Balancing Diversity in Human Resource Management: A Discourse of the Federal Character Principle in Edo State Civil Service

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Abstract

The thrust of this paper is on Balancing Diversity in Human Resource Management in Edo State Civil Service. Nigeria as a pluralist nation has consistently sought for appropriate policy or policies in the formulation and adoption of alternatives which will truly cater for the needs of diverse ethnic groups that constitute the nation. However, the viability of these principles in addressing the issue of diversity management, discrimination and imbalance in the composition and conduct of public institutions in Nigeria have very high inclination to their ethnic identities .The methodology of this paper is based on secondary sources .This paper relied on the representative bureaucracy theory which is more or less a democratic model to give us a theoretical perspective in understanding this research .The paper found out, amongst others, that the various local government areas in Edo State are not fairly

represented in the State Civil Service. It was also discovered that political party affiliation affects the effective application of the federal character principle in the recruitment process of the Civil Service of Edo State. Furthermore, recommendations were highlighted which include, amongst others , the application of Merit System or meritocracy alongside the application of the federal character principle should become the fulcrum in the recruitment of personnel into the Edo State Civil Service in order not to endanger standards and professionalism .Also, the problem of political selfish manipulation of the principle of the federal character for personal or sectional gain should be checked so defaulters can be punished or prosecuted .

Keywords: **Diversity, Human Resource, Management, Federal Character Principle**

Introduction

The effective and efficient management of diversity in Human Resource Recruitment is an important aspect in an organizational management, be it public or private. This is done so as to attain efficiency in resource control and management. Organizations, be it public or private rely on their Human Resource for its day-to-day functioning; though other factors such as availability of technology, raw material, information, etc make organizational operations possible, but it's actually the Human Resource that makes organizational operation to happen; hence, its importance cannot be over stated.

Civil Service, therefore, can be defined as "the people and departments in government who are not involved directly in the creation and judging of laws, but rather, are the ones who deal with the regulation and implementation of the laws on a daily basis. It also refers to either a branch of governmental service in which the basis of professional merit is proven

by competitive examinations or a body of employees in any government agency other than the military". The Civil Service are governmental parastatal is located in all the thirty-six (36) states in Nigeria. It is charged with the duty of carrying out developmental programs, all geared towards the advancement of diverse groups. It may not be out of place for one to say that the Civil Service is the "eyes, hands and legs of government" because it is through it that government actually carries out and monitor all of its developmental projects, ranging from environment, health to agricultural and education. The Civil Service is a government establishment which automatically gives every citizen, irrespective of tribe and ethnicity equal right to employment. This fact undoubtedly portrays the diversity in Human Resource Recruitment in the Civil Service of Edo State and Nigeria by extension, and further highlights the crucial nature of Human Resource Recruitment and the management of its diversity. Bernard & Bernadette (2014), assert that

> "The recruitment and selection of staff in any organization be it public or private sector is of paramount importance to the organization. This is so because it is the staff that turns the vision and mission of the organization into reality. Thus, the objectives of any organization can only be realized through the effective co-ordination of the human resource of the organization".

Diversity as a concept is two dimensional in the sense that it can either be a "curse or a blessing". However, in the case of Nigeria, it has proved to be more of the formal than the latter. The lack of cohesion and unity has ravaged the country and is still fostering inter-ethnic distrust, founded on the multi ethnic and lingual nature of Nigeria. The issue of ethnic bias and sentiment has affected all important aspects of the country, ranging from its political culture of favoritism to nepotism where merit is sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity this has become a criterion for recruitment. The Edo

State Civil Service is not left out in the status quo despite the numerous efforts made by government to tap into the benefits inherent in diversity. It is therefore against this background that this study seeks to access the viability of the instrument of federal character principle in managing diversity through HR recruitment in Edo State Civil Service.

