert (2014) observes that Public human resources management is also concerned with the human and social implications of change in internal organisation and methods of working; and of economic and social changes in the society. Dresang (2009) contends that how well

government works depends fundamentally on the quality of public employees and on how completely their talents and energies are put to use. The essential task of Public Human Resources Management is to attract and identify competent people for government positions, design work and provide a setting that encourages employees to work energetically, creatively and ethically (Robert, 2014). Public human resources administration is in essence, the administration of employees as governmental assets whose value can be enhanced through investment. It involves setting public personnel policies that match a government agency's shared vision or mission.

Human Resources Management is that part of public management concerned with people at work and their relationship within the government (Robert, 2014). Human Resources Management refers to the policies, practices and systems that influence employee behaviours, attitudes and performance (Cascio, 2010; Bernardin, 2010). The expansion and the analysis of the definition above would help in explaining the situation of personnel utilization in Nigeria local government.

Personnel Utilization

Obadan (2000) sees Personnel Utilization as "useful engagement of staff in his area of specialization for effectiveness and efficiency". Francis (2018) conceives Personnel utilization as the effective and efficient use of human resource in an organization in order to achieve desired growth and development of any organization, and to avoid wastage of manpower. In the same vein, Ogbodo (2007) see the term human resources utilization as a means whereby managers are able to employ the right workers for the right job, train and develop the workers so that they contribute meaningfully to pursue the organizational goal to avoid wastage. The definitions above identified the maximization of employees in order to sustain productivity at a minimum cost and maximum output. The achievement of organizational goals is highly depends on the effective utilization of qualified and committed personnel as drivers of other resources (Kisumbe, Sanga, & Kasubi, 2014).

Fatiregun (1992) define Personnel/ Manpower Utilization "as a gradual and systematized continuous job-related education, training and job assignments during working life, which in itself, is a process of ensuring improvement in the performance ability on the job". Personnel utilization implies maximum use of competent staff for the purpose of improving productivity and hence, achieving organizational objectives (Stephen, Moses, & Basil, 2013). For useful and maximum engagement of personnel to be achieved, proper time management is also essential.

Personnel Utilization could also be seen as a means of engaging the workers through adequate job description and analysis, in order to justify their remuneration, and ultimately achieved organizational goal.

The time an employee spend on attending to client out of the actual time he/she supposed to be on the job, plays a major role measuring or calculating the utilization rate.

$$\text{Utilization Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of actual hour spent on attending to client} \times 100}{\text{Number of available hours}}$$

The percentage of employee utilization rate; the total hours an employee supposes to be on the job and the hours an employee actually spends on attending to client. Then divide the hours used for client by the total hours the employee was available. This could be assess daily, weekly or monthly

Local Government

It is very important to state that the concept of Local Government could be view in different ways. Nevertheless, most of the definitions identified the capability of local government to exact labor through the judicious use of human resources or personnel management in order to achieve its objectives. United Nations Office for Public Administration defines Local Government as;

"a political subdivision of a nation or (in a Federal system) state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labor for prescribed purposes. The [such] governing body is elected or otherwise locally selected".

The definition shows clearly that for local government to have substantial control on local affairs, to impose taxes or to exact labor for prescribed purposes there is need for efficient management of personnel or employee.

The 1976 Local Government Reforms also affirms the position of United Nations Office for Public Administration by extensively conceives Local Government as;

"Government at the local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the State and Federal government in their areas, and to ensure, through devolution of functions to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions that local initiatives and responses to local needs and conditions are maximized" (FGN,1976).

The central issue from the definition above is how local government exercises her specific power given by law. This could be deduced from the instrumentality of its personnel management. It is the personnel that formulate and implement policies, it is personnel that mobilize resources, including the citizens for participation. The definition also asserts the substantial control of local government on their staff (personnel), which is the backbone of any organization.

Local government is universally regarded as a governmental administrative unit closest to the people

especially the grassroots. The administrative functions of government could only strive in an environment where there are competent personnel. Therefore, the personnel at the local government level act as a veritable agents of service delivery, mobilisers of human and material resources, and organisers of local initiative in responding to the needs and aspirations of the people at the grassroots level. Aransi (2012) sees local government council as “a sub-national government run by a body (elected or appointed) and established by law over a defined territory with authority to generate and utilise resources for the development of its locality and well-being of its citizens”. The ability of local government to make use of the authority given to her to generate and utilize resources for development of its locality has constituted a major challenge especially in Nigeria local government system.

