

Full Length Research Paper

Problems of recruitment in civil service: A case of the Nigerian civil service

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This study probed to identify the problems of recruitment in Nigerian federal civil service and to determine the extent of the utilization of job description and job specification in the recruitment process. Stratified random sampling method was used to draw a sample of 190 from five federal ministries grouped into the four major categories of grade levels. Descriptive survey design was employed and descriptive statistics used for the analysis. The survey identified factors such as increasing pressures for employment, utilization of informal sources of recruitment, long military era, federal character principle, lack of independence of the service commission and delegation of recruitment functions as the prevalent problems affecting recruitment in Nigerian federal civil service. As results of these problems, job description and standard personnel requirements were not adequately used in the recruitment process, especially at the lowest category of grade levels. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the federal government should promulgate laws that will protect employees in the private sector in order to reduce consistent pressures for employment in the public sector. Subjective and informal sources of recruitment should be de-emphasized, and instead sources from educational institutions and professional organizations should be encouraged. The number of federal civil service commissioners should be increased with the establishment of zonal and state offices. It was also recommended that the remuneration of the federal civil servants should be increased. Federal civil service should utilize job description when embarking on actual recruitment exercise and personnel requirements should be developed to match position classification in the service. Finally, a proposal of further research agenda was made on the re-examination of the reliability and validity of employee selection instruments in the civil service.

Key words: Civil service, recruitment.

INTRODUCTION

The efficiency and effectiveness of any work place (whether the private or the public sector) largely depend on the caliber of the workforce. The availability of a competent and effective labor force does not just happen by chance but through an articulated recruitment exercise (Peretomode and Peretomode 2001). Recruitment is a set of activities used to obtain a sufficient number of the right people at the right time from the right places (Nickels et al., 1999), and its purpose is to select those who best meet the needs of the work place, and to develop and maintain a qualified and adequate workforce through which an organization can fulfill its human resource plan. A recruitment process begins by specifying human resource requirements (numbers, skills mix, levels, time frame), which are the typical result of job analysis and human resource planning activities (Cascio, 1986). Information from job analysis and human resource

planning activities activates the next phase in the recruitment process, namely, attracting potentially qualified candidates to apply for vacant positions in an organization. This can be done through recruitment within the organization (internal sources), and or recruitment outside the organization (external sources). After this phase, the organization should devise selection tools to help sort out the relative qualifications of the job applicants and appraise their potentials for being good performers in a particular job (Jones et al., 2000). Those tools include applications and resumes, interviews, reference checks, tests (Snell, 1999). The essence of these recruitment activities is for the organization to appoint the best applicant with the right ability, temperament and willingness (Mullins, 1996).

Recruitment of personnel for the civil service is one of the crucial tasks of modern government and lies in the

heart of the problem of personnel administration (Basu, 1994) . The state and federal civil service commissions serve as employment agents for the civil services in Nigeria and they do the recruitment without a fee (Nwachukwu, 2000). Specifically, the authority for recruitment into the Nigerian federal civil service is the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC). However, the commission delegates powers to federal ministries and extra-ministerial departments to recruit junior staff to posts graded GL 01–06 (Al-Gazali, 2006).

The Nigerian federal civil service system emphasizes uniformity, standardization, and transparency (Babaru, 2003) in recruiting competent applicants. Despite these emphases, it is perceived that the recruitment process lacks equity and transparency, making it difficult if not impossible to recruit the best qualified applicants for available jobs in the service. The perceived problems of recruitment in Nigerian federal civil service could be attributed to factors such as inadequate and invalid standards for evaluating job candidates (as a result of absence of job analysis), sources of locating the potential applicants, transparency and independence of the recruiting authority, and the administrative machinery for determination of qualifications. Environmental influences such as technological, social, political and economic demands also cause problems that affect recruitment into the federal civil service. The recruitment process requires monitoring these problems and its impact on the recruitment exercise in order to attract broad range of potential applicants, and screen out unsuitable applicants.

This study, therefore, aims to identify the prevalent problems affecting recruitment in Nigerian federal civil service and to determine the extent of the application of job description and job specification in the recruitment process.

To investigate the problems of recruitment in Nigerian federal civil service, the following questions serve as a guide to the survey in the quest for answers to the problems being investigated. 1. What are the problems affecting recruitment in Nigerian federal civil service? 2. What are the causes of these problems? 3. What are the sources (internal and external) of recruitment used by Nigerian federal civil servants? 4. Does Nigerian federal civil service employ job description to complement the recruitment process? 5. Does Nigerian federal civil service utilize job specification in the recruitment process?

The rationale behind this study is to create a solid basis for Nigerian federal civil service to make standard and objective recruitment decisions by appointing the right applicants into the service and accurately matching them with position classification. A good recruitment exercise enhances productivity. It also reduces cost as it reduces labor turnover rate and employee dissatisfaction (Nwachukwu, 2000).

The findings and recommendations of this study will help Nigerian federal civil service commission and the recruiting authorities of other nations especially developing

countries to select civil servants who best meet the needs of the workplace. The study will be significant to business practitioners as it relates to management of people because without managers and employees, there would be no business (Nickels et al., 1999) . Academicians and students especially those in the field of public human resource management will benefit from this study since it will serve as an additional source of information in that discipline. The study will also be significant to the general public because it covers issues on public administration which is important to every citizen of a nation as it concerns the condition of a society.

