
Challenges of Recruitment and Selection Process of Librarians in Federal University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the challenges of recruitment and selection process of librarians in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey. The population of the study consists of 108 librarians. 95 copies of the questionnaire were filled and returned. The questionnaire was used in collecting data. The overall reliability of the instrument yielded 0.95 with the use of Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. Standard deviation and mean was used to generate the data that was gathered. The rating scale of 4 points was subjected to an estimation procedure using SPSS version 17.0. A mean score of 2.5 and above on any item was accepted. The findings revealed that the librarians identified the challenges to include ethnicity influence; favouritisms; recruitment based on godfatherism; dwindling budgetary allocation. The librarians also identified some of the strategies to include performance at interview as benchmark; equity and fairness as benchmark; recruitment should be done according to relevant discipline; and having channels for reporting cases of corruption during recruitment. Based on the above findings the study recommended among others that recruitment and selection of qualified librarians should be done according to the laid down procedures.

1. Introduction

University libraries are the treasure house of knowledge to cater for the needs of scholars, scientists, technocrats, researchers, students and others who are in the mainstream of higher education. The International Encyclopedia of Information and Library Science (Feather & Sturges, 2003) defines a university library, as a library that obtains and maintains collections of books and other media and provides information services to users. For these services to be rendered effectively, the university library management has to recruit competent librarians to shape the future of the library.

The focus of recruitment is having the right person in the right place at the right time, and it is crucial to organizational performance. Jovanovic (1982) define recruitment as a process of

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attracting a pool of high quality applicants so as to select the best among them. While selection process connote the best performing librarians, based on defining requirement for recruitment, skills demonstrations, and employee's referees. The guidelines for selections of librarians as approved by the ACRL Board of Directors at the ALA Annual Conference (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2017) posits that since selection is such a critical phase of the process, it is useful for the committee to discuss the qualifications and expected evidence for meeting the qualifications, and develop the evaluation method or rubric before selection of applications begins. This helps to ensure that consistent standards are applied and that the review is an evidence-based approach that is done objectively and fairly.

The recruitment and selection process of librarians is a very big task that requires transparent personnel to conduct a successful recruitment and selection process in the university libraries. In the public sphere like the university libraries, favoritism, cronyism, and nepotism also undermine the common good. When someone is granted a position because of connections rather than because he or she has the best credentials and experience, the service that person renders to the public may be inferior. Also, because favoritism is often covert (few elected officials are foolish enough to show open partiality to friends, and family), this practice undercuts the transparency that should be part of governmental recruiting and contracting processes. It appears though that adherence to the basis of recruitment and selection especially educational qualification still remains a challenge facing human resource professionals and the Nigerian public sector which is also applicable to librarians. It is as a result of this situation that this topic challenges of recruitment and selection process of librarians in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria is considered imperative. The study was conducted in Federal University libraries in South- South, Nigeria, currently South-South, Nigeria have a total number of six federal universities with their libraries attached to them respectively.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Effective recruitment process of librarians benefits university libraries in multiple ways. Librarian's engagement, sustained job performance, employee retention and low turnover are some advantages of best practices in recruitment and selection processes.

In recent times, especially in the higher institutions of learning and more specifically at the Federal University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria, it has been observed that recruitment of librarians has deviated significantly from the laid down principles of merit, competence and transparency. It has also been observed that sociological factors such as Man-know man, connectivity, ethnic consideration, political leanings, federal character principles, nepotism" have been given significant consideration in the value scale of recruitment in the Nigerian public sector establishment, including higher institutions of learning (Idike et al., 2019). It is no longer news that before an applicant gets a job in any of our public organization in Nigeria; he/she needs to know somebody to influence it. The Federal University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria, being part of the public institutions cannot be exempted from the problem identified above-average.

It is as a result of this situation that motivated the researcher to embark on this study, and

if not addressed on time, it will jeopardize the recruitment and selection process of librarians in academic libraries in the libraries under study.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to examine the challenges of recruitment and selection process of librarians in federal university libraries in South-south, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- Identify the challenges associated with recruitment and selection process of librarians in the federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria
- Find out strategies for enhancing recruitment and selection process of librarians in the federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

2. Literature Review

The literature will be reviewed under recruitment, selection process, challenges and as well as strategies to overcome it.

2.1 Recruitment Process

Recruitment is a process of attracting a pool of high quality applicants so as to select the best among them. According to Costello (2006), recruitment is described as the set of activities and processes used to legally obtain a sufficient number of qualified librarians at the right place. The recruitment of librarians is paramount to learning, reading and research in the university. Recruitment is a vital function of human resource management for university libraries. The dictionary of library and information science defined recruitment as the process of attracting qualified personnel to work in a library system by posting a notice and position description in appropriate Library and Information Science Journal and to library related electronic mailing lists and by publicizing the vacancy at job fairs and word-of-mouth (Tiwari, 2011). These are terms that refer to the process of attracting and choosing candidates for employment. As explained by Opatha (2010), recruitment is the process of finding and attracting suitably qualified people to apply for job vacancies in academic libraries. It is a set of activities an organization uses to attract job candidates who have the needed abilities and attitudes. In other words, recruitment is the process of generating a pool of qualified applicants for organizational job vacancies. Nwankwo (2000) perceived recruitment to involve getting all prospective librarians for job position in academic library. For him, the recruitment process involves seeking and attracting a pool of librarians from which candidates who are to fill job vacancies can be recruited. Raub and Streit (2006) suggests that recruitment process is important practices for library management, and is crucial in affecting organizational success. For this reason, top performing libraries devoted considerable resources and energy to creating high quality recruitment systems. Recruitment is nothing but the process of searching the librarians for employment and then stimulating

them for jobs in the library. It is the activity that links the academic libraries and the librarians. It is critical for academic libraries to review and assess their processes and procedures, and thoroughly understand the world that they are in when it comes to recruitment and employment.

Alsar (2012) suggest that the opportunity to bring someone into a high-performing organization like the library or to look for a specific skill set to improve organizational effectiveness should be embraced and actively pursued. Librarians within a library are the most critical resource in any professional activity because the quality of the work depends on the qualities of those librarians recruited. The wrong recruiting decision can adversely impact an organization for years. However, done well, recruitment greatly enhances an academic library's ability to select, recruit and retain the most qualified librarians for any position. Jovanovic (2004) opined that due to the fact that libraries are always fortified by information technology to be more competitive, it is natural to also consider utilizing this technology to re-organize the traditional recruitment process through proper decision techniques, with that both the effectiveness and the efficiency of the processes can be increased and the quality of the recruitment and selection decision improved.

2.2 Selection Process

Once candidates are identified, an organization can begin the selection process. Selection practices can also be linked to organizational success. According to Ikeanyibe (2009), Selection is part of the recruitment process through which the organization takes out of many who applied, those who are considered best for the job. Turner (2010) claims that the success of any organization depends on its ability to get the right people, in the right place at the right time. Byars and Rue cited in Alsar (2012) defined selection as the process of choosing from among available applicants, the individuals who are most likely to successfully perform a job. Similarly, Rothwell (2010) defines selection as a related process, which involves management nominating for openings to see how equipped internal applicants are to meet current needs. As Tekeste (2009) caution, selection panels have to be careful not to discriminate against applicants with potential. Their decisions should be guided by short-listing criteria that is developed against the job requirements stipulated in the advertisements. Pilbeam and Corbridge (2006) also opined that selection involves the application of appropriate techniques and methods with the aim of selecting, appointing and inducting a competent person or person's for recruitment in academic libraries. Also, Osterberg (2014) investigated recruitment and selection procedures benchmark study, and it was revealed in the study that different selection techniques such as performance during interview, skill demonstration, understanding the jobs, defining requirements for recruitment, years of applicant ship of librarians, recommendation letter from an influential person, etc are applied to eligible candidates in order to diminish the group of suitable applicants. Lepak and Gowan (2010) asserted that the objective of selection process is to make a contract with the most suitable candidate for the job.

2.3 Challenges of Recruitment and Selection Process of Librarians in Academic Libraries

The biggest challenge for academic libraries is to source or recruit the best people or potential librarians for the library. According to studies conducted by Lawrence (2006), apart from procedural aspects, there are however substantive issues which merit attention, for example appointing the most qualified and competent candidate in the most appropriate position. If the above does not happen, it poses serious challenges because the standards that are set often prove to be inappropriate. Factor such as ethnicity, religion, government etc. has drastically affected the recruitment of competent librarians in academic libraries into the public service. This paper is also an attempt to establish whether or not the Federal Character Principle is being adhered to. It also aims at finding out whether equity and fairness are the benchmark of recruitment and into the Public Service in Nigeria. Effort would also be geared towards proffering solutions to observed shortcomings. Favoritism has always been a complaint in government service. In 2002, a survey from the federal government's Office of Personnel Management found that only 36.1 percent of federal workers thought promotions in their work units were based on merit. (Government Executive Magazine, "Playing Favorites," by Brian 2004). They believed that connections, partisanship, and other factors played a role. Cronyism is a more specific form of favoritism, referring to partiality towards friends and associates. As the old saying goes, "It's not what you know but who you know," or, as blogger Danny Ferguson put it, "It's not what you don't know; it's who your college roommate knows." Cronyism occurs within a network of insiders-the "good old' boys," who confer favors on one another. Nepotism is an even narrower form of favoritism; both nepotism and cronyism are often at work when political parties recruit candidates for public office. One of the most basic themes in ethics is fairness, stated this way by Aristotle: "Equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally." Favoritism, cronyism, and nepotism all interfere with fairness because they give undue advantage to librarians who do not necessarily merit recruitment.

Scholars have traced the recruitment pattern back to the colonial rule when the government hurriedly replaced foreign staff with locals, many of which were not properly equipped in terms of education or knowledge, but were employed on the basis of nepotism (Budhwar & Debrah, 2001). Recent studies also have shown that recruitment processes in the Nigerian public sector are influenced by factors such as political consideration/god-fatherism, nepotism, quota system, ethnicity (federal character principle) and government discretion (Inyang, 2011; Gberegbe, 2010; McOliver, 2005). In addition, Fajana et al. (2011) suggested that factors such as culture, language, religion, gender and educational qualifications are part of the basis for determining who get employed in the civil service. If the recruitment and process and practices are not strictly adhered to in academic libraries in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria, it will jeopardize the libraries objectives, vision, mission, and job performance.

2.4 Strategies to improve on Recruitment and selection process of Librarians in Academic Libraries

Recruitment is regarded as the foremost of any academic libraries. It is regarded as the most

important policy in management of human resource in libraries, and this is because without it, academic libraries exist in void. Every recruitment process should not only be based on some shared principles, but also should conform to internationally accepted practices. Any recruitment exercise should be devoid of corruption, nepotism or favoritism.

Corruption is seen to stem right from the recruitment stage. Corruption as a form of unethical practices should not be allowed to be initiated at the recruitment stage. As a way of ending the vice, it is recommended that relevant authorities make stringent measures to hold accountable those who are seen to engage in corruption and nepotism. Both the recruiting management and the librarians recruited should be charged with abuse of office and corruption. Any form of corruption is bad and should not be tolerated. Secondly, it is prudent that the government of Nigeria should design a good programme that would educate aspiring librarians of how to uphold ethics during recruitment and after they are absorbed into the library. Such a programme could include holding seminars for all interested before they undergo the recruitment exercise, and another one for the ones who have qualified to become librarians. Such a programme would ensure that ethics are upheld everywhere, and it would be a way of ending corruption once and for all.

In order to contain corruption, participants agreed that a combination of interlocking arrangements needs to be developed and implemented. According to Campaign for Good Governance (2006) these include:

- Accountability of decision-makers during recruitment process
- Appropriate channel for reporting instances of corruption during recruitment of staff
- Effective monitoring units at all levels of recruitment
- An independent judiciary, and enforcement of the rule of law against culprits
- A free and trained press to report cases of corruption during recruitment
- Government institutions should have checks and balances mechanisms during recruitment
- Citizen awareness campaign of costs of corruption and of citizen rights during recruitment process

According to Gommans (2006) on Global Programme against Corruption, there are four basic arenas in which action can be taken against corruption and nepotism within an institution: First, the basic institution of good governance needs to be strengthened. At the head of this list is the judiciary, which is itself the guardian of laws and integrity. But if the judiciary is itself corrupt, the problem is compounded and the public at large without rule of law. Second, the capacity and integrity of enforcement need to be enhanced. The best law has no value if it is not enforced. The best judges and magistrates are wasted if cases are never brought to them. Good investigations are wasted effort if the judge or magistrate is corrupt. Thirdly, an institution needs to put in place a solid set of preventive tools. Codes of Conduct and strong independent oversight bodies can help ensure that the acceptable standards of behavior are respected in both the private and public sector. According to Dubois and Rothwell (2004), competency-based recruitment can be used to checkmate recruitment of candidates. It is a process of recruitment based on the ability of candidates to produce anecdotes about their professional experience which can be used as evidence that the

candidate has a given competency. Candidates demonstrate competencies on the application form, and then in the interview, which in this case is known as a competency-based interview.

The process is intended to be fairer than other recruitment processes by clearly laying down the required competencies and then testing them in such a way that the recruiter has little discretion to favor one candidate over another; the process assumes high recruiter discretion is undesirable. As a result of its perceived fairness, the process is popular in public services. Competency-based recruitment is highly focused on the candidates' story-telling abilities as an indication of competency, and disfavors other indications of a candidate's skills and potential, such as references.

Above all, library management is required to have transparency when recruiting librarians. From the above strategies, corruption poses a serious development challenge to the recruitment of librarians in academic libraries, if these above strategies is adhere to, it will strengthen the recruitment process of librarians in academic libraries as well as improving the selection process. A lot of studies have been done on challenges and strategies for recruitment of librarians in other research findings but none have been done in the university libraries under study. This study is hereby undertaken to fill this lacuna in knowledge.

3. Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study consists of 108 recruited librarians in all the federal universities libraries in South- South Nigeria. The sample size of this study consists of 108 librarians in the university libraries. A total of one hundred and eight (108) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the librarians in the federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria, only ninety-five (95) were filled and returned which resulted to 88 percent return rate, which was used for study because of the manageable size of the population. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze the data that was gathered.

4. Results

RQ 1: What are those challenges associated with recruitment and selection of librarians in the federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 1 shows the mean ratings and the standard deviations of librarians' responses on challenges associated with recruitment of librarians in the federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. In the descending order of severity, they agreed that: ethnicity influence (3.41 ± 0.84); favoritisms (3.29 ± 0.85); dwindling budgetary allocation (3.22 ± 0.73); recruitment based on godfatherism (3.19 ± 0.91); nepotism (3.13 ± 0.87); no adherence to the planning process of recruitment (3.07 ± 0.85); religion influence (3.04 ± 0.85); cronyism ($3.04, 0.82$); recruitment of non-librarians to the library (2.99 ± 0.88) and bribery (2.98 ± 0.96) was rated least. With a cluster mean of 3.14

and standard deviations of 0.86, these results suggests that the extent librarians agreed on those challenges associated with recruitment of librarians in the federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria was high.

Table 1. Mean rating and Standard Deviation of librarians’ responses on the challenges associated with recruitment and selection process of librarians in the federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

Items Statement	N	\bar{X}	SD	R	Decision
Ethnicity influence	95	3.41	0.84	1st	Agree
Favoritisms	95	3.29	0.85	2nd	Agree
Dwindling budgetary allocation	95	3.22	0.73	3rd	Agree
Recruitment based on godfatherism	95	3.19	0.91	4th	Agree
Nepotism	95	3.13	0.87	5th	Agree
No adherence to the planning process of recruitment	95	3.07	0.85	6th	Agree
Religion influence	95	3.04	0.85	7th	Agree
Cronyism	95	3.04	0.82	7th	Agree
Recruitment of non-librarians to the library	95	2.99	0.88	8th	Agree
Bribery	95	2.98	0.96	9th	Agree
Cluster mean	-	3.14	0.86		Agree

