

Representative Bureaucracy and the Challenges of Diversity Management in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The adoption and application of Representative bureaucracy in Nigeria's public administrative system arose out of the need to manage its diverse populace, to achieve national integration and sustainable development. However the above purpose has not been achieved over the years, thus, this study attempts to examine representative bureaucracy as a tool of diversity management in Nigeria public service, to achieve national integration, nation building and sustainable development. The study utilized the secondary method of data collection and found that the major challenges in diversity management through the application of representative bureaucracy in Nigeria are Lack of meritocracy and heavy presence of ethnocentrism in the public sector. It however, recommended that the principle of merit should be applied in public service employment and appointment as well as admissions into Nigeria tertiary institutions and equal opportunity for all irrespective of ethnic or religious affiliation.

Keywords: Representative Bureaucracy; Federal Character Principle; Public Administration, Nigeria and Diversity Management

INTRODUCTION

The application of the principle of bureaucracy varies to a great extent from country to country depending on a country's historical background and the people concerned. In the contemporary world, there is no on single accepted model of bureaucracy, but there are universally recognized principles of bureaucracy, because there are certain unavoidable implications in the working characteristic of any bureaucracy as stated by the founding fathers. Merit and competent examination are often the basis of recruitment and promotion in an ideal bureaucracy, they subsumes different classes of human being working together to achieve organizational corporate goal. Each one of these classes of humans has a vital obligation to make the organization relevant in the achievement of national development in the society concerned.

To be an encompassing system, a bureaucracy must first of all, consist of a reasonable cross-section of the body politic in terms of occupation, class, geography, and the like; and secondly it must be in tune with the general ethos and attitudes of the society of which it is a part, furthermore, representative bureaucracy is expected to promote upward mobility on the part of the minority

groups in the country and represent the open competition of democracy (Van-Riper, 1958).

Representative bureaucracy as used interchangeably with federal character principle in this study, in Nigeria perspective is derived from the Federal Character Principle (FCP) that is widely seen to have promoted exclusion, especially in appointments in the Nigeria's civil service, and the growing mutual distrust, ethnic loyalty, regionally based agitations for self-governments that follow highlight the issues surrounding the national policy integration model. Performance failures in representative bureaucracy and inclusive governance in Nigeria are not unconnected with the skewed application of FCP. According to Federal Character Commission (FCC, 2006), attainment of public good and unity is a corollary of the spirit of representation in an equitable and transparent manner that accommodates the principle of diversity management in bureaucratic representation as against the ideology of FCP and application.

Onyinshi, A.E. (2018) assert that the principles of representative bureaucracy which is used interchangeably with the federal character principle contends that, the social composition

of a particular public organization is pertinent to their performance and acceptability before the citizens or the general public to which they represent.

The concept gained popularity in Nigeria in the post-independence era due to the prevailing diversity in culture, tradition and religious affiliations in the country after amalgamation. Several scholars consider the term representative bureaucracy or FCP a tool for national integration, nation building and sustainable development through eradication of dominance of any sort especially in areas of appointments and recruitment into public institutions by a particular group within the country, while others perceive its implementation in Nigeria as contrary to the purpose of its adoption by the federal government. It is in the pursuit of national integration, nation building and sustainable development in a diversified society like Nigeria that piloted the adoption of FCP to manage the diversity.

According to Onyishi, A.E. (2018), “the fundamental bases of the federal character principle are to permit the composition and conduct of public institutions and affairs to reflect the heterogeneous character of a given country at a given time. It is rooted on the fact and or, assumptions that a sense of belonging is likely to be evoked from each regional groups that made up the country when national institutions and affairs are reflective of the composition and conduct, of the heterogeneous nature of the country”.

