ABSTRACT
Local governments in Nigeria are faced with a number of challenges, including intergovernmental conflicts, structural organizational problems, financial difficulties and shortages of qualified human resources, the place of traditional authority in local government and corruption with impunity. This study centered only on staff recruitment. Using a desktop approach methodology, the study found out that poor selection of staff for recruitment, training and inadequate training needs assessment constitute the major constraints to effective realization of the objectives of local government. Among the findings of the study is that over the years, both managers and administrators have come to accept the centrality of manpower in the production process. Hence, the necessity for effective plan for corporate manpower needs to cope with the ever-changing technology; product and skill needs of modern organizations. Irrespective of its centrality, manpower planning and development has not been given adequate attention by government especially the local councils. This is attributed to lack of proper understanding of both the concept and methods for manpower development in a post-colonial state in which the process of human resource development for national development was distorted by colonialism and negative political leadership orientation. Among the recommendations made include that local government should make manpower planning and development a priority. In order to achieve this, manpower planning and development should form an important part of their objectives annually.

Keywords: Local Government, Staffing, Manpower Planning and Development, Nigeria & Staff Needs.

INTRODUCTION
Human Resource Management (HRM) is crucial for increasing organizational performance (Takeuchi et al., 2007; Huselid, 1995) and HRM functions (training and development, employee participation, appraisal, rewards, status and security, staffing) have been linked in diverse ways to organizational performance outcomes (Datta et al., 2005) as well as employee skills, motivation, commitment, work quality, performance and opportunities to contribute (Lepak et al., 2006; Liao et al., 2009). From all HRM functions, we focus exclusively on the employee staffing one. Staffing is probably the most important single HRM practice because ‘if you have an inadequate personnel, all the trainings, incentives and communications in the world will not complete their makeover’ (Becker et al., 2001, pp. 99).

The local government constitutes the most critical level of government in the move for a sustainable national development. Over the years, national development has been canvassed to take off from the grassroots as the local government is widely known as a vital instrument for rural transformation and machinery for effective delivery of socio-economic services to the people (Adeline, 2014; Otoghile and...
Edigin, 2011). Manpower is therefore, the most strategic and potent resource in any organization, but has not received the desired professional management for the attainment of local governments’ contributions towards national development. More than 70% of Nigerians reside in the rural areas where there is acute shortage of social infrastructure and economic needs. In the light of this in 1976, the local government nationwide reform was initiated where the local governments were saddled with more functions, responsibilities and finances to correct the anomaly of rural areas challenges (Adeline, 2014).

As a tier of government, the local government retains its position as the closest level of government to the people to cater for the development of the local areas (Fajonymi & Olu-Owolabi, 2013). Consequently, lack of performance on the part of local government personnel often results in moribund national development. That is why the role of local government in national development has always been a question of argument and general discussion. The issue becomes worse when problems of development are traced to poor staffingas manifested in the inability to plan and execute government programmes as well as efficient and effective social service delivery (Fajonymi & Olu-Owolabi, 2013).

Therefore, for development to be possible there is the need for the emergence of a sound staffing process within which adequate, skilled and well-motivated workforce should operate. No local government can be efficient and effective if it underrates the critical role that the right people play in achieving goals, thus the need for effecting staffing in the local government administration has become imperative (Adeline, 2014). Save for some few local government councils, local government generally has experienced and is still experiencing dearth of skilled, technical and professional staff like qualified engineers (of all types), medical doctors, accountants, statisticians, economists, lawyers, town planners, to mention a few. The facilitating factors for this include: Low image of local government in the mind of professional who feel and think that there is no job satisfaction sufficient to keep them at that low level of public service. Abysmally low payment scheme for the staff of the council which is not commensurate even with the recent minimum wave as local government is the least paid public service in the nation. Worst still, no effort is in place to upgrade their remuneration status.

Moreover, the manner of recruitment is questionable as it is based on subjectivity and consideration of sentiment which ultimately enthrones mediocrity and debase meritocracy. For instance, the junior carder which is grade level 01-06, whose payment status is as low as N30,000.00 at most is naturally does not suitably attract any skilled worker.