Statement of the problem

Nigeria as a plural state is faced with the issue of integrating all ethnic groups in the vital sectors of the economy. The Civil Service Commission which is made up of all ministries and commissions located in the 36 states of the country is essential to the development of the nation. This is so because they are charged with the responsibilities of implementing and monitoring governmental programs. In fact they are the mechanism employed by government in meeting its people's direct goals and objectives, (Ekeh, 1989).

The Civil Service of Nigeria is ideally the highest employer of labour in the country, which gives qualified citizen an equal right to employment. This, by implication, entails that people of various ethnicity, ideology and religious affiliation are all entitled to be employed and should be judged with same criteria. Hence, outlining the need for managing diversity in Civil Service recruitment process in Nigeria which Edo State is inclusive will ensure fairness and equity. Efforts have been made by the Nigerian government to tangibly manage diversity in Civil Service recruitment as viewed in the introduction of the federal character principle. The desire of the federal character is to capture all aspects of societal population in Nigeria. This desire is also present in other levels of government in Nigeria.

But ironically, the federal character principle which is meant to unite the various nationalities in the country has been questioned as regards the inconsistency in the human resource procurement process by different or successive government which has led to more deepen acrimony among

various ethnic groups in the Federal Civil Service and Edo State Civil Service in particular. This ugly trend of almost "one – sided" recruitment process in the bureaucratic structure of the Edo State Civil Service has by all implication defeated the true purpose of the aforementioned principle. The main concern of this study is to assess the instrument of federal character principle in managing diversity in Edo State public service recruitment of workforce. It interrogates the extent to which federal character principle ensures local governments spread in employment; the extent to which ethnic balancing is entrenched in the recruitment of human resource; the extent to which the 35% affirmative action to address gender balancing is complied with; and the extent to which other vulnerable residents of the state are catered for.

Objectives of the study

1. Ascertain the roles of ethnicity, religion, political party affiliation in recruitment and selection into the Civil Service of Edo State.

2. X-ray the viability of the federal character principle as a tool for ensuring equality and managing diversity in Human Resource Recruitment process in Edo State Civil Service.

3. Ascertain the extent to which the 35% affirmative action to address gender balancing is addressed.

4. Highlight the factors militating against diversity management in the Human Resource Recruitment process in Edo State Civil Service.

5. Proffer solutions to the factors militating against diversity management in the Human Resource Recruitment process in Edo State Civil Service.

Operational Definition of Terms

Human resource management.

People are vital to organization as they offer perspectives, values and attributes to organizational life and when managed effectively, these human traits can be of considerable benefits to the organization (Joy, Ugocukwu & Ndubuishi, 2015). Human resource is the internal strength of an organization because it is through it that the organization attains it's short and long term goals. While it is true that machines have been developed to do the work humans used to do; it is also true that machines cannot operate themselves; they have to be operated by humans in order to achieve desired results. In asserting the important role human resource play, Asare-Bediako (2008) affirms that, "The ergonomics of the work environment, state of the art equipment as well as quality of raw materials can make production possible, but it is the human resource that actually makes production happen".

Recruitment

According to Monday and Noe (2005), "recruitment is a process of attracting individuals on a timely basis in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications, developing their interest in an organization and encouraging them to apply for jobs within it". This shows clearly that recruitment exercises are not conducted all year round but at a designated time when the need arises. The need arises as a result of vacant positions created by those who left the service as a result of their retirement, withdrawal from service or other reasons.

Civil Service

The Civil Service is the body of public officials employed in the civil capacity to undertake the formulation and implementation of government policies and programs. This can be viewed in terms of structure like ministries, departments, or human occupants of the public offices like

permanent secretaries, ministers and higher administrative staff. Section 2 of the Pension Act of 1951 defines Civil Service as the service in a civil capacity under the government of the federal or in a college, university or a pensionable employment under local authority. (Ngozi & Oluwabukumi, 2015).