Representative bureaucracy was adopted and enshrined in the 1999 Nigeria constitution to deal with the problem inherent in diversity such as imbalance, marginalization and discrimination in the Nigeria public administration to ensure mutual co-existence, national integration and national development. It was the desire for national integration in a heterogeneous society such as Nigeria that gave rise to the idea of representative bureaucracy or the Federal Character Principle (FCP) in Nigeria public sector. But, the issue at hand now, is whether the government has been able to manage the country’s large diversity to achieve national integration through the adoption of representative bureaucracy or FCP.

It is on the above ground that this study examined the challenges of diversity management in the Nigeria public administration through representative bureaucracy, which is the main objective of the study. The study intends to achieve the above objective by conceptualizing representative bureaucracy and diversity management; and how these two variables interplay in the Nigeria

public administration to achieve the much needed integration and national development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Representative Bureaucracy

The concept of representative bureaucracy is defined as “the notion that public organizations should look like the population they serve” (Andrews, R. et al., 2014). They further contend that the broader an organization is representative of the demographic composition of the population, the more likelihood of representatives of the people who share their values to be more responsive to their needs. The representatives of a people may not know why they are appointed or selected, but because they come from the same geographical description the people feel their interests are secured.

Elaiwu in Cornelius, O.O., and Greg, E. (2013) view the concept of representative bureaucracy as the process of creating unity and sense of belonging among heterogeneous groups in a particular state. While Ezeibe, C.C. (2013), view it as the process of constructing a national identity using the power of the state. It further contended that it involves the process designed for unification of different group of people within the state so that they can remain politically stable and viable in the long run within a given country.

Groeneveld, S. and Van de Walle, S. (2010) examined the three dimensions of representative bureaucracy in the subject of public administration and diversity management as a form of representation that captures virtually all aspects of a society’s groups in the administration of the state. In particular, the concept of representative bureaucracy has been predominantly associated with decentralization, inclusion and management of diverse groups depending on the centralized nature or otherwise of the country’s political system. This is the effect of the dominance of varied ecological factors exemplified by the bureaucratic elites in the social, political and economic domain (Denhardt, R.B. & DeLeon, J.V., 1994), which also results in producing programs and political policy that did not meet the needs or interests of all social classes in managing the special effects of representation.

Gidengil, E. and Vengroff, R. (1997) assert that inclusive public service is characterized by the demographic composition of the populace it serves, and to which its policies apply.

Representative bureaucracy in this study implies the reflection of the pluralistic makeup of a

country or society, in terms of ethnicity, religion and gender respectively, in the recruitment of employees into public institutions.

DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Human diversity has been in existence from the beginning of times. Diversity Management issues abound in many countries and it is expedient that they are proactively identified and appropriately addressed.

According to Danullis, M, & Dehling S. (2004), Diversity Management is the strategic process to manage a diverse workforce-including the fight against stereotypes, prejudice and all kinds of discrimination due to the individuals' perceptions and assumptions in the manner to maximise the benefits and minimize the barriers of different opinions, behaviours and attitudes of human beings within a company.

Diversity management, a part of human resource management, involves the recognition, effective deployment and harmonisation of individual employee idiosyncrasies. Successful diversity management helps managers to maximise employee's knowledge and expertise to better achieve organisational objectives (Allen, D., et al., 2004). Diversity can stem from a wide range of factors including gender, ethnicity, personality, cultural beliefs, social and marital status, disability, or sexual orientation (Shen, J., et al., 2009).

“Diversity management is much more than just a multicultural issue: it is about embracing many different types of people, who stand for different things and represent different cultures, generations, ideas, and thinking” (Llopis, G., 2011).

Diversity Management in this study is the ability to achieve success by utilizing the similarities and differences among people of different age, ethnicity, religion, physical abilities and disabilities, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, personality, perception, attitude and values.

NIGERIA REPRESENTATIVE BUREAUCRACY

“Representative bureaucracy” was first used in Nigeria by the late General M. R. Mohammed as federal character principle (FCP) in his address to the inaugural session of the Constitution Drafting Committee, (CDC) 1979 on the 18th day of October 1975 (C.D.C, 1979)

It is contained in the application of FCP document as expressed below:

Where the number of positions available cannot go round the States of the Federation or the Federal Capital, the distribution shall be on

zonal basis but in the case where two positions are available, the positions shall be shared between the northern and the southern zones. Where the indigenes of a State or the Federal Capital Territory are not able to take up all the vacancies meant for them, the indigenes of any other State(s) or the Federal Capital territory within the same zone shall be given preference in filling such vacancies. Provided that where the zone to which the preference is given fails to take up such vacancy the indigenes from any other zone shall be considered for the appointment (FCC, 2006).

The document refers to the distinct wish of the Nigerians to promote national unity, national loyalty, equity and sense of inclusiveness to every citizen of the nation notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, language or religion which may exist and is their desire to promote and harness to the improvement of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The 1979 constitution Section 14 Subsection 3 defined representative bureaucracy 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 command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or form a few ethnics or other sectional group in that government or any of its agencies. (Constitution of FRN, 1979)

It is obvious from the above report and the federal constitution that adoption of FCP was an effort to address the problem of the prevailing imbalance in bureaucratic structure and ethnic domination in public sector in order to achieve national integration and development amidst the diversity in Nigeria.

Edigin, M. (2010), argued that the principle of representative bureaucracy arose out of the need to ameliorate the prevalent ethnic conflict in the country arising out of the competition over the control of political power, government appointments, citing of public industries and institutions, employment into public organizations as well as admission into federal universities in Nigeria. While Ekeh, P. (1989) is of the view that, the introduction of federal character principle, quota system or representative bureaucracy in Nigeria is an attempt to deal with the problems of mar-

ginalization arising from the distribution of privileges and benefits among the federating

regions or states in Nigeria. This implies that representative bureaucracy as a doctrine of the 1979 constitution sought to provide equity in distribution by preventing any ethnic group from having dominance and exclusive access to these opportunities and benefits inherent in the exercise of state powers and consequently ensuring that every state or region has equal access to the benefits of the state.

In other words, the application of the Federal character principle, the quota system or the representative bureaucracy in the Nigeria public service is seen as the democratization of our public bureaucracy through the principle of representation as contained in the 1979 constitution of Nigeria (Okpata, F.O. 2011). Edigin, M. (2010), Osaghae, E.E. (1988), Ammani, A.A. (2014), opined that representative bureaucracy has helped in national stability and development by reducing ethnic competition and makes it difficult for an ethnic bigot to restrain other ethnic groups from gaining access to political positions/offices and that the Representative bureaucracy desirable and inevitable in a diversified society like Nigeria.

The emphasis of representative bureaucracy as enshrined in the application of Federal character document is that of ethnic representation without recourse to merit. Thus, FCP is to some extent a hindrance to what bureaucracy stood for by the founding fathers of bureaucracy, in terms of competence, meritocracy, professionalism and output performance.

The implementation of representative bureaucracy is a diversity management strategy in Nigeria public service which became non-productive, the application of the principle in Nigeria encourages divisive ethnic sentiments and poses serious challenges to diversity management and the administrative effectiveness in the Nigeria public service, since merit is replaced by favoritism on the platform of federal character principles. Gboyaga, A. (1989) argued that the representative bureaucracy or federal character principle is simply an elite strategy which cannot enhance sustainable development or national integration in Nigeria because it is not designed for such responsibility but for selfish elite's political reason. He maintained that they constitute the ideas of corrupt cabals for their own selfish political interest and use ethnic sentiment to cover their evil intention.

Onyeoziri, F. and Momah, P.O.O. (2002), also argued that the principle is centrifugal, in practice rather than centripetal in Nigeria context, it does not promote a working environment where

individuals or employees are seen as bona fide members of the nation-state, but a situation where they are viewed from the political calculus of ethno-linguistic group within the country, in so doing strengthening the integration of the federating units instead of the nation as a whole.

Sharma, M., et al. (2011) avowed that politicization of public organization breeds unevenness in that institution, which is inimical to organizational growth and accordingly contributes considerably to inefficiency of most public institutions in Nigeria.

There is a glaring divide between the policy formulation and policy Implementation within the framework of FCP in Nigeria resulting in the absence of significant progress for national integration and development. This failure derives from "the compromised bureaucracy" through over-politicization of the institution, especially in the area of appointment. For instance, most of the appointments into by various public institutions by different administrations over the years have echoed exclusion rather than equity.

The implementation of the FCP in Nigeria public service tends to encourage unprincipled performance among public official and limit merit in the area of employments, promotions and appointments. Notably, 70% of Nigeria Foot-soldiers are from Hausa-Fulani; 80% of all Permanent Secretaries in Federal Ministries are from Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba combine; 80% of those given Oil Wells presently in the Oil Niger Delta Region are from Hausa-Fulani; 60% of Generals in the Nigerian Military are from Hausa-Fulani; 60% of the Heads of Parastatals are from Hausa-Fulani; 60% of the Top Ranks in Nigerian Police Force are from Hausa-Fulani; 70% of Nigerian State Security Services (SSS) men are from Hausa-Fulani; 60% Top Posts in each of: Nigerian Prison Services; Nigeria Immigration and Nigerian Ports Authority are from Hausa-Fulani; About 90% of JAMB employees are from both Hausa—Fulani and Yoruba tribes; 80% of all the employees in Federal Secretariat are from both Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba tribes combined; 95% of the professors and workers in National University Commission are from Hausa- Fulani and Yoruba tribes combined; 80% of employees in ICPC and EFCC are Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba combined; 90% of all the Registrars and Bursars of Federal Universities, Federal Colleges of Education, Federal Polytechnics are from both Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba tribes combined; Nigerians in Foreign Missions both of African Union, ECOWAS and United Nations; 98% of

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them are from both Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba tribes combined; 70% of all the Ambassadors and High Commissioners are from Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba tribes combined; 95% of all the employees (staff) of Nigerian High Commissions and Ambassadorial abroad are from Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba tribes combined. This was also the same trend in the Nigerian Railway Corporation: out of a total of 431 names on the current staff list of the Corporation, 270 are Igbo and 161 belong to other tribes. The main reason adduced for the above is that the Chairman was simply an Igbo man and not because the employment is done on merit (as cited in Asaju, K. & Egberi, T. 2015).

Nigeria is a pluralistic country with diverse religion, culture, ethnic group, languages, beliefs and values etc. Although conflict is inevitable in heterogeneous societies, the aforementioned features of Nigeria can make it incapable of optimal functionality. Several ethnic and regional groups have at one time or the other threatened to walk out of the union. The increased disruptions in the national unity evokes a sense of despair with the activities of Boko Haram insurgents, Niger Delta Militancy and the IPOB separatist movement which has caused human, economic and environmental casualties and displacement, all resulting from the wrong implementation of the Federal Character Principle of representative bureaucracy.

The application of FCP in the public administration of Nigeria has attracted pessimistic remarks from scholars that it grinds down the principle of merit in employment and appointments which is a major characteristic of a bureaucracy as enshrined by the doctrine of bureaucracy for

effective service delivery. In the application of FCP, the merit principle is compromised for equity in distribution.

In a swift reaction to the application of the FCP, Adamolekun (2007) queried whether the area or ethnic region of an individual has become the key factor in determining the quality of the individual. Similarly, Ekeh, P. (1989) depicted that the application of Representative Bureaucracy to the public services, as most radical and damaging. He also emphasized that the application of the principle had invaded the integrity and standards of public bureaucracy and other governmental bodies that normally should be shielded from the ravages of politics. Forrest (1993) also argued that the application of the Federal Character principle in the public service not only led to poor appointments but also enhanced mediocrity rather than merit.

In addition, Tonwe, D.A. and Oghator, E.O., (2009), argued that the principle allows ethno-regional patrons and their clients to exploit and mismanage state resources without contributing to any meaningful development.

