PROBLEMS OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: 
THE NIGERIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Good organizational structure alone, does not guarantee enhanced performance and increased productivity but with well-managed personnel. Personnel is therefore, a critical factor in the attainment of organizational goals. This is because all the organizational activities are initiated and determined by the persons who make up that institution, as plants, offices, computers, automated equipments and all else that a modern firm uses are unproductive except for human effort and direction. However, these abilities and capabilities of the personnel to contribute significantly to the attainment of organizational goals have contemporary, been hindered and hampered by some issues that are amenable. The local government as an institution cannot be exempted. The importance of personnel in the local government cannot be over-emphasized, so it becomes very essential that the personnel of the local government should be judiciously managed to achieve the goals of the local government. In the light of the above, this paper examines the importance of personnel, its sourcing, recruitment and maintenance and the problems they encounter in the course of administering the local government and then proffer some tangible solutions to the problem.

Keywords: Personnel, Management, Organization, Local Government, Personnel Management,
INTRODUCTION

The local government system is specially designed to bring governance close to the people at the grassroots. The need to enhance efficiency and workability of the system led to the reforms in the local government administration in Nigeria. In spite of these reforms the system has neither brought the much desired results especially in transforming the rural areas nor checked corruption which thrives in Nigeria. Indeed, one area where the system has suffered severe dislocations is in the field of human resource and capacity building and staff welfare. This has helped to enforce low morals in many workers resulting in low productivity, favouritism and corruption.

In order to sanitize the system therefore, there is need to keep strictly to the standard rules in relation to proper staff placement in all the Departments in the local government (Isabemoch, 2010).

Human Resource, capacity building and staff welfare are the basic roles of the personnel management. The universal acceptance of the critical role of personnel in the achievement of organizational goals and the realization and appreciation of the various exogenous and endogenous variables which inform, determine, order and finally condition personnel activities, led to the establishment of Department of Personnel Administration, personnel management, or Human Resource Management in any viable organization (Okoli, 2000). These personnel management/Administrative units are traditionally saddled specific functions (Onyishi, 2002) among which are staff placement.

The importance of personnel (Human Resources) in the attainment of organizational objectives cannot be over-emphasized (Onah, 2002) as it has been amplified by Ofoegbu (1985) who averred that “A firm can mobilize all its capital inputs and still be out of production. The decision to start capital mobilization is personnel management decision. The assemblage of the inanimate factors of production into a single, coherent and operational production system is a human act, conceived by human genius and realized by human efforts”. Hence the critical processes of determining goals, making investment choices, directing work effort on a day-to-day basis, maintaining and servicing equipment and so on, fall squarely on the personnel of an organization. It therefore follows that people are the main instruments for the realization of organizational objectives.

Having established the importance of personnel, it is necessary to stress that in service organizations such as local governments, the role of personnel in the attainment of goals becomes all the more significant hence local government is a labour intensive organization and to the extent that these labours are well organized and motivated, to the same extent, the local government can successfully fulfill all its numerous responsibilities (Onah, in Ezeani and Nwankwo, 2002). To remedy the ills of local government in Nigeria, one should strive remedy its personnel problems as enhanced personnel management promotes and ensures healthy local government administration.

The main thrust of this paper therefore is to identify the problems of personnel management in Nigerian local government administration; to examine the contributions of the personnel managers to the personnel problems of Nigerian local government and ascertain the major strategies the personnel managers of Nigerian local government Administration. And to determine the extent to which external factors/forces influences local government personnel management and thus leads to poor personnel management in the local government and to provide corrective measures for effective personnel management in the Nigerian local government administration. In doing so, this paper is grouped into six, one for each. Section one discusses personnel /Human Resources, the concept of management, Personnel Management/Human Resource management.

Personnel/Human Resource

Personnel are people who are employed by a company or organization to perform some kind of work. Personnel can, according to encyclopedia, (2009) vary from unskilled labourers hired to do daily contract work to highly skilled professionals such as doctors who staff a hospital. The importance of personnel in the attainment of organizational objectives cannot, according to Onah, in Ezeani and Nwankwo (2002) be over-emphasized. Accordingly, the critical processes of determining goals, making investment choices, directing work effort on a day-to-day basis, maintaining and servicing equipment and so on, fall squarely on the personnel of an organization. It therefore follows that people are the main instruments for the realization of organizational objectives.