Thus, Lickert (1974) opines that “of all the tasks of management, managing the human component is central and most important task because all else depends on how well it is done”. Accordingly, the personnel management of local government involves the recruitment, appointment, posting, promotion, training and discipline of its employees for the purpose of attainment of its goals. There is hierarchy of officials and institution which are responsible for the personnel management duties of the local government. This ranges from the Chairman, Secretary, Supervisors, Administrative Heads of Department and Head of Personnel Management, Junior Staff management Committee and the Local Government Service Commission. Even the Department of Local Government Affairs in the Governor’s office is also involved in these personnel management functions as it has the responsibility for local government personnel training.

**Conceptual Framework**

**Conceptualizing Local Government**

Local government as a concept has been conceptualized by various scholars. The concept has been centered on the transfer of political powers to local areas by involving the inhabitants in the provision of basic needs. Ikelegbe (2005) defines local government as “a segment of a constituent state or origin of a nation state”, established by law to provide public services and regulate public affairs within its jurisdiction. Fajobi, (2010) defines local government “as a unit of government to maintain law and order based on range of social amenities and to encourage cooperation and participation of people at the grassroots to improve their living conditions”.

178
The 1976 Nigerian local government reform guidelines define local government as: Government at the local level, exercised through representative council, established by law to exercise specific powers within a defined area. 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 the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the State and federal governments in their areas, and to ensure, through devolution of these functions to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized. United Nations Development Programme (2009) defined local government as a unit of government covering the range of governance issues that exist at the local level including decentralization of policies and processes, the role and inter-relationships of different actors and institutions, local democracy and local government performance.

Local government is both a political and administrative structure closest to the people. It is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain. In the words of United Nations Office for Public Administration quoted by Ogunna (1987), local government is defined 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 governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected (p. 369);

However, the conceptualization by guideline for implementation of 1976 local government reforms in Nigeria expanded the meaning of local government to include the purpose, functions and its operation. As cited in Ola (1984), it conceived local government as:

Government at a local level exercised through representative council, 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 provision of services and to determine and implement project of state and federal governments in their areas and ensure through devolution of functions to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local initiative and response to needs and conditions are maximized (p. 7).

For the purpose of this paper, different issues raised from the definitions above are extracted to form a broad conceptualization of local government as follows:

- The local government is a political authority with elected officials which has the political powers to take decisions
- The local government is a subdivision of the central government established by the law
- The local government is a unit of government closest to the people to provide basic social and economic amenities.
- The local government is an entity that has substantial autonomy to make laws, rules and regulations. Also the autonomy to formulate and execute programmes and policies
- The local government is expected to facilitate the existence of democratic self-government close to the local government levels of the society, and to encourage initiatives for leadership potentials
- The local government is expected to mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public
- The local government is expected to provide a two-way channel of communication between the local communities and central government.

From the above issues raised, we can therefore adopt the broad functions of the local government and the rationale behind the existence of local government as articulated by Bajela (1986) to include:
- Bring government to the grassroots level, thus encouraging a sense of belonging among the local populace;
- Facilitate effective and efficient government administration;
- Foster even and rapid socio-economic development of the communities they serve;
- Promote effective and efficient communication link between the central government and the people at the grassroots level;
- Encourage greater public participation in governmental activities;
- Provide utility services and amenities to the local people; and
- Help the central government in the maintenance of law and order.

To attain the above, there is need for effective staffing.

**Conceptualizing Staffing**

To ensure professionalism in the local government service, creation of departments of personnel, finance, supply and offices for councilors, secretary, treasurer and auditor-general for local government were made mandatory. The 1988 reform also clearly defined the functions of the Local Government Service Commission, which sets guidelines for staffing and monitoring local governments. All these provisions sought to institute responsible local government in the Nigerian federation (Abdulhamid & Chima, 2015). Previous literature has shown that implementing an effective staffing process is positively correlated with organizational performance (Delery and Doty, 1996). A sophisticated selection system tests a candidate's potential for a position and decreases the organization's level of uncertainty when faced with an external candidate (Lado and Wilson, 1994). A stringent recruitment and selection system also gives those employees who are selected a sense of elitism, imparts high expectations of performance, and conveys a message of the importance of people to the organization (Pfeffer, 1998). Incompatibility between the individual and the organization can impede the achievement of necessary performance levels (Lado and Wilson, 1994), while an advanced staffing process can bring to the organization employees who match the abilities of the present human resources and fit into the existing interpersonal structure, at lower training costs. Parnes (1984, p. 473; cited in Dean and Snell, 1996) supported this thesis when he states that ‘one of the most obvious ways firms enhance their stock’ of human capital is through the individuals they hire’.