Relevant literature

There are a number of resources that contribute towards the success of any organization, such as manpower, money, machine, material, information, idea, and other inputs. While these resources are important, the human factor is the most significant one because it is the people who have to coordinate and use all other resources (Chandan, 1987). Recruitment is integral part of human resource, and involves the process of identifying and attracting or encouraging potential applicants with needed skills to fill vacant positions in an organization (Peretomode and Peretomode 2001), matching them with specific and suitable jobs, and assigning them to these jobs (Chandan, 1987). Job analysis, which is the study of what is to be done, where, how, why, and by whom in current and predicted job, begins the recruitment process (McCormick, 1976). This analysis involves compiling a detailed description of tasks, determining the relationship of the job to technology and to other jobs and examining the knowledge, qualifications or employment standards and requirements (Jain and Saakshi, 2005) . A Job analysis does two things (Clifford, 1994). First, it tells the recruiter about the job itself by specifying the essential tasks, duties, and responsibilities involved in performing the job. This is called job description (Ash, 1988). Second, it describes the skills, knowledge, abilities and other personal characteristics needed to perform the job. This is called job specification (Levine, 1983). Job analysis provides essential information for recruitment (Brannick et al., 1992), and a thorough job analysis helps in the placement decision of an organization by specifying the requirements of a job and the abilities of the person to meet these requirements so that specific jobs are assigned to those people who will be most productive.

After the job analysis process, the recruiter sources potential applicants by creating awareness for the existence of vacancies in order to attract the right kind of people to be recruited from the right places and time.

There are basically two sources of recruitment where applicants can be drawn in any organization. These sources are classified as either internal or external. To what extent these sources will be used depends upon the specific environment of organization as well as its philosophy of operations. When using internal sources of recruitment

ment, the organization turns to existing employees to fill open positions. The employees recruited internally are either seeking lateral moves (job changes that entail no major changes in responsibility or authority levels like transfers), or promotions (Jones et al., 2000). Internal sources of recruitment are not expensive and are less time consuming, compared to external sources. Another merit of internal sourcing is that the employees are already familiar with the system, and the organization also has information about their skills, abilities and actual behavior on the job. Internal sourcing boosts morale and motivation of employees.

Despite the internal sources of recruitment, many organizations still rely on external sources. Reasons may be that there is limited pool of candidates internally and the system may not have suitable internal candidates. When recruitment is conducted externally, the organization looks outside for potential applicants. External recruitment is likely to be used especially for lower entry jobs in periods of expansion, and for positions whose specific requirements cannot be met by present employees within the organization. There are multiple means through which an organization can recruit externally, such as advertisements in electronic (including internet) and print media, private and public employment agencies (Prasad, 1979), work-ins by job hunters (Jones et al., 2000), employee referrals (Halcrow, 1988), academic institutions (Lindquist and Endicott, 1986), professional associations, unions (Terpstra 1996) and informal networks (Jones et al 2000). External sourcing has both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages include having access to a potentially large applicant pool, being able to attract people to an organization who have the skills, knowledge, and abilities the organization needs to achieve its goals, and, being able to bring in newcomers who may contribute fresh ideas to solving problems and who may be up-to-date on the latest technology. The disadvantages include high costs of recruitment and training, lack of knowledge about the inner workings of the organization, and uncertainty about the performance of the potential employees.

Recruiting qualified and competent workers may be very difficult for some organizations because of some environmental constraints. Some organizations have unattractive workplaces, have policies that demand promotions from within, operate under union regulations, or offer low wages, which makes recruitment exercise and keeping employees difficult (Nickels et al., 1999). However, the degree of complexity of recruitment is minimized by formulation of sound human resource policies after careful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the environment.

Civil service recruitment is the process through which suitable candidates are induced to compete for appointments into the civil service. The civil service is a professional body of officials, permanent, paid and skilled (Finer, 1949). It is a system that offers equal opportunities to all citizens to enter the government service, equal

pay to all employees doing work requiring the same degree of intelligence and capacity, equal opportunities for advancement, equal favorable conditions and equal participation in retirement allowances and makes equal demands upon the employees (Willoughby, 1964). The major requirements of the civil service are that it should be impartially selected, administratively competent, politically neutral and imbued with the spirit of service to the community (Gladden, 1948). The civil service is indispensable to the functioning of the modern state (Basu, 1994), that is why the condition of a society is largely determined by the performance of the public service (Phillips, 1990). The civil service is the major facilitators for implementation of the will of the state as expressed through public policy. The civil servant is a person who is employed into the civil service. He should not be a political or judicial office holder and his remuneration should be solely paid out of government funds.

Due to the increasing significance and importance of the civil service in modern society and the assumption of responsibility by the government for the performance of various social and economic functions, it has become necessary to recruit competent applicants into the service. The recruitment process should attract the best available talents to the civil service. The key to most recruitment process in the civil service is the notion of position classification, which is arrangement of jobs on the basis of duties and responsibilities and the skills required to perform them (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2006). This classification is derived from a thorough job analysis. The use of position classification system is important in the civil service recruitment process because it maintains an objective inventory that connects positions to the tasks and skills required to fill them. Once it has objective statements about positions, a civil service is able to source potential applicants by creating awareness of the existence of vacancies.

The recruitment process into the civil service involves a number of problems because of diversification of the civil service functions and the growth of democratic and egalitarian principles. Some of these arise from the location of the recruiting authority, methods or sources of recruitment, qualifications of the employees and methods of determining qualifications (Basu, 1994). Other problems include unavailability of skills needed (Manchester, 1998), emphasis on corporate culture, and unattractive work places (Nickel et al., 1999). These and other problems arising from the environment are monitored and appropriate corrective measures taken in order to ensure the ability to recruit the right type of persons for the right jobs based on the principles of merit and equal opportunity for all.