In observing the role of personnel in the attainment of organizational goals, Ofoegbu (1985) averred “A firm can mobilize all its capital inputs and still be out of production. The decision to start capital mobilization is personnel decision. The assemblage of the inanimate factors of production into a
single, coherent and operational production system, is a human act, conceived by human genius and realized by human efforts.

However, personnel is interwovenly used as human resources. Human resources at the organizational level, according to Ikeanyibe (2009) is the entire staff, personnel, manpower or employees of the organization. Human resource denotes the infinite differences in the relative capability of people who may be employed or are actually employed in an organization and the relative quantity and quality of output, which they could be used to achieve.

Onah, (2008) had observed that the efficiency with which an organization can perform will depend to a large extent, on how its human resources can be managed and utilized. Every manager must, therefore, be able to work effectively with people and also be able to solve the various problems the management of people may entail. According, he observed that the type of leadership which characterized our organizations in the first half of the 20th century is no longer sustainable in the present working environment. The leadership was arbitrary and autocratic in its relationship with subordinates. Today, things have changed. Employees are better educated and their orientation and value system are no longer the same as those of the past. In addition, most organizations are becoming more complex in nature and, therefore, leaders in these organizations are expected to have greater technical competence and a better understanding of human behaviour. Organizational human resources have become of strategic interest to the top management recently because the effective use of people in organizations can provide a competitive advantage.

Human resources, easily recognized as the most important out of the resources required for the production of goods and services, are the key to rapid socio-economic development and efficient service delivery. According to Barney (1995), human resources include all the experiences, skills, judgment, abilities, knowledge, contracts, risk-taking and wisdom of individuals and associates in an organization. Without an adequate, skilled and well-motivated workforce operating within a source human resource management programme, development and efficient service delivery is not possible.

The concept of human resource is more frequently used to day to refer to organizational personnel. Thus, human resource management is today more frequently used to describe the handling of the people aspect of management. It is therefore important according to Ikeanyibe (2009), that we from the outset understand the connotations of these concept that has become more popular in describing the management of the in the workplace today. Man is a reservoir of timeless knowledge, skills and capabilities. But as a rational and emotional being, the willingness in supplying these towards the achievement of the organizational objectives is determined by a number of factors. In addition to the willingness to behave in a particular way required, there is also the issue of the measure, nature of knowledge, skills and capabilities possessed by individuals since all human beings do not possess the same type of knowledge, skills and capabilities in the same measure. Human resources therefore refer to people since all persons possess some knowledge, skills or capabilities that could be productive. Organizational success depends largely on people. Thus, a organization must of necessity attract the right kind of human beings, retain and maintain them in the right frame of mind to given their best efforts towards achieving he organizational activities.

Human resource management therefore, is a set of organizational activities directed to attracting, developing and maintaining and effective workforce. This is the topic of the next segment after the evaluation and review of the concept of “management”.

MANAGEMENT

Management in simple terms means the act of getting people together to accomplish desired goals. It comprises planning, organizing, Resourcing, leading or directing, and controlling an organization (a group of one or more people or entities) or effort for the purpose of accomplishing a goal. Resourcing encompasses the deployment and manipulation of human resources, financial resources, technological resources, and natural resources.

Different meanings have according to Nwachukwu (1988) been attributed to the word “management”. Some people see it as referring to a group of people. They think of management team or a group of individuals in an organization. Management is also seen as a process demanding the performance of a specific function. Here, management is a profession. According to the American institute of management, it is used to designate either a group of functions or the personnel who carry them out; to describe either an organization’s official hierarchy or the activities of men who compose it: to provide autonomy to either labour or ownership.
The Wikipedia (2009) observed that management can also be referred to as the person or people who perform the act of management. Talking about the act of management, the Nigerian Institute of management (NIM) opined that management is a comprehensive activity, involving the combination and co-ordination of human, physical and financial resources, in a way which produce a commodity or a service which is both wanted and can be offered at a price which will be paid, while making the working environment for those involved agreeable and acceptable. According to Yalokwu (2002) “management can be defined as the process of planning, organizing leading and controlling the efforts of organizational members and using all other organizational resources to achieve set goals”. Further still, management involves the achievement of goals set for the organization. This means that managers of any organization a commercial bank, a university, or the Nigerian stock Exchange-try to attain specific ends. These ends are unique to each organization. The set goals, whatever it maybe to the organizations concerned, management is the process by which the goals can be attained. The foregoing definitions of management are in compatibility with Bedeian (1993) that “management is a process by which we achieve desired results through efficient utilization of human and material resources”.