In view of the above, Ployhart (2006, p. 868) posits that ‘staffing is as the process of attracting, selecting, and retaining competent individuals to achieve organizational goals’. Dyck and Neubert (2009, p. 360) define staffing as ‘the HRM process of identifying, attracting, hiring and retaining people with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to fulfill the responsibilities of current and future jobs in organization’. Staffing is the means by which firms recruit and select applicants with higher quality and generic human capital (Schmitt and Chan, 1998). In this sense, recruitment and selection can be considered as the two phases of the staffing process. The process of employee staffing consists of finding, evaluating, and assigning individuals to work (Gomez-Mejia et al., 1998). Organizations of any size may use staffing to acquire temporary or permanent employees. Some related terms and departments include human resources, personnel management and hiring (Otoghile & Edigin, 2011).

According to Odigbo (2013) staffing in the local government system is the traditional management function of attraction and selection of the best people and putting them on job where their talents and skills can be best utilized, and retention of these people through incentives, job training and job enrichment programmes, in order to achieve both individual and organizational objectives. This emphasizes managing human resources. It is the function of human relationship in the organizational structure with competent staff. It is that part of the management function which is concerned with people at work and with their relationship within the organization. Staffing may be defined as “that function of management, which is concerned with selecting, developing, maintaining and utilizing the manpower such that the objectives of the organization are achieved economically, socially, politically and effectively. The objectives of individual employees of the local government are accomplished to the
highest degree possible and serving in tandem with the objectives of the community at large (Adeline, 2014).

According to Koontz and O’Donnell (1980: 76):

> The managerial function of staffing involves manuring the organizational structure through proper and effective selection, appraisal and development of personnel to fill the roles designed into the structure. Staffing is defined as, “Filling and keeping filled, positions in the organizational structure. This is done by identifying work-force requirements, inventorying the people available, recruiting, selecting, placing, promotion, appraising, planning the careers, compensating, training, developing existing staff or new recruits, so that they can accomplish their tasks effectively and efficiently.

They further expressed that in simple words, staffing function relates to:

- Manpower planning.
- Recruitment, selection and placement of employees at the right places and at the right time, doing things which result in the organization, individual employees and the society at large receiving maximum long-run benefits.
- Training and development through counselling and performance evaluation.
- Employee welfare, including safety and health;
- Maintaining healthy labour relations;
- Framing suitable compensation policies;
- Maintaining effective discipline and control mechanism.

Generally, the staffing function is handled by Personnel Department in the local government system in Nigeria. The personnel policies are formulated by the personnel department to achieve the maximum usage from personnel in the local government. These personnel policies and decisions are constantly changing due to the following considerations according to Armstrong (2006):

- The social and legal pressure is high to increase the proportion of minority workers.
- Affirmative action: local government councils are obliged to give special considerations to minorities including women workers in order to compensate for past discrimination against them. This has been a result of special upheaval against a male-dominated society and business where women and minorities were not treated at equal level. This affirmative action may require more pre-assigned jobs for minorities and women.
- The workers are shifting their idea of success.
- The number of people who prefer to work only part-time is increasing. Even the full-time workers are trying to get fewer work week hours so that they can have more leisure time.
- Education level of the total work-force is rising.
- There is a shift towards more skilled jobs. Due to advent of mechanization and specialization and technological innovations, the number of unskilled jobs has been steadily decreasing giving rise to more skilled jobs requiring training and adoption.
- Labour unions are becoming stronger and highly protective of the work-force and thereby personnel management policies are affected by union’s objectives and goals.
- There are continuous social and technological changes.