Federal Character Principle

The federal character principle is an integrative mechanism which stands for fair and effective representation of the various components of the federation in the country's position of power, status and influence is a highly contested issue in Nigerian polity. As a result, it has attracted the attention of many reputable scholars in Nigeria leading to abundant literatures on the concept of federal character principle and its implementation in the Nigerian public, covering various perspectives. Many scholars regard it as a tool for nation building and development through elimination of dominance of any particular group and marginalization of other groups, while others see its implementation as defeating the purpose for which it was adopted. Federal character principle involves a deliberate plan to construct means of ensuring the proper distribution of amenities and government projects in a country.

It's a policy that was introduced following observed differences in culture, traditions and inequality in human resources as well as the capability to have access to resources (Ezeibe, 2013). This principle according to Heirmexy (2011), was formulated and introduced so as to ensure equitable sharing of posts and even distribution of natural and economic resources.

Theoretical Orientation

The term representative bureaucracy is generally attributed to J. Donald Kingsley's book titled *Representative Bureaucracy* that was published in 1944. In his book, Kingsley calls for a " liberalization of class election for the English bureaucracy," due to the "Dominance of social, political,

and economic elites within the British bureaucracy" which he claimed resulted in programs and political policy that did not meet the needs or interests of all social classes .To solve this issue, Kingsley states that "representative bureaucracy is necessary because there must be at least some administrators sympathetic to the programmatic concerns of the dominant political party". Despite criticism at the time of publication, years later, political scientist Samuel Krislov echoed Kingsley's sentiments in his book also called *Representative Bureaucracy* and this has been expanded upon since then by a number of scholars all over the world (Denhardt,1994).

In Samuel Krislov's book, he states that in much, if not all, of bureaucracy's history, the perception of bureaucracy has had the identification of being entities covered in red tape and having an antagonistic approach to the public (Krislov, (2012). The theory posits that the active representation of group interests occurs because individual bureaucrats reflect the views of those who share their demographic backgrounds. "Representative bureaucracy is a notion which advocates that social groups should have spokespersons and office holders in administrative and political positions". With this notion, representative bureaucracy is a form of representation that captures most or all aspects of a societal population in the governing body of the state.

The theory of representative bureaucracy suggests that a demographically diverse public sector workforce (passive representation) will lead to policy outcomes that reflect the interests of all groups represented, including historically disadvantaged communities (active representation).When representative bureaucracy is utilized, it enables relationships to flourish due to the attempt of even representation of all aspects of societal population. Representative bureaucracy helps to provide "checks and balances" that prevent favoritism (Groeneveld, S. Walle, 2010).

In Bureaucratic representation, it is expected that public administrator and government officials in a bureaucracy represent and

conduct duties that are of concern or in the interest of the individuals and groups they represent and serve. Studies have shown that there are an endless list of variables linking active and passive representation such as class, race, gender, ethnicity, cultural traits as well as language and religion (Beverlin, 2012) . A number of studies have demonstrated a possible linkage between active and passive representation. Active representation is a process while passive representation is a characteristic. The possible linkage between active and passive is one that is complex and perplexing (Lim, 2006). Bureaucratic representation therefore, is when it is expected that public administrator and government officials in a bureaucracy represent and conduct duties that are of concern for the interest of the individuals and groups they represent and serve, and this anchors the principle of diversity .

Diversity Management: A Human Resource Recruitment Perspective

The concept of diversity was initially originated from the United States in the late 1980's (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto & Monga 2009; Meena & Vanka, 2013). However, last two decades has witnessed the development of diversity as a business strategy across the globe. Indian industry has also started leveraging on diversity in order to have social, economic and political gains (Wambui et al., 2013). There are several reasons why diversity has become such a pressing concern recently; prominent amongst globalization, changing labour markets, teamwork strategies, shift from manufacturing to service economies, mergers and alliances, etc. (Cascio, 1998). Diversity initiatives enhance creativity, innovation, global understanding, flexibility and productivity in the organization and produce competitive advantage (Kundu, 2003; Wambui et al., 2013).

Cultivating a diverse workforce isn't just ethical or social but it also demonstrates a good business oriented approach (Bateman & Snell, 2008). In the light of current changes sweeping across the globe, diversity has increasingly become a hot issue in the corporate world (Henry & Evans,

2007). Diversity refers to the entire spectrum of human characteristics that make people different from one another (Gomez-Mejia, 2010). Diversity can also be perceived as the variety or multiplicity of demographic features that characterize a company's workforce, particularly in terms of race, gender, culture, national origin, handicap, age and religion (Dessler, 2011).

Human resource diversity acknowledges the reality that people differ in many visible and invisible ways (Shen et al., 2009) which mainly includes national origin, age, gender, race, marital status, social status, disability, education, language, sexual orientation, religion, physical appearances, ethnicity and culture (Kundu, 2003). Diversity refers to a heterogeneous set of individuals who acknowledge, understand, value and respect (Wambui et al., 2013) each other's demographic, physical, biological, social and psychological differences.

The Nigeria Civil Service

The Nigerian Civil Service originated from a humble beginning and is dated back to the colonial era. Nwabuike (1999) revealed that among the activities which kick started the Nigerian Civil Service are the merger of the Niger Company in 1899, the creation of the protectorate of northern and southern Nigeria in 1900; the merger of Lagos colony with southern Nigeria in 1906 and the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates in 1914. During the colonial era, the nation Nigeria saw a single unit Civil Service which comprised of few senior Civil Servants of European extracts and few Nigerians who were charged with the responsibilities of providing secondary services such as clerks, court messengers, dispensers, teachers, etc.

However, the Civil Service has evolved over the years and has become Nigerian's greatest employment mechanism. These evolvements saw a "Nigerianlized Civil Service" as Nigerians occupy all the positions in the commission. The Nigerianlization of the Civil Service brought about

diversity in Human Resource Recruitment because it saw the employment of people of all walks of life, diverse educational qualifications, religious affiliation, cultural aspiration and moral value. This diversification of the Civil Service workforce has streamlined the need for effective management in the recruitment process. On a bid to address this issue in a manner that embodies all elements of fairness, equality, inclusiveness and equal participation of all citizens regardless of tribe, religious affiliation, ethnicity and other sentimental attachments, the government of Nigeria adopted the federal character principle.

The pluralistic nature of Nigeria has introduced diversity in Human Resource Recruitment because Nigeria as a federal society with 36 component states and an estimated population of 180 million segmented into over 250 ethnic groups which makes an arrangement that could accommodate the different segments of the country in the public bureaucracy without any segment feeling marginalized such as federal character a necessity (Gberevbie, 2012). Hence, on its quest of sharing the "national cake" and to enable the Civil Service to meet its mandates, the nation has constantly strived to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of its people without undermining the peculiarities of the multi-ethnic groups which make up the country. These have led to several Civil Service reforms witnessed in the country such as the Adebo Commission of 1971, Udoji Public Service Review Commission of 1974, Dotun Philips Civil Service Reform of 1988, and Allison Ayida Committee on Civil Service of 1995 (Tonwe & Oghator, 2009).

Nzeshi (2012) noted that, "Often times these policy alternatives turn out to be deliberate arrangements when carefully conceived, crafted and practiced, will provide an opportunity for centre seeking and centre-fleeing forces to interact peacefully and co-habit on agreed terms. One of such policy alternatives adopted for the management of public service in Nigeria is the federal character principle which was borne out of the need to ensure an even spread of government appointments at all federal states and local

government councils in the country". The concept of federal character was first popularized under the Murtala/Obasanjo regime (1975 – 1979). It became a constitutional matter in the Constitution Drafting Committee as well as the Constituent Assembly, which was the progenitor of the 1979 constitution. It finally inculcated into the 1979 constitution as a directive principle of state policy (Osaghae, 1988).

An Appraisal of the Federal Character Principle in Diversity Management

Gboyega (1989) Fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy in the 1979 constitution explains federal character to mean that the composition of the federal government or any of its agencies and the conduct of their affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to recognize the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and to command national loyalty. Accordingly, the predominance in that government or its agencies of persons from a few ethnic or other sectional groups shall be avoided. The above constitutional mandate was made with a view to enhancing participation of people from different segments of the Nigerian society in the process of governance (Gboyega, 1989: 177). The principle was introduced to take care of some problems in the political process including, ethnicity, minority problem, discrimination based on Cashment Area, resources allocation, power sharing, employment in public institutions. (Afigbo, 1989). The Federal Character Principle while aiming at ensuring equality amongst the component units had as its very heart the eschewing of all forms of group imbalance in public institutions and affairs (Obiyan & Akindele, 2002).

It has been argued that in striving to ensure equality for the unequal, federal character principle has become discriminatory. The interpretation of the federal character on the basis of state and ethnicity is regarded by some as inadequate as other social division in Nigeria include class, religion and ideological divisions. Operations of federal character tend to give more

powers to the politically dominant groups, creating wider power disparity between the stronger and weaker groups (Ikime, 2002). Though the basic role of the federal character principle was to foster national building, its implementation had been fraught with different problem as it had resulted in tension among the component units of the federation. The reasons for the tensions are as follows, the fuzziness that pervades its application in certain areas, the arbitrariness that seems to company its application even in areas where the application seems straight, especially during military regimes, lack of political will from the leading elite to employ sanctions when the rules are breached, and lack of definite guideline in achieving balance between equity and efficiency in the application of the principle (Onyeoziri, 2002).

These factors tend to highlight the liabilities to the judicious practice of the principle and poses serious encumbrances to the realization of sustainable development in Nigeria. Federal Character Principle instead of ameliorating the negative effects of ethnocentrism, provokes ethno-regional division. It suffers from a fundamental contradiction as a policy for ensuring nation building or national integration. The principle does not encourage treating individuals as members of the nation-state, but views them from the lens of ethno-linguistic group within the nation state, thereby reinforcing the integration of the units instead of the nation-state (Onyeoziri, 2002). On the inconsistency in the application of the Federal Character Principle in Nigeria, Gboyega (1989) noted that issues of making public institutions reflect the federal character was taken up haphazardly giving rise to arbitrariness and victimization of some unfortunate public servants. Ekeh (1989) taking a similar position argues that "the most radical and damaging application of federal character has been in the bureaucracies and public services of the federation where permanent secretaries have been kicked around, removed and sometimes dismissed".

Recommendations

In view of the research finding, the following recommendations are made in order to enhance the general effectiveness of the application of Federal Character Principle in the recruitment and selection process in the Edo State Civil Service.

1. The Application of Merit System alongside the application of the Federal Character Principle should become the fulcrum in the recruitment of personnel into the Edo State Civil Service in order not to endanger standards and professionalism.

2. There is need to strike a balance between the application of Federal Character Principle, quota system and the Merit principle in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the service, and for equity, unity and fair play to prevail in the state.

3. The problem of political manipulation of the Principle of the Federal Character for personal or sectional gain should be checked, defaulters punished and prosecuted.

4. Educational developmental programmes should be carried out in the State by the government; in order to enable each local government provides qualified persons to represent them in the distribution of positions in the public service.

5. The federal Character commission should always inspect civil and public service institutions to ensure proper implementation of Federal Character Principle and to guard against violation of equal representation.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that the Federal Character Principle application in the recruitment and selection process into the Edo State Civil Service promotes a sense of belonging among various ethnic diversities in the State. The

Federal Character Principle being practiced in the Edo State Civil Service needs to give a sense of oneness to all ethnic diversities in the state. The study further concludes that as regard the 35% affirmative action women are not adequately represented as recruits in the recruitment and selection process into the Civil Service of Edo State.

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