Competent and Qualified Personnel and Service Delivery at the Local Government Level in Nigeria: A Conceptual Review

Matthew Funsho Bello a *, Abga Maina Mackson b

a Department of Public Administration, Gombe State University, Gombe State, Nigeria
b Department of Political Science, Federal university Dutse, Jigawa State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the concept of competent and qualified personnel and service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria. One of the core reasons for the creation of local government in almost all countries of the world is to provide goods and services to the local population. Unfortunately, this third tier of government has performed abysmally in meeting the felt needs of those in their jurisdictions and this has been a major concern to public policy makers and various stakeholders. The method used to obtain data was through the secondary sources, findings suggest that service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria has been very poor due to lack of competent and qualified personnel, the resultant effect has been lack of accountability and transparency. Service delivery at the local government’s level suffered neglect because of institutional weakness and lack of competent and qualified personnel. Paradoxically, poor services are the social vices bedeviling the Nigerian society of which local governments is charged with the responsibility of mitigating; hence for the local government to perform its statutory function of service delivery efficiently, there must be a complete autonomy of local government both administratively and fiscally; and for service delivery to be realistic. There must be competent and qualified personnel with expertise through regular workshops, seminars and training for capacity building.

1. Introduction

The establishment of local governments the world over was the need to democratize powers of government to meet specific needs of the people at the grassroots level. Local government exists in every nation of the world, though with distinct operational models such as constitutional status, historical background and level of autonomy. The local government must have policies and institutional frameworks that will support and sustain grassroots development in any system of government; effective local government administration plays a crucial role in ensuring efficient provision of public goods and services to vast rural dwellers.

In Nigeria, large chunk of the population lives in the rural areas where the local government is expected to provide basic socio-economic services such as rural feeder roads, dispensaries and clinics, water, security, local education authorities, etc. The delegation of government activities allows active involvement of the citizens at all levels and makes government participatory (Ola, 2019). The complexity and dynamism of the contemporary government in Nigeria requires decentralization of government business for efficient and effective administrative convenience and service delivery; considering the diversity in language, culture, norms, customs, population and environmental peculiarities of the Nigerian society local government administration became absolutely necessary to accommodate the inherent peculiarities of the various groups for peaceful coexistence.

Suffice to say that the problems, needs and agitations across the country begin from the grassroots which are part of the whole which could either be federal, national or central must demonstrate its effectiveness on its population through policy making, implementation and evaluation for effective service delivery (Abegunde, 2019). The philosophy of local government administration is to get the people at the grassroots involve in the administration of themselves by finding
solutions to the challenges of their immediate environment through formulation and implementation of policies for their wellbeing. The idea of local government involvement in democratic process is to ensure the participation of the rural dwellers in the governing process and development programmes, which would eventually, culminates to national development. However, the dismal performance in terms of provision of goods and services to the rural populace at local government level in the country has continued to generate concerns and attract reactions from both the rural dwellers and policy makers.

In order to achieve these lofty goals and aspirations, there is need for the local governments in Nigeria to have competent and qualified personnel to deliver services that must satisfy the daily needs of the people at the third and the lowest rung of government, which is perceived and believed to be the closest government to the people. Hence, this study assesses or evaluates a conceptual review of competent and qualified personnel and service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria.

The local government administration is saddled the responsibility of providing essential basic social services; bringing the presence of government closer to the people and undertaking development activities in accordance with the constitution provisions. In Nigeria, the local government councils are constitutionally required to perform certain basic functions according to the fourth schedule of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria (Odede, Banji & Adepoju 2020) Among which is the consideration and making of recommendations to a state commission on economic planning or any similar body on:

a. the economic development of the state, particularly in so far as the areas of authority of the council and of the state are affected, and

b. proposals made by the said commission or body; construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings, drains and other public high ways, parks, gardens, open spaces, or such public facilities as may be prescribed from time to time by the house of assembly of the state. The above functions suggest that local government administration plays a crucial role in ensuring efficient provision of public goods and services to the people at the local level. It is therefore the constitutional responsibility of the local government to provide basic social and public service delivery and this can be achieved only through the instrumentality of competent and qualified personnel (Shadrach, 2014).

The non-performance of local governments in Nigeria has continued to generate great concerns in respect of effective service delivery at the grassroots level; lack of competent and qualified man power among others has remained one of challenges to effective service delivery by the local government administration in Nigeria. The success of any organization rely more on the ability to utilize its human and material resources to achieve the desired objectives of which Local government in Nigeria must ensure proper utilization of her personnel in an efficient and effective manner in order to meet the developmental demands at the local level.