Looking at the overview of the concept of “management”, the Wikipedia (2009) espoused that the verb “manage” comes from the Italian maneggiare (to handle especially a horse), which in turn derives from the latin manus (hand). The French word mesnagement (later me’nagement) influenced the development in meaning of the English word management in the 17th and 18th centuries. Its theoretical scope heralds thus, Mary Parker Follet (1868-1933), who wrote on the topic in the early 20th century, defined management as “the art of getting things done through people”. One can also think of management functionally, as the action of measuring a quantity on a regular basis and of adjusting some initial plan; or as the actions taken to reach one’s intended goal. This applies even in situations where planning does not take place. From this perspective, Frenchman, Henri Fayol considers management to consist of five functions (1) Planning (2) organizing (3) Leading (4) Coordinating and (5) Controlling.

Historically, difficulties arise in tracing the history of management. Some see it as a late modern conceptualization. On those terms, it cannot have a pre-modern history, only harbingers. Some writers trace the development of management thought back to Sumerian traders and to the builders of the pyramids of ancient Egypt. Slave owners through the centuries faced the problems of exploiting/motivating a dependent but sometimes unenthusiastic or recalcitrant workforce but many pre-industrial enterprises, given their small scale, did not feel compelled to face the issues of management systematically. However, innovations such as the spread of Arabic numerals and the codification of double-entry book-keeping provided tools for management assessment, planning and control. Given the scale of most commercial operations and lack of mechanized record-keeping and recording before the industrial revolution, it made sense for most owners of enterprises in those times to carryout management functions by and for themselves. But with growing size and complexity of organizations, the split between owners and day-to-day managers gradually become more common. Towards the 20th century, this split led to business management consisting of six separate branches namely:

1. Human resources management
2. Operations management or production management
3. Strategic management
4. Marketing management
5. Financial management and
6. Information technology management that manages information systems.

In the 21st century, observers find it increasingly difficult to subdivide management into functional categories in this way. More and more processes simultaneously involve several categories. Instead, one tends to think in terms of the various processes, takes and objects subject to management. Branches of management theory also exist relating to non-profits and to governmental: such as public administration, public management, and educational management further, management programmes related to civil society organizations have also spawned programmes in nonprofit management and social entrepreneurship. Note that many of the assumptions made by management have come under attack from business ethics viewpoints, critical management studies, and anti-corporate activism. As one consequence workplace democracy has become both more common and advocated, in some places distributing all management functions among the workers, each of whom takes a portion of the work. However, these models predate any current political issue, and may occur more naturally than does a command hierarchy. All management to some degree embraces democratic principles in that in the long term, workers must give majority support to management otherwise they leave to find other work or go on
strike. Hence management has started to become less based on the conceptualization of classical/military command and control, and more about facilitation and support of collaborative activity, utilizing principles such as those of human interaction management to deal with the complexities of human interaction.

Nwachukwu (1988) writing on the functions and behaviour, as well as the need for management observed that there is no human endeavour that does not require proper management for its proper functioning. All types of organizations – government establishments, business enterprises, hospitals, cooperatives, churches, whether profit making or non-profit making, require food management to function effectively. Managing is one of the most important human activities that permeate all organizations. When people work together for the attainment of a predetermined objective, there is a need for management that is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the aims and objectives of the organization are realized. It is the managers responsibility to ensure that every member of the group contribute his best. To get people to put in their best efforts, the manager has to understand people, their emotional, physical and intellectual needs. He has to appreciate that each member of the group has his own personal needs and aspirations and that these are influenced by such factors as the ethnic, social, political, economic and the technological environment of which he is a part.

