



Reconciling Federal Character Principle With The Merit System-Human Resource Procurement In The Edo State Civil Service, 2010-2022

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Abstract

This paper reconciled Federal Character Principle with the merit system in human resource procurement in Edo State Civil Service (2010-2022). The work adopted the representative bureaucracy theory as the basis for this study. The paper made use of qualitative research design by using secondary source of data collection such as published books, academic journals, newspapers, magazines, government gazettes, annual reports and internet downloads. Desk analysis of data collected was done. The findings revealed that rather than Federal Character Principle strengthening national unity, the principle unfortunately enthrones ethnicity and threatens to drag Nigeria backwards by breeding inefficiency instead of meritocracy. The paper concludes that the application of merit in human resource procurement is bedeviled with the statutory application of federal character principle as a recruitment policy, client-patron mode of employment, job racketeering among others. The paper therefore, recommends that the federal government should strengthen her institutions, provide the necessary back up for the federal character principle and make sure that any chief executive and public/civil servants found in the act of employment racketeering is prosecuted.

Key words:

Introduction

Diversity Management has become a framework to leverage the diversity of a global workforce while seeking to maintain consistency throughout the organization (Rosenzweig, 1998). A major challenge in the contemporary workplace is to create an inclusive culture that satisfies diverse demands and expectations of workers and enables their fullest contribution to achieve organizational goals (Knotter et al., 2011; Schmidt, 2014).

According to Jimada, 2004, Nigeria represents a classical case of a highly heterogeneous society by over 470 ethnic groups. These groups are not only distinguished by language, customs and myth of origins but also diverse in culture, geography and religion. Thus, it is in recognition of this that the architects of modern Nigeria opted for a federal system of government as a mechanism for coping with problems associated with a multi-ethnic society. The question of fair and equitable representations of indigenes of the component units in Nigeria in the government bureaucracy has always been a contentious issue right from the colonial days. This and other issues of equitable distributions of socio-economic amenities and infrastructural facilities among the federating units created the national question (Shainaan, 2009). Therefore, the national question aims at solving the problems of marginalization of some groups by others.

The Federal Character Principle as enshrined in the 1979 and retained in 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, gives the Commission the power to operate and regulate the distribution of posts and socio-economic amenities among the Federal, State and Local Government establishments. It stated unequivocally that the application of the Federal Character is not and need not be synonymous with lowering of

standards (Shainaan, 2009). This is the essence of having the best men and women drawn from every segment of society to work in the public service.

Generally, looking closely at the distribution table of staff of Edo State Civil Service by Local Government Areas of Origin and salary grade levels as at 31st December, 2020, it is pertinent to state that it negates the application of Federal Character Principle as depicted in the distribution table as some local government were more marginalized. The lopsidedness will further be discussed in the section of assessing Federal Character Principle in Edo State Civil Service.

It is also observed that the Federal Character Principle have been flagrantly abused by successive Governments in the majority of the bureaucratic and political appointments made by the Government Administration, apart from the Ministerial and Commissioner's appointments. In view of the above, this paper aims to reconcile the federal character principle and the merit system with particular focus on Human Resource Procurement in the Edo State Civil Service Commission (2010-2022).

Statement of the Problem

In the public administration literature, the debate concerning representation of various sections or subunits of a society in a bureaucracy has continued to attract great concern. Some scholars have contended that representation of the various subunits of the state is desirable and imperative. Other scholars have held that representation of the various areas of the state cannot be possible or should be. The proponents of the representative bureaucracy or inclusiveness are of the view that the representation of the various areas or senatorial districts of the state in bureaucracy is germane in resolving the conflicts and agitations of various groups in a state (Esman, 1999; Meier and Nigro 1976). It is contended that fair and equitable geo-political representation is not just morally right, it is imperative for modern development, because it is the professional civil servants that determine public policy areas (Okotoni, 2001; Okotoni, 2003, Ikelegbe, 2006). Thus, balance and equitable representation of the various Senatorial Districts in the state civil service is imperative for ensuring equal access and opportunity, and the inclusiveness of group interest in administrative decisions (Konsky, 2007).