However, local government in Nigeria generally has continued to experience shortage of skilled, technical and professional staff like qualified engineers, medical doctors, accountants, statisticians, economists, lawyers, town planners, etc. Among the principal factors for the dismal lack include: low image of local government in the mind of professionals who feel and think that there is no job satisfaction sufficient to keep them at that low level of public service. There is also abysmal low payment scheme for the staff of the councils, which most often is not commensurate even with the recent minimum wage as local government is the least paid public service in the country with no foreseen 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 favoritism, nepotism, ethnic and political consideration and other primordial factors that replaced and displaced competence, qualification, experience and performance thereby making local governments to suffer.

Drawing from the above, these are problems which the personnel departments of the local government and the staff of the local government encounter. Included are among these are also lack of adequate incentives and motivation, low prestige as local government employees are considered as rural officials with local status and rural image; jobs are not challenging to bring out the best in the personnel. They do not enjoy equal treatment with the state civil servants, low executive capacity as they have only administrative staff and lack specialist, technicians, engineers coupled with inadequate facility for staff training ; favoritism in the appointment and promotion of staff. Oyinboyi (2002) blamed the problems of personnel department of the local government on over centralization, which often makes staff assessment inefficient. Furthermore is political interference from the states and the influence of ethnicity, favouritism and nepotism, irregular payment of staff salaries and total absence of fringe benefits and physical working conditions which are usually very poor are among the factors responsible for why competent and qualified personnel is lacking at the local government councils. In view of the foregoing discussion this paper seeks to undertake a conceptual review of competent and qualified personnel and service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria

The aim of this study is to undertake a conceptual review of competent and qualified personnel and service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria; the specific objectives are to:

a. Identify the causes of lack of competent and qualified personnel in the service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria.
b. Ascertain why competent and qualified personnel do not want to stay in local the local service.

c. Suggest or recommend ways on how to encourage competent and qualified personnel to stay and serve in the local government for efficient and effective service delivery at that level in Nigeria.

From the problem drawn above there are several research question, as follows:

a. What are causes of lack of competent and qualified personnel in the service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria?

b. Why it is those competent and qualified personnel do not want to work in the local government service?

c. What are the ways that could make or encourage competent and qualified personnel to stay in the local government service for effective and efficient service delivery at that level in Nigeria?

2. Research Method

The study is a content analysis using the expository, explanatory and descriptive qualitative technique and relies on secondary sources of data collection and personal observations. Data was collected through a comprehensive review of relevant literature on competent and qualified personnel and service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria.

3. Discussion

3.1. Competent and Qualified Personnel

To be competent could mean proper or rightly relevant and indispensable or adequate ability or qualities; having the aptitude in a particular way such as having the capacity to initiate a quick response, following exposure to threat. Competence on the other hand is a combination of skills and knowledge that enables a person to make informed decisions and carry out a defined task; the ability to undertake responsibilities and perform activities recognized by standards on regular basis.

A competent person refers to a person who has in respect of the work or task to be performed, the required knowledge, training and experience and where applicable, qualifications, specific to that work or task provided where appropriate qualifications and training are registered... a person who is qualified by virtue of his or her experience and training. A competent person is a person or group of persons who have accumulated skills and knowledge of working in a particular set up and have received any additional training to increase or improve those skills. The competent person also exhibits sufficient skills related to teaching or training others about the specific training topic.

A competent person according to OSHA 1926 is one who is capable of taking cognizance of any dangerous conditions in any organizational system or any component thereof, as well as in their application related to the work environment. A person is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surrounding or working condition which are risky OR dangerous to employees and who has the approval to take prompt counteractive measures to get rid of any vulnerability or menace (Traves, Antonio & Comoes 2007).

Talking about qualified personnel, looking at it from a general perspective, qualified has a very broad definition but outside of ethical standardization, qualified means having the qualities, accomplishments, etc. that fits a person for a specific function, etc. A Qualified person is someone who is familiar with the construction and operation of the equipment and the hazards involved (OSHA, 1910). OSHA 1926 described a person with a recognized degree, certificates or professional standing or who by extensive knowledge and experience in the subject field has successfully demonstrated the ability to solve or resolve problems; one who has the capability of designing, analyzing, evaluation and specifications in the subject work, project or product as a being qualified.