Since a number of factors affect the formulation and execution of personnel policies, it is important that these policies be based upon sound principles which would ensure that equity and justice are accorded to all employees, “a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work is adopted and opportunities are offered to all employees for job satisfaction and job enrichment.”
Features of Staffing
According to Yaro (2014) the following are the features or nature or characteristics of the staffing function:

- It is a universal function. It is the responsibility of every manager.
- It is a continuous function performed by every manager to ensure successful functioning of his department and to develop his successors. Since staffing is a continuous function, it will be effective in realizing its goals.
- It is a dynamic and never ending process. With changes in the size and environment of the local government, changes take place in personnel.
- Human resources expects and deserves dignity. So the success of the staffing function lies in involving every individual in the organization in the task of achieving organizational goals.
- It is a difficult function with problems of social, philosophical and psychological nature.
- Staffing is a management function.
- It is an integral part of management process.
- Staffing is the pervasive function of management.
- Staffing is concerned with the optimum utilization of human resources.

Importance of Staffing in the Local Government System
Ubeku (1975), observed that we may examine personnel management from two different angles, first, as a function or responsibility of every manager or supervisor who has people under him all of whom are working towards the achievement of desired goals. Secondly, as a function in an organization which is performed by particular department, the personnel department. Deriving the above extract, there are problems of the personnel departments of the local government and there problems which the staff of the local government encounter. On the basis of the latter, Ogunna (1996) referred to it as personnel problem of the local government among which he outlined low pay, lack of adequate incentives and motivation, low prestige as local government employees are considered as rural officials with local status and rural image. Their job is not challenging to bring out the best in them. They do not enjoy equal treatment with the state civil servants etc. Onyishi (2002) blamed the problems of personnel department of the local government on over centralization hence lumping seldom makes staff assessment efficient. Onah (2002) pointed at political interference from the states and the influence of ethnicity, favouritism and nepotism. Majorly, irregular payment of staff salaries and total absence of fringe benefits and physical working conditions which are usually very poor all impacts negatively on the personnel management of the councils.

According to Greenfield (2007) the following are the importance of staffing in the local government system in Nigeria:

- Staffing function help in discovering of qualified and obtaining competent personnel for various jobs in the local government.
- Since the right person is recruited for the right jobs, it leads for maximum productivity and higher performance.
- It promotes optimum utilization of human resources.
- It increases job satisfaction and morale of the workers through adequate remuneration for each job.
- Since the staffing helps to ensure maximum utilization of human resources exist the labour costs per unit or production will be reduced.
- It ensures the continuity and growth of the organization such as local government, through development managers.
- It helps business activities are not disrupted at any time due to shortage of competent workers or excess of workers. Because it forecasts the correct staff requirements for the present and for the long-term.
It leads to efficient functioning of the organization like local government due to systematic programmes for the selection, training and appraisal of employees are required by proper staffing function.

The use of latest technology can be achieved by the right person, selected in the local government.

Employees now recognize the dignity of labour, there is awareness of the role of performing the staffing function well; management can show the significance it attaches to the human resource development.

Principles of Staffing:
The principles, which relate to the nature and purpose of staffing, selection, training and development and appraisal of managers in the local government system in Nigeria as postulated by Gberevbie (2010), are given below:

(1) Principle of Staffing Objective
The objective of staffing is to bring people with required skills into the local government and develop them into valuable organizational resource. The implementation of this principle will help in the undertaking of responsibilities of management by competent people and, thus ensure the long-term success of the enterprise.

(2) Principle of Staffing Responsibility
The responsibility of the efficient planning and execution of the staffing function rests upon every manager at all levels of the local government council. To be effective, specialized services of the personnel, department should be utilized to carry out the staffing responsibility.

(3) Principle of Human Resources Planning:
In today’s complex and dynamic environment, human resources planning ensures that the local government council has adequate supplies of managers. Planning for manpower is necessary both when managerial talent is in abundance or in scarcity.

(4) Principle of Recruiting Personnel:
To achieve the staffing objective in the local government, both internal and external sources of recruitment should be judiciously utilized. The more an enterprise is committed to the assurance of quality management, the more it will encourage open competition among all candidates for management positions.