The Nigerian federal civil service context

Prior to 1988 reforms, the civil service in Nigeria was organized strictly according to British traditions (Ademolele-

(Ademolekun and Gboyega, 1979), apolitical, bureaucratic and conservative, which made the structure an ossified system. The roots of the Nigerian civil service can be traced to the colonial civil service established by the British to govern Nigeria, as a colonial territory (Olowu et al., 1997), in 1861. However, it was not until 1914 (amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorate) that there was a unified governmental structure in Nigeria and that year marked the beginning of a Nigerian civil service (Olowu et al., 1997). The system remained in place after independence in 1960. Up to 1988, there were three major categories in the civil service within the framework of 17 point Unified Grading and Salary Structure (UGSS) that was adopted in 1975. Olowu et al. (1997) identified the grade levels structures as junior staff (01 - 06), senior staff (07 - 12) and management staff (13 - 17), and in 1988, as part of the reform, a fourth tier structure was adopted by creating a directorate cadre (15 - 17) of the management cadre. The later now include officers on posts graded GL 13 - 14.

The Nigerian civil service has been undergoing gradual and systematic reforms and restructuring since May 29, 1999 after decades of military era (Babaru, 2003). The military ruled Nigeria between 1966 and 1979; and between 1984 and 1999. As part of the reforms, section 153(1)d of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria has vested in the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC) the powers to appoint persons to offices in the federal civil service and to dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding such offices. The commission comprises a chairman and fifteen commissioners who are appointed by the president subject to senate approval. Appointments into the federal civil service are done through recruitment, transfer and secondment (Babaru, 2003). Recruitment is the filling of vacancies by appointment of persons not already in the federal civil service (FRN, 2000: Rule 0228), transfer is permanent release of an officer from one schedule service to another or within the same service, while secondment refers to the temporary release of an officer to the service of another government agency or international organization of which Nigeria is a member for a specified period (FRN, 1998:). Section 170 of 1999 constitution empowers the commission to delegate any of its powers and functions in order to guard against possible delays and allow for the devolution of administrative powers in view of the crucial role the commission is expected to play as a regulatory authority of the federal civil service. Though the commission delegates powers to ministries and extra-ministerial departments to recruit junior staff to posts graded GL 01 - 06, it has the reserved right to exclusively appoint the entry grades of senior staff on GL 07 - 10. Appointments to posts graded GL 12 - 14 are done directly by the commission after due advertisement as the need arises and appointment of directorate staff, which is GL 15 - 17 is made by the commission in consultation with the head of the federal civil service and in response

to advertised vacancies (FRN, 2000: Rule 12102).

In Nigerian federal civil parlance, appointment is often synonymous with recruitment (Al-Gazali, 2006). Recruitment in the Nigerian federal civil service is determined by three major factors (Babaru, 2003). The first is the availability of vacancies declared by the ministries and extra-ministerial departments and forwarded to the commission through the office of the head of civil service of the federation. Awareness for such vacancies are publicized through advertisements and notices. The second factor is the qualifications of the potential applicants. The specific qualifications and skills required for various categories are presented in schemes of service (2000). The third factor is the principle of federal character. That is quota allocated in the recruitment exercise to states to ensure that the federal civil service reflects 'Federal Character.' Federal character principle is a constitutional matter and an important factor that determine appointments into the federal civil service. This issue is expressed in section 14(3) of the constitution as

“The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to comm.- and national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from few States or from few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or any of its agencies.”

The basic idea of the principle is to have an even representation of all states, ethnic and other sectional groups in the federal service. It has a lot of political support, especially from those in the disadvantaged areas- mainly the northern states of Nigeria (Olowu et al., 1997). In order to implement this concept effectively, a commission called the Federal Character Commission was created in 1995. However, promotion in the federal civil service is determined by factors such as number of years in a grade level, performance in promotion examination and interviews (FRN, 1998), and availability of vacancies or jobs at a higher level.

Methodology

Sample

The population of this study comprised civil servants in Nigerian federal ministries. See Table 1 for the size of Nigerian federal civil service from 1966 - 1993. The current size could not be determined at the time of this study but it was estimated to be about 220,000. The stratified random sampling method was used to draw the samples from five federal ministries. This method was employed in order to have representation of the various categories of the grade levels because the population does not constitute a homogenous group (Kothari, 2004). The characteristics for the sampling process were based on the surveyed federal ministries and the major categories of grade levels. The sampling design was influenced by the staff strengths of the various grade levels in the service since the

Table 1. Size of the Nigeria federal civil service 1966-1993.

Year	Junior staff	Senior staff	Total
1966	46,676	8,313	54,989
1970	32,736	12,418	45,154**
1974	74,198	24,679	98,877
1975	-	-	122,086
1978	-	-	187,677
1979	174,042	21,877	195,919
1980	-	-	213,802
1984	-	-	257,103
1985	-	-	255,156
1988	-	-	251,657
1990	-	-	273,392*
1991	134,762	47,380	182,142
1992	146,819	47,599	194,418
1993	149,052	49,879	198,931

Sources: 1. Federal Civil Service Manpower statistics for various years. 2. Annual Report of the Federal Civil Service for various years. 3. Federal Ministry of Establishments, Lagos. 4. Report of the Study Group, 1985. Note**: Decline from 1966 figure reflects departures as a result of civil war 1967-1970. *: The huge drop in the numbers after this year cannot be attributed only to retrenchments on account of the SAP. We doubt the accuracy of this figure (Olowu et al 1997).

size decreases progressively as the grade levels increases.

To investigate the problems of recruitment in Nigerian federal civil service, this research employed the descriptive survey method. This method was used because the study was interested in finding the meaning and to obtain an understanding of the problem being investigated (Ezirim et al., 2004) without any attempt to manipulate or control the sample subjects (Asika, 1991).