In examining competence and qualification, it is pertinent to state that the person with appropriate skills and knowledge that are considered can maintain control over any situation can be considered competent and qualified. What makes the competent person unique is the level of control the person has. Thus, the competent person has the clout to initiate and take immediate measures and proffers prompt curative action to remedy any unforeseen situation; no matter what the job task involved. The personnel need appropriate level of training to perform a job task effectively and efficiently; a person cannot be considered competent or qualified without having received appropriate training that is required (OSHA, 2011).

3.2. Service Delivery

Service delivery from commercial point of view is a compound word that defines the interaction between service providers and clients where the provider offers service. It is the provision of sufficient, affordable and quality basic services, usually considered a core function of urban governments. Delivery of services like water, sanitation, waste management and housing correlates closely with health and the wellbeing of urban residents, however in Nigeria service delivery is constrained by challenges of coordination, governance, finance and capacity; governments at all levels plays important roles in service delivery by regulating, facilitating and collaborating with other stakeholders and institutions.(Lamothe, Scott, Meayoung & Richard 2008).

National governments set the policy framework, transferring resources to local governments for implementation. The primary responsibility for the provision of basic services usually rests with the local governments, even if the delivery of service is outsourced to the private sector or the NGO.
Governance at the local level covers the full range of arrangement through which governments and other stakeholders work together to install, deliver and manage services (William, 2016). The state has a vital role in delivery of a wide array of public service from justice and security to services to individual for individual citizens and private enterprises; beside the traditional public services such as health care delivery or education, there are administrative procedures such as issuance of licenses, and permissions, which are subject to regulations of administrative proceedings.

By definition service delivery is any contact with public administration during which customers, citizens, residents or enterprises seek or provide services, handle their affairs to fulfill their duties (Sigma, 2011), these services should be delivered in an effective, predictable, reliable and customer friendly manner. However, due rapid expansion of the use of information and communication technology (ICT), electronic service delivery is an effective means to reduce cost both in time and in money for both citizens and the government. Good service requires that:

1. The government understands the need to provide citizen oriented administration
2. Good administration is a policy objectives put into practice coherently through various regulatory and other mechanisms to ensure quality public service delivery.
3. Accessibility to public service is ensured to enhance public delivery by supporting the development, revision and implementation of regulations to help maintain consistent coherent administrative principles and safeguard public liability.
4. Offering of expertise in the use of quality assurance tools.
5. Provide diagnostic tools to help monitor, assess and redesign the service delivery Processes (Sigma, 2021).

3.3. Public Personnel Management at the Local Government Level in Nigeria

Personnel management is concerned with the development of individuals for achieving the goals of an organization and those of individuals; it is an integral part of local government administration to ensure smooth running of the staff in accordance with the plans and projects of the organization by providing coordination and cooperation within the local government administration system. The concept of Public Personnel Management emphasizes that persons employed in an organization are the most important resources, whose management should be just the same way as the management of financial and material resources. Armstrong (1995) said personnel management is essentially about the management of people to improve organizational effectiveness. Obisi (1996) sees Personnel Management as all the activities of an organization in terms of recruiting, training, developing, motivating and preserving its human resource.

Jucius (1973) opined that Public Personnel Management is a field of management which has to do with Planning, Organizing, and Controlling various operative functions of procuring, developing, maintaining, and utilizing labour force in such a way that:

a. The objectives for which the organization in established are attained economically
b. The Objectives of all levels of personnel are served and met at the highest possible level; and
c. The objectives of the community are duly considered and served while Adamolekun (1983), categories the common activities under personnel management into three broad groups:
   - 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 and 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 said the three broad functional categories is closely inter-related to each other. The activities under personnel utilization constitute some kind of prerequisites for activities under motivation. 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 indispensable in achieving organizational goals but most importantly is the utilization of human resource in an efficient and effective manner either in private or public sectors (Aminu 1998).

An organization does not exist in vacuity, it make use of both human and material resources to achieve its set objectives and goals. Therefore adequate utilization of the available resources leads to efficient performance (Ishola & Babatunde, 2001); suffices to say that governments tends to be labour-intensive organization; e.g. 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 but how efficient and effective
are these employees being utilized to perform these statutory functions?

