

Challenges Of Federal Character Principle And Administrative Effectiveness In The Nigerian Public Service**Nkadi Francisca Ibhade¹, Akpomuvire Mukoro²**^{1,2}Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences

Delta State University Abraka, Nigeria

E-mail Correspondence : akpomuviremukoro@delsu.edu.ng

ABSTRAK

Examining the federal character principle's application to public service in particular is the study's main objective. The data collected for the study relied exclusively on secondary sources . The noble goal of incorporating Nigeria's federal character principle into the country's administrative structure has become a burden in and of itself. This study aims to explore the reasons behind the persistence of inequality, injustice, political dominance, and economic subjugation of one region over another in Nigeria, even after the federal character principle was enshrined in the constitution. What is the reason behind not upholding and adhering to the federal character principle when it comes to political appointees and public officer recruitment? Why isn't the federal character principle adhered to even in the public service when it comes to postings, promotions, and rewards? Other recommendations were made in an effort to create a respectable public service that everyone can relate to without the slightest suspicion or mistrust. The study concluded that the government is in charge of creating and implementing policies that further a range of clearly stated social, political, and economic goals. In carrying out these duties, policy makers should use Weber's "best result" option to guide their decisions. This will help to mitigate the negative effects of federal character, nepotism, tribalism, and the quota system that plague Nigeria's political and administrative landscape. Among other recommendations, Weber suggests that the government and its agencies apply the concept in a sincere, honest, and transparent manner. They must adhere to the rules or guidelines governing the application, but they must not do so at the expense of applicants' qualifications and merit. This means that when applying the concept, merit must be taken into account and the qualifications of those vying for a political position or appointment must not be disregarded.

Keywords:*Federal Character Principle; Public Service; Challenges; Injustice; Inequality*

A. INTRODUCTION

Without a doubt, the problem statement is an essential component of all research projects, and this one is no different. In Nigeria, there are numerous instances where the

Challenges Of Federal Character Principle And Administrative Effectiveness In The Nigerian Public Service

Volume 8 | Nomor 2 | 126 – 135 | Desember 2023

federal character principle was improperly unfairly applied. Additionally, the annual reports from the Federal Character Commission's publications reveal that many complaints are filed due to establishments breaking the principles of federal character. For instance, the Federal Character Monitor, the Commission's quarterly publication, accused as well as summoned the Nigeria Communication Commission for violating the principles of federal character (Nzeshi, 2012). More specifically, among the issues affecting the effective operation of the Nigerian public service are the policy's inefficiency in attracting potential employees and the hiring process, which selects workers based on federal character standards rather than merit. Also attesting to this weakness are the subpar work output of employees that the Olusegun Obasanjo-led administration found, which was linked to subpar civil servant quality and manpower utilisation. According to Gberevbie (2010), the Nigerian public service appears to be less concerned with keeping hold of its valuable personnel because it is crowded with workers who are more focused on job security than job satisfaction. From an economic standpoint, it appears that a government establishment is the only organisation that can accommodate such workers in the current climate. It is understandable why El-Rufai (2011) claimed that the Nigerian public service had turned into a workplace for uninteresting, slothful, and uninspired individuals; individuals without aspirations for their careers and who genuinely don't seem to know what it means to be satisfied in their work, preferring to use their position to make a living rather than use it to improve society.

The advent of globalisation has made it simpler for qualified workers to switch careers, particularly when their current position is unfulfilling or unmotivating. Finding the components that draw in and keep workers is crucial for the Nigerian public sector. Regretfully, the Nigerian public service's vague methods of measuring and assessing performance make it challenging to pinpoint each employee's advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, and threats and to assign rewards and recognition appropriately. This actually makes it challenging to determine which specific area of the public service actually adds value to the organisation and which area needs special attention. Organisational relevance is contingent upon the skill, knowledge, and competency of its workforce (Ogunlusi, Faseyiku, & Oginni, 2013). Because of this, Agburu (2012) believes that an organization's ability to offer work-satisfying environments that include rewards and incentives like paying wages and salaries at rates that are competitive with the local

Challenges Of Federal Character Principle And Administrative Effectiveness In The Nigerian Public Service

Volume 8 | Nomor 2 | 126 – 135 | Desember 2023

market and industry determines its organisational competitiveness. It is important to remember that incentives need to match expected efforts and be set up so they are simple to administer.

This study's main contention is that the federal character principle's introduction and implementation have not succeeded in bringing competent and motivated workers to Nigeria's public service, where they could enhance administrative effectiveness and improve performance in the execution of government policies for sustainable development. Therefore, research has been done on the federal character principle, the quota system, and their effects on public service globally, particularly in developed countries. However, in developing nations—Nigeria included the opposite is true. Now, the question that arises after the adoption of federal character principle is how the concept has been put into practice in our politics vis-a- vis the appointment of public officers in the various government positions. The federal character concept was first implemented in 1979 by the Shehu Shagari Administration. However, since then, no government or administration has adhered to the principle guiding the concept. As a result, not all aspects of public appointment have seen the concept upheld or respected. For example, while all states were represented in the ministerial appointment category, which clearly demonstrated adherence to the principle, this cannot be said of other areas of public appointment, such as the permanent secretary and ambassadorial appointments. For this reason, the aforementioned circumstance calls for more research on the challenges of federal character and administrative effectiveness in the Nigerian public service which this current study tends to fill.

B. RESULTS

1. Literature Review

It is true that the concept's creators had difficulties coming up with it, which explains why a suitable process or formula for putting it into practice was not given. For example, it is acknowledged that the nation was multiethnic; consequently, it is not possible to make provisions for the sharing of political appointments among these groups, which explains why it is not possible to have representation from every ethnic group in a government cabinet. Furthermore, the idea did not specify precisely how a state- or region-based fair distribution of political appointments within the government could be accomplished. The widespread acceptance of the concept itself promoted ethnicity in the

Challenges Of Federal Character Principle And Administrative Effectiveness In The Nigerian Public Service

Volume 8 | Nomor 2 | 126 – 135 | Desember 2023

guise of ethnic consciousness, identity, and cleavage, which in turn hinders the attainment of national unity. These conceptual shortcomings made the execution of the principle difficult. And for this reason, some concept detractors advise that the concept's application be limited to particular spheres of our public life. Though there are issues with the idea and its negative effects on politics, adopting a federal character can help foster unity and achieve national integration, which will encourage equal participation from all ethnic groups in the growth of the nation's socioeconomic and political life and, in turn, lessen the marginalisation of minority or disadvantaged groups in the allocation of resources in the public sector and decision-making processes.

Despite the compelling argument made in the Udoji report of 1974, capacity-building programmes for public servants which were an important issue during the immediate pre- and post-independence years were gradually neglected (Adamolekun, 2008). The aforementioned submission makes it abundantly evident why administrative efficacy in the Nigerian public service for long-term prosperity may remain a pipe dream. In their contribution to the discussion of the ineffectiveness of the public sector, Gberevbie and Ibietan (2013) argue that one of the causes of the inadequate efficiency of the Nigerian public service is the "poor capacity of a large percentage of civil servants, sometimes to a degree of illiteracy" resulting from the application of quotas to employees. Adamolekun (2008) supports the argument that Nigeria's public bureaucracy is ineffectual for the nation's sustainable development because of the quota system's adoption and the disdain for public servants' capacity-building programmes. Treating disparate individuals equally is the most severe form of inequality; claim Gberevbie and Ibietan (2013). The Nigerian quota system policy is elitist and discriminatory based on class. It also results in a blurring of the boundaries between meritocracy and ethnic balancing, which inadvertently creates multiple citizenship systems within the system of politics. Furthermore, the principle's application has inadvertently led to "elimination by substitution" scenarios, making it counterproductive. By prejudice in hiring and advancement, it achieves this. The principle attempts to achieve parity among the states, despite the fact that they differ in terms of population and the diversity of the pool of potential appointees.