As the debate goes on, government continues to develop and implement policies to promote representation of various geo-political zones in the bureaucracy. In 1979 and 1999 Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Nigeria Government enshrined Federal Character Principle for ensuring fair representation among the federating units in distribution of amenities and appointment of personnel in the public service (Osaghae, 2002). At the state level, representation is adopted to ensure the distribution of various local governments with geographical spread among the wards is emphasized in the distribution of appointment of personnel to ensure fairness and equity.

Despite these measures, complaints are rife that certain regions are marginalized in appointments and promotions into management positions in Ministry, Department and Agency (Aighewi, 2004). In other words, there are widespread complaints of lopsidedness in appointments and promotions of top civil servants in Edo State Civil Service. The researcher was interested in this work to actually know whether there was merit in the recruitment of Civil

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Servants in Edo State during the tenure of Comrade Adams Oshiomhole as Governor of Edo State (2008-2016) and the period of Mr. Godwin Obaseki as Governor of Edo State (2016-2024). Against this background, this paper reconciled the application of federal character principle and merit system with particular focus on human resource procurement in the Edo State Civil Service Commission (2010-2022).

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Reconcile the application of Federal Character Principle and Merit System.
2. Ascertain whether there is merit in the application of Federal Character Principle.
3. Proffer policy statement for improvement.

Methodology

For the purposes of this study, research design was used; by using secondary source of data collection: published books, Academic Journals, Newspapers, Magazines, Government gazettes, Annual reports and internet downloads/literatures. The data was analyzed using percentage table at the entry levels (Gl.08-10), prospective Directorate levels (Gl.12-14), Directorate levels Gl.15-17), the Senatorial District and the overall total.

Conceptual Clarifications

Federal Character

The expression “Federal Character” is defined as: “The distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote National Unity, foster National loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the Nation, notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, culture, language or religion which may exist and which is their desire to nourish and harness to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria” (1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).

Merit System

Merit System is a system in which a position is occupied or promotion is earned on the basis of competence rather than other criteria such as political affiliation or length of service. In other words, merit system is a system by which appointments and promotions in the public and civil service are based on competence rather than political connection, nepotism, favoritism, bribery among others (Mustapha, Okonmah & Okunmahie, 2022). It is the opposite of the spoil system or patronage system.

Human Resource Procurement

Human Resource Procurement is a term that refers to the process of finding and hiring talented individuals who can contribute to an organization’s success. It encompasses everything from identifying staffing needs to recruiting, selecting and onboarding new hires. In today’s highly competitive business landscape, having a strong human resource procurement strategy is essential for businesses looking to gain a competitive edge (<https://oboloo.com>blog>what-is-human-resource-procurement>) – retrieved 5th July, 2023.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopts the theory of representative bureaucracy as the basis for this study. This theory was propounded by J. Donald Kingsley in 1944. The theory of representative bureaucracy suggests that a demographically diverse public sector workforce will lead to policy outcomes that reflect the interests of all groups represented, including historically disadvantaged communities (Bradbury, 2004). The theory equally suggests that a public workforce representative of the people in terms of race and ethnicity will help ensure that the interests of all groups are considered in bureaucratic decision making processes. Its assumptions are liberation of social class selection, Decentralization, Inclusiveness and Diversity management.

In representative bureaucracy, the diverse section of a multi-ethnic society is duly represented in decision-making bodies, then the interests and needs of that society will be served (Kim, 1994). An inclusive bureaucracy, accommodating the diverse elements of a country's population would help foster the needed integration, just as was intended in the Nigerian case.

The implication of representative bureaucracy theory to this study is to crystalize the ideal process in human resource procurement in the public service as against marginalization/lopsidedness in the disadvantaged communities/ethnicity. More so, it enables public service recruiter to use the success of an individual (applicants) as a yardstick in offering a job as against favouritism, nepotism, political consideration among others, a concept referred to as "equity and fairness model". Subsequently, the theory has wide reaching implications for employee morale, efficiency, productivity and turnover in the Nigerian public service.