The response structure employed for research questions 1 and 2 were the multi-choice questions. The questionnaire responses for those questions are presented in Tables 3 and 4 respectively. The reason for using the multi-choice questions was to allow responses to be diverse so that the choice of responses in the questionnaire for those questions will not be limited to only one alternative. Though, respondents were limited to indicate not more than three options in order to make analysis easy.

Data collection

Data were primarily obtained by a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was designed in a reasonable and adequate form in order to elicit the correct responses from the sample subjects. The instrument guides were passed to senior professional colleagues to assess the suitability and make necessary corrections. The study also employed the test-re-test method to assess the survey instrument. The objectives were to make the instrument valid and reliable. Field notes from observations and personal interviews were triangulated with the quantitative findings to identify the vital explanatory problems affecting recruitment and the extent of the utilization of job description and personnel specification in Nigeria federal civil service in light of literature review.

A total of the 250 questionnaires were administered to the respondents chosen from the five federal ministries. Of the 250 questionnaires, 50 questionnaires were distributed to each ministry according to the four categories of grade levels in the ratios of 4:3:2:1 from grade levels 01 - 17 respectively. Of the total questionnaires

distributed, 190 usable questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 76%. A break down of the acceptable sample responses is summarized in Table 2.

It is notable from Table 2 that out of the 190 questionnaires, majority of the respondents 84 (44.21%) were those at the lowest category and the response rates for the next categories from the lowest category were 52 (27.37%), 39 (20.52%) and 15 (7.90%) respectively. This was influenced by the staff strengths of the various categories. Of the initial 50 questionnaires sent to each ministry, the least number returned and accepted was 36 (72%), and the highest was 42 (84%). However, the acceptable questionnaires 190 (76%) of 250, were considered adequately representative for this study.

Analysis and findings

The study processed the questionnaire responses before analysis by editing, coding, and classifying the data according to the categories of grade levels. The data were subsequently tabulated and descriptive statistics such as the mean frequencies and percentages were employed for the analysis.

Problems of recruitment

To analyze the problems of recruitment in Nigerian federal civil service, respondents were asked to state not more than three problems affecting recruitment into Nigerian federal civil service. The multi-choice questions structure was employed and based on the responses, a summary of the problems affecting recruitment in Nigerian federal civil service is presented in Table 3.

The questionnaire responses from Table 3 showed that 568 responses were received (as a result of the multi-choice questions structure) with a mean frequency of 2.99 indicating that respondents did not choose more than three options as instructed. Majority of the respondents in the first two categories of grade levels (01 - 10) indicated increasing pressures from applicants as the major problem affecting recruitment into Nigerian federal civil service, while majority of the respondents in the management and directorate cadres GL 12 - 17 indicated long military era as the major problem. The percentage responses for all the categories of grade levels from the most significant were increasing pressures from applicants 179 (31.51%), sources of recruitment 156 (27.46%), and long military era 101 (17.78%). Others were federal character principle 72 (12.67%), lack of independence of federal civil service commission 33 (5.81%), and the delegation of recruitment functions to ministries and extra-ministerial departments 27 (4.75%).

Increasing pressures from applicants

The respondents were asked to state not more than three factors influencing the most prevalent problem identified by them, using the multi-choice questions structure. The most prevalent problem as indicated in the study was increasing pressures from applicants (Table 3). A summary of the factors influencing the most prevalent problem is presented in Table 4. The response rates in Table 4 showed that 537 responses were received with a mean frequency of 2.83. The most frequently indicated option by all the respondents with regard to the factors influencing increasing pressures from applicants was the rate of unemployment 175 (32.59%). Other options indicated were pensionable appointments 156 (29.05%), job security 121 (22.53%), flexible civil service system 53 (9.87%) and remuneration 32 (5.96%).

Sources of recruitment

The respondents were asked to indicate the sources of recruitment (internal and external) to their current positions. The questionnaire

Table 2. Grading structure of sample by ministries.

Ministries	Categories of grade levels				
	01 – 06	07 – 10	12 – 14	15 – 17	Total
Agriculture & Rural Development	17 (8.95%)	11 (5.79%)	07 (3.68%)	02 (1.05%)	37 (19.47%)
Commerce	16 (8.42%)	09 (4.74%)	08 (4.21%)	03 (1.58%)	36 (18.95%)
Culture & Tourism	16 (8.42%)	11 (5.79%)	08 (4.21%)	03 (1.58%)	38 (20.00%)
Education	18 (9.47%)	11 (5.79%)	09 (4.74%)	04 (2.11%)	42 (22.11%)
Information & National Orientation	17 (8.95%)	10 (5.26%)	07 (3.68%)	03 (1.58%)	37 (19.47%)
Total	84 (44.21%)	52 (27.37%)	39 (20.52%)	15 (7.90%)	190 (100%)

Source: Survey data 2006.

Table 3. Problems of recruitment in the federal civil service.

Problems	Categories of grade levels				
	01-06	07-10	12-14	15-17	Total
Lack of independence of FCSC	21 (3.70%)	09 (1.58%)	01 (0.18%)	02 (0.35%)	33 (5.81)
Delegation of recruitment functions	2 (0.35%)	18 (3.17%)	05 (0.88%)	02 (0.35%)	27 (4.75%)
Federal character principle	30 (5.28%)	23 (4.05 %)	10 (1.76%)	09 (1.58%)	72 (12.67%)
Long military era	13 (2.29%)	32 (5.63%)	44 (7.75%)	12 (2.11%)	101 (17.78%)
Increasing pressures from applicants	98 (17.25%)	43 (7.57%)	27 (4.75%)	11 (1.94%)	179 (31.51%)
Sources of recruitment	86 (15.14%)	31 (5.46%)	30 (5.28%)	09 (1.58%)	156 (27.46%)
Total	250 (44.01%)	156 (27.46%)	117 (20.60%)	45 (7.92%)	568 (100%)
Mean	568/190 = 2.99				

Source: Survey data 2006.