In the Nigerian constitution, the federal character principle is implemented equally by all states, which means, according to Ayoade (2009), "that the North was represented in the ratio 19:17 (52.8 percent) of public posts." According to his theory, "the fact that arithmetical justice does not always translate to socio-political justice further complicates this situation." It is not always the case that members of a representative bureaucracy have equal power (Ojo, 2009:5). Regarding the previously upload submissions, the federal character principle presents an imprecise

Challenges Of Federal Character Principle And Administrative Effectiveness In The Nigerian Public Service

Volume 8 | Nomor 2 | 126 – 135 | Desember 2023

and deceitful approach to achieving fairness and unity in a federal society like Nigeria. According to Soludo (2012:7), who advocates for the use of merit as a strategy for hiring personnel in the country's pursuit of improved performance and administrative effectiveness for sustainable development, the establishment of a merit-driven culture is a crucial result of Vision 20:20:20 and a priority area for policymakers. To this aim, a thorough examination of laws pertaining to diversity management and ethnic balancing, including the federal character principle, will be carried out in order to guarantee a stronger promotion of merit for Nigeria's sustainable development. Nigeria has historically been blamed for its incapacity to address development issues like poverty, unemployment, corruption, and security because of weak institutions and government agencies as well as poor governance. This is according to The Transformation Agenda (2011-2015:10).

Because of the inadequate application of the federal character principle in Nigeria's public service, incompetent workers incapable of carrying out government policies for sustainable development can be recruited into the workforce. Nonetheless, Gbervbie (2010:116–117) contends that hiring someone based solely on their federal character does not preclude them from making a significant contribution to the advancement of the organization's objectives. This is especially true when suitable hiring practices are implemented, such as screening applicants according to pertinent experience, education, and skill sets. Consequently, the capacity and willingness of the employee to work for the company are what matter. Furthermore, when organisations properly train and develop their workforce, even in cases where incompetent employees would have been hired through inappropriate recruitment strategies, organisational productivity is increased.

According to Olaopa (2012:56), one of the "effective the development of nations strategies designed for managing the combustible diversity in Nigeria" is the federal character principle". But according to him, "this principle has badly eroded the public service's capacity for competency and professionalism". In this situation, what steps can Nigeria take to achieve sustainable development? In response to this question, Olaopa (2012) made reference to the nation's tertiary education's diminishing content and the lack of the necessary skills to close the capacity gap in the public service. He came to the conclusion that "a 'town and gown' networking that harnesses and deploys the full weight of the available academic capital and capacities to the task of national development" was no longer beneficial to the country (Olaopa, 2012:56). In this sense, implementing the federal character principle has hampered sustainable development rather than assisting in the resolution of administrative inefficiencies in the Nigerian public sector. The aforementioned implies that the appointment of incompetent personnel through the application of the federal character principle, which permits representation of various segments of Nigerian

Challenges Of Federal Character Principle And Administrative Effectiveness In The Nigerian Public Service

Volume 8 | Nomor 2 | 126 – 135 | Desember 2023

society in government without adequate consideration for merit and quality training to enhance productivity, can account for unethical behaviour among public officials and low worker efficiency in the country's public service.

In their numerous public appointments, the military-led administration that followed by no means upheld the idea of federal character. This persisted until Olusegun Obasanjo's recent administration, during which the concept was once again partially implemented, particularly in the area of ministerial appointment. The concept also received further attention when the government released the 1999 constitution, which stipulated that a federal character commission should be established to guarantee that the government and its various agencies comply with the principle. Furthermore, the idea has not been correctly implemented during the public service recruitment process. It is widely obvious that nepotism and ethnicity have played a major role in the civil service hiring process, resulting in the outright marginalisation of some groups within the nation

C. DISCUSSION

Theoretical Framework

The study's framework was taken from Max Weber's (1846–1920) bureaucratic theory. According to the theory, the most logical way to achieve efficiency in a formal organisation founded on legal-rational authority is through the creation of an ideal-type organisation. He believes that task division, a clear authority hierarchy, impersonality, and comprehensive rules and regulations are the keys to efficiency. According to Weber, a structure that follows bureaucratic norms would be predictable, long-lasting, effective, and well-organized. This theory's characteristic is that managers are in charge of controlling work by organising employees' tasks. Positions, not individuals, are assigned rights, responsibilities, and functions. It is believed that efficiency in large complex organisation can only be achieved through the following features:

1. Hierarchy of authority and offices.
2. Rules impersonally carried out.
3. Selection based on technical competence.
4. Division of work according to specialization.
5. Use of written records.
6. Salary based on position.
7. Training for each new position.

