

REPRESENTATIVE BUREAUCRACY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON NATION BUILDING (A STUDY OF NIGERIA)

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Abstract

Nigeria as a heterogeneous society consists of different people with various ancestral origins, languages, and cultures. It is therefore imperative to guarantee equity, justice and fairness in the allocation and distribution of resources, wealth and positions to the various ethnic groups in order to keep Nigeria as a single entity. This work investigated the effects of representative bureaucracy in guaranteeing equity and fairness in the distribution of national cake among these ethnic groups. Some of the findings of this work include that marginalization in employment into the federal civil service was responsible for conflicts among the ethnic groups in Nigeria, representative bureaucracy provides the modalities and schemes for redressing imbalances in Nigerian civil service, that representative bureaucracy did not promote ethnicity but encouraged nation building in Nigeria, merit should not constitute a weighty consideration even in seeking to achieve-geopolitical balancing on recruitment in Nigerian civil service. The work also made some recommendations which include among others; that there should be functional mechanism for the effective implementation of federal character and quota system in Nigerian civil service and staff of the civil service should also be trained on the job to encourage professionalism.

Keywords: Bureaucracy, Federal Character, Nation Building, Representative Bureaucracy, Quota Principle

Introduction

Nigeria's antecedents of historical and political process dates back to colonial rule with three major ethnic groups of Hausa- Fulani (North), the Yoruba (Southwest) and the Igbo (Southeast). Other minorities also exist. According to Mustapha (2007), this formed the basis of Nigeria's three regional structure and antecedents of her ethnic considerations. (Tamuno, 1984:394) discloses bureaucratic developments in the colonial administration of Nigeria to include the amalgamation of the Lagos Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria.

The Solaru Parliamentary Committee on Nigerianisation (1958/1959) accelerated the pace of Nigerianisation of the Federal Civil Service (Tamuno1984:397). Government accepted the recommendations of the Solaru Parliamentary Committee and as at October 1, 1960, the newly-independent Nigeria led by Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa commenced the implementation of the Nigerianisation policy in the Federal Civil Service. Colonial administration in Nigeria created an opportunity for partnership between Nigeria and Britain. It introduced good governance structure as it partly succeeded in transforming native customs and institutions such as improvement in medical care, education, infrastructure and administrative reforms.

The administration noted the unity of Nigeria despite the diverse nature of her peoples and also recognized the strength of the merit principle in the practice of representative bureaucracy in Nigeria. The administration also recognized ethnic regionalism existing among the North, South, West and East and in the colonial administrative practice; the indirect rule policy laid the foundation for the acceptance of peoples of the three regions as one. Bureaucratic inequalities among the three regions were the basis for recruitment policies from colonial to post-colonial administrative periods.

Regionalism was entrenched during colonial rule as economic structures such as the marketing boards were regionalized and regional parliaments were also introduced. Meritocracy was not abandoned during colonial era as the economic and political structures recognized the importance of merit in recruitment. The problem connected with colonial bureaucracy was that of difficulty to remove the ethnic structures (Barnes 1997:223; Graham, 1966) cited in Mustapha (2006:8).

By the 1950s, British colonial administration in Nigeria started to pave the way for localism of the Nigerian civil service which was achieved in 1960. The quota system in Nigeria aimed at representation of states in federal institutions and dates back to management of the military by colonial administration when its lower echelons were occupied by ethnic minority groups from the North. In 1958, the North had 50% of entrants to the Nigerian army and 25% went to the East and West Mustapha (2006:33). The Nigerian civilian government of Balewa applied merit for recruitment of indigenous corps officers that took over from the British officers Mustapha (2006; 33). Mustapha (2006:34) notes that the military quota was later put in abeyance but later appeared into the main stream of nation-building process under the 1979 Constitution when quota was based on state. The author adds that quota system introduced into the educational system comprises academic merit, educationally less developed states, catchment area and discretion by operators of respective institutions. The quota system has both its merits and demerits in all sectors introduced. Which consist of the following: the wide representation of states of the federation in federal establishment, it has helped in sustaining the unity of the country and has also assisted reducing the gap in national development. Even with its merit however its demerits can't be overlooked which include non-compliance with the quota system in some states, falsification of states of origin and unavailability of candidates to fill their quota in respective states of the federation. Also, the system has not been able to harmonize merit and ecological approaches. The above observations explain that decentralization is good in federal states like Nigeria and it has helped maintain the unity of the country but problems of harmonization with merit principles has introduced mediocrity and incompetence from the base of educational sector to the administrative sector.