Local government system in most nations of the world share certain attributes and characteristics which include: subordination to other tiers of government or subunit of a federal/central or state government; the authority to embark on public activities; a continuing organisation; the power to sue and be sued; the right to collect taxes; the right to engage in contractual agreement with others; the power to make its own policies and budgets; and power to manage its human resource to ensure efficient service delivery (Tumini 2011; Ezeani, 2012; Chukwuemeka, Ugwuanyi, Okolo & Onuoha 2014; Otinche, 2014).

The definition of Local Government was equally made more clear by Kirk Green in Ola and Tonwe (2009), who submitted thus: “Local Government unit in any system should possess the following characteristics: a certain population, a given territory, a separate legal identity, executive and administrative purposes, an institutional structure for legislative, a range of powers and functions delegated from the intermediate or appropriate central legislature”. The components of this definition also require the extensive use of personnel.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized both secondary and primary source of data. The secondary source of data collection in form of content analysis of documents, articles, records and academic research projects was adopted which is basically on descriptive method. The primary data were gathered strictly through observation method.

ISSUES ON PERSONNEL UTILIZATION IN NIGERIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Normally, in Nigeria, local government workers and even most of the government workers, resume to work 8am and close 4pm from Monday to Friday, which is about 8hours per day. The questions here are that how many hours does each worker spend in attending to their clients? Does

every employee resume or come to work every day? Even, if yes, do they all resume at appropriate time of 8am? and do they all close at appropriate time of 4pm? How many hours do they used to attend to the clients during their working hours? Do they even have enough clients to attend to within their workable hours? These are the questions that need answers, among the various issues confronting personnel utilization in Nigeria local government. In an attempt to answer the questions above, it is observed that not all workers resume work promptly in most of the local governments, which definitely affect the number of hours spend on attending to client, out of the supposed hours they ought to be on their job. More so, this challenge occurred because there is no proper job description for each workers and much more most of the time there is limited clients to attend to which make most of them to be inefficient. Kisumbe, Sanga, Kasubi, (2014) corroborate this position by submits that “the ineffective human resource utilization is reflected but not limited to among other things, the number of hours employees do spend in actual service delivery”. Mohamed (2006) argues that the nature and volume of services to be performed by a local government determine the type of quality and quantity of the staff required which is more articulated at the recruiting stage, in terms of job- design to determine proper qualification for a specific position and job-allocation, which reflect a precise caliber for certain position, thus result-oriented local government activities. Thereby, it is not out of context in assessing the performances and activities of local government workers in a result –oriented manner to juxtapose their efficiency and effectiveness.

There are various issues that call for attention in appraising the public personnel utilization, especially in Nigeria local government that influence the attitude, behavior and performance of the employee which include; the policies, practices and systems of government towards the management of their personnel.

1. **POLICIES:** The government policies have a way of affecting the behaviors of workers. It takes personnel to formulate and implement policy. Policy influence could be deduced from personnel utilization in Nigeria local government in two folds;

- a) The policy of government in delivering service to the populace
- b) The recruitment policy

The Policy of Government; the workability of any organization is based on the kind of policy at place, which would be carried out by human being. From formulation to implementation, even to evaluation would be carried out by human resources. The kind of policy in place would determine the kind of human resources to run the policy, which make the environmental factor crucial in any policy. Governments at the various levels in Nigeria and especially at the local level run with policies in order to make lives easy for the populace. The absence

or inadequate policies would result to under-utilized or poor utilization of personnel. This is observable in public sectors and especially in Nigeria local government system. Implementation of policies that would bring about development by improving the living standard of the populace is at the low ebb.

The Recruitment Policy; Recruitment policy adopted in any organization also plays a major role in better utilization of personnel. Recruitment policy could be economical, social and qualification considerations. Economic consideration talks about the recruitment based on personnel economic usefulness i.e his productive contribution should exceed or at least equal his remuneration. The social consideration talks about recruitment aimed at solving social problems like joblessness, in order to alleviate people's hardship. While the qualification consideration always based on merit and quota system. The recruitment policy in Nigeria public sector has constituted a challenge in efficient utilization of personnel. Government recruitment in Nigeria is more to create job for the jobless, than proper needful of that personnel. Most of the time in Nigeria local government imbibes more of social consideration policy aiming at solving issues like joblessness which eventually leads to overstaffing and which make the utilization rate to be at the low ebb. The more staff at work would likely lead to less job at stake, and the fewer jobs at stake, the low utilization rate. The policies of government have a way of influencing the attitude, behaviors and performance of workers.