Challenges Of Federal Character Principle And Administrative Effectiveness In The Nigerian Public Service

Volume 8 | Nomor 2 | 126 – 135 | Desember 2023

The theory can serve as a helpful analytical framework for problems pertaining to public organisation inefficiency. It can be used to explain why corruption occurs in government agencies. The bureaucratic theory ends up serving as the benchmark for assessing an organization's efficacy and efficiency. Written exams for candidates vying for specific positions are necessary in the case of Nigeria and the Federal Character Commission. This will make the competency- and knowledge-based selection process easier. Public officers will become more productive and efficient as a result, which will ultimately improve service delivery. Given that promotions will only be granted based on written exams and competence, this will incentivize hard work. This will encourage public servants to perform their duties to the best of their abilities, understanding that performance is the foundation for advancement.

In Nigeria, the selection and recruitment of officials is determined by factors such as prebendalism, godfatherism, and primordial considerations. The bureaucratic theory aims to standardise this situation by establishing a recognised process for officer recruitment. Officials are liable to an impersonal order: When handling cases, officials are influenced by office policies and procedures rather than by sentiments or feelings within the primary group. For whatever reason, the majority of civil servants and public servants in Nigeria adopt a "I don't care attitude" due to their circumstances. They have a tendency to act inappropriately and treat their jobs lightly because of their godfathers, or politicians, who assisted them in getting hired. This anomaly is attempted to be corrected by the bureaucracy theory. This theory is relevant because it aims to guarantee the efficacy and efficiency of public service delivery, which is the duty of an accountable government. Every previously existing dividing line is purposefully removed to create interlocking linkages that enable more regular communication, collaboration, consensus-building, and community.

Effective administration or public service demands a synthesis of theory and practice. As a result, Max Weber (1864–1920) provided guidance on how to achieve organisational effectiveness through his theory of ideal bureaucracy. It is unlikely that any contemporary human organisation, whether in the public or private sector, can operate effectively without following Weber's theory of rationality when it comes to hiring and rewarding employees. The hierarchy that implies structure, promotion based on professional merit, skills as a recruitment guide, the development of career services, reliance on and application of scientific rules and regulations, the impersonality of relationships between career professionals and their clientele in the bureaucracy, specialisation

Challenges Of Federal Character Principle And Administrative Effectiveness In The Nigerian Public Service

Volume 8 | Nomor 2 | 126 – 135 | Desember 2023

along functional lines, authority and responsibility, and proper documentation or record-keeping in a formal organisational or national setting are the characteristics of the Weberian (legal-rational) model. Thus, this theory clarifies the various efforts made by the Nigerian government to build a peaceful and cohesive society, which culminated in the creation of the federal character principle and the quota system with the goal of fostering national development. This is to address the issue of disparities in development, mistrust among different ethnic groups in Nigeria, and fear of dominance. Considering the aforementioned, it is becoming more and more obvious that Nigeria's government's poor performance is a product of incompetent leadership supported by a dishonest political elite and a wasteful public bureaucracy.

Challenges And Administrative Effectiveness In Public Service

This study looked at the federal character policy in Nigeria and how they affect public service. The concept of federal character was adopted and afterwards enshrined in the 1979 constitution in an attempt to curb all these ethnic vices, bridge the differences that already existed among various ethnic regional groups, and promote equitable distribution of national resources, inclusive of equal representation of the various ethnic, sectional, or regional groups in the appointment of public offices to different governmental positions. Since the Nigerian state's establishment, its diverse composition has given rise to a number of problems that have forced the government to keep adjusting the system's survival mechanisms. These issues, which were intended to promote national integration, a sense of belonging, and the healthy development of all areas of the state, have divided the nation along lines of ethnicity, religion, majority-minority, advantaged-disadvantaged, and so on. The introduction of the quota system and the federal character principle in the employment process became crucial in putting an end to the already imminent class conflict.