In the final analysis, it is worth stressing that despite its shortcomings (if any), representative bureaucracy remains the best bureaucratic experiment for multi-ethnic societies. The relevance of this theory is to recognize the diversity of the people within its area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the peoples of the federation. In its relevance to Edo State Civil Service, it reveals that appointment were lopsided as some Local Governments were marginalized.

The Application of Federal Character Principle and Formulae

The Federal Character Commission is the body charged with sole responsibility of enforcing the observance of the federal character principle. The federal character principle requires that there is no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in the federal government and its agencies (Demarest et al, 2020). The National Constitutional Conference set up by the Military Head of State, Sani Abacha, established the Federal Character Commission in 1996 to monitor and enforce federal character application and proportional representation (Mustapha, 2007).

Today, the Federal Character Commission (Establishment, e.t.c) Decree No 34 of 1996 ("the Enabling Act") as earlier mentioned, now FCC ACT, CAP F7, Laws of Federation of Nigeria 2004, is a direct result of the recommendations of the 1994/95 Constitutional Conference. The Commission was established to give effect to section 14 (3) and (4) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) which provides inter-alia:

section 14 (3) "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 command National Loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies".

Section 14 (4) "the composition of the Government of a State, a Local Government Council, or any of the agencies of such Government or Council, and the conduct of the affairs of the Government or Council or such agencies shall be carried out in such manner as to recognize the diversity of the people within its area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the peoples of the Federation" (Federal Character Commission Handbook, 2014 Revised Edition).

According to the Federal Character Commission Handbook, 2014 Revised Edition, the functions of the Commission shall be:

- (a) To work out an equitable formula subject to the approval of the President, for the distribution of all cadres of posts in the civil and the public services of the federation and the states, the armed forces, the Nigerian Police Force and other security agencies, bodies corporate owned by the Federal or State Government and Extra-Ministerial Departments and Parastatals of the Federation and States;
- (b) To promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principles of proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all levels of government;
- (c) To take such legal measures including the prosecution of the heads or staff of any Ministry, Extra-Ministerial Department or agency which fails to comply with any federal character principle or formula prescribed or adopted by the commission, among others.

More importantly, the Commission uses the Federal Character Principle to equally assess political appointments such as the appointment of ministers, special adviser, ambassadors and chairmen and members of boards e.t.c, so as to ascertain its level of compliance with the principle. According to the Federal Character Commission Handbook (2014), the following guiding principle and formulae for the distribution of post were enumerated among others as thus:

1. Each State of the Federation and Federal Capital Territory shall be equitably represented in all National Institutions.
2. The best and most competent persons shall be recruited from each state of the federation and FCT to fill positions reserved for the indigenes.
3. Once a candidate has attained the necessary minimum requirement for appointment to a position he/she shall qualify to fill a relevant vacancy reserved for indigenes of his/her state or the Federal Capital Territory.
4. Where the number of positions available cannot go round the States of the Federation or the FCT, the distribution shall be on zonal basis, but where two positions are available, it shall be shared between the Northern and the Southern Zones.

Review of Extant and Empirical Literature

Nigeria and most other African countries are faced with the issue of how to achieve adequate and equal distribution of employment across all the spheres of the Nation as one

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mechanism of ensuring and putting an end to marginalization. The most important strategy so far adopted by Nigeria is the Federal Character, a phrase which clearly came out of the constitutional drafting committee (CDC) in the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

According to Edigin (2010), the Federal Character Principle is an attempt aimed at institutionalizing the accommodation of the diverse groups and interest in the country through the process of employment distribution. This position is further captured in the constitution drafting committee (CDC) reports that see the Federal Character as a provision or an act created to ensure and promote National Unity and to harness the diversities existing in the country. The Federal Character remains the deliberate effort of the Government designed to accommodate less privilege sections of the country (Olagunju, 1987).