Despite the critical importance of human resources, the hiring of public employees often negates the rules and regulations which tend to make the effective management to be extremely difficult especially in public sector. Public personnel management 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), while discussing personnel management 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. 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 lives of the populace; actually one area where the local government system has suffered brutal disenchantment is in the field of human resource, capacity building and staff welfare. This has led low morale in many workers resulting in low productivity, favouritism and corruption. Human Resource, capacity building and staff welfare are the basic roles of the personnel management. The critical role of personnel in the achievement of organizational goals and the realization and appreciation of the various external and internal unpredictable influences which tend to determine, order and condition personnel activities, led to the establishment of Department of Personnel Administration in the local governments. Personnel management in any viable organization (Okoli, 2000) is usually assigned specific functions (Onyishi, 2002). Personnel are people who are employed by a company or organization to perform some kind of work; according to Encyclopedia, (2009) personnel vary from unskilled laborers 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 & Nwankwo (2002) be ignored for that reason the critical processes of determining goals, making investment choices, directing work effort on a day-to-day basis, maintaining and servicing equipment are the duties of the personnel of an organization.

It therefore follows that people are the main instruments for the realization of organizational objectives. While assessing the role of personnel in the attainment of organizational goals, Ofogbru (1985) upheld that a firm can mobilize all its capital inputs and still be out of production. Ikeanyibe (2009) is of the view that personnel refers to entire staff, personnel, manpower or employees of the organization; the 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 said organization) depend largely, on how its human resources can be managed and utilized. Every manager must therefore be able to work effectively with people and be able to solve the various problems the management of people may entail.

3.4. The Nexus between Competent and Qualified Personnel and Service Delivery

As stated above, service delivery is the relationship between policy makers, service providers and the masses; it covers services and other supporting systems that are usually regarded as the responsibility of government. These services may include but not limited to primary education and basic health services, infrastructure like water supply and sanitation, environmental safety, roads and bridges and other related services that promote security of lives and properties of the local communities; e.g. justice and police (Berry, et al. 2004) In Nigeria, there were so many dissatisfaction expressed by many groups about centralization approach to provision of local services by the local governments which is typified by lack of autonomy of local governments; the operation of state local government joint account has rendered local governments as an extension of state ministries ad department and therefore their factions are dictated by state governments (Mcmill, 1977).

For local governments in Nigeria to provide efficient service delivery to their people, there is need for capacity building to enhance the competency of the local government staff to acquire the basic requisite knowledge and skills in rendering the services. Some services require specialized knowledge and skills to provide them and for such services to be delivered there is need for expertise to handle them; hence, local authorities need to build and enhance the capacity of their staff. Therefore, formal training is a necessity aimed at enhancing the competency, knowledge and skills in managing the delivery of services and resources (Isah, 2013).

It is important to note from the above assertion that there is a link between competent and qualified staff and service delivery. For example, the delivery of health related services requires competent and qualified staff to handle such cases like immunization of infants, giving oral vaccines to babies etc. Also construction related infrastructures like shopping centers, motor parks, public libraries, roads, bridges and culverts requires the services of staff trained from the works department of the local government. Hence, the nexus between competent and qualified and service delivery is that a competent person must possess both skill, knowledge and must be qualified to handle any situation related to the area of expertise (Agunyi, 2015)

3.5. Local Government

A review of the concept of local government becomes imperative before we can understand how
competent and qualified personnel and service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria could be achieved. Emezi (1984:25) visualize local government as: “Systems of administration through which governance are organized to maintain law and orders to provide some social amenities, encourage cooperation and participation of the local populace towards the improvement of their living conditions”. It provides opportunities that enable them to conduct their affairs effectively for their own general good. Agagu (1997) posited that a local government is a government operated at the grassroots level of management intended to address the peculiar needs of the people at the grassroots. Government at local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise specific functions within defined sphere of influence with full control over local affairs relating to staff, institutional and financial authority; to initiate and direct the provision of services, determine and implement projects on behalf of the State and Federal Governments in those areas through devolution of functions to the local councils and guaranteed active participation of the people where local initiation and response to local needs and conditions are maximized (FRN, 1976:1).

Appadorai (1975) and Orewa (1991) opined that local government is the “lowest component of administration that operates within a defined geographical entity with common socio-political identity. Agagu (2011) refers to it as the government operated by elected representatives charged with administration and executive responsibilities in matters pertaining to residents of a particular district or place. According to the UN office for Public Administration, it is “a political subdivision of a nation or in a federal system state, which is constituted by law to control local activities including the ability to impose taxes or to exert labour for given purposes, whose governing body was elected otherwise locally selected” quoted in Ola & Tonwe (2009). It is also viewed as a system of government whereby the state establishes local unit of government with powers and authority to make and mobilize local resources for implementation or execute decisions made by the central government (Eboh & Diejomaoh, 2010).