Table 4. Factors influencing increasing pressures from applicants.

Factors	Categories of grade levels				
	01-06	07-10	12-14	15-17	Total
Flexible system	14 (2.61%)	17 (3.17%)	16 (2.98%)	06 (1.11%)	53 (9.87%)
Job security	63 (11.73%)	29 (5.40%)	21 (3.91%)	08 (1.49%)	121 (22.53%)
Pension	66 (12.29%)	46 (8.57%)	34 (6.33%)	10 (1.86%)	156 (29.05%)
Remuneration	19 (3.54%)	06 (1.11%)	04 (0.74)	03 (0.56%)	32 (5.96%)
Unemployment	72 (13.41%)	49 (9.12%)	36 (6.70%)	18 (3.35%)	175 (32.59%)
Total	234 (43.58)	147 (27.37%)	111 (20.67%)	45 (8.38%)	537 (100%)
Mean	537/190 = 2.83				

Source: survey data 2006.

responses according to the categories of grade levels are summarized in Table 5.

The internal labor market accounted for 50 (26%) of the total respondents. The internal source is comprised of transfers and promotions. Transfers were used by 16 (8.4%), while promotions were used by 34 (17.8%). External labor market accounted for 140 (74%) of the total respondents. The compositions and utilization of the external source are advertisements 11 (5.9%), notices through states and local governments 29 (15.3%), educational institutions 1 (0.5%), professional organizations 3 (1.6%), connections and informal contacts 96 (50.1), private employment agencies 0 (0%) and trade unions 0 (0%). Clearly, this survey suggested that the sources of recruiting in Nigerian federal civil service vary significantly with the categories of grade levels. Connections and informal contacts

dominated the sources 96 (50.1%), but the utilization declined relatively as the categories of grade levels increased. It showed that internal sources of recruitment are more utilized at the higher grade levels.

Employment of job description

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they are working with precise job description. A summary of the questionnaire responses is presented in Table 6.

With regard to the utilization of job description in Nigerian federal civil service, the response rates indicated that 119 (62.63 %) work with defined job description while 48 (25.26%) work without defined job description. It is notable from the responses that significant nu-

Table 5. Recruitment sources by grade levels.

Sources	Categories of grade levels					n = 190
	01 – 06	07-10	12-14	15-17		
Internal	50 (26%)					
Transfer	04 (2.1%)	03 (1.6%)	05 (2.6%)	04 (2.1%)	16 (8.4%)	32% of Internal Source
Promotion	09 (4.7%)	07 (3.7%)	13 (6.8%)	05 (2.6%)	34 (17.8%)	68% of Internal Source
External	140 (74%)					
Advertisement	02 (1.1%)	03 (1.6%)	04 (2.1%)	02 (1.1%)	11 (5.9%)	7.9% of External Source
Notices through States/Local Governments	18 (9.5%)	09 (4.7%)	02 (1.1%)	00 (0.0%)	29 (15.3%)	20.7 of External Source
Private Employment Agencies	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	0.0% of External Source
Educational Institutions	00 (0.0%)	01 (0.5%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	01 (0.5%)	0.7% of External Source
Trade Unions	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	0.0% of External Source
Professional organizations	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	02 (1.1%)	01 (0.5%)	03 (1.6%)	2.1% of External Source
Connections/Informal contacts	51 (26.8%)	29 (15.3%)	13 (6.8%)	03 (1.6%)	96 (50.1%)	68.6% of Exter. Source
Total	84 (44.2%)	52 (27.4%)	39 (20.5%)	15 (7.9%)	190 (100%)	

Source: Survey data 2006.

Table 6. Employment of job description in the federal civil service.

Response	Categories of grade levels					n=190
	01-06	07-10	12-14	15-17		
Yes	33 (17.37%)	36 (18.95%)	35 (18.42%)	15 (7.90%)	119 (62.63%)	
No	38 (20.00%)	09 (4.74%)	01 (0.53%)	00 (0.00%)	48 (25.26%)	
Indifferent	13 (6.84%)	07 (3.68%)	03 (1.58%)	00 (0.00%)	23 (12.11%)	
Total	84 (44.21%)	52 (27.37%)	39 (20.53%)	15 (7.90%)	190 (100%)	

Source: Survey data 2006

number of senior federal civil servants from grade levels 07 - 17 responded positively to the employment of job description while majority of the junior federal civil servants on posts graded GL 01 - 06 responded negatively to the employment of job description in their respective places of work. This clearly revealed that the utilization of job description vary significantly between the lowest category of grade levels and the other categories.

Application of job specification

Respondents were requested to indicate if their sources of recruitment (internal and external) were based on minimum acceptable requirements for employment. A summary of the questionnaire responses is presented in Table 7.

As indicated in Table 7, significant number of all the respondents (94.74%) in the respective categories of grade levels accepted that they were recruited based on minimum acceptable standards for employment. This clearly indicates that Nigerian federal civil service utilizes human resource requirements (job specification) in their recruitment exercise.