(5) Principle of Training Objectives:
The more precisely and carefully the training aims are stated, the more likely are the changes of accomplishing them. The training needs should be stated for different categories of personnel. This will ensure the measurement of the effectiveness of training efforts.

(6) Principles of Managerial Appraisal:
The more clearly verifiable objectives and required managerial activities are identified, the more precise is the appraisal of managers against these standards. This principle suggests that managerial performance appraisal should be based both on the criteria of verifiable objectives and evaluation of managers as managers.

Essentials of Good Staffing Policy:
The essentials of good staffing policy in the local government system in Nigeria according to Ahmad & Schroeder (2002) include the following:

- It should take into account the interests of both employer and employee.
- It should be consistent with the basic overall policies of the unit.
- It should be complete in every respect.
- It should be simple and precise.
- It should be reasonably stable and permanent.
- It should be flexible, in relation to changes in environment.
- It should be responsive to prevailing trends in local government and society.
It should take into account variations in the capabilities, interests and attitudes of employees.
It should be uniformly applicable to all members of the local government council.
It should be properly communicated to those for whom it is intended.
It should be acceptable to the employees.

The Process of Staffing in the Local Government System:
The procedure or steps which are adopted in the managerial function of staffing process according to (Akintunde & Giwa, 2017) consists of the following sequential steps:
Staffing process stresses on equipping the organisation with an exact number of people, and that too at the right time and place, which will help the organisation to attain its objectives effectively. The staffing process involves a series of steps, discussed as under:
1. **Manpower Planning**: Popularly known as human resource planning, it is the process of forecasting the firm’s demand for and supply of competent workforce, in the adequate number in future.
2. **Recruitment**: It entails seeking, stimulating and obtaining, as many applications as possible from the eligible and competent candidates.
3. **Selection**: It is the decisive step of the staffing process, which involves differentiating between applicants, so as to identify and choose the candidate who best fulfils the qualifications and requirements of the vacant position.
4. **Placement**: The allocation of rank and responsibility to selected candidate, is known as Placement.
5. **Orientation and Induction**: After the placement, the next step is to provide the new employee with the information they require for functioning comfortably and efficiently in an organisation. Induction is the process of introducing the new joinees to the job and the organisation as well.
6. **Training and Development**: In this step, the new joinees undergo training to acquire specific skills. Development implies learning opportunities, designed by the organization, to ensure the growth of employees.
7. **Performance Appraisal and Career Development**: This step involves devising methods that would judge an employee’s performance over a period of time and providing opportunities to employees to develop their careers and managerial talents. This can be shown in diagram 1 below.
8. **Career Management**: Career Management is a process in which the individual understands and learns new skills and interests and use them for the betterment of the organization and self.
9. **Compensation**: Compensation refers to the consideration which an individual gain, in return for his/her contribution to the organization.
10. **Promotion and Transfer**:

![Staffing Process Diagram](image)

**FIGURE 1: STAFFING PROCESS**

Source: Ejumudo (2011)
Each of these steps is important for the maintenance, performance and growth of local government administration in Nigeria, each step involves attending to the human assets and improving upon its quality.

According to Chukwuemeka, Ugwuanyi, Ndubisi-Okolo&Onuoha (2014) Staffing process recognizes the significance of each person employed by the organization, as the work of every individual, keeps the organization going. So, acquiring a good staff is a tough task, because the success of the organization depends on it and so, the process should be performed attentively. Further, the top executives of the organization should be aware of the national labour laws, which applies to the organization. Moreover, the organization should be clear on how many employees, it is going to recruit, for carrying out various activities of the organization.

Challenges to Staffing in the Local Government System in Nigeria

The following factors posed threats to the staffing process in the local government administration in Nigeria:

- Unlawful discrimination on the grounds of sex, ethnic origin and religion instead of merit,
- Non-consideration of the right attitude in the process of staffing,
- Undue interference by the politicians and top functionaries in the staffing process,
- Biasness in the staffing method by the employers affect the credibility and quality of employee,
- Replacement of retired personnel with their relatives and back-door recruitment disrupts staffing process in the local governments. For instance, in Enugu state, the top management staff replaces retired persons with either the son or wife of the retiree.