Local government is the third tier of government after the state and federal government established for the provision of basic needs of the people at the grassroots, which either allow the people to directly or indirectly participate in governance through their elected, appointed or nominated representatives. It is a level of government where democratic principles are taught, in other word local government is a democratic training school for political leadership with responsibility to provide quality service delivery (Laski, 1964).

In Nigeria, local administration was created, mainly for administrative convenience of the colonial masters and later for service delivery among the rural dwellers that are far from the central government. The relevance and continued existence of local government as an institution is predicated among other reasons, on the need to stimulate and promote local autonomy; enhance participatory democracy at the grassroots; promote efficient utilization of local resources; provide local services; and serve as avenue for rural socio-economic development (Ademolekun, 1983; Ola, 1984; Bello-Iman, 1996; Olowu, 2000; Abe & Omotoso, 2014).

3.6. The Scope of Service Delivery at the Local Government Level in Nigeria

All along, we have examined the concept of competent, qualified personnel and service delivery and local government from general perception, but what does public service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria entails? Local service delivery is the delivery of services at the local level and is a distinct domain of public policy. It is believed that local governments can address the needs and interests of the local population and be a prime driver of innovations in government practices at the local level; it is a key topic of discussion for academics and practitioners in the wake decentralization and deregulations that has manifested under the new public management (William, 2016).

In Nigeria, the responsibility of providing essential social services and bringing about development to the rural dwellers were the sole responsibility of the local government councils. Social services refer to services that are provided to individuals, groups or communities either by the government or by either non-governmental agencies in order to mitigate social problems and to ensure the welfare of the people individually or collectively (Nio, 2005). It is those services provided to foster integration and discourage disaffection among the members of society (Godowoli, 2005). Provision of social services in the Nigerian society was mainly to meet the societal needs which most often are varied from some ethnic groups to another and influenced by the existing social structure. Ethnic and religious heterogeneity act as a go-between the social services delivery system as the Islamic and clientele system of Hausa, the much egalitarian system of the Igbo’s and the much extended family system of the Yorubas varied (Olowu, 1980).

From the historical memory lane, the colonial experience brought along its trails, and increased rate of urbanization and industrialization, which combined to undermine the extended family system that previously ensured the provision of social services in many traditional African societies (Nwoba, 2011). The colonial social service act of 1940 was concerned with child labour (children under 14 years). The 1945 ordinance gave premium to free education service for the disabled and a disabled people register was opened in 1955. The 1942 act emphasized the establishment of boy’s club in order to prevent delinquency (Olowu, 1980).

The missionaries emphasis on education as an instrument of social change and a tool for religious conversion further led to the abandonment of the traditional value system on which the traditional social services were built (Nwoba 2011). The missionaries
were however, the initiators of the early social services delivery in Nigeria, especially in relation to healthcare and education (Olowu, 1988).

The coming of the military and the subsequent civil war in Nigeria created a new class of beggars and displaced people, interstate and intercity transport and communication brought about accelerated urban transformation, and the declaration of 1979 as the international year of the child fostered the development of social policy on social services delivery in Nigeria. The guidelines of the third National development plan in Nigeria (1979-1980) indicated five areas of federal government policy on social services, namely health, workers welfare, destitute, sport development and the promotion of cooperatives. Furthermore, the forth National Development Plan identified the problems that inhibited the recognition of social policy rationales accorded to the sector. For example, lack of clear definition and conception of the real scope and meaning of the social services, shortage of qualified personnel, instability of constitutional arrangement, lack of qualified staff and inadequate facilities for the provision of social services (Nwoba, 2015). The reason for the rapid growth of social services delivery was that increasing social services delivery is what really constitutes “development” from the people’s perspective, individual, political parties, or governments who seek popularity, political support or votes must patronize the populace through the most ambitious promise of social services provision (Nwoba, 2014). The general elections of 1979, 2003, 2007, 2011 in Nigeria were characterized by competing promises for social service provisions, which indicate the trends in Nigeria’s socio-economic status (Nwoba, 2014). Under normal circumstances, it was government’s responsibility to provide basic services to citizens, the scarce fiscal and manpower resources available to government associated with the need for cogent planning and use of available resources often leads to remarkable administrative centralization predisposed to urban centres (Okoli, 2008). The cravings of the masses that dwell in rural areas whose politics were mainly the politics of social services availability made government to devolve administrative structures by making the local institutions to serve as agents that would bring development to the localities.

