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Assessing capacity building efforts of local government administrators in Nigeria: The case of Mubi-North local government, Adamawa state

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Abstract

It is standard in the literature on the human resource (or personnel) that building capacity of workers through training and development is key to the Improvement of the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Public Service. This paper examines the capacity building efforts of local government administrators in Mubi-North local government area of Adamawa State. Using data obtained through questionnaire and interview and a variety of descriptive techniques we find that workers in the local government area do not seem to be adequately trained due to multitudes of intervening variables of politicking. Although, those who were able to benefit from such training appear to gain considerable skills that are manifested in terms of increased competence and efficiency in their service delivery. The research work, however, recommends that the activities of those who were in charge of staff training should uphold principles of the rule of law.

Keywords: Capacity building, civil service, Mubi-North

1. Introduction

It is a commonly held view that Nigeria needs to increase work-related training to achieve lasting economic progress and address the existing skills gap. Notwithstanding the policy interest and the vast economics literature on human capital development, there is a paucity of research that examines the impact of public sector-related training on direct measures of workers' productivity. The primary contribution of this study is to provide such evidence for Mubi North local government Area (LGA). The public service in Nigeria is perceived as the protector of public interest and remains an executive agency of government. Although civil service in the country is expected to earn public confidence, there have been complaints about the poor productivity of civil servants, partly due to lack of adequate skill to discharge their duties efficiently. This is in addition to the challenges of corruption (Onah & Oguonu, 2010) [37].

To tackle this problem, the government introduces some reforms such as, for example, service compact with all Nigerians (SERVICOM), in 2004 to increase and ensure productivity and service delivery in the public service. It is also in the realization of the significance of capacity building of staff that the Federal Government promulgated the Industry Training Fund Decree. The establishment of SERVICOM is equally in consonance with public services in local government, which has sought to use training to ensure capacity building as one of the vehicles for making their staff professionally and operationally effective as well as more result-oriented. It can also be used as a criterion for assessing the suitability of existing staff for promotion. Indeed, realizing the significance of Human Resources Development (HRD). The International Labour Office (2008) affirmed that development and training improve trainees' efficiency, income-earning capacity and consequently standard of living. Moreover, training widens career choices and opportunities. Stahl (2006) [44], for example, opined that training helps to prepare employees for certain jobs that are unique to the public sector. Mubi-North local government requires professionals who possess the requisite capacity, skills, and knowledge to be productive. Training should, therefore, be part of comprehensive planning programs. Notwithstanding the recognized importance of capacity building by management experts and government as expressed in white papers on various reforms in Nigeria, little is known about its impact on local

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government staff. It is in this backdrop that this work examines the impact of capacity building on productivity in Nigerian Public service with particular attention to Mubi-North local government, Adamawa State.

The challenge of capacity building through training for developing nations is, however, daunting. This is in consideration of how far ahead of the rest of the world is and the enormous efforts and resources required of them to catch up. Nigeria's high population, vast socio-cultural diversity, and yet-to-mature political culture make the challenge even more critical. In spite of these challenges, there is cause for great optimism because the nation has more than enough human capital potentials to surmount the challenge if harnessed, activated and effectively channeled. This research deals with the capacity building and development of employees in Mubi-North local government is intended to find out the efficiency and effectiveness of capacity building program. Without doubt, more effort to improve capacity building or training will help to ensure that the staff of Mubi-North local government possesses the knowledge and skills they need to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively, take on new responsibilities and adapt to changing conditions for development, growth, prosperity, and stability at the grassroots of the nation-state system. The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature, section 3 describes the data and methodology; section 4 presents and discusses the results. Section 5 concludes while section 6 recommends.

2. Literature Review

Drawing from Scientific Management Theory which advocated for the use of a scientific method to define the 'one best way' for a job to be done. Frederick Winslow Taylor, who is, popularly identified as the father of Scientific Management theory among other contributors was also a strong advocate of worker development through scientific methods for the rule of thumb methods. The scientific method as he practiced it, focused on careful observation, experimentation, and measurement, all intended to find the best way of doing a task.