The fundamental tenet of the Federal Character Principle is the elimination of all group imbalances in institutions and public affairs while maintaining equality among the constituent parts. The Federal Character Principle serves as an integrative mechanism that promotes equitable and effective representation of the various federation components in positions of authority, prestige, and influence within the nation. This will guarantee widespread public involvement in national affairs and promote equitable development. Because of the differences in the educational attainment of the federation's states, applying the principle had proven difficult. This suggests that the bar must be lowered in order to make room for the states with lower educational attainment. By doing this, it becomes clear that during the selection process, merit will be sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity. It

Challenges Of Federal Character Principle And Administrative Effectiveness In The Nigerian Public Service

Volume 8 | Nomor 2 | 126 – 135 | Desember 2023

is therefore imperative that adjustments be made to this procedure in order to guarantee administrative efficacy for Nigeria's sustainable development. In summary, the negative aspects of our country's history among different groups were merely historical. Nigeria would eventually correct any imbalances there with the right preparation, commitment, and sacrifice rather than causing rifts in the country and escalating tensions.

The government must reevaluate the federal character principle's implementation through merit-based enforcement measures based on public service reform initiatives that can inspire human potential and governmental institutions for long-term prosperity if the Nigerian public service is to fulfil its mandate of promoting sustainable development. Furthermore, it is imperative to include individuals who are dependable, prepared to serve, and capable of producing results. As a result, the government is in charge of creating and implementing policies to further a range of clearly stated social, political, and economic goals. Weber's "best result" option should guide policy makers in carrying out these duties so that the detrimental impacts of federal character, nepotism, quota systems, and tribalism plaguing Nigeria's political and administrative landscape can be ignored.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the study's conclusion, the following suggestions are put forth: When implementing the idea, the government and its agencies ought to be truthful, open, and sincere. They must adhere to the rules or guidelines governing the application, but they must not do so at the expense of applicants' qualifications and merit. This means that when applying the concept, merit must be taken into account and the qualifications of those vying for a political position or appointment must not be disregarded.

The public sector should undergo a complete administrative system makeover, a review of its rules pertaining to hiring, promoting, and disciplining employees, and the establishment of a political class dedicated to substantive advancement as part of political reform. In terms of hiring, advancement, and discipline in Nigeria, political reform in the public sector must work towards the depoliticization and detribalization of the public and civil service.

References

Ayoade, J. A. A. (2009). The Federal Character Principle and the Search for National Integration. In K. Amuwo, Suberu, R., Adigun, A., & Haurault, G. (eds) *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd. pp. 101-120.

Challenges Of Federal Character Principle And Administrative Effectiveness In The Nigerian Public Service

Volume 8 | Nomor 2 | 126 – 135| Desember 2023

- Federal Character Commission. (1996). *Issued by the secretary to the commission with act no 34*. Abuja: Federal Character Commission Publications.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2011). *1999 Constitution as amendment*. FRN Publicaions.
- Gberevbie, D. E. (2010). Nigerian federal civil service: Employee recruitment, retention and performance. *Journal of Science and Sustainable Development*. 3(1), 113-126.
- Gberevbie, D. E., & Ibietan, J. (2013). Federal character principle and administrative effectiveness in the Nigerian public service: Challenges and prospects for sustainable development, 1999-2012. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 15(5), 46 – 61.
- Nzeshi, O. (2012). *The quest to amend federal character commission*. Iabdan: Spectrum Books.
- Ojo, E. O. (2009). *Mechanisms of National integration in a multi-ethnic federal state: The Nigerian experience*. Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Ltd.
- The Transformation Agenda. (2011-2015). *Summary of the federal government's key priority policies, programmes and projects*. Abuja: National Planning Commission.
- Weber, M. (1967). *The theory social economic organization*. London: Collier Macmillan Publishers.
- Agburu, J. I. (2012). Recent trends in wages and salaries administration in Nigeria: A synopsis on theoretical and empirical challenges. *International Journal of Basic and Applied Science*, 1(2), 257-268.
- El-Rufai, N. A. (2011). Reforming our dysfunctional public service. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6(12), 210 -221.
- Oginni, B. O., Ogunlusi, C. F., & Faseyiku, I. O. (2013). A study of employee retention strategies and organizational survival in private universities in South West, Nigeria. *The International Journal of Management*, 2(1), 1-17.
- Adamolekun, L. (2008, March 26). Let us Debate Federalism. *The Vanguard Newspaper* (Lagos). p. 17.
- Olaopa, T. (2012, April 10). Nigerian public service and the udoji reform: A review." *The Daily Trust Newspaper* (Lagos). p. 56.
- Soludo, C. C (2012, September 17). Restructuring Nigeria for prosperity. *ThisDay Newspaper* (Lagos). p. 7.