The provision of essential social services such as health, education, water, roads and housing has always been the responsibility of the federal, regional or state and local governments in Nigeria. Yet Nigeria has never evolved a definite social policy like those obtainable in the most developed countries for the provision of essential social services: It is important to note that these services are not only economically unproductive activities but that their provision were most often financed from revenues obtained from the other sectors of the economy due to limited resources available to agencies provide. These services which overwhelmed the consumers in the cities with their extraordinary population growth and density, competition for financial resources allocation between the directly productive activities and these social services has become stiff (Nwoba 2014). The primary objective of the 1976 local government reform was to facilitate even development and services at the grassroots level. However the capacity and effectiveness to achieve these goals and objectives was constrained by how to differentiate those social services from other that may be regarded as such, distinguish the effect or impact of local government from that of other governmental bodies, determine the degree to which they complement or sub-vert each other,. (Abonyi; 2012) contended that the difficulty is greater not only because most of the social services that have a direct bearing on the life of communities such as health Centres, dispensaries, roads and water supply are on the concurrent list of the functions of state and local governments. Nevertheless, administrative conflicts arise due to a clash of opposing interests within the levels of government.

About power struggle between the state government and local governments, conflict arises as to which level government is responsible for the provision of a particular type of social service. Most social services that have a direct bearing on the life of communities such as health centres, dispensaries, primary and adult education, roads and water supply are on the concurrent list of functions of state and local governments. Enormous variations exist between and within states in the level to which local governments were allowed to carry out such functions, also between the needs, resources and capacity of urban and rural local governments.

In contrast the beneficiary may weigh such decision as to which level of government is best qualified and positioned to provide a particular type of social service using non-market valuation technique such as Pareto optimality, social cost verses social benefit conditions, and contingent valuation technique. Thus, the issue of using both levels of government into the provision of social services usually throws the beneficiary into a combat continuum of extremes, as none of the government can be held responsible for inadequate provision (Nwoba, 2014).

3.7. Theoretical Framework

Service delivery at the locality level takes many forms and demands a corresponding span of responses; making services accessible to the poor is integral to the effort to achieve the purpose e for the creation of local government. Basic government services allow people to be productive members of society, therefore, the provision of fundamental services like Agricultural support and irrigations, roads, health, and primary education are essential for accelerating the rate of development at the local governments (John, 2010).

In recent times, governments have more often shared the responsibility of service delivery with the local government through inter-governmental arrangement that aim to increase accountability and responsiveness to service delivery; sometimes government find it difficult to develop and implement a coherent approach to decentralizing the delivery of public services (Okoli,
They may tend to initiate decentralization through legislative procedures, but it might not unusual to reject the legislation (Onah, 2010) which could result to conflicting legislation and inconsistent implementation across sectors. Akhakpe & Kolawole (2010), argued that, where the central government is in not consistent and supportive of the legislation, the introduction of a sound local government system tend to meets with other daunting challenges.

The theoretical framework is the structure that holds or support the topic of a research study; it introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists, it consists of concepts together with their definitions and references to relevant scholarly literature about an existing theory that is used for a particular study. The theoretical framework demonstrates an understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to the topic of a research and also relate to the broader areas of knowledge being considered. Theoretical frameworks are sometimes not readily found within the literature; one must review research studies for theories and analytic models that are relevant to the research problem being investigated, selection of a theory depends on its appropriateness, ease of application, and explanatory power and ideas about how things relate to each other (Creswell, 2008).

There are many theories used to explain the concept of competent and qualified personnel and service delivery. Among the theories is the theory of expenditure limitation propounded by Aaron Wildavsky in 2003. however in this paper, the efficiency service theory is adopted; the advocates of the theory from Western Europe especially the efficiency service school of thought by Rudolf Von Gueist and George Langrod posited that the existence of local government is justified on the premise that, it is an efficient agent for providing services that are local in nature; Makenzie 1954 who is also notable promoter of the theory was of the view that the local government existed to provide services that must be judged by its success to be measured by a standard measured by the national inspectorate.

Another theorist of the efficiency model was Sharpe 1970 who argued that if local governments did not exist, something else have to be created in its place. Sharpe’s assertion show the indispensable role the local government plays at the grassroots level, he went further to observe that while the value of local government safeguard liberty of democracy recognized role of local government as an agent for delivery of services suggest no comparable interest, yet it was constantly under attack for its deficiency in its sphere of influence.