DISCUSSION

In respect of delegation of recruitment functions and activities by the federal civil service commission to ministries and extra-ministerial departments as a recruit-

ment problem, the questionnaire responses indicated 4.75%. Section 170 of the 1999 constitution empowers the commission to delegate any of its powers and functions as it deems fit because of the crucial role the commission is expected to play as a regulatory authority of the federal civil service. Because of that, the federal civil commission delegates its activities and functions to ministries and extra-ministerial departments to recruit in the lowest category of grade levels (01 - 06). In as much as delegation is imperative because it guards against possible delays and results in quick decision, it was observed that it is a problem in Nigerian federal civil service because it lacks control and gives room to heads of ministries and extra-ministerial departments to employ without adherence to recruitment policies and procedures. This explains the reason why most federal civil servants in the lowest category of grade levels were recruited through informal sources and connections as indicated in the questionnaire responses (Table 5). The implication of this problem is that incompetent applicants are recruited into the service making the system to be unproductive. Delegation of recruitment functions and activities also has the problem of over staff. The team that was set up by the federal government to investigate the federal

Table 7. Application of job specification in federal civil service.

Response	Categories of grade levels				
	01-06	07-10	12-14	15-17	n =190
Yes	76 (40.00%)	50 (26.32%)	39 (20.53%)	15 (7.90%)	180 (94.74%)
No	02 (1.05%)	00 (0.00%)	00 (0.00%)	00 (0.00%)	02 (1.05%)
Indifferent	06 (3.16%)	02 (1.05%)	00 (0.00%)	00 (0.00%)	08 (4.21%)
Total	84 (44.21%)	52 (27.37%)	39 (20.53%)	15 (7.90%)	190 (100%)

Source: Survey data 2006.

civil service structure in 2006 reported that there was excess staff (estimated to be 9,839) at junior grade levels. This sustained the fact that the problem was as a result of delegation of recruitment functions and activities by the commission because it was subsequently confirmed by El- Rufai (member of the federal executive council) in his response to the report of the investigating team. The grade levels that accounted for the highest number of excess staff in Nigerian federal civil service were in the category where delegation of recruitment functions and activities are applicable. The consequence of excess staff is to down size the number of federal civil servants, especially at the junior grade levels by retrenchment exercise. It was revealed through personal interviews that whenever such exercises occurred, federal civil servants who are not connected are most affected because the system lacks standard criterion and does not adhere to the federal civil service rules and regulations on such matters. According to some respondents, when retrenchment exercise is taking place at the central level, heads of ministries and extra-ministerial departments are employing simultaneously at the delegated level. This revealed that there is no effective implementation of recruitment plans and control mechanisms in Nigerian federal civil service as a result of delegation of recruitment functions and activities.

Relative to lack of independence of the federal civil service commission as a problem of recruitment in the federal civil service, the questionnaire responses indicated 5.81%. Section 158(1) of the 1999 constitution provides for the independence of the commission in the exercise of its constitutional powers and functions from the direction or control of any other authority or person along with some other federal executive bodies. But it was observed in the survey that delegation of recruitment functions to ministries and extra-ministerial departments has affected the independence of the commission since it is easier to influence recruitment functions and activities at the ministries and extra-ministerial departmental levels than with the commission at the central level. Also, in theory the constitution protects the independence of the commission but in practice, it was observed that members of the commission are being influenced by the executive arm of government and pressures from friends, family members and others who are regarded powerful in

the country. These influences from the interested parties affect the independence of the commission because it discourages suitable candidates to compete for appointments into the federal service which has an impact on the principles of merit and equal opportunities. Another problem associated with lack of independence of the service commission is that recruitment is induced to the system when vacancies do not exist as a result of these pressures from the environment. For federal civil service to have the right kind and number of civil servants to accomplish its overall objectives, the commission must plan for its personnel needs. But this study observed that human resource planning is a neglected area in Nigerian federal civil service context because of the influence on the independence of the recruiting authority especially at the ministries and extra-ministerial level. This also contributes to one of the reasons why the system is having excess staff at that level. With these problems in the system, the commission can not recruit the right number and the right kinds of people, at the right places and time doing things which are right in the service.

On the issue of federal character principle as a factor contributing to the problems of recruitment into the federal civil service, the questionnaire responses indicated 12.67%. Federal character principle is a quota system and quotas are seen by employers as an unsavory strategy for rectifying the effects of past or present unfair discrimination (Cascio, 1986). The major problem associated with this principle as observed in the survey is that the principle sacrifices merit in favor of quota. For instance, a respondent in a personal interview was disappointed with the principle stating that the country's image is at stake if the federal character principle is not limited to minimum acceptable standards. According to the respondent, "the worst of it is that the principle is also applied in the secondment of Nigerians for foreign services." It was revealed in the study that the reason why the principle is considered more important than merit in the recruitment of federal civil servants is because those in the disadvantaged areas – mainly the northern part as opined by Olowu et al. (1997) are the political leaders of the country. This made it possible for them to use their positions to protect their region using the principle. For instance in the Northern Governors Forum (NGF) of 2007, Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (governor of Niger State)

said that one of the problems facing the region is educational backwardness. But despite this problem, the study observed that people from the northern region are significantly placed in the federal civil service because of the employment of the federal character principle.

The questionnaire responses (17.78%) on long military era as a problem affecting recruitment in the Nigerian federal civil service could be sustained considering the long term of military regimes and their irrational reforms in the country since independence. The military ruled the country for about 28 years and during their regimes, they initiated different reforms that led to the conscious and deliberate politicization of the federal civil service which made the system declined in efficiency, effectiveness and productivity (Babaru, 2003). These reforms affected the recruitment policies of the federal civil service because it led to loss of the attributes of political neutrality, anonymity, and impartiality in the recruitment process. The military administrators aggravated the failures of Nigerian state rather than address them (Olowu et al., 1997). Etuk (1992) opined that the various military administrators were sycophantic because most civil servants under their regimes feel that it is "safer to conform than to initiate, safer to comply than to suggests changes and safer to follow the beaten path than to try to blaze new trails."