CONCLUSION

Personnel function is a critical factor in the attainment of the goals of an organization, hence good organizational structure does not by itself, guarantee good performance. Plant, offices, computers, automated equipments and all else that a modern firm use are unproductive except for human efforts and direction. This is why personnel management has been defined as persons employed in an organization to perform some kind of work or task including the management of them.

However, the ability of personnel to contribute to the attainment of the goals of an organization such as the local government depends to a large extent on how well they are recruited, their quality and how they are managed. This is because all the task of management managing the human component is central and most important task because all else depend on how well it is done. Simply put, the personnel of an organization have to be properly managed for them to be able to make maximum contribution to the organization. Such organization may be the local government council.

In this paper, we conclude that staffing in the local government administration in Nigeria are complementary and critical indispensable institutional activities that add significant value to Nigeria’s civil service. This is due to the fact that they jointly provide the basis or bottom line for the efficacious role of the civil service in supporting the policy formulation process and translating policies into action. After all, the onerous task of the civil service is to operate the administrative machinery in accordance with the policy established by the political executive, and the work of government cannot be done without it. This explains why staffing systems must be allowed to take its full course or follow its entire cycle by adhering to the principles of systematic planning, clinical execution, objectivity and merit, even where there is need to satisfy such demands for ethnic balancing or Federal Character Principle.

In the Local Government Administration, staffing system is beset with extra-institutional/organizational factors that alter the demands for meritocracy and constitute a threat to the efficacy of the local government as an instrument and machinery of development in Nigeria. Indeed, the high level of political interference and manipulation by the political class, top administrative echelon and others, through the exploitation of such factors as ethnicity, nepotism, favoritism, institutional and state politics, top governmental connection and outright corruption, in determining who gets engaged in the service is not only anachronistic, but it is equally dysfunctional with consequential effects and negative implications.
for human resource competence, capability, quality decisions and service delivery. The effect of the manipulation of the staff recruitment and selection process in Nigeria’s local governments is a failed and incapacitated civil service that is unable or constrained from providing the desired and inevitable nexus between policy formulation and execution through a committed team of competent, capable, quality and service-minded workforce.

Though the staffing system in the local governments in Nigeria is characterized by a number of irregularities, which are mostly sentimental, it is believed that a lot can be achieved if the recruiters maintain the status quo by making sure that merit is considered as number one priority followed by impartiality, fairness and equality. After all, the Fulton Committee ignored the attempt devised by the Nigerian State to justify the need to incorporate such tendencies as quota system, Federal Character, religion, etc, which in the final analysis are used negatively to favour sectionalism.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are put forward for consideration. It is hoped that if these recommendations are implemented, the local government administration in Nigeria would come alive and become the envy of other nations.

(a) The Nigerian Local Government Commission should try as much as possible to ensure that no unlawful discrimination occurs in the staffing process on the grounds of sex, ethnic origin and religion. Thus, staffing into the local government system should be based on merit.

(b) Staffing in the Local Government administration, should not be based on the skills of the applicants alone. Positive attitude should also be considered as well. The right attitude not only benefits the employee but also maintains workplace morale and improves overall performance that benefits both the employee as well as the organization as a whole.

(c) Political office holders and other top government functionaries should minimize or stop constant interference in the issue of recruitment and selection of staff in the public service. This would help to avoid the very sad experience of the Nigerian Immigration Service (N.I.S) selection process in 2014.

(d) Local government employers should be cautious in choosing staffing methods as well as assessing the predictive value of the methods in order to maintain credibility among applicants. The parameters considered before employment should be sound, not biased and up to date.

(e) There is need for professionally qualified and experienced personnel to head various departments in the local government. Such persons will be needed to formulate efficient personnel plans, evolve personnel management techniques and strategies for efficient personnel recruitment, placement, and management.

(f) Government at all levels should make manpower planning and development a priority. In order to achieve this, manpower planning and development should form an important part of their objectives for every financial year.

(g) Finally, recruiters in the Nigerian local government need to keep abreast of changes in the labour market to ensure that their staffing efforts are not wasted or directed at too small a pool of labour. This means that government must know its exact workforce and also know when there is need to add to the existing workforce.

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