The theory is relevant because it believes that the vital function of local governments across the country through its structures of departments must interact together to keep the local government moving efficiently. Beside the interaction within the local environment, interaction with other agencies like the federal, state governments, local government service commission, the rural communities and others must be sustained for harmonious intergovernmental relations that would deliver quality services in a timely, satisfactory, honest, effective and efficient, transparent manner. Each department within the local government organizational structure must have competent and qualified staffs that have the requisite skills, knowledge and experiences in service delivery. It is important to state that the effectiveness and efficiency of service are appraised based on how successful the services are delivered by the local government through its workforce and institutions that can act to perform through actors that who must be well equipped and trained to take the demand for service delivery at the local government level (Chikwudi.(2015).

3.8. Theoretical Framework

In evaluating services delivery by local governments administration in Nigeria, Samihah & Salibu (2012) carried out a study on “fiscal planning and local government Administration in Nigeria; the quest for sustainable social services Delivery”. The study critically examined local accountability in respect to budget and budgeting system in order to improve sustainable social services delivery at the local level. They adopted both survey and explanatory technique. The findings of the paper revealed that less than five percent (<5%) of the statutory allocation to the local governments are expended on social services while more than ten percentage (>10%) is used for personnel expenditure as the cost of delivering the social services.

Prichared (2010) posited that local government is best place to engage with local communities in Nigerians to understand their needs, priorities and preferences in order to make well-informed choice about how resources should be spend in the best interest of local people in Nigeria. Okoli & Akume (2011) examined the application of intergovernmental (IGM) tools during Obasanjo Administration, (1999-1997). The work adopted a simple survey design and descriptive method of analysis. The result should that; the inability to organize at the aspect of governance has had a woeful outcome on the nation’s capacity to effectively put
together the abundant resources nature has endowed for the good of its citizenry

3.9. Theoretical Framework

The following areas are the ideal areas that local governments can reach the common man through the provision of quality service delivery especially in the rural areas.

a. Recreation and sports facilities
b. Robust economic development initiatives
c. Promotion of the culture of the local people
d. Provision of parks, landscaping and building maintenance
e. Social housing
f. Provision and safeguarding of lives and properties of the local grassroots population
g. Provision of feeder roads and water supply
h. Provision of motor parks and local transport services
i. Provision of primary health care services and local education (Prasat, 2020)

4.1 Causes of Poor Service Delivery System at the Local Government Level in Nigeria

Findings have shown that the major causes of poor service deliver in Nigeria include but not limited to the following:

1. Political manipulation for self-interest
2. Corruption.
3. Lack of accountability and transparency
4. Poor human resource policies

Absence of Qualified Personnel - The structure, environment, motivation and remuneration are poor at the local government level of administration, which tends to not making local government unattractive to qualified personnel. Recruitment of staff into local government council are done basis of political patronage and political compensation thereby sacrificing merit on the altar of politics. Oviasuyi, et.al (2010) said, “Recruitments into local government councils are often carried out, not necessarily on the possession of requisite knowledge and experience, but rather on political considerations. This perhaps could be the reason for the lack of discipline and poor attitude to work by local government employees. The lack of discipline, efficient and effectiveness of local government employees is a product of the process of their recruitment (Nwizu, 2008).

Poor Inter-Governmental Relations - Local governments have not been allowed to function as an autonomous tier of government by both federal and state governments; rather it has been treated as an appendage of the state governments. Although there were provisions in the 1999 constitution as amended on the sharing of the nation’s revenue; the amount accruing from the federation account to local government councils are not disbursed directly to the local governments but through the state governments. The state governments have persistently failed to meet the constitution provision that the state should disburse funds to their local councils. Most state governments in Nigeria paid only small fraction of the money allocated to local governments and decide which project to be execute by the local government councils.

Findings emanating from this study regarding the causes of lack of competent and qualified personnel in the service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria suggest that local government administration in Nigeria generally has continued to experience shortage of skilled, technical and professional staff like qualified engineers, medical doctors, accountants, statisticians, economists, lawyers, town planners, etc. Among the principal factors for the dismal lack include: low image of local government in the mind of professionals who feel and think that there is no job satisfaction sufficient to keep them at that low level of public service; appalling low payment scheme for the staff of the councils. This is which most often is not commensurate with minimum wage standards as local government is the least paid public service in the country with no foreseen 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 entrones 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 thereby making local governments to suffer.