Relative to the sources of recruitment as a recruitment problem in the federal civil service, this survey revealed that connections and informal contacts dominated the sources. These sources are not valid and reliable methods. Although, the sources of recruitment vary significantly with the categories of grade levels (Table 5) . All studies of how people seek jobs indicate consistently that the way to get a job is to use multiple methods, and begin searching early. According to Nwachukwu (2000), advertisement, especially in the leading national newspapers, seems to be frequently employed means of recruitment in Nigeria, but in contrast, this study revealed that connections and informal contacts dominated recruitment sources into the federal civil service, but the utilization declined relatively as categories of grade levels increased. This is because majority of the staff at the higher grade levels are existing employees who are either seeking lateral moves like transfers or seeking promotions. Informal sources and connections (also called Man-Know-Man) is a serious problem of recruitment in the federal civil service because these sources do not possess the attributes of objectivity, standardization, uniformity and transparency. It was observed that federal civil servants who were recruited through informal sources consistently depend on such contacts for transfers, advancements and promotions. They also have the problem of doing unethical things in the service without being reprimanded as a result of their level of connection, making the system to lack discipline.

Actually most job seekers rely on these informal sources of job opportunities to a greater degree than might be expected (Cascio, 1986), but the reasons why the junior

staff utilizes the informal sources more than the senior staff could be attributed to two major factors. First, majority of them were fresh school leavers and desperate job hunters, therefore uses all available networks (which are mainly informal and connections) within their disposal to get employed. Second, delegation of recruitment functions to ministries and extra-ministerial departments to appoint in that category. Professional organizations and educational institutions were insignificantly utilized. Professional organizations are important source that was why the director in charge of recruitment and appointment- federal civil service commission, in a paper he presented on February 2003 at the commonwealth – New Zealand Agency, recommended that professional bodies should be involved in the recruitment exercise to bring about independence and transparency. Educational institutions are also very important source of recruitment because they include a large pool of people from which to draw applicants with up-to-date training and a source of innovative ideas (Scheetz, 1986). From the survey, it was established that private employment agencies and unions were not utilized. Private employment agencies recruit for a fee and they have been criticized for making exaggerated claims (Nwachukwu, 2000). It was also revealed that promotions are more utilized when compared to transfers in internal recruitment. One of the drawbacks of internal recruitment is that it could be biased and be based more on seniority principle rather than merit principle (Chandan, 1987) in the federal service.

Increasing pressures from applicants as a problem of recruitment into the federal civil service was the highest factor indicated in this study with questionnaire response rates of 31.51%. It was revealed that the pressures from potential applicants have also contributed significantly to the reasons why the federal civil service commission is not independent. These applicants desperately search for influential contacts to secure jobs for them in the service. When this happens, the civil service commission and other recruiting authorities are under pressure to recruit even when human resource needs do not exists making the system have excess and unproductive staff. This results to inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the civil service.

The study identified factors that could contribute to such pressures (Table 4). The responses indicated that unemployment rate was the most significant reason for consistent pressures from potential applicants. Several studies have shown that Nigeria unemployment seems to consist not of uneducated, rural populations but of some highly educated populations, as well as those who normally would form the core of the productive vanguard in a developing country. Figures from National Manpower board (2000) stated that unemployment figures for graduate alone was about 5.7 million in 2000 and may increase to 10 million in 2002. Majority of secondary school leavers are also unemployed. Unemployment in Nigeria is a social and economic problem which has compelled job seekers to pressurize employers for gainful employ-

ment, and the civil service is not an exception. Another major reason why applicants consistently put pressures for employment into the civil service is as a result of pensionable appointment. Nigerian federal civil servants appointments are pensionable and permanent which are not common in the private sector. The civil service rules and regulations pursuant to pension Act (Cap P4 laws of the federation of Nigeria 2004) stipulates 35 years of service or 60 years of age as mandatory period for retirement by any civil servant who may have served in the employ of government, which is not attainable in the private sector. The permanence nature of the civil service also contributed to consistent pressures from applicants. About 10% of the respondents indicated that flexibility in the system influenced pressures from applicants. Some civil servants in personal interviews revealed that the system allowed them to do their private businesses which will not be entertained in the private sector. The questionnaire responses indicated remuneration as the least reason why there were consistent pressures from applicants for employment in Nigerian federal civil service. The remunerations of Nigeria civil servants are poor when compared to employees in the private sector. This could have attributed to the low response rates. According to vanguard newspaper report (2007), with an increase of 15%, GL 01 will be paid #133,000; GL 04 #144,000; and directorate cadre #2.271 million. If this is converted to monthly remuneration in dollars, it will be \$87, \$94 and \$1,478 respectively. The gap in salaries between the public and the private sector is 300 – 500%, and even with the public sector, the salary of the civil servant is worse (Babaru, 2003). Though, the study established that Nigerians could accept any job for any pay instead of staying unemployed. However, it was observed that despite the consistent pressure by applicants to get employed into the federal civil service, there is high rate of labor turnover especially at the senior grade levels as a result of the poor remuneration in the federal civil service. Most Nigerians see the civil service as a spring board to get a better job else where. As one respondent stated, “The civil service is my starting point to get experience, since other good organizations always requests for years of experience.” The respondent interpretation of ‘good organizations’ is nothing short of the remuneration in the private sector. This perception could affect employee morale and productivity. It could also result to high rate of labor turnover in the system. For instance, the team that investigated the federal civil service structure in 2006 indicated under staff of 7,013 in the senior category and 1,105 at directorate level as at the time of their investigation, showing the presence of labor turnover in the system.