Not all people can manage effectively or aspire to management position. Whenever people work together, there is generally a need for the co-ordination of efforts in order to attain expected results in reasonable time, and with minimum amount of money, discomfort or energy. All people who oversee the function of other people who must work in subordinate position are managers. Managers are people who are primarily responsible for the achievement of organizational goals. Any organization that fails to realize its objective often blames it on management. In those enterprises that the stock holders feel that they do not attain their objectives, there is a tendency to blame it on those responsible for piloting the affairs of the organization management. Thus, management is often accused of lack of initiative, ineptitude, misconduct or are said to be unqualified and are called upon to resign. The manager is the individual to provide the dynamic force or direction. He is the person in charge or expected to attain results. The manager does not spend all his time managing. He is like a football coach. He does not play the game but directs the players on how to play... A manager that fails to achieve the objectives as expected is either dismissed or asked to resign. In large organizations such as the local government, the civil service or government corporations, there are often many instances of dismissals, transfers, demotions and promotions. A manager is expected to possess special talents or abilities quite different from non managers. In all countries, management has emerged as a leading group in our economic society. They are a class by themselves, distinct from ownership and labour. According to Peter Drucker, “rarely, if ever, has a new basic institution, or new lending group, a new central function, emerged as fast as has management since the turn of the century. In this study our emphasis is on personnel management.

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT/HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The personnel of an organization comprises of men and women, young and old who engage in the production of goods and services and who are the greatest assets of the organization as observed Ndiomu (1992). The ability of any organization to achieve its goals depends, to a large extent, on the caliber, organization and motivation of its human resources. These and other statements by human resources management experts and practitioners alike, point to the importance and critical role of the human element in organization. But the personnel of an organization have to be properly managed for them to make maximum contribution to the organization. That, according to Ezeani (2002), is why Likert (1974) opines that “of all the tasks of management, managing the human components is central and most important task because all else depends on how well it is done”. Amber (2009) in agreement with Likert observed that in any organization there is a system which is responsible to increase the welfare and performance of the employees. This system implements policies which aim to achieve all the objectives regarding the personnel of the organization. This system is known as personnel management. Nowadays, scope of personnel management has increased and thus referred to as human resource management. The function of personnel management starts with the staffing process, screening and interviewing process and selection process. In addition, personnel management also develops such policies which are beneficial for the employees. Harry (2009) averred that personnel management is basically a form of Human Resource management. This area of management is concerned with everything about the staff and workers of the organization. It is fundamentally responsible for the hiring
and staffing of employee in an organization. It also suggests the job description as well as the skills required for a particular job. Once a person is on job, the personnel management function looks after appropriate training and development of the individual. Along with this, the personnel management decides what benefits and perks to give to a certain employee. It establishes operational policies and procedures, employment requirements, discipline procedure etc.

The institute of personnel management defined personnel management as “that part of management concerned with people at work and their relationships within an enterprise. Its aim is to bring together and develop into an effective organization the men and women who make up an enterprise and having regard for the well being of the individual and the working groups, to enable them to make their best contributions to its success. Niven in Ezeani (2002) upheld that “personnel management is the responsibility of all those who manage people as well as being a description of the work of those who are employee as specialist”. According to Pigors and Myers (1983), personnel management is a set of staff function but also a managerial responsibility. Northcott (quoted in croft 1996) stipulated the relationship between the general structure of management and the specialized form of personnel or human resource management thus:

Personnel management is an extension of general management… prompting and stimulating every employee to make his fullest contribution to the purpose of the business. It is an advisory service and a staff activity with no obvious authority except that which arises from its terms of reference and the knowledge and skill of the adviser. It becomes organized as a function, that is, a body of duties brought together as the responsibility of one person and carried out wherever they occur in the establishment.

Cole (2002) observed that the expression personnel management refers primary to the activities of specialists’ staff responsible for implementing the key objectives of the organization in respect of its use of people (employees). Personnel have always had responsibilities towards the workforce, for an important part of their role is a concern for fair treatment, equitable payment and other aspects of importance to the employee stakeholders in the organization. Thus, the personnel role as distinguishable from the team leadership role, which is essentially about the harnessing of people’s efforts in the pursuit of organizational goals. Personnel management, according to Ezeani (2002) is therefore an activity aimed at ensuring efficient use of the personnel of an organization to achieve maximum productivity for it and at the same time enable the employee to gain optimum psychological and material benefits from his or her work. Accordingly, it is important to note that although personnel management is a responsibility of all those who manage people, it is a function of the specialists and part of the general managerial process. Thus, according to Croft (1996) “although managers must deal with people, the organization can also provide a number of specialist who can ease the load of the line managers and provide a specialist advisory service.

Sharma and Sadana (2009) prefer personnel management as personnel administration and he observed and upheld that “personnel Administration is that branch of Public Administration which can help an organization in the management of personnel resources with the use of well thought out principles, practices and rationalized techniques in selecting, retaining and developing personnel for the fulfillment of organizational objectives systematically and scientifically. It is the art and science of planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating the personnel resources in any organization to ensure their best use for the achievement of the objectives, goals and targets of an organization. Jucious (2000) defines personnel administration as “that field of management which has to do with planning organizing, directing and controlling the functions of procuring, developing, maintaining and utilizing a labour such that:

The objectives for which the company is established are attained economically and effectively,
The objectives of all levels of personnel are served to the highest possible degree;
The objectives of the community are duly considered and served.

According to Thomas G. Spakes, personnel administration is a code of the ways of organizing and treating individuals at work so that they will each get the greatest possible realization of their intrinsic abilities, those attaining maximum efficiency for themselves and their group and thereby giving to the enterprise of which they are a part its determining competitive advantage and its optimum results:
Is a part of the management process in the organization; Helps the organization in the management of personnel resources with the use of certain principles, practices and techniques; These principles and techniques are intended to develop potentialities of employees so that they get not only maximum satisfaction out of their work but also they contribute their maximum to achieve the objectives of the organization in most efficient and economic manner; It is concerned with the human relationships in the organization.

The main objective of the personnel administration is the achievement of the goals of the organization. To achieve these goals, it must be ensured that the human resources are effectively utilized. This requires that the personnel agency should design and establish an organizational structure and an effective working relationship among all the members of an organization. The personnel administration must create a soothing environment for the employees to secure their integration so that they may feel a sense of involvement, commitment and loyalty to the organization. Specific objectives of personnel administration may be described as under: to enable each person to make his maximum personal contribution to the effective working of the organization; to ensure respect for human personality and the well-being of the individual; To ensure satisfaction of various needs of individuals for achieving their maximum contribution towards organizational goals.

The importance of personnel administration has increased in recent times due to several reasons like rapid advancements taking place in technology requiring continuous development of human resources; large size of the modern organizations in the age of liberalization and globalization, long-range needs of manpower; high wage bills necessitating optimum use of manpower, and recognition of human aspect of organization.

Speaking of human aspect of organization in line with the concept of “personnel management”, Ezeani et al (2002) asserts that there is no doubt that the ability of any organization or society to achieve its goals depends to a large extent on the caliber, organization and motivation of its human resources. This opinion Likert (1994) upheld when he asserted that “all the activities of any enterprise are initiated and determined by the persons who make up that institution. Similarly, Harbison (1974) opined that “human resources and not any other constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. And Drucker (1978) upheld that good organizational structure does not by itself guarantee good performance. Human resources is as a fact of life of the existence, survival and development of an organization as food is to man”. Frank (1974) describes human resources management as a series of activities in which the job, the individual and the organization all interact as each develops and change. According to Ademolekun (1983) Human resources management is the management role that is concerned with people at work and their relationship with the organization.

Human resource management, according to Ikeanyibe (2009), encompasses those activities designed to provide for and coordinate the human resources of an organization. Organizational success depends largely on people. Thus, an organization must of necessity attract the right kind of human beings, retain and maintain them in the right frame of mind to give their best efforts towards achieving the organizational activities directed to attracting, developing and maintaining an effective workforce. Cole (2002) sees Human resource management as decisions about the deployment and treatment of personnel taken by line units as well as personnel specialists. Human resources management implies an approach which recognizes that employees are only one group among several, such as customers and shareholders, who have a claim on the resources of the organization. Frank (1974) identifies two major activities within the human resource area viz: human resource utilization and human resource development. The first is concerned with the recruitment, selection, placement, compensation and appraisal of the human resources. The second group of activities is designed to enable employees of the organization assume new roles and functions and improve their efficiency and effectiveness.

According to Onah (2008), the goal of Human Resource management are to develop the workers in the organization to contribute to goal achievement in the organization by management improved productivity, quality and service. In addition, Human Resource management has some specific roles to play in an organization. These are strategic and operational roles. Its role strategically, Human resources are critical for effective organizational functioning. Human resources must be viewed in the same context as the financial, technological and other resources that are managed in organization. Its operational role, Mathis and Jackson (1997) sees operational activities of the human resource management as both tactical and administrative in nature. As Griffin (1997) sees this aspect from the legal perspective because some have regulated various aspects of employee-employer relations. Human Resources management is therefore interested in compliance with equal employment opportunities and
observation of labour laws. Unfortunately, the compliance and observance of these laws are unduly interfered with in the local government system.

The Local Government

The expediency for the creation of local government anywhere in the world stems from the need to facilitate development at the grassroots. The importance of local government is a function of its ability to generate sense of belongingness, safety and satisfaction among its populace. All forms of government regimes or political systems have so far ensured the attainment of this goal. Such strategy for ensuring national administrative development and political efficacy is found in the concept and practice of local government. Whatever is the mode of government, local government has been essentially regarded as the path to, and guarantor of, national integration, administration and development. Central to the creation of local government, however, is its ability to facilitate an avenue through which government and the people intermix, relate and more quickly than any other means resolve or dissolve issues that may have heated the system. Local government has been perceived as a panacea for the diverse problems of the diverse people with diverse culture.

As important as this tier of government has been, there seems to e some impediments that have been infringing on its performance and functions in recent times. These impediments range from political but undue interference of the higher levels of government to inadequacy of well-trained and qualified personnel. Usman (2010) sees local government as a system of public administration at a local level, charged with the responsibility of bringing the people at the grassroots closer to the government. He however, regretted that a critical survey of local governments in Nigeria today slows at most the same scene; that is, they are living in the shadow of the federal government that have resulted to the abysmal failure of the system.

The concept of local government as observed by Dumadu (2008) involves a philosophical commitment to democratic participation in the governing process at the grassroots level. This implies legal and administrative decentralization of authority, power and personnel by a higher level of government to a community with a will of its own, performing specific functions as within the wider national framework.

There are various definitions of local government by scholars and practitioner or administrators alike observed Ezeani (2006). A local government according to Agagu (1997) is a government at the grassroots level of administration meant for meeting peculiar grassroots need of the people. Appadorai (1975) defined it as a government y the popular elected bodies charged with administrative and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place. Lawal (2000) also defined local government as that tier of government closest to the people, which is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of the people in its domain. Olisa et al (19900 defined local government as a unit of government below the central, regional or state government established by law to exercise political authority through a representative council within a defined area. The United Nations Office for Public Administration (1976) defines local government as:

….a political sub-division 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 exert labour for prescribed purpose. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected.

The guidelines for a reform of local government in Nigeria define local government as:

Government at the 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 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 he sat and federal government in their areas, and to ensure, through active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local initiatives and response to local needs are maximized.

Historically, Nwabueze (1982) upheld that regardless of nomenclature, local government is a creation of British colonial rule in Nigeria. it has overtime experienced change in name, structure and composition. Between 1930s and 1940s, for instance, local government was known as chief-in-council
and chief-and-council, where traditional rulers were given pride of place in the scheme of things. In the 1950s, election was introduced according to the British model in the western and eastern parts of the country with some measure of autonomy in personnel, finance and general administration. It was on this premise that the rising tide of progress, growth and development experienced in the local governments in these areas was based. The pace of this development was more noticeable in the south than in the north. During this period, heterogeneity was the hallmark of local government as there was no uniformity in the system and the level of development was also remarkably different. The introduction of 1976 reforms by the military administration of General Obasanjo, says Ajayi (2000), brought about uniformity in the administrative structure of the system. The reforms introduced a multi-purpose single-tier local government system. The 1976 guidelines added that the reforms also introduced population criterion under which a local government could be created. Consequently, a population of within 150,000 was considered feasible for a local government. This was done to avoid the creation of non-viable local council and for easy accessibility. There was also provision for elective positions having the chairman as the executive head of local Government with supervisory councilors constituting the cabinet. This was complemented by the bureaucrats and professionals, such as doctors, Engineers, etc, who were charged with the responsibility of implementing policies. Ajayi (2000) further upheld that in 1991, a major landmark reform was introduced as the system had legislative arm. In addition, the Babangida administration increased the number of local government from 301 in 1976 to 453 in 1989 and 589 in 1991. The Abacha regime also increased the number to 774 local councils that we have today and the administrative structure also underwent some changes.  

Summatively, it can be said that no public institution in Nigeria has been so subjected to frequent reforms than local government. Nearly every successive administration introduced one administrative change or the other. Apart from the celebrated 1976 reforms, state government officials have also introduced various manipulations. For instance, in Ekiti State, the tenure of elected local government officials was reduced to two years, while some retained it to reflect three years. In the Southwest, except for Lagos State, a caretaker committee was introduced in 2003 immediately after the general elections. In similar vein, in June 2007, some state governments dissolved their local councils and appointed caretaker committee to steer the affairs of the council prior to the conduct of elections. The problems of local government are multifarious and that explains why in spite of the reforms, the problems are unabated. We shall look at three of these perennial problems of the local government.  

1. **General Indiscipline**  
   Indiscipline is rampantly perceived and well pronounced among the workers in local government. The senior officers who travel to their families away from their offices on Friday, return very late on the following Monday or may decide to stay back till Tuesday, and the junior members of the staff who directly or indirectly observe this more often than not are in the habit of playing truant with the jobs. Little or no commitment to duty has become a rule rather than an exception. Officers have been turned to market places were officers hawk their goods freely. The rules that guide moral conduct and professional ethics seem to have, at worst, become cobweb that is too weak to tame the monstrous activities of the workers. Indiscriminate lustful desires are noticeable among the workers. The official relationship between super ordinates and subordinates has been stained. Strict instructions handed down from top echelon to the bottom are either not followed or treated with levity as a result of the immoral relationship between the boss and subordinates. Official duties are seen as an extension of private leisure. Laisser-faire attitude to work has arrested the efficiency of local government and has drastically affected its performance. Corruption in low and high places in the local government has been rampant among the senior civil bureaucrats to whom the public funds meant for developmental purposes are entrusted. Low officers sent on drives do not cover enough ground and also print their own receipt. They therefore, collect 70% of the drives as personal gains and return only 30% to the council. Generally, wide-scale embezzlement by officials of the grassroots has made the needed development of grassroots a fall dream and has rendered them financially incapable to discharge their constitutionally assigned responsibilities.  

2. **Undue Interference**  
   The degree of external influence and intrusion in the local government affairs by the higher levels of government is worrisome and needs re-evaluation. Situation where the state governor unconstitutionally dissolves the entire elected council’s officers without proper investigations on spurious allegations is not good for the future of local government administration in the country. Such external
interference indeed subverts democratic process and undermines constitutional authority at the grassroots level.

The crux of the matter is the ‘almighty’ power and misuse of i.e. enjoyed by the state government over local governments. Practically, and in the true sense, local government in Nigeria lacks autonomous financial power. Local government is now considered an extension of state’s ministry. The inherent nature of this problem has caused subservience, a situation where local government waits for the next directives from state government before the former could think of, let alone embarking on development projects. The major challenge that the local government faces is the political control the respective state governors have on the local government chairmen. This is as a result of the fact that state governors sponsor election of most, if not all, of the chairmen. They are handpicked by the state governors rather than being elected. It is a clear case of who pays the piper dictates the tune. This again, creates a problem of diversion of local government funds for personal use of state governor.

The undue interference has incapacitated local government from effective functioning on the one hand, and alienated grassroots people from enjoying social services delivery expected of local government on the other.

3. **Inadequacy of Skilled Worker**

Save for some few local councils in Lagos State and perhaps, some southern states, local government generally has experienced and is still experience 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 wage as local government is the least paid public service in the nation. Worst still, no effort is in place to upgrade their remuneration status. Manner of recruitment is questionable as it is based on subjectivity and consideration of sentiment which ultimately enthrones mediocrity and debase meritocracy. Employment is based on favouritism, nepotism, ethnic and political consideration and other primordial factors that replaced and displaced competence, qualification, experience and performance. Entrance into the local government staff forum is usually through junior staff cadre as it is the compensatory tool of the chairman as necessitate by spoils system and prebendalism. This grade level 01-06 whose payment status is as low as N24,000.00 at most is naturally not suitable for any skilled worker. A graduate of any field, all things being equal, will not listen to such pronouncement let alone accepting the offer. If he does, thanks to unabating unemployment, he must, as a matter of necessity, device another means of making up as his salary, ordinarily cannot meet his physiological needs. Therefore, the local government suffers (Emeh, et al 2009).

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

Personnel management is the process of skillful procurement, utilization, development, motivation and control of staff to accomplish the organizational objectives. The importance of human resources in any organization cannot be over-emphasized. In fact, the ability of any organization or society to achieve its goals depends on the caliber of its human resources, otherwise known as personnel and more importantly, on how effectively they are managed. The local government is not an exception as the tier of government is not an exception. As the tier of government nearest to the grassroots, local government has over the years been regarded as a veritable instrument of rural development. Indeed, the objectives of the local government according to the 1976 guidelines for local government reform in Nigeria are: To make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives by devolving or delegating them to local representative bodies. To facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government close to the grassroots of our society, and to encourage initiative and leadership potentials. Mobilization of human and material resources through effective management of human resources. 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”

Agreeably, Ogunna (1996) averred that in the entire management process of any organization, manpower resources constitute, perhaps, the most crucial element in the achievement of its objectives as it is the human element that creates services and can destroy an organization if chooses to do so. 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 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 this personnel management functions as it has the responsibility for local government personnel training. Onyiishi (in Ezeani and Nwankwo 2002) referred to this arrangement as the organizational structure of personnel Administration in the Nigerian local government system.

PROBLEMS OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS.

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. on the former, he summarized as low executive capacity as they have only administrative staff and lack specialist, technicians, engineers etc. Again, there is an inadequate facility for staff training even the malfeasance of favouritism in the appointment and promotion of staff. 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings on problems of personnel management in the local government system, the following are recommended:

1. 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;
2. There is need for autonomy of the local government as a third-tier, especially on the aspect of personnel management where those professionally qualified and experienced personnel heading various departments will be able to showcase their competencies, experiences, knowledge’s and expertise.
3. There should be a regularly scheduled personnel audit with frantic emphasis and efforts at ridding the local government of “ghost workers”, and also to ensure that all are placed where they are qualified to operate;
4. Better pay package should be ensured for the staff of the local government and their salary scale structure should be matched with those of the state government since they are both under the same state.
5. There should be policies on personnel up-gradation in terms of their paper qualification attainment and skills acquisition to keep pace with trend should that be subjected to verification by external body under the auspices of an uncorrupted administrator from either within the state or outside the state from the civil service commission;
6. The states government control of the local government councils should be stopped as a way of averting instability in the system, to enable for stability and development. By so doing, the constitutional structure of local government will be returned to the various local government council, such that the Head, Local Government Administration (HLGA) will serve as a resourceful,
neutral, non-partisan yet knowledgeable, experienced and powerful technocrat (Head of Service) with the return of the people’s elected chairman and councilor who will take up their supervisory job, enabling the various Heads of Department (HOD’s) to perform credibly in their own field, as it is wrong and unconstitutional for the Governor to administer the local government by proxy.

CONCLUSION
Personnel is a critical factor in the attainment of the goals of an organization, hence good organizational structure does not by itself, guarantee good performance. Personnel is life to the existence, survival and development of an organization as food is to man; since all the activities of any organization are initiated and determined by the persons who make up that organization. Plant, offices, computers, automated equipments and all else that a modern firm uses are unproductive except for human efforts and direction. This is why personnel have 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 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.

Local government is a unit of government below the central, regional and state government, established by law to exercise political authority through a representative council within a defined area. It is also a system of public administration at a local level, charged with the responsibility of bringing the people at the grassroots closer to the government. It involves a philosophical commitment to a democratic participation in the governing process at the local level. The expediency for the creation of local government stems from the need to facilitate development at the grassroots. Its importance, however, is a function of its ability to generate sense of belongingness, safety and satisfaction among its populace.

To achieve these important changes, the seeming impediments, in the context of problems of personnel management, such that have infringed on its performance of functions, duties and responsibilities, should be dealt with. To deal with such impediments that constitute local government personnel management problems, some innovative ideologies enumerated should be employed and adhered to. Such as follows; Acquisition of modern organizational technologies and consequent acquisition of the skills and knowledge to operate, use and maintain such equipments; constitutional absolute autonomy to the local government as a third tier government, in terms of finance (statutory allocation) and personnel management interference and control;

Improve funding of the councils to ensure the ability to acquire up-to-date technologies and qualified personnel, such that will ensure productivity of the council. Improved incentives and motivation of the personnel and the re-uniformity of salary scale structure with those of state or even federal civil servants.

Nigerian local government in general has been x-rayed and showed lacking in the afore stated requirement to ensure better personnel management which will ultimately lead to increase productivity and therefore, needs the above innovative ideologies to occupy its pride of place again.

REFERENCES