PRACTICES: All round utilization of human resource in Nigeria is essential to reduce wastages of human resources (Obisi, 2015). This essential commodity of all round utilization of personnel is lacking in Nigeria local government, due to the problem of **Overstaffing**. It is also observe that the number of staffs in each local government is overwhelming, compare to the efficient level of each staff, and the local government as a whole. The number of staffs in each local government is more than the needed. Even the average number of personnel assigned to each department is more than the total number of cadres in the scheme of service for each department. This observation affirms the assertion of Monehin (2015) that more than enough staffs occupied the cadres in various department of local government in Nigeria.

Though, the staff strength supposed to bring about efficient delivery of service to the populace, but the opposite is the case. Mohamed (2006) also concludes that the problem of local government in Nigeria has always been overstaffing compared with low and irrelevant qualifications. This implies that local government in Nigeria has passed the stage of inadequate or unskilled personnel, because when there is overstaffing, it means there is more than enough manpower, but the problem lies on how these workers are being used in attaining the necessary development at the local level.

Lack of Proper Job Design and Description:

This is another issue that needs to be resolved in Nigeria local government. The proper job design and description for employees is lacking in the system. Dresang (2010), a job description summarizes the nature of a specific job. The job description identifies the tasks and responsibilities of a position (Ivancevich, 2010; Meidment, 2011). Job descriptions identify the tasks and responsibilities of a position, whereas the job specification identifies the qualifications needed in the person who is to fill the position (Robert, 2014). The appropriate task and responsibilities is lacking in the management of personnel at the local government level in Nigeria. Kisumbe, Sanga, Kasubi, (2014) conclude that human resources in the public organizations are not fully utilized in service delivery and the reasons is not far-fetched from the fact that there is limited scope of job descriptions, and the tasks assigned to certain category of employees are not enough, truancy and presentism behavior among other.

Lack of Proper Development Orientation: The personnel management in Nigeria local government beginning to lose more of developmental orientation within them. They see more of themselves as just mere appendage of state government rather than to be the facilitator of developmental activities at the grassroots. They relate with other tier of government especially the state government in master-servant relationship than partner –in-progress relationship to bring development to the people at the local level.

Lack of Innovation: This is evident in the way the leadership at the local level perceived themselves in the sight of other tiers of government and general populace at large. The notion that state government does not empower local government financially, and with that, noting or less can be achieve in term of utilization of human resources to bring about innovation is in mirage. They have neglect the fact that, the best resources any organization could have is human resources, and the ability to think out of box, in order to use the excess personnel at their disposal to facilitate efficient and effective service delivery to the citizens is sacrosanct.

CONCLUSION

The policies and practices of personnel utilization constitute the formation of system for operation in Nigeria local government. It is evident that local government employees had not been managing efficiently and effectively in the process of discharging their duties. The personnel utilization rate is at the low ebb, despite the overstaffing (more than enough staffs) nature of personnel management in Nigeria public sector, especially in local government. This occurrence could be traced to the ways and manners the stakeholders see the business of government, i.e *the business of government does not*

deserve ones sweat. Also, the policies of government from recruitment process, and other policies that need to be executed are not developmental in nature and practice, which make the utilization of personnel to be inefficient and ineffective. The success of any local government is its ability to utilize its human and material resources to achieve the desired objectives i.e., rendering needed services to the community. Local government is a government in which popular participation both in the choice of decision makers and in its recognition as a third tier of government are key.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for local government in Nigeria to adopt a mixed recruitment policy in order to maximize personnel utilization effectively. The recruitment policy in public sector should move from just social consideration of solving unemployment or joblessness problems alone, but to mix it economic consideration. The contribution of each personnel should be able to quantify their remunerations, if not exceed it. The mixture of the social and economic considerations policy in the recruitment process should be imbibed in order to maximize the potential of each worker.

Proper tasks and responsibilities should be attached to each worker and adequate assessment should be done on them frequently, i.e daily, weekly or monthly. This would definitely increase the utilization rate of the personnel. More so, leadership or management of each local government should be innovative enough to think outside the box, at least on how to maximize the mandatory functions of local government, if the concurrent functions with the state government are making them to be redundant. They should think beyond depending on the state or federal government for financing. If this is thoroughly pursue, personnel utilization will be at the maxima level.

State governments should allow local government to strive more by given them sufficient autonomy politically, administratively, and financially, in order to formulate and implement policies that would attend to the yearning and aspirations of each community. The governance at the local level requires the totality of executive and administrative functions of the government, with a view of fulfilling constitutional obligations or social contract to the citizenry at the local level. The success of any government be it at the local or other levels of government would be determine by the kind of personnel (executive and administrators) at their disposal, and the usefulness of such.

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