Relating to Taylor's argument, Olu and Erero (2008) ^[35], pointed to the need for building the capacity of institutions in the Nigerian public service, which according to them can be traced back to 1896 when some educated persons in Lagos proposed the establishment of a Training College and Industrial Institute. Though the idea was supported by the British government, it was not ready to make a financial commitment. The lack of financial commitment and the inability of the initiators to raise the required funds led to the demise of the capacity building proposal. Later, more concrete moves were made to establish institutions of learning in the country to address the acute shortage of manpower observed by the government. The post-independence efforts to develop a training system for the Nigerian local government staff can be traced to Professor C.P. Wolle's survey of 1967 on the Training Needs of the Nigerian local government staff (Erero & Ayeni, 2004). The federal government commissioned the then institute of Administration, University of Ife but now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife to survey the training needs of the staff. The study was conducted and a report was submitted. The federal government came out with a White Paper on the Report in April 1969. The document titled: "statement of Federal Government Policy on Staff Training

on Nigerian local government system" has key elements that include the establishment of the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and encouragement of every large department to establish a capacity-building unit commensurate with its size and functions. Others include the establishment of a standing committee on staff development and the reorganization on the federal ministry establishment to give greater priority to training.

Currently, there are numerous Universities, Colleges of Health Technology and Polytechnics that serves as a training and development centers for manpower training in the local government system. Most of these institutions have designed or modified their programs to accommodate the training needs of the staff. According to Olu and Erero (2008) ^[35], the local government system is strongly advised to approach the designated institutions, particularly those of technology, with specific requests to design courses that are of special relevance to building their capacity and a necessity for service and productivity. In recognition of this, the Federal government established the Department of Local Government Studies in Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, and University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) to cater for the training of the ever-increasing personnel of the local government councils in their respective catchment areas. Aforementioned universities are known for training various categories of public servants across the country. However, Mubi-North local government staff is hardly known to benefit from such gesture hence the focus of this research work.

According to Akpan (2002) ^[3], an untrained individual (employee) in the modern world is a threat to the society as s/he is likely to know only the laws of things with little or no idea of (their) why. As a result, if, for, instance, there is any trouble or breakdown in a machine or a mistake in a ledger, all that can be done is to fumble and punch up trouble anyhow, leading to a more serious breakdown or greater confusion. There is no place for an untrained worker or even an intelligent amateur in the contemporary days of specialized work. The principal intention of capacity building, according to Akpan (2002) ^[3] is to equip people with the knowledge required to qualify them for a particular position of employment or to improve their skills and efficiency in the position they already hold. Capacity building of an employee gives him confidence and a sense of belonging to work effectively. In a similar view, Onah (2008) ^[36] stated that capacity building enhances productivity and that the center to all motivational strategies is manpower training. Its importance in the development of man, not a machine is vital in the overall capabilities and productivity of an organization. Training aiming to improve worker productivity, therefore, has become more obvious given the growing complexity of the work environment, the rapid change in local government administration, which further necessitates the need for capacity building of staff to meet up with the changing environment.

Scholars and policymakers now recognize the fact that it is essential that capacity building does not only facilitate the development of the workers but also their productive capacity. For example, Griffin (2006), Ajibade (2003), Adeniyi (1999) and Arikewuyo (2001) suggest that capacity building is required because it enables workers to acquire more and new knowledge and develop further the skills and techniques to function effectively. Capacity building,