However, some scholars harshly criticized the application of federal character principle thus: To Wahab (2009), the federal character principle is valuable as it ensure the representation of the sections of the country, but he sees it as policy measure that negates standard principle of merit in the overall employment process which can lead to poor work quality as a result of seeking balance in the political system of the country. One of the failure of the federal character principle is that the commission is still a government controlled agency, which depends on the Executive for funding and direction, hence the Federal Character Commission cannot provide effective check in a situation whereby the Executive flouts federal character criteria in making appointments. For instance, the administration of president Buhari totally neglected the Federal Character Principle in majority of the appointments he made between 2015 and 2023. Majority of the bureaucratic and political appointments made by the government of president Buhari, apart from ministerial appointments, disproportionately favoured the Northern region in clear violation of the Federal Character Principle.

Subsequently, according to the Punch Newspaper of 8th August, 2023, a former integrated payroll and personnel information system desk officer at the Federal Character Commission, Mr. Haruna kolo accused of collecting bribes from job seekers in exchange for employment, owned up to the allegation and indicts the Executive Chairman of the Commission, Dr. Muheeba F. Dankaka that he was acting on the instructions of the Executive Chairman. Furthermore, Adeoti and Olaniyan (2014) observed that “rather than strengthening National Unity, the principle of Federal Character unfortunately enthrones ethnicity”. Also, Udoh (2014), in dissecting the decadence in the country today, concluded that the basis and wrong application of the Federal Character Principle threatens to drag Nigeria backwards. This in effect, breeds nepotism and inefficiency instead of meritocracy. There was a highly biased method of distribution of state resources where a public officer preferred his relatives and family members or friends in job recruitment, promotion and appointment to public positions thereby ignoring the merit principle; this had led to the downgrading of the quality of the public services (Common Wealth Association for Public Administration and Management 2010).

Igbokwe-Ibeto, Agbodike and Anazodo (2015) carried out a research on the application of the Federal Character Principle and its implications on service delivery in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service. The study heavily relied on both primary and secondary data while a multistage sampling technique was adopted to select the sample. The researchers also used the

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Pearson chi-square test of goodness to test the hypotheses. Analysis of the study showed that there is a strong relationship between federal character principle and employee service delivery as well as a poor attitude towards work by bureaucrats. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended the Government should strictly adhere to the Max Weber bureaucratic theory as regards recruitment based on merit and reassess the workability of the application of the Federal Character Principle in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service.

Gberevbie and Ibitetan (2013) conducted research on the Federal Character Principle and administrative effectiveness in the Federal Civil Service; challenges and prospects for sustainable development, 1999-2012. They observed that the Federal character principle as practiced in Nigeria, diverts emphasis from merit to sharing privileges and benefits accruable from representative bureaucracy, and this limits integration. In practice, the federal character principle does not work well because it makes the country less integrated instead of more united, which is what its proponents wanted when they came up with it as a way to deal with the problem of having equal representation for people from different groups of society in a multi-ethnic state like Nigeria.

Origin of Merit System

Prior to the emergence of the merit system in the United States of America, the spoil system was used as the basis of procurement of human resource into the public service from 1825-1883 and was generally associated with President Andrew Jackson. Though, he was not the inventor of the spoil system, but he heightened and advertised it by openly providing jobs for his supporters following the 1823 election. The spoil system is based on the recruitment principle whereby the political party that emerged victorious in an election sacked all its political opponents from the public or civil service and replaced them with its own supporters at the expense of those who were qualified and competent for the job which resulted in the lack of continuity, inefficiency and mediocrity (Mustapha et al, 2022).

In consonance to the above, public opinion became conscious and dissatisfied with this practice when President James A. Garfield was killed by a disappointed job seeker in 1881. Two years later the United States Congress passed the Pendleton Act in 1883 marking the beginning of the merit system in the United States public service. The Act abrogated the spoil system which prescribed that employee can only be employed into the public service only after passing a competitive job examination. The merit system later spreads to all parts of the globe (Edigin, 1994).

Merit System and Its Application

The "Merit System" is a method of personnel management designed to promote the efficiency and economy of the service and the good of the public by providing for the selection and retention of employees and other related matters based upon merit and fitness. The Merit System ensures fair treatment of applicants and employees in all aspects of personnel administration without regard to political affiliation, sex, religion, disability, or marital status or any other basis prohibited by law, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights as citizens (Del Norte, 1966). Therefore, this means that it hires and promotes employees on the basis of ability, performance and competence.