In order to ensure equal representation among the ethnic groups that make Nigeria federation and passive representation; that is, the ideal that officials serving in government agencies demographically represent society at large which later translate into active representation that led to the idea of federal character principle, the 1999 Constitution stated that the condition of winning an election as governor include that the candidate should have not less than one quarter

of the votes cast at the election in each of the two-thirds of all the local government areas of the state.

Nation Building on the other hand, refers to the process of constructing a national identity using the power of the state. To Elaigwe (2011:36), is the process of creating unity and sense of belonging among heterogeneous groups in the state. Furthermore, nation building involves the process aimed at unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. The concept gained popularity due to the observed diversity in culture, tradition and religion in Nigeria after amalgamation and 1960 independence. It became obvious that the existence of Nigeria is marriage of divergent bed fellows and so its corporate existence hinges on advocacies and policy trust that can restore confidence, safety and sense of accommodation irrespective of the differences. Federal character/quota system is one of the principles and policies introduced to guarantee nation building (Elaigwe 2011:36).

Under the federal character principle, provision of social services has been evenly distributed among the various geo-political zones. No unit is unnecessarily discriminated against in the establishment of social services. To demonstrate unity, Alhaji Shehu Shagari's administration ensured that all states have federal universities and admission to these universities be based on criteria such as catchment area, educationally less advantaged states and locality. This situation assisted many admission seekers to gain admission into higher institutions. The method also increased human capital development such that made the public and private sectors to have a pool of manpower to employ from. This to Talib (2005:10) has helped in the equalization of persons, distribution of amenities and the achievement of nation building.

Conceptual Clarifications

Bureaucracy

An analyst has simply remarked: "few things have a worse reputation than bureaucracy. Say the word and everyone immediately thinks of red tape, stupid and rigid rules, waste, and coldly impersonal lazy clerks" (Woll and Zimmermann, 1989). Bureaucracy is so often used as a derogatory term, that one forgets that it "was coined by a distinguished sociologist to describe an institutional development that he regarded to be of great benefit to modern society" (Lynn, 1987:77).

Weber saw bureaucracy as the type of administration which is organized rationally, logically, impersonally and according to official rules as a means of carrying out imperative control over human resources. For Weber, bureaucracy "was a necessary condition or an organizational means for maintaining the legal, economic, and technical rationality inherent in modern civilization". Weber also emphasized the technical superiority of bureaucratic organizations over all other forms of organization - comparable to the technical superiority of a machine over non-mechanical modes of production. Some scholars have argued that bureaucracy facilitates rational planning of complex tasks and efficient production by large organizations (Lynn, 1987).

According to Anthony Downs (1967), bureaucracy, which is one of the most frequently used words in modern writing about organization, has three different meanings. It refers to a specific institution or class of institutions. In this sense, bureaucracy denotes the same concept as the term "bureau". It can also mean specific method of allocating resources within a large organization. A synonym for this sense might be bureaucratic decision making. Thirdly, "it sometimes denotes 'bureauness' or 'the quality that distinguishes bureaus from other types of organization.' Bureaucracy, in the context of this work, refers essentially to the civil service and other

government bureau, established to help in the formulation and implementation of government's policies.

Representative Bureaucracy

The term "representative bureaucracy" was given currency in 1949 through Donald Kingsley's book with the same title and since then it has gained popularity through the discussions of a few American Political Scientists and British Sociologists. The underlining concept, however, is still subject to some confusions owing in part to its normative overtones

Kingsley (1994) was partly responsible for injecting some ambiguity into the meaning of the term. He pointed out-though without giving precise figures – the actual dominance of the middle class in Britain's higher civil service and traced its history. He was generally satisfied that this class 'mirrored the dominant forces in society' and so 'can be entrusted with power' and at the same time he was anxious that the civil service should draw proportionately more from the working class. In other words, he was happy in one part of his book to see the same class which called the political tune well represented in the higher civil service – thereby ensuring harmony between the body politic and body administrative and sorry in another part that the working class was left out. This ambivalence confuses the straight meaning of the term 'representative bureaucracy'. Literally, it would mean a civil service in which every economic class, caste; region or religion in a country is represented in exact proportion to its numbers in the population. In practice, its American proponents interpret it less literally to mean a bureaucracy drawn 'from all social, racial and religious groups on the basis of ability' but not necessary in exact numerical proportion to produce "a copy of the total society".