however, is not coaxing or persuading people to do what is wanted, but rather a process of creating organizational conditions that will cause personnel to strive for better performance. Emphasising on this line of argument, Akintayo (1999), Oguntimehin (2001), and Graig (2001), among others, pointed out that increase productivity can improve the quality of work, improves skills, knowledge, understanding, and attitude, enhance the use of tools and machinery, reduces waste, accidents, turnover, lateness, absenteeism, and other overhead costs, eliminates obsolescence in skills, technologies, methods, products, capital management etcetera. The importance of qualified manpower in the social, political and economic development of any nation can therefore, hardly be overstated. According to Nwachukwu (1999, pp. 128) ^[27], “No nation is known to have attained sustained high level of economic growth and development without an ample supply of qualified manpower. Of all the factors that unlock the factors of economic growth and development, a country’s human resources are most vital for without it, all the other factors have to wait”. Changes in the quality of workforce account for the rapid economic development that has taken place in the advanced countries than any other factor. Kuzet (2004) observed that the major capital stock of an industrially advanced country is not its physical equipment, it is the body of knowledge amassed from tested findings and discoveries of empirical science and the capacity and training of its population to use this knowledge. The essence of any capacity building program according to Nwachukwu (1999) ^[27] is to improve the welfare of workers by maximizing their talents and the quality of their employment opportunity and in so doing, add to the country’s economic vitality. Thus, all capacity building programs are aimed at human resources development and utilization. Professor Harbison saw it as the process of increasing the knowledge, the skills and the capacities of all the people in a society. In economic terms, he states that it is the accumulation of human capital and its effective investment in the development of an economy. Countries such as Japan, Korea, West Germany, Italy, and so on are known to have attained high levels of development despite the absence of mineral wealth of any significance. Thus, the capacity building program of any nation is intricately interwoven with her economic and social development (Akintayo, 1999).

The Nigerian government is cognizant of this fact and has overtly encouraged the establishment of many institutions and organizations for the training and development of her manpower. Various universities have been founded and many more are planned to be established in the future. Many colleges of technology have been established for the training of intermediate level manpower in the local government system. According to Olu and Erero (2008) ^[35], the government has set up many institutions to help in management education in the country. The National Manpower Board is responsible for the periodic appraisal of requirements for manpower in all occupations and development of measures for in-service training of employee manpower both in public and private sectors. The Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) was established in 1972 to provide diverse capacity building facilities for senior managers of the economy. The Nigerian Institute of Management established 1961, the Centre for Management Development (CMD) established in 1973, has also been established for manpower development, training,

and coordination. The Industrial Training Fund (ITF) was also established in 1971 to promote and encourage the acquisition of skills in Industry and Commerce to generate a pool of indigenous trained manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the economy. The Nigerian government has also entered into bilateral agreements with some foreign countries for the training of Nigerians in practical skills, (Nwachukwu, 1999) ^[27]. Each year, many scholarships are offered to deserving Nigeria’s to study in foreign countries. All these notwithstanding, the manpower problems of this country are far from being contained.

Critically, the major flaw of the concept of capacity building through staff training given by the scholars in this study is that they are very narrowly conceived, and therefore, reflect only on the acquisition of skills, knowledgeability, and experience to improve present and future performance in order to fit into specific job and pattern, (Ezeani, 2006; Hoyle, 2003; Onah, 2008; Boydell, 2001) ^[36, 13, 19, 7]. The concepts did not include the evaluation of the effect of capacity building programs on the employee which is a process that consummates it. Without such, capacity building is absurd. The capacity building, therefore, is an organizational effort aimed at helping an employee to acquire basic knowledge required and the evaluation of those skills, knowledge, ability, and experience for the efficient execution of the functions for which he is hired. Besides, it is a systematic and intentional process of positively altering and evaluating behaviors of organizational members in a direction which contribute to overall organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, the scholars are liberal to address the effect of the basis of the economic system on capacity building. Organizations undergoing capacity building needs to be economically balanced to be able to meet up with financial requirements. In consequence of not addressing the economic system, many organizations have failed in that their economic needs were not identified and provided for as an indispensable part of management function.

The scholars did not cover the local environment that is similar to the study area, which is quite different from the Western environment. The Western environment is characterized by Max Weber’s bureaucracy where nepotism, corruption, favoritism, and sectionalism are relatively minimal compared to the local government environment. As a result of these factors, capacity building can be more effective in the Western environment than in the local government environment. To date, the following behaviors are still observable in the Nigerian local government areas. First, the management’s selfish interest still overrides the workers’ welfare in the local government system. Second, the employees see the public service as “no man’s job” and did not take the work and staff development serious due to selfish politicking in the local government system. Finally, the scholars did not examine the capitalist nature of the state that exists in Nigeria which is exploitative, suppressive and dominative. The above factors may likely affect the effective capacity building efforts of Nigerian Public Service, particularly at the local government level.

3. Methodology

We obtained our sampling frame from the personnel department of Mubi-North local government secretariat, which includes 240 staff from various departments of the local government secretariat, which include administration department, finance, and supplies department, works

department etcetera with population from 600. We adopted stratified simple random sampling technique to draw the number of staff for questionnaire distribution. The use of this technique was to enable each member of staff to have an equal chance of selection.

4. Results and Discussions

We report figures for all staff as obtained from the personnel department of the LGA. We find the Education department have higher percentages while Agric and Vet with the lowest percentage (Table 1). The sample respondents were chosen from the categories of the department to enable us to have a true representation of personnel in Mubi-North local government. It was random because respondents were randomly selected within the various department of the local government (Table 2).

Table 1: Total number of staff in Mubi-North Local Government

Department	Number	Percentage (%)
Personnel department	104	17.2
Finance department	95	15.4
Works department	102	17
Health department	112	18.4
Education department	105	17.5
Agric/Vet. department	87	14.5
Total	600	100

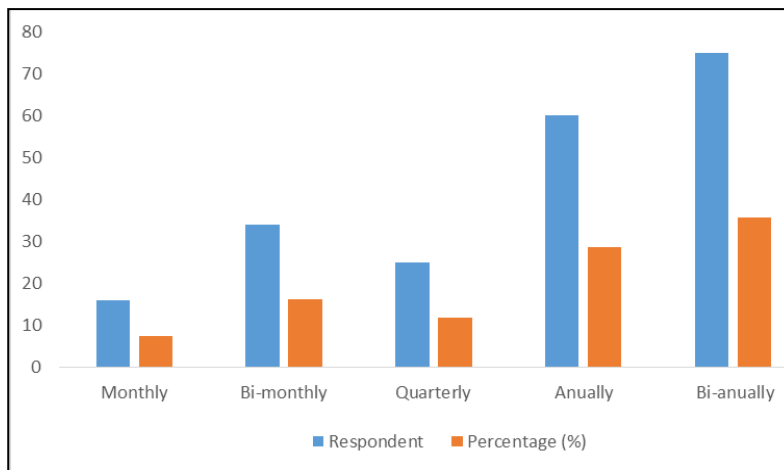
Source: Personnel Department, Mubi-North local government, 2019

Table 2: Total number of respondents in Mubi-North Local Government

Department	Number
Personnel department	34
Finance department	36
Works department	45
Health department	45
Education department	46
Agric/Vet department	24
Total	240

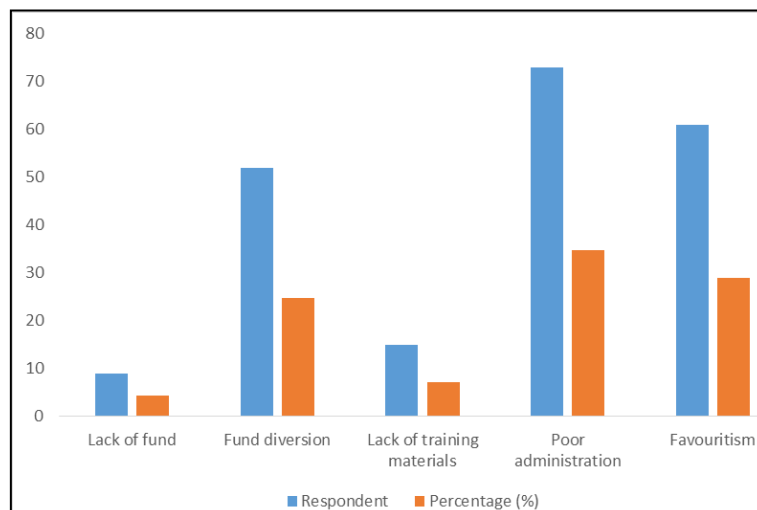
Source: Field work, 2019

To assess the possible ways through which could be trained, the following question was asked: “how the staff of Mubi-North local government improve their capabilities through training”. Figure 1 represents responses to such a question. The figure shows that out of 240 respondents that represent, 16 of them representing 7.6% agreed that on-the-job training can be used to increase their working capabilities, 34 respondents which represent 16.2% agreed with job rotation, 25 respondents (11.9%) agreed with lectures and seminars, 60 respondents which represent 28.6% agreed with induction training while 75 respondents (35.7%) strongly agreed with special courses.



Source: Field work, 2019

Fig 1: Possible ways to trained the staff Mubi-North local government Area

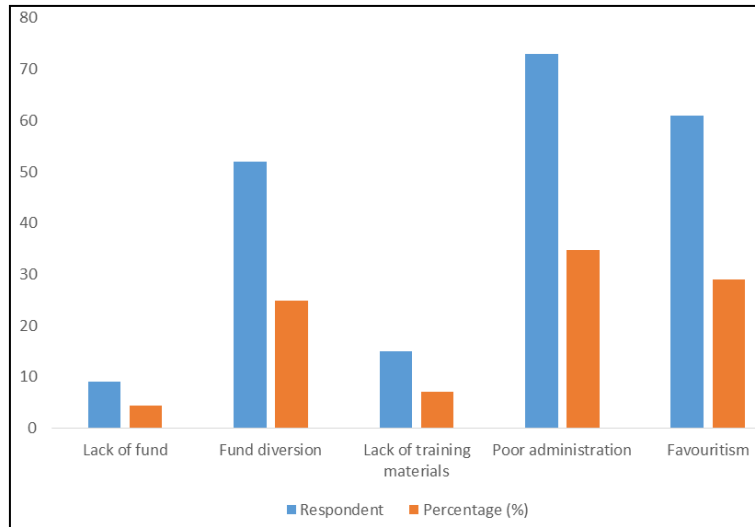


Source: Field work, 2019

Fig 2: Frequency and how capacity building programmes are carried out in Mubi-North LGA

Figure 2 attempted to answer the question of how often are capacity-building programs observed in Mubi-North local government? According the fact gathered, out of 240 respondents that represent, 16 respondents which represent 7.6% indicted that capacity building programs are observed monthly in Mubi-North local government, 34 respondents which represent 16.2% agreed with bi-monthly, 25 respondents which represent 11.9% agreed with quarterly, 60 respondents which represent 28.6% agreed with annually, while 75 respondents representing 35.7% strongly

agreed with bi-annually. The implication from the above results shows that Mubi-North local government workers do not seem to be adequately trained since the majority of them only observed capacity building programs in the LGA bi-annually. However, findings from interviews conducting during the study indicate that the management often organizes training like in-service training, seminars, and workshops for its employee. But, in most cases, only a few of the employees, mostly loyalist of the top administrators of the local government (LG) benefits from them.



Source: Field work, 2019

Fig 3: Frequency distribution of sampled respondents regarding problems encountered relating the conduct of capacity building in Mubi-North LGA

Figure 3 shows that out of 240 respondents that represent, 9 of them (representing 4.3%) agreed that one of the problems encountered by Mubi-North local government in conducting capacity building is lack of funding, 52 respondents which represent 24.8% agreed that even though there is funding, it's usually diverted to solve personal problems, 15 respondents which represent 7.1% agreed that they lack training materials, 73 respondents which represent 34.8% responded that poor management of Mubi-North local government is another major problem. While 61 respondents which represent 29% strongly agreed that favoritism during the selection of participants in the capacity building program is another major problem, which results to selecting the same set of participants almost all the time. The implication from the above result shows that the administrations of Mubi-North local government need to channel all financial resources designated for training but also to select participants based on merit rather than favoritism.

5. Conclusion

The findings below are based on fact gathered through interview, primary and secondary sources of data. The major findings of this study were generated from an effort to answer the research questions, these include an interview with the top management staff and the senior officers which revealed that the inability of the management to give adequate attention to the training of their workforce was caused by lack of fund faced by the system. This was as a result of small financial allocation to the system by the federal government because of an economic meltdown over the past 4 years. The question of whether the local

government spends all the money approved by the federal government for its staff training received the following reply; "Approval is not synonymous with the actual cash allocation. The government can approve a certain amount to be spent on a particular sub-head but it does not follow that all the approved amount will be released or made available". The effort to get the actual amount released for staff training program proved abortive. This would have helped to determine what percentage that went into training within the period under-study, 2008- 2018. The staff of the accounting department contacted could not open up on the ground that the information is a confidential one. In another interview with the Head of Personnel Management (HPM) on the performance of the staff who had undergone training shows there has been a remarkable improvement on trained staff when compared with those that have not undergone the training at all. He posited that the difference is clear among the staff.

Other major findings in the study confirm low productivity because of inadequate capacity building of staff and non-integration of trained staff due to politicking in Mubi-North local government reveals the following. First, the majority of the workforce in Mubi-North local government are below 40 years and dominantly with WASC/GCE and ND/NCE certificates offices, this indicates the need for staff training to enhance their productivity. Second, most workers do not experience "job satisfaction" but rather "job dissatisfaction" because of inadequate training given to them by the authority. Third, a number of the staff of the LG have not benefited from any government training program because of political manipulation. Fourth, the study also finds that management of Mubi-North L.G sees training as an extra

burden which can be undertaken if there are sufficient funds. Fifth, the management of Mubi-North was not interested in training their workforce because of greed, jealousy and envy thereby frustrating subordinate promotion, since knowledge is power. Sixth, the major factor that hinders capacity building in Mubi-North local government was based on 'sectionalism' by the management who seems to be ignorant of the principles of training in the local government system. Seventh, the findings also indicate that the selection of staff for training in Mubi-North local government is based on management interest and biases. Eighth, the management disposition towards training its workforce is not encouraging.

6. Recommendations

The study raised pertinent policy issues, which should be given priority attention to, for the capacity of local government staff to increase. However, in drawing up these policy issues, we are guided by the fact that Government policies and strategies which supports capacity building, public service growth and competitiveness should be encouraged. The sum allocated to the education sector has always fallen short of the UNESCO recommendation of 26%, if the government has a genuine interest in developing capacity-building programs, the government must make a deliberate effort to continually increase budgetary allocation to educational training to meet this recommendation. Head of public service should formulate policy programs where government agencies and parastatals forward their annual reports on training programs undertaken, as well as, proposals for the in-coming year(s). Education and training programmes to build up the base for human capital development and resources for long term investments: Government agencies and private sectors through their Human Resource department should map-out long term education and training programs that are in line with the objectives of the organization and those that match employee's abilities and skills that will enhance effective productivity. Also, the government should make it compulsory for public servants to undergo relevant training programs, especially in the senior cadre before being promoted to the next level.

Fiscal policies and performance level indicator should be incorporated to meet the international standard: Public service should have an appraisal form to determine the performance level of staff and to also know their strength and weakness. This will allow the management to develop a capacity building plan to improve the performance of staff. Government policies have been found to act as catalysts in the adoption of information and communication technology in Nigeria: Policies that are targeted towards the capacity building of staff should be developed and adopted from other countries. It will ensure learning from best world practices. Finally, the management of Mubi-North local government should be fair, just and equitable and ensure that all staff is allowed to undergo training at least 4 times in a year.

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