Merit can also be viewed as a process of determining which job seeker has the skills, abilities and knowledge deemed to be most suitable for the job. In a merit based system, applicants effectively compete for a job. The written application, the selection interview and any testing of applicants is all part of the competition process. It makes the “Right man for the right job” and “round peg in a round hole position” in an organization.

In the Nigerian public service, merit is often jettisoned on the altar of ethnicity and religion affiliation, leading to the procurement of human resources that are unqualified, incompetent or not best suited for a particular position and this has negatively affected the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector mandate (Mustapha, Edegware and Onya 2018).

An Evaluation of the Application of Merit System

Merit system reinforces the notion of equality and competence as it rejects patronage, nepotism, corruption and incompetence for entering into the public service. It is a system that values the principle of competition, open selection, careful evaluation of qualities and having a set of qualification standards and established recruitment process rather than an arbitrary appointment of individuals to public service (Dahlstrom, Lapuente and Teorell, 2012).

Today, Nigerian public service recruitment is marred with obstacles to merit system application which include federal character principle, favoritism, partisanship, corruption, nepotism and other primordial considerations among others (Osawe, 2015). More often, those candidates that are eventually selected for the job seldom fulfill the merit rules and the criteria for the final selection are not made public. Thus, in a pure merit system, all appointments from top to bottom are openly advertised, followed by a competition based on merit rules that are publicly understood and can be challenged if a breach is suspected (McCourt 2007). In Nigerian public service recruitment, the reverse is the case as majority of public service job vacancies are not advertised. Example, is what happened at the federal character commission, during the investigative hearing by House of Representatives ad hoc committee investigating MDAs and tertiary institutions on mismanagement of the IPPIS in August, 2023. During the investigative hearing, a former IPPIS desk officer at the Federal Character Commission, Mr. Haruna Kolo accused of collecting bribes from job seekers in exchange for employment, owned up to the allegation and indicts the Executive Chairman of the Commission, Dr. Muheeba F. Dankaka that he was acting on the instructions of the Executive Chairman. He admitted to having received over ₦75m from desperate jobseekers on the instructions of the Executive Chairman of the FCC (Guardian Newspaper, 2nd November, 2020).

Assessing Federal Character Principle in Edo State Civil Service

The Edo State Civil Service Recruitment is the sole responsibility of the Edo State Civil Service Commission. When vacancies are declared by the various Ministries/Department, then the State Civil Service Commission place job advertisement of the existing vacancies in the radio, television and newspaper. Responded candidates are shortlisted for an interview. After the interview, qualified candidates are selected and recruited to the various positions in the ministries/department to reflect federal character guiding principle and formulae (Edo State Civil Service Commission, 2020 annual report).

In 2020, according to available records from Edo State Civil Service commission, 2901 Staff were on the record of employment respectively into the various ministries and departments in the state (Edo State Civil Service Commission, 2020 annual report).

Below is the distribution table of the employed Staff of Edo State Civil Service by their Local Government of origin, Salary Grade Level and how they are spread according to the Federal Character Principle in their employments.

However, looking at the distribution table of the Staff of Edo State Civil Service by Local Government Areas of origin and salary grade levels as at 31st December, 2020, it is pertinent to state that it negates the application of Federal Character Principle due to percentage lopsidedness in the appointment as it was more tilted to some Local Governments in alter marginalization of some local governments, while some were slightly marginalized.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF STAFF OF EDO STATE CIVIL SERVICE BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS AND SALARY GRADE LEVELS AS AT 31ST DECEMBER, 2020