Hence, representative bureaucracy can be seen as an effective and efficient representation of the public into the public organization for socio-economic and political growth for the entire society. It is also an equitable representation of the component units that has integrated to form a large system for the benefit of the people.

Nation Building

Nzongola (1987:76) conceived the concept of Nation building to mean "Establishing a national identity to transcend ethnic, regional and other particularistic ties, promoting national integration through exchange and cultural integration by all segment of the population and developing a national culture through educational and cultural activities. This position is shared by Nwabughuogu (2004:1), who states pungently that it is "a process of developing national consciousness among individuals and groups to cultivate a sense of love for a given nation and to accept this commitment to a nation-state. He further contends that nation building involves the creation of favorable environment that will sustain the sense of love developed by the individuals and group for the nation-state.

Thus, nation-building would normally involve the creation of impressive elements of organization (political, social and economic) that characterize a modern state: good roads, water supply, facilities for education and health, efficient communication, opportunities for employment and many others, would make the citizens develop love for their country. Similarly, Elaigwe (2011:103-104) vividly argues that "the process of nation building does not involve the transfer of 'commitment and loyalty' from narrow or parochial levels of ethnic groups to larger political units such as Nigeria. It involves the widening of (rather than transfer) horizons of identity of parochial units to include larger units such as the state". He further classifies nation building into two dimensional ways:

- a. The vertical dimension which according to him is closely linked with general acceptance of the legitimacy of the state not merely because of its coercive powers. In such state, the people see the government as the status symbol of their political community.
- b. The horizontal dimension involves the acceptance and incorporation of other members of the civil body as equal fellow members of a 'corporate' nation. This implies that such recognition confers some rights to share the good things of the state. In this way, a sense of belonging and loyalty to the political community is being buttressed and enhanced.

In sum, Nation building is the crave for nationhood, statehood, and selfhood i.e. a political community where the members will have inalienable rights or access to the good things of life on equal basis and where there will be harmonious living, intermingling of cultures and co-existence of inhabitants.

Operationalization of key Concepts

Bureaucracy

According to Weber (1950) is an administrative or social system that relies on a set of rules and procedures, separation of functions and a hierarchical structure in implementing controls over an organization, government or social system. Large administrative staffs are most common in large organizations that need standardized rules and procedures or consistency across a wide range of business activities (Okoh, 2016).

Federal Character

Olagunju (1987) defined federal character as a deliberate design to accommodate less dominant but often forcibly expressed interest. Implicit in the above definitions is that federal character is introduced where there are observed differences in culture, tradition and inequality either in human, natural or both.

Representative Bureaucracy

Representative bureaucracy is a system based on the belief that the ratio of each minority at each employment level in a government agency should equal that group's proportion in the general population. Is an effective and efficient representation of the public into the public organization for socio-economic and political growth for the entire society. It is an equitable representation of the component units that has integrated to form a large system for the benefit of the people

Nation-Building

In the modern era, nation-building referred to the efforts of independent nation to reshape territories that had been carved out by colonial powers or empires without regard to ethnic, religious, or other boundaries. Nation-building aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run (Okoh, 2016).

Quota Principle

In Nigeria, it is the appointment, promotion and retention of federal and state civil servants (bureaucrats) in line with the federal character principle, in other words, representation of states, or any other sectional group is paramount.

Influence of Representative Bureaucracy on Nation Building in Nigeria

In view of the fact that Nigeria is a country of diverse religious and ethnic nationalities, it is strongly believed that representative bureaucracy and its affiliate concepts are faced with certain problems, some of which include:

Ethnocentrism: The evils of tribalism in Nigeria are many. Tribal appellations cause tribal idiosyncrasies, these lead ultimately to superciliousness and disharmony. An ethnic group is distinguished by language, culture, religion or any two of them (Nnoli, 1990). Ethnocentrism is a self-judgment that one's ethnic group is superior to others. Such assumption promotes antagonism evidenced in Nigeria.

Elitism: Emergence and rise of elitism in Nigeria is traced to the unmatched amalgamation and introduction of federalism in 1914 and 1954 respectively. It is understandable that significant number of pre and post- independent nationalists do not have sound economic base. They strategically position their few agents in offices who act as political representatives against the set out goals of the establishment where they work. Nigeria has had more crises since the introduction of representative bureaucracy, some of which includes: The Nigeria civil war, several elections' violence particularly in 2011. Why and who is responsible? These concepts serve interest of elite who are eager to use their slaