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# How centralized recruitment influence employee's turnover in Tanzania Local Government Authorities: Experience from Moshi Municipal Council

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## **Abstract**

*The recruitment of different human resources in Tanzania local government authorities is centrally organized through the Tanzania Public Service Recruitment Secretariat. The aim has been to facilitate the recruitment of competent personnel to fill identified vacant posts in different local authorities. Despite the positive contributions of centralized recruitment including the recruitment of competent staffs, the system has been blamed for causing labor turnover among centrally recruited staffs. However, little was known as to how centralized recruitment influenced labor and therefore this aim of this article is to show how centralized recruitment influence labor turnover in local authorities. The study employed case study design whereby Moshi Municipal Council was chosen. Documentary review and in depth interviews were used to collect data whereby a total of six respondents were interviewed. Findings shows that centralized recruitment influence employees turnover because employees are recruited from different places to work in a new areas which they are not familiar with something which later affect their relationships with employers and therefore decides to leave. Conclusively, this paper calls for government attention to revisit the decision of recentralizing human resources recruitment and build the capacity of local authorities to recruit their employees.*

**Key words;** Recruitment, Centralized recruitment, Human resources Turnover and Human resources retention

## **1. Introduction**

In the current world of globalization and increasing work force diversity, the living challenge has been how to attract, recruit and retain competent and skilled personnel. There is no doubt that organizations (both public and private owned) which manage to attract, recruit and retain their employees enjoy competitive advantage over its rivals. According to Olowu and Adamolekun (2005 cited in , Das & Baruah, 2013) securing and managing competent human resources as the

most critical resources of any organization, lead to creating an organization which is effective and efficient in delivery of goods and services whether in public or private sector.

Human resources recruitment which refers to the process of finding and engaging potential people in the organization (Karemu, Kahara, Veronese, & Josee, 2014) is one of the important human resources management function which influence success or failure of an organization. It is the hiring process which to a great extent determines the fate of an organization in terms of the kind of personnel it recruits based on their competency.

Centralized human resources recruitment is linked to a traditional model of public administration which was characterized with centralized human resources management practices. In this model, everything which has to do with human resource management is bounded with strict rules and regulations. In this case, human resources recruitment was highly centralized through strong established central agencies (Brown 2004). Through centralized recruitment, candidates apply the job through an agency which is responsible in recruiting and posting the successful candidates to respective locations. Centralized human resources recruitment has been accepted as one of the method of recruiting competent candidate without any elements of nepotism and corruption and help to have accurate national statistics regarding employment trends and available personnel in the organizations (Njovu, 2013). Despite its positive contributions, the system has never been free from criticisms whereby it has been criticized in so many ways including the delay in filling the identified vacant posts due to existence of rigid procedures which take a lot of considerable time. Also the system has been negatively attacked due to the fact that it is not possible for the central government to know exactly the need of human resources in local authorities (Nabaho, 2013).

Though recruitment is concerned mainly with attracting and enrolling skilled personnel in the organization, it has been identified as one of the factors which may influence employees' retention or turnover in an organization depending on how and where these employees were recruited. For example the use of strategic recruitment process like the use of associations, psychometric tests, websites, targeting specific professionals, employing head hunting strategies process have been identified as influencing factors towards employee retention (Mbugua, Waiganjo, & Njeru, 2015). Decentralized human resources recruitment has been mentioned as a contributing factor in retaining potential personnel due to the fact that, majority of those who are recruited are living within the area and therefore are familiar with the environment as compared to those who are coming from other places (Munga, Songstad, Blystad, & Mæstad, 2009).

Tanzania is one of the developing countries which have decided to centralize its human resources recruitment practices despite having decentralization policy for some years now. Under decentralization by devolution policy, Tanzania is committed to devolve some functions to local authorities including human resources management functions. Under this policy, local authorities were to be empowered to hire, fire, pay and oversee their own staff (Tidemand & Msami, 2008). Following this, local authorities had had their own employment bodies which were responsible for recruitment process. However, while local authorities were enjoying such freedom, a lot of weaknesses were identified including the malpractices of the processes

featured with some elements of corruption, nepotism and recruitment of unqualified staffs (Njovu, 2013).

Because of identified weakness of decentralized human resources recruitment through local government authorities, the government of Tanzania decided to centralize the process in 2009 and confer the mandate to the established Tanzania Public Service Recruitment Secretariat. The secretariat has been mandated to recruit, select and post employees to different local authorities which have identified the available vacant positions (Njovu, 2013).

Following its establishment, the system has been receiving positive recommendations as it facilitate the recruitment of qualified staffs and facilitate equal distribution of human resources into different places. However in recent years there has been complains among leaders in local authorities through different channels on the commitment of centrally recruited staffs to stay. There have been some reported cases of centrally recruited employees who report to their posted work places and decide to leave even before commencing working and others drop out and decide to quit (Njovu, 2013). However, little is known as to how centralized recruitment influence employees' turnover. Because of this lacuna in literature particularly since the establishment of centralized recruitment in Tanzania, this paper therefore aimed at finding out how centralized recruitment influence employee turnover in Tanzania local government authorities with a specific case of Moshi Municipal Council.

## **2.0 Literature review**

### **2.1 Centralized recruitment**

Recruitment as one of the human resources function can be centralized or decentralized. Centralized human resources recruitment which is linked to centralized human resources management has been aimed at solving the problem of nepotism in hiring process, providing equal opportunity together with facilitating the recruitment of competent personnel to be dispersed in decentralized units (Berman et al. 2012 cited in Njovu, 2013). Centralized recruitment has also being advocated for its ability to recruit competent staff (Munga et al., 2009).

In this case, centralized recruitment has been accepted as the best recruitment method even in the previously decentralized practices where some critical weaknesses were revealed including nepotism and poor distribution of human resources to the areas with a need (Wang, Collins, Tang, & Martineau, 2002). Despite all these recognitions and praises the system has been

### **2.2 Centralized recruitment and Human resources turnover**

A good number of literatures have been eying on exploring and discussing factors for human resources turnover and/or retention by trying to find out which factors influence turnover and/or retention (see Afifi, 1991; Cohen, 1999; Das & Baruah, 2013; Ramlall, 2003; Twum-darko & Town, 2013). A lot of issues have been identified as the reasons for employee's retention/turnover including the type of leadership, attractive packages as benefits and motivation to mention few (Muceke, Iravo, & Namusonge, 2012; Muir & Li, 2014; Twum-darko & Town, 2013; Wambui, 2012). The influence of centralized recruitment on employees' turnover, which is the central theme of this paper, has been given little attention in existing body of literature. Only

Njovu 2013 managed to show that centralized recruitment is linked with the increase of labor turnover in local government authorities whereby majority of centrally recruited staffs fail to report to their posted areas and those who report very few stay.

It is with no doubt that the process of recruitment and all its modality have something to do with employee retention/turnover in any organization. Each employee desires better working conditions that will help sustaining his/her life. In this case, recruiting an employee who is full of expectations centrally and allocate him/her to a remote area where there is little chance of meeting the expectations, turnover became an inevitable condition ( Munga et al., 2009).

### **2.3 Human resources recruitment in Tanzania Public service**

Since the attainment of independence in 1961, Tanzania Public service has been undergoing several reforms which were aiming at improving and strengthening the availability and capacity of human resources for effective and efficient service delivery. Like any other developing country which was under colonial oppression, Tanzania took some initiatives to improve its public services for growth and economic wellbeing. All these reforms can be grouped into different phases from independence 1962 to 1970, the decentralization phase 1972 to 1984, the structural adjustment/civil service reform phase 1987 to 1999, and last the current public service reform programme which started in 2000 (Annual, Conference, & Africa, 2006). In all these reforms human resources management in local authorities have been changing accordingly. However, for the purpose of this paper, we can careful trace the human resources recruitment function in local authorities from 1972 where all local government authorities were abolished and all issues regarding human resources management like recruitment and distribution of human resources in local government were done by the central government through the Civil Service

Department ( Munga et al., 2009). The central recruitment system didn't last longer whereby it was later transferred to the Local Government Service Commission which was responsible not only for recruitment and distribution of human resources in local authorities but also with issues relating to rewarding, promoting, and transfer just to mention few (URT 1982 cited in Njovu, 2013). These practices under the Local Government Service Commission, didn't not also last longer whereby following the adoption of decentralization by devolution policy all activities of human resources management were mandated to respective local authorities. In this case, human resources recruitment as one of the functions of human resources management was done by local authorities through their established employment boards (URT, 1998).

