

The Nexus between Federal Character Policy and the Nigeria Civil Service

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Abstract: The Federal government of Nigeria established the Federal character policy as a measure to check the problem of employment distribution, inequality and marginalization as perceived in the civil service of the country. It is against this backdrop that the paper sought to conceptualize the relationship between the Federal character policy of employment equality and the employment distribution civil service of Nigeria. Secondary source of data collection was used for this paper, specifically scholarly journals, text books, articles, handbooks, governmental official document and dictionaries was consulted and used for this study. For the purpose of analyses the study adopts the content analysis of scholarly publications. The research discovered that the whole essence of the establishment of the Federal character policy as a measure for equitable distribution of governmental employment in the civil service of Nigeria created an admirable nexus between the civil service and federal character policy but more needs to done at the interpretation and implementation stage. Hence, this paper recommends a strict adherence to policy guidelines and massive orientation in order to guarantee better understanding that will ensure a more cordial relationship.

Keywords: Federal character policy; Civil Service, Employment Distribution; States; Policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many countries of the world are confronted with series of challenges and crisis of various forms like terrorism, poverty, immigration, internal displacement (IDP), degradation, and recession, but the African situation is uniquely different with Sub-Sahara Africa countries like Sudan, South Sudan, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Guinea and Nigeria remains in conflicts among ethnic, states, geo-political zones and tribal groups due to perceive marginalization and fear of domination of some sections of the countries and the height of these marginalization and domination of some sections of the over the others has led to crisis of great proportion at various times in the history of the region. For example South African crisis in the early 1990's was between Xhosas, Zulus and the other blacks, in Rwanda the conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi in 1994, in Kenya the geographical and ethnic diversity of the 2007 in addition to the weak states institutions; and policy implementation mechanism further manifested in the level of inequality in the employment distribution into public service of those countries (Irobi, 2005).

The Nigerian situation is not different as it is further worsening by the fear of domination by some geo-political zones and states over the other. To Kirk-Greene (1975) fear remain a constant phenomenon ever since independent in Nigeria, surprising the fear is not the physical fear over violence, not the retributive fear over spiritual attack, but the psychological, discriminatory and fear over domination of one state over the other especially in getting one's quota in the employment into the civil service of the central government. Especially in the distributions of available employment which is often perceived as uneven and in favor certain group over another leading to mobilization of marginalized groups to seek for equality and fairness, which is further compounded by the high level of unemployment in some all the geo-political zones and state of the country (Irobi, 2005; Majekodunmi, 2013).

The distribution of the available employments is lopsided due political reasons and the inherent political manipulation and unjust treatment of some section of the country. The country Nigeria has a multiethnic state structure with an unending crisis marginalization; rancorous difference among the ethnic groups/sectional groups with inherent the fear of domination of one state by another to unequal distribution of job amongst the state in the country (Mafos, 2015). The problem of marginalization that characterized the Nigeria state is further buttress in the civil service which remain excessively polarized as well as lacking transparency in the employment distribution by the Federal Civil Commission in the face of the Federal character policy which is suppose to guarantee equality and fairness (Akinwale, 2014).

The disparity in employment equality in the civil service of Nigeria has become more worrisome and confusing due to the lopsidedness in the distribution of employments among the states and geopolitical zones of the country. This disparity in the civil service employment distribution can lead to grievous consequences such as conflict among states and geopolitical zones of the country, and even war especially with the growing tension in the country over sectional marginalization and high sense of inequalities that exist between the state and regions (Ibor, et al, 2015). The employment and selection process over the years is weighed down by nepotism and favoritism at the expense of equality and fairness to “man know man basis” (Justice, et al, 2015).

In order to address these lopsidedness, inequality, marginalization and the predominance of states and sectional groups in the civil service of the countries and to guarantee national co-existence in a multiethnic nation of Nigeria. The Nigeria government came up with the Federal character policy (Commission) as a policy mechanism to ensure employment equality, considering the diversity of the people and the need to ensure the promotion of the sense of belonging and to guarantee equal percentage representation among all the sections of the countries particularly in employment distribution among geopolitical zones and states of the country.

It is against this backdrop that the study sought to examine the relationship between the policy of Federal character policy of employment equality and the civil service of Nigeria as perceived by scholars.

2. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

Federal character policy:

Federal character policy is defined as an action or measure of the government and the desire of the people of Nigeria to promote unity, equality and foster national loyalty and give citizens of the country a sense of belonging to the nation, notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, geopolitical group, culture, language or religion which may exist especially distribution of employment and to nourish and harness to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Oyadiran & Toyin, 2015)

Civil service:

The civil service falls under the wider public service of any country which includes people in government ministries, agencies, departments and units who advice, develop and implement policies and programmes of the government and the assist in managing the day to day activities (Rao, 2013). The civil service is an important arm of government because it support and ensure good governance, provide access to public service, carryout the implementation of economic policy, manage public revenue and expenditure, it assist in maintaining fiscal sustainability and guarantee institutional development (Schiavo-Campo & Sundaram, 2001). Nigerian civil service has it origin clearly rooted in the time of British colonialist period. The civil service of Nigeria is an organized body of employee of the government entrusted with the administration duty of the nation and having mandate of carrying out the policies decision of the government through her day to day activities (Nwanolue & Iwuoha, 2012).

3. THE NEXUS BETWEEN FEDERAL CHARACTER POLICY AND NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE

In examining the relationship between the federal character policy and Nigerian civil service Ugoh and Ukpere (2012) sees it as that policy measure put in place by the Nigerian government to ensure all inclusive and integration of different sections of Nigeria into the civil service of the country especially in the employment distribution and strengthening of unity, peace, equal ability to the activities of the service and to serve as a means of improving the standard of living of the citizenry. Ugoh & Ukpere (2012) further posted that the major problem of Nigeria being continuous ethnic and sectional rivalry in maneuvering their ways into the civil service and it is believed that the federal character policy better position to guarantee equality and fairness in the aspect of employment distribution in the service.

Edet (2014) viewed the federal character policy as a corrective measure against the inter-ethnic rivalry towards securing domination in government especially in the civil service of the country. This necessitated the provisions of the policy as a captured in the constitution in order to prevent the domination of certain persons or group of people from taking up majority of the employment activities or process of the Nigerian civil service. In the same vein Ake (1993) sees the federal character policy as an established act aimed to ensure fairness and justice among all the groups and sections of Nigeria in the federal civil service of the country.

Oyedeji (2016) sees the established of the policy of federal character policy as that provision enacted to redress the imbalances and perceived injustices in the society and particular in the civil service of Nigeria. Furthermore, perceived the federal character policy as that provision intended to ensure and guarantee equal opportunities for certain section of the population to access every available job offer at the civil service of the country without limitation or restriction. The policy equally foster national integration in the civil service of Nigeria by downplaying all forms of discrimination based on sex, status, section of the country one belongs and religious and enhancing unity of purpose in the service (Oyedeji, 2016).

Similarly, Oyadiran & Toyin (2015) sees the federal character policy as an enactment of the government to enhance political integration of all sections or geopolitical zones of the country which are to be represented in the civil service of the country especially in the employment distribution. Oyadiran & Toyin (2015) believe would correct the discrimination, tribalism and nepotism of the past, and ensure fairness among all the geopolitical zones, and this stability and inclusive civil service will be guaranteed in Nigeria.

According to Ezeibe (2013) federal character policy is a deliberate attempt of the federal government of Nigeria to construct and ensure adequate and proper employment distribution in the civil service of the country. Through the civil service the federal character can assist in unifying the heterogenous and autonomous zones through her quota system which can guarantee equality of opportunities in the civil service of Nigeria (Okorie & Greg, 2013). In addition, Asaju & Egberi (2015) posited that the federal character policy as reactionary, the scholars explain that the policy is a positive reaction of the government toward correcting those practice of the past administrations which happens to exploit the nation diversities with their parochial and selfish consideration which was placed above the national interest. Thus, federal character a principle is that deliberates efforts to correct perceived imbalance and to ensure proper distribution of employment in the civil service of the country (Asaju & Egberi, 2015).

4. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The federal character policy is apparently aimed at ensuring equitable distribution of human and material resources among all sections, state and geopolitical zones of Nigeria, especially in employment distribution into the civil service of the country. This is basically why the employment process into the Nigerian civil service should reflect the principles of federal character which is fairness and equality in the distribution of available position or post. The strict adherence of the principles of federal character in the civil service of Nigeria can eliminate the perceived fear of marginalization in the country and this can strengthen the peaceful coherence in Nigeria. The whole essence of the establishment of the Federal character policy as a measure for equitable distribution of governmental activities in the civil service of Nigeria create an admirable nexus between the civil service and federal character policy but more needs to done at the interpretation and implement stage to ensure equal representation. Every section of the country Nigeria must be greatly represented in the civil service through fair, equal and transparent process of employment in the service. A strict adherence to policy guidelines and massive orientation in order to guarantee better understanding that will ensure a more cordial relationship is need. Through mass orientation and the involvement of policy analysis a better interpretation and implementation is ensured.

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