Key: N = Population, \bar{X} = mean, SD =standard deviation, R = Ranking

RQ 2: *What strategies could be used to improve on recruitment and selection process of librarians in the university libraries under study?*

Table 2 shows the mean responses and the standard deviations in the opinions of respondents on the strategies used to improve on recruitment of librarians in the university libraries under study. The mean ratings of librarians on each of the items were above 2.50, and this suggested that all the strategies listed were accepted. From the highest order of their preference, the respondents agreed firstly that performance at interview as benchmark (3.71 ± 0.52); equity and fairness as benchmark (3.63 ± 0.60); recruitment should be done according to relevant discipline (3.56 ± 0.65); having channels for reporting cases of corruption during recruitment (3.52 ± 0.62); integrity of decision makers during recruitment process (3.49 ± 0.60); government institutions should have checks and balances during recruitment (3.49 ± 0.68); an independent judiciary and enforcement of the rule of law against culprits (3.48 ± 0.68); effective monitoring units at all levels of recruitment (3.43 ± 0.63); citizen awareness campaign of costs of corruption and of corruption and of citizen rights during recruitment process (3.40 ± 0.74) and a free and trained press to report cases of corruption during recruitment process (3.34 ± 0.69). The overall cluster mean of 3.51 and standard deviations of 0.64 has revealed that the degree of agreement of librarians on all the strategies was high.

Table 2. Mean rating and Standard Deviation of librarians’ responses on the strategies used to improve on recruitment and selection process of librarians in the university libraries under study

Items Statement	N	\bar{X}	SD	R	Decision
Performance at interview as benchmark	95	3.71	0.52	1st	Agree
Equity and fairness as benchmark	95	3.63	0.60	2nd	Agree
Recruitment should be done according to relevant discipline	95	3.56	0.65	3rd	Agree
Having channels for reporting cases of corruption during recruitment	95	3.52	0.62	4th	Agree
Integrity of decision makers during recruitment process	95	3.49	0.60	5th	Agree
Government institutions should have checks and balances during recruitment	95	3.49	0.68	5th	Agree
An independent judiciary, and enforcement of the rule of law against culprits	95	3.48	0.68	6th	Agree
Effective monitoring units at all levels of recruitment	95	3.43	0.63	7th	Agree
Citizen awareness campaign of costs of corruption and of corruption and of citizen rights during recruitment process	95	3.40	0.74	8th	Agree
A free and trained press to report cases of corruption during recruitment process	95	3.34	0.69	9th	Agree
Cluster mean		3.51	0.64		Agree

Key: N = Population, \bar{X} = mean, SD =standard deviation, R = Ranking

5. Discussions

The results suggest that the librarians identified the challenges to include: ethnicity influence; favoritisms; recruitment based on godfatherism; dwindling budgetary allocation; no adherence to the planning process of recruitment; nepotism; religion influence; cronyism; and bribery.

Also, The findings also revealed that the strategies used to improve on recruitment of librarians in the university libraries under study are: performance at interview as benchmark; equity and fairness as benchmark; recruitment should be done according to relevant discipline; having channels for reporting cases of corruption during recruitment; integrity of decision makers during recruitment process; and government institutions should have checks and balances during recruitment.

Base on the findings the following recommendations were given:

- Recruitment and selection process of qualified librarians should be done according to the laid down procedures in other to recruit the best.
- The library management should ensure that an independent judiciary, and enforcement of the rule of law against culprits be adhere to, so as to enable equity and fairness during recruitment and selection of librarians.

6. Conclusion

The challenges facing recruitment and selection of librarians in Nigerian university libraries have to be curbed. The influence of ethnicity, nepotism, federal character principle godfatherism, favoritism etc has to be put to stop if only the university management really want the best crops of librarians. The implication is that, if the right channels to curb the challenges are not strictly adhere to, it will jeopardize the recruitment and selection process of librarians. These challenges must be surmounted if the library management has channels for reporting cases of corruption during recruitment as well as an independent judiciary, and enforcement of the rule of law against culprits, this will help to sanitize the system as well improve the recruitment and selection process of librarians.

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