With regard to the use of job description in Nigerian federal civil service, this survey revealed that the use of job description in the federal civil service vary significantly with the categories of grade levels (Table 6). The most affected in relation to the non-utilization of job description

is the junior category. A Job description is a by-product of job analysis (Jain and Saakshi, 2005). There is no logical recruitment that can take place in an organization without job description because it spells out the factual statement of job contents in the form of duties and responsibilities of a specific job. Recruitment of federal civil servants without the development and utilization of job description is a serious problem because the federal civil service commission will not have adequate information for object-tive recruitment decisions since job description provides such information. It was revealed through personal inter-views that the various ministries and extra-ministerial departments develop their respective job descriptions for recruitment purposes. But the problem lies with the effective and rational applications of the developed job description especially at the lowest grade levels. This is because of the earlier identified problems affecting recruitment in that category. Non-employment of job description in the recruitment process has made the federal civil service system especially in the junior category not to be able to specify the tasks to be performed. This has affected position classification in the system and has resulted to federal civil servants existing in the system without defined duties and responsibilities. It has also given the under utilized civil servants the opportunity to occupy themselves elsewhere instead of being idle in the service. The study observed that the perception of flexibility and lack of responsiveness in the system could also be attributed to lack of defined job description.

Relative to the utilization of job specification in the recruitment of federal civil servants, the survey revealed that Nigerian federal civil service uses job specification in their recruitment exercise since applicants were recruited based on minimum acceptable requirements for employment (Table 7). It was established in the study that the standards for employment and performance specifies the human requirements needed for the job. A job specification is another by-product of job analysis and it is an important tool in the recruitment process because it keeps the recruiter's attention on the list of qualifications necessary for an applicant to perform the job and assists in determining whether the candidate is qualified. Therefore, not using job specification in the recruitment exercise could result to matching the wrong person for a job. This creates inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the system. The decision to specify minimum human requirements for a job is a difficult task as it involves considerable degree of subjectivity. It was observed in this study that the federal civil service establishes relatively low personnel requirements, resulting in a situation where lowly qualified people end up being recruited. This has also contributed to the reasons why incompetent applicants consistently put pressures for employment into the federal service and why there is high utilization of informal sources of recruitment. For instance, first class graduates and other competent professionals are few in the civil service system because they believe that the system

comprises of mediocre as a result of the low personnel requirements. The system used to recruit top cream of university graduates and professionals, a continuation of British heritage leaving others who are less able to go on to the other sections of the economy, but because of the low personnel requirements, the situation has changed of late. Presently, other sectors especially the business section establishes relatively high personnel requirements, resulting in a situation where highly qualified people are attracted, encouraged, recruited and placed in the areas where they are competent but in the case of the federal civil service, most civil servants are recruited and placed in the areas where they lack proficiency as a result of low personnel requirements. This explains the reason why the private sector in Nigeria is relatively more productive than the public sector.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It was concluded from the findings that Nigerian federal civil service are faced with recruitment problems that has affected their services. The study established the problems affecting recruitment into Nigerian federal civil service as increasing pressure for employment from applicants, emphases on connections and informal contacts, and inadequate utilization of some significant sources of recruitment. Other problems identified in the study include long military era, the principle of federal character, independence of the federal civil service commission, and the delegation of recruitment functions and activities to ministries and extra-ministerial departments. These problems have created difficulties for the federal civil service commission to appoint the right persons for the right jobs based on the principles of merit and equal opportunities for all citizens. As result of these problems in the system, the study observed that suitable people are not induced to compete for appointments into the service, making the system employ incompetent people. The study revealed that Nigerian federal civil service designs job description but with relatively low level of utilization at the lowest grade levels which has affected position classification and identification of defined duties and responsibilities in the system. It was also established that Nigerian federal civil service uses job specification but with relatively low personnel requirements when compared to the private sector which has discouraged competent applicants from seeking employment into the service. It was finally concluded that as results of the problems of recruitment in Nigerian federal civil service, the system is perceived to comprise of lazy, ineffective and inefficient people, resulting to low employee productivity in the service.

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, it was recommended that Nigerian federal government should promulgate employment laws that will guarantee job security in the private sector in order to reduce the pressures for employment in the federal civil service. Empha-

ses placed on all kinds of subjective and informal contacts in the recruitment exercise should be discouraged. Reliable and valid selection instruments should be devised. Sources from notices and advertisements on internet, educational institutions and professional organizations should be adequately utilized. The aim is to attract as many qualified applicants as possible, select and subsequently appoint the best through a more objective procedure. The federal government should increase the numbers of federal civil service commissioners to represent each state of the federation, and, zonal and state offices of the commission should be established. This will make the commission to be more responsive, eliminate or reduce the extent of delegation and easily monitor the application of the principle of federal character objectively. Federal character principle should be applied only at the lowest category of grade levels (01 - 06), and appointments in the other categories of grade levels should be based strictly on merit. Recruitment exercises should be carried out based on human resource needs and backed by well defined jobs description and specification in order to avoid excess staff in the system. The federal civil service commission with heads of ministries and extra-ministerial departments should re-design personnel requirements to match position classifications. Finally, remuneration of federal civil servants should be increased in order to attract more competent applicants and also reduce the rate of labor turnover in the service.

The immediate priority, therefore, is the need to re-examine the reliability and validity of employee selection instruments in the federal civil service.

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