S/N	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS	GL 01	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	12	13	14	15	16	17	CONSOLIDATED SALARY	TOTAL	%
1	Akoko Edo	-	2	5	7	3	12	18	84	13	20	5	6	9	2	1	-	1	188	6.5%
2	Egor	-	1	2	2	-	10	14	39	12	17	4	8	7	-	1	-	1	118	4.1%
3	Esan Central	-	1	4	7	1	4	26	55	14	10	6	4	3	1	-	1	2	139	4.8%
4	Esan North East	-	1	2	4	4	11	15	32	12	11	4	4	5	3	4	-	2	114	3.9%
5	Esan South East	1	1	8	9	6	11	22	44	23	12	2	7	3	-	-	-	1	150	5.2%
6	Esan West	-	1	4	8	2	10	25	37	16	9	9	3	3	3	-	-	2	132	4.6%
7	Etsako Central	-	1	7	4	2	6	14	35	9	7	4	1	2	1	-	1	1	95	3.3%
8	Etsako East	-	1	4	4	2	4	17	33	10	3	2	3	1	-	-	-	1	85	2.9%
9	Etsako West	-	-	8	13	7	20	35	100	22	17	7	3	7	4	1	2	1	247	8.5%
10	Igueben	-	2	3	1	1	5	10	36	13	7	4	3	4	3	-	-	2	94	3.2%
11	Ikpoba Okha	1	2	8	9	1	8	28	33	10	12	18	3	3	1	-	-	1	138	4.7%
12	Oredo	2	9	21	28	9	23	47	113	33	39	10	12	18	5	3	4	5	381	13.1%
13	Orhionmwon	1	4	7	18	5	18	35	66	13	19	31	5	8	6	3	1	3	243	8.4%
14	Ovia North East	1	2	10	8	2	9	27	35	18	14	24	1	5	2	-	1	-	159	5.5%
15	Ovia South West	-	1	-	4	5	10	20	26	8	3	1	3	3	2	3	1	1	91	3.1%
16	Owan East	1	1	4	8	2	10	17	40	15	21	6	8	4	1	2	2	-	142	4.8%
17	Owan West	-	2	6	7	1	8	39	48	15	12	-	4	8	2	1	2	2	147	5.1%
18	Uhunmwode	-	4	11	12	7	24	41	45	19	20	7	5	3	1	1	-	1	201	6.9%
19	Other States	-	-	2	4	-	-	4	12	5	4	-	4	1	1	-	-	-	37	1.3%
	TOTAL	7	36	116	157	60	203	454	903	280	257	144	87	97	38	20	15	27	2901	100.0%

SOURCE: Edo State Civil Service Commission, 2020 Annual Report

Generally, looking closely at the distribution table of the staff of Edo State Civil Service by Local Government Areas of Origin and salary grade levels as at 31st December, 2020, it is pertinent to state that it negates the application of Federal Character Principle as depicted in the distribution table, were appointments was tilted to some Local Governments in alter

marginalization of some local governments while some were slightly marginalized. In the representation, Oredo Local Government have 381 with 13.1%, Etsako West Local Government have 247 with 8.5%, Orhionmwon Local Government have 243 with 8.4%, Uhunmwode Local Government have 201 with 6.9%, Akoko-Edo Local Government have 188 with 6.5% and Ovia North East Local Government have 159 with 5.5% respectively. While, Etsako East Local Government have 85 with 2.9%, Ovia South West Local Government have 91 with 3.1%, Igueben Local Government have 94 with 3.2% and Etsako Central Local Government have 95 with 3.3% were marginalized respectively.

Looking further at the entry levels (Gl.07-10), Oredo Local Government have 232 with 12.4%, Etsako West Local Government have 174 with 9.3%, Akoko Edo Local Government have 135 with 7.2%, Orhionmwon Local Government have 133 with 7.1%, Owan West Local Government 114 with 6.1% and Uhunmwode Local Government have 125 with 6.7% respectively. While, Ovia South West Local Government have 57 with 3.0% Etsako East Local Government have 63 with 3.4%, Etsako Central Local Government have 65 with 3.5%, Owan East Local Government have 67 with 3.6% and Esan North East Local Government have 70 with 3.7% were marginalized respectively.

The above marginalization was also observed in the prospective Directorate (Gl.12-14) and the Directorate levels (Gl.15-17) respectively.

Again, at the Senatorial Districts distribution, Edo South have 1,331 with 45.9%, Edo North have 904 with 31.2% and Edo Central have 629 with 21.7% respectively. Generally, Edo South Senatorial District marginalized Edo North and Edo Central Senatorial Districts sharply.

From the table, the observed lopsidedness was defended by the commission's recruitment officer that it was as a result of the creation of more local government in the state, disparities in educational advancement and unregulated recruitment in the past contributed to the slightly existing imbalances and lopsidedness. That efforts are being made to redress the imbalance especially with the now application of federal character principle.

Discussion of Findings

In the course of this paper, it was found that Edo State Civil Service Commission placed advertisement/publication of the vacancies declared by the various ministries/departments in the radio, television and newspaper. Then, responded candidates are shortlisted for an interview and the qualified candidates are selected and recruited to the various positions in the ministries/department to reflect federal character guiding principle and formular (Edo State Civil Service Commission, 2020 Annual Report). Therefore, looking at the above distribution table of the Staff of Edo State Civil Service by Local Government Areas of Origin and salary grade levels as at 31st December, 2020, the observed lopsidedness in the appointment was tilted to some Local Government in alter marginalization of some local governments while some were slightly marginalized. Also, the Edo State Civil Service Commission's recruitment officer defended the observed lopsidedness in their 2020 annual report that it was as a result of the creation of more local government in the state, disparities in educational advancement and unregulated recruitment in the past contributed to the slightly existing imbalances and

lopsidedness. That, efforts are being made to redress the imbalance especially with the now application of federal character principle.

The constitution drafting committee reports see the federal character has provision or an act created to ensure and promote national unity and to harness the diversities existing in the country. This was confirmed by Edigin (2010), who stated that the federal character principle is an attempt aimed at institutionalizing the accommodation of the diverse groups and interest in the country through the process of employment distribution.

Some academic scholars and institutions were having a divergent views from the above. The Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (2010) opined that the “state resource distribution method is highly biased where a public officer prefers his relatives and family members or friends in job recruitment and promotion, thus enthroning unimproved integration. As the federal character principle is being inappropriately applied, it leads to tribal dominance by the major groups, even though the goal is to prevent sectional dominance. Adeoti and Olaniyan (2014) observed that rather than strengthening national unity, the principle unfortunately enthrone ethnicity. Furthermore, the application of the federal character principle has not improved integration in the public and civil service. Udoh (2014) “in dissecting the decadence in the country today, opined that it threatens to drag Nigeria backwards by breeding inefficiency instead of meritocracy”. Today, Nigerian public service recruitment is marred with obstacles to merit system application which include federal character principle, Favoritism, Partisanship, corruption, nepotism and other Primordial considerations among others (Osawe, 2015). However, the application of merit in human resource procurement is bedeviled with the statutory application of Federal Character Principle as a recruitment policy, client-patron mode of employment, job racketeering among others. All the above have constituted impediments to the ability of the Nigerian public service institutions to deliver on their mandates.

Conclusion

In conclusion therefore, findings reveals that there seems to be strong and general acceptance amongst scholars that the whole essence of the establishment of the federal character principle as a policy measure, remains an admirable policy mechanism of the federal government which can curb the perceived inequality and marginalization across the country. But, the practical implementation and interpretation of this policy is far from it main objectives.

However, the application of merit in human resource procurement is bedeviled with the statutory application of federal character principle as a recruitment policy, client-patron mode of employment, job racketeering among others. All the above have constituted impediments to the ability of the Nigerian public service institutions to deliver on their mandates.

Recommendations

In view of the literature review and findings, this paper recommends the following:

1. A strict adherence to policy guideline and implementation plans as spelled out in the Act establishing the federal character principle in order to end inequity and marginalization.

2. The federal government should pass a law to back up the federal character principle and make sure that any chief executive and public/civil servants found in the act of employment racketeering is prosecuted.
3. That the federal character principle should be implemented with merit principle in all government recruitments to select the best from each of the states.
4. Public service job vacancies should be advertised openly to the general public subject to competitive employment examination.
5. Finally, it is imperative for a rigorous continuous enlightenment campaign by the government vide electronics and prints media to make people understand the importance of federal character principle in bringing about a sense of belonging among the federating units, Nationwide.

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