While explaining the inadequacies of the application of the FCP in Nigeria, Ijewereme, O.B. (2018) assert that the issues of making public institutions reflect the FC was taken up haphazardly giving rise to arbitrariness and victimization of some unfortunate public servants. The issue questions the application of the FCP since most appointments reveal domination of one ethnic region in power over others. The table below provides graphic detailed data and substantiation.

Table1. Some selected public offices' Appointees, Years of Appointment and Zones of Origin in Nigeria; 2000-2020

| Portfolio | Appointees | Years | Region |
|---------------------------|---|-----------|--------|
| Chief of Naval Staff | Vice Admiral V.K. Ombu | 1999-2001 | South |
| | Vice Admiral S.O. Afolayan | 2001-2005 | North |
| | Vice Admiral G.T.A. Adekeye | 2005-2008 | West |
| | Vice Admiral I.I. Ibrahim | 2008-2010 | North |
| | Vice Admiral O.S. Ibrahim | 2010-2012 | North |
| | Vice Admiral D.J. Ezeoba | 2012-2013 | East |
| | Vice Admiral U.O. Jibrin | 2013-2015 | North |
| | Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas | 2015-date | South |
| Chief of Army Staff | Lieutenant general Victor Mlu | 1999-2001 | North |
| | Lieutenant general Alexander Ogomudia | 2001-2003 | South |
| | Lieutenant general Martin Luther Agwai | 2003-2006 | North |
| | Lieutenant general Owoye Andrew Azazi | 2006-2007 | South |
| | Lieutenant general Luka Yusuf | 2007-2008 | North |
| | Lieutenant general Abdulrahman Bello Dambazau | 2008-2010 | North |
| | Lieutenant general Azubuike Ihejirika | 2010-2014 | East |
| | Lieutenant general Kenneth Minimah | 2014-2015 | South |
| National Security Adviser | Lieutenant general Tukur Yusuf Buratai | 2015-date | North |
| | Aliyu Gusau | 1999-2006 | North |
| | Abdullahi Sarki Mukhtar | 2006-2010 | North |

| | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------|-------|
| | Aliyu Gusau | March 2010-Sept. 2010 | North |
| | Kayode Are | Sept. 2010-October 2010 | West |
| | Owoye Andrew Azazi | 2010-2012 | South |
| | Sambo Dasuki | 2012-2015 | North |
| | Babagana Monguno | 2015-date | North |
| Chief of Staff | Abdullahi Mohammed | 1999-2008 | North |
| | Gbolade Osinowo | June 2008 – Sept. 2008 | West |
| | Position abolished 18 Sept. 2008-17 May 2010 | | |
| | Mike Oghiadomhe | 2010-2014 | South |
| | Jones Arogbofa | 2014-2015 | West |
| | Abba Kyari | 2015-2020 | North |
| Chief of Air Staff | Ibrahim Gambari | Present | North |
| | Air Marshal Jonah Wuyep | 2001-2006 | North |
| | Air Marshal Paul Dike | 2006-2008 | East |
| | Air Marshal Oluseyi Petinrin | 2008-2010 | West |
| | Air Marshal Mohammed Dikko Umar | 2010-2012 | North |
| | Air Marshal Alex Sabundu Badeh | 2012-2014 | North |
| | Air Marshal Adesola Nunayon Amosu | 2014-2015 | West |
| Chief of Defence Staff | Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar | 2015 – date | North |
| | Admiral Ibrahim Ogohi | 1999-2003 | North |
| | General Alexander Ogomudia | 2003-2006 | South |
| | General Martin Luther Agwai | 2006-2007 | North |
| | General Owoye Andrew Azazi | 2007-2008 | West |
| | Air Chief Marshal Paul Dike | 2008-2010 | East |
| | Air Chief Marshal Oluseyi Petinrin | 2010-2012 | West |
| | Admiral Ola Ibrahim | 2012-2014 | West |
| | Air Chief Marshal Alex Sabundu Badeh | 2014-2015 | North |
| Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) Chairman | General Abayomi Gabriel Olonisakin | 2015-date | West |
| | Abel Guobadia | 2000-2005 | South |
| | Professor Maurice Iwu | 2005-2010 | East |
| | Professor Attahiru Muhammadu Jega | 2010-2015 | North |
| Comptroller General Immigration Services | Mahmood yakubu | 2015-date | North |
| | Lady U. C. Nwizu | 2000-2004 | East |
| | Chukwurah Joseph Udeh | 2005-2010 | East |
| | Rose Chinyere Uzoma | 2010-2013 | East |
| | Rilwan Bala Musa | 2013 | North |
| | David Shikfu Parradang | 2013-2015 | North |
| | Martin Kure Abeshi | 2015-2016 | North |
| Muhammed Babandede | 2016 – date | North | |

Source: Author's Research, 2020.

Table 1 above, shows the dominance of one region or zone of the country in appointments into public institutions, revealing that the various administrations have continuously promoted ethnic loyalty, which has greatly hampered the nation's unity and development. It also revealed that rather than deemphasize ethnic loyalty, there has been increasingly incomprehensible national loyalty.

Within the recruitment (or selection) practice in the country, the best applicants are rejected. Though there is always official denial, recruitment/appointment into the Nigerian public sector is broadly perceived as favouring individuals that share regional similarity with government in power without consideration to merit-based principle.

Apart from the above controversies, religion and ethnicity are the major shortcomings of Repre-

sentative bureaucracy or FCP in Nigeria. Ethnic preference in appointment negatively affects not only the representativeness of the public sector, but also its capacity and ultimate output.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the explanations of various existing literature above, in respect of the application of representative bureaucracy in Nigeria public administration, and the challenges it poses on the diversity management of its large population for national integration and development in Nigeria, the study found lack of meritocracy, presence of ethnocentrism as the major challenges.

This study found that the practice of representative bureaucracy in Nigeria is a calculated plan of the governing political elites to place their loyalist

in public offices set out objectives of the establishment where they are employed.

The study also found that the pitiable capability of the public administrators as a result of the wrong application of representative bureaucracy, often lead to illiterate and unsuitable applicants being employed or appointed at the expense of the fully qualified personnel, leading to poor performance of the Nigerian public administration. The above assertion explains the bleakness of the Nigerian public bureaucracy for enhancing national integration and development.

The politics of FCP and its application is misconstrued concept which refers to the competitions of interests among various geopolitical zones. It is found in every field of human endeavour, especially in public sector administration that is characterized by intrigues and in certain cases weakens, or outright breaking of standard rules, particularly in developing countries. Thus, Nigeria political space has some principles that are derived from political prospect which are at variance with bureaucratic expectations.

Based on the above discoveries; the study recommends the following to be infused into the nation's diversity management strategies from the perspective of Federal Character Principle (FCP) or representative bureaucracy:

The principle of merit should be applied in public service employment and appointment as well as admissions into Nigeria tertiary institutions; this will create efficiency and effectiveness of the operations of public service leading to the much needed national development.

Every Nigerian should be given equal opportunity in employment into the public sector as well as the institutions of higher learning in the country irrespective of their states or local governments of origin, given that the present arrangement of FCP has failed in all entirety which has greatly slowed down the pace of national development.

Emphasis should be shifted from representative bureaucracy to more pressing issues in Nigeria such as the issues of competence, commitment, corruption and conflict of interest and career certainty in the public sector service.

Political education, re-orientation and social sensitization should be deployed by the government and leaders (religious, traditional, etc) in all parts of the country to change the mindset of the people to know that our 'diversity is our strength'. This

will develop the representativeness of the Nigerian bureaucracy to improve its performance and help to enhance the quality of the country's democracy since having a representative bureaucracy is the democratic standard.

Finally, sound governance remains an authentic model for national unity, national loyalty and feeling of a sense of belonging to curtail the shortcomings of FCP in Nigerian bureaucracy.

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