Despite its positive contributions in the management of human resources in local government authorities, decentralized human resources management did not escape from fatal criticisms. Several issues were raised against the decentralized practices including the issues of corruption during recruitment process, lack of capacity of local authorities employment bodies in terms of skills and knowledge something which led to the recruitment of incompetent personnel (Munga et al., 2009). All these negative practices led to the establishment of centralized recruitment whereby local government authority staffs are centrally recruited and posted into different places with vacant position. The Tanzania Public Service Recruitment Secretariat was

established in 2009 and conferred mandate to recruit staffs for local government authorities and some other public institutions (URT 2007).

The new centralized recruitment under the public service secretariat, has been receiving some positive comments like it has helped to facilitate the recruitment of competent staffs, provides equal employment opportunities and equal distribution of staffs (Njovu, 2013).

### 3. Methodology

The major objective of this paper was to find out whether centralized recruitment influence employee's retention. In this case, the focus was to find out centralized recruitment influence human resources turnover in the organization. To facilitate the study, a single case study design was adopted for the purpose of having in depth understanding of the centralized recruitment and how it influence employees turnover. Literature suggests that for in depth understanding of the phenomena, case study is of great help as it will create a room to understand how and why issues ( Yin, 2003). Moshi Municipal Council as one among Tanzania local government authorities was chosen. Data collection process started by having in depth documentary review, whereby human resources management reports on recruitment and turnover were reviewed to establish the recruitment and turnover trends during pre and after centralized recruitment. This was followed by in depth interviews with Municipal officers including the two human resources officers and four heads of departments who make a total of six participants. The collected data from documentary review and interviews were analyzed through content and thematic analysis whereby different themes were identified and developed.

### 4. Findings

#### 4.1 The condition of recruitment and turnover before centralized recruitment (2006-2009)

In order to establish as to what extent centralized recruitment has contributed turnover rates, researcher decided to review previous reports on recruitment and turnover trends at Moshi District Council for four years 2006- 2009. Findings shows that a total of 61 employees were recruited into different departments as it is shown in the table below.

Table 4.1 Number of recruited employees under decentralized process (2006-2009)

Source; Researcher (2016)

Department	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Human Resource & Administration	2	-	-	1	3
Finance	1	-		2	3
Transport	-	3	-	-	3
Education	15	5	3	2	25
Works & Building	-		1	3	4
Water	2	-	-	1	3
Procurement	-	-	-	-	-
Health	4		2	4	10
Other department	2	4	3	1	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>61</b>

After finding out how many were recruited before centralized recruitment, researchers wanted to find out how many turnovers occurred during this period. It was found that out of 61 recruited employees, 11 which are equal to 18% had left the organization.

Table 4.2 Number of employees who had left the organization (2006- 2009)

Year	No of employees	Turnover
2006	26	4
2007	12	5
2008	9	2
2009	14	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>11</b>

Source; Researcher (2016)

#### 4.2 Turnover rates after centralization of recruitment

In order to get the rates of those who left the organization, we first wanted to find out how many employees were recruited under centralized recruited from 2010 to 2015. It was found that a total of 189 employees from different professions were recruited as it is shown in the table below

Table 1 Number of employees who were centrally recruited since 2010-2015

Department	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Human Resource & Administration	4		2			1	7
Finance	4		2	1		3	10
Transport	5			1		4	10
Education	26	15	7	12	5	6	71
Works & Building	7	3			2		12
Water	1	4			2		7
Procurement	4		2	3	1		10
Health	10	7		2	2	4	25
Other department	11	9	1	6		10	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>189</b>

Source (Researcher, 2016)

After getting exactly figure of those who were recruited centrally, we wanted to establish the total number of employees who left the organization since 2010 to 2015. It was found that out 189 recruited employees, 53 which is equal to 28% of all recruited employees, left the organization to join other organizations as it is shown in the table below

**No of employees who left the Organization**

Year	Centrally recruited	Turnover	Retention
2010	72	17	55
2011	38	7	31
2012	14	9	5
2013	25	10	15
2014	12	8	4
2015	28	2	26
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>136</b>

Source (Researcher, 2016)

**4.3 How centralized recruitment influence the turnovers**

Comparing to the previous decentralized recruitment practices, the number of those who have left the organization under centralization is bigger, even though the number of those who were recruited centrally is also big. In this case, researchers wanted to find out how centralized recruitment has influenced the turnovers

**4.3.1 Difference between a place of recruitment and place of work**

Under centralized recruitment employees apply through and centrally recruited then posted into different regions, municipal or districts where there is a need. In this case, most of the time those posted employees find themselves in a new environment which to majority of them appears to be challenging and henceforth reduce their commitment. During the interview with the Municipal human resources officer he argued that;

*“...majority of newly recruited employees found it hard to cope with new environment. Someone is recruited from a place which is more than one thousand kilometers, coming to work to a new place which he/she is unfamiliar with. It is a problem as compared to the time when we were recruiting on our own where many applicants were within the region and therefore more familiar with the environment”*

These findings are in line with those by Munga et al., 2009 who also found that employees who were centrally recruited and posted by the central government had less commitment to work in areas they were posted as compared to those who were applied and recruited directly by the district authorities.

**4.3.2 Centralized recruitment affects employer-employees relations**

Employer and employees relationship has been identified as a critical factor in influencing employees retention in the organization whereby whenever there is a positive relationship employees are motivated and committed to their job (Aguenza, Puad, & Som, 2012; Markos, 2010). Findings from this study shows that, centralized recruitment has negatively affected the employer and employee relations and therefore results into discomfort among recruited employees. It was argued that recruiting employees through local employment boards create a



sense of belongingness among employees to a respective organization and therefore in one way or the other the relationship between employees and employer will be healthier one.

Through interview one respondent argued that;

*“The current centralized recruited has reduced to a great extent the employer-employees relations as compared to the previous practices. This has in turn affected employees’ motivation and dedication to work, and therefore decided to leave”*

This argument is supported by the findings of Njovu, 2013 whereby despite the fact that few people agreed to this argument but it was found that decentralized recruitment had a positive contribution in creating conducive relationship between employer and employee and therefore employees become motivated and committed to work something which makes them stay in the organization.

### **Discussion**

Among of the primary motives of adopting the decentralization by devolution policy by the government of Tanzania was to empower local government authorities to have the ability to manage the affairs of human resources from hiring payment. Among of the activities which were performed by local government authorities were recruitment, selection and posting employees into different areas identified with shortages within their geographical jurisdiction. However, because of some identified weakness of the system centralized recruitment came into existence. The issue of employees’ turnover has been there in many Tanzania local government authorities caused by different reasons like poor working conditions characterized with low salary and lack of motivation to mention few. However, after the establishment of centralized recruitment the problem of turnover among centrally recruited staff has been emerging as new disease in the realm of human resources management which needs special attention.

From the findings it is clear that centralized recruitment is in one way or the other causing employee turnover. The question is, to what extent this problem will continue to develop and affect human resource management specifically in local authorities where majority of Tanzanian lives? It is high time for the government to revisit the decision which led to the recentralization of human resources recruitment. Think of a person who was born and grew in Kilombero- Morogoro, studying and graduate at Mzumbe University Morogoro. The same person is centrally recruited to work as a ward executive officer in some remote parts Kakonko Kigoma almost 1000s Kilometers from Morogoro. To what extent this person is likely to work with those local authorities given the nature of environment which is new, the package and related benefits?

The issue of going back to centralization of some human resources functions is against the predetermined vision of adopting decentralization policy. It is like sliding ten steps back out of the fifteen made steps towards attaining the defined local government authorities autonomy in administrative issues.

## Conclusion

Building strong institutions that will serve the public with excellence requires a pool of well educated, trained and motivated staffs who understand the nature of the environment and utilizes the available opportunities. In this case retaining those competent staffs remains the paramount goal to any institution. This calls for public service management in Tanzania to find mechanisms that will help to retain centrally recruited personnel including offering attractive benefits with a focus to those who are posted in remote areas where life seems to be difficult due to absence of needed infrastructures. Also there is a need to revisit the decision of establishing centralized recruitment system specifically to local authorities and return the power to them. Some of the justifications of low capacity of employment boards in terms of skills and knowledge needs to be addressed.

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