Findings on why those competent and qualified personnel do not want to work in the local government service; the study reveal that local government personnel most often encounter lack of adequate incentives and motivation, low prestige as local government employees are considered as rural officials with local status and rural image. Besides, jobs are not challenging to bring out the best in the personnel. They do not enjoy equal treatment with the state civil servants, low executive capacity as they have only administrative staff and lack specialist, technicians, engineers coupled with inadequate facility for staff
training; favouritism in the appointment and promotion of staff. Onyishi (2002) blamed the problems of personnel department of the local government on over centralization, which often makes staff assessment inefficient. This is pronounced political interference from the states and the influence of ethnicity, favouritism and nepotism, irregular payment of staff salaries and total absence of fringe benefits and physical working conditions which are usually very poor are among the factors responsible for why competent and qualified personnel is lacking at the local government councils.

In order to suggest the ways that could make or encourage competent and qualified personnel to stay in the local government service for effective and efficient service delivery at that level in Nigeria, it is imperative to note that employees are better educated and their orientation and value system are no longer the same as those of the past. 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 behavior. Public personnel management have become of strategic importance to the top management because the effective use of people in organizations can provide a competitive advantage and easily recognized as the most important resources required for the production of goods and services and the key to rapid socio-economic development and efficient service delivery. According to Barney (1995), it includes 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 in any organizational management programme, development and efficient service delivery is not possible; thus, personnel management is today more frequently used to describe the handling of the people aspect of management. It is therefore important according to Ikemiyihe (2009), that from the onset there is the need to 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. Everyone possess some kind of particular knowledge and expertise, skills or capabilities that could be productive hence, organizational success depends largely on people, organizations must necessarily attract the right kind of human beings, retain and maintain them in the right frame of mind to put in their best efforts towards achieving the organizational activities. Public personnel management therefore, is a set of organizational activities directed to attracting, developing, maintaining, and effective workforce.

The importance of personnel in the attainment of organizational objectives cannot be over-emphasized (Onah, 2002) affirm 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 (Ezeani & Nwanwko, 2002).

The local government as an institution is greatly affected by lack of competent and qualified personnel, which jeopardize their objectives suggesting that personnel management in the local government lack standards ways in improving the education and training levels of employees. The findings from this study revealed that, personnel management need to ensure clear understanding on ethical, ecological, environmental and moral obligations to their employees in particular and the local government and society in general. 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) suggested that the role of personnel in the local government is indispensable, so it becomes very essential that the personnel of the local government should be judiciously managed to achieve the goals of the local government. The constrains of personnel management in the local government administration such as individual geographical and racial background, occupational, cultural, industrial differences and legal influence on employment decisions which actually became a threat to acquiring competent and qualified personnel to stay and work at the local government level. Conclusively, this paper has undertaken a conceptual review of competent and qualified personnel in relation to service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria. The paper attempted to conceptualize what and who could be
described as competent and qualified personnel? What are service delivery and the concept of local government as a tier of government at the lower level of governmental administration? Other areas examined include the nexus between competent, qualified personnel and service delivery; the scope of service delivery at the local government level, a theoretical framework and a brief empirical review of service delivery.

While the method of obtaining data for this write was the secondary sources based on what others have written about the topic of discussion. Findings emanating from the discourse suggest that service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria has not been palatable, hence there was dismal performance in that respect; the reasons adduced for the colossal inadequacies in service delivery at the local government level in Nigeria hinges poor payment system. This is further compounded by debased occupational integrity corruption, lack of accountability and transparency, etc.; This is to say that service delivery in the local governments in Nigeria suffered serious setback or neglect because of institutional weakness of which lack of competent and qualified personnel is a major precursor.

4. Conclusion

After all that have been said from the foregoing discussion, in operating 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 such that where the labor structure is well organized and motivated, the local government can successfully fulfill all its numerous responsibilities.

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. Good organizational structure alone does not yield optimum performance and increased efficiency until there is well-managed competent and qualified personnel. They are therefore, a significant component needed in the attainment of organizational goals because organizational activities are evolved and executed by the workers in that institution, as plants, offices, computers, automated equipment and all else that organizations uses remained unused until human effort are involved.

This paper makes the following recommendations.

a. Though the local government could be described as the lowest level of governance, since it is a tier of government, personnel working in the local government should be paid and remunerated just like other civil servant in the country.

b. There must a deliberate comprehensive policy on service delivery for local government personnel, especially regular training, workshops, seminars that would enhance capacity building to enable them deliver qualitative and efficient services to their people.

c. Personnel working in the local governments should be given their due respect both in status and profession and should be encouraged to serve in the local government through motivation by giving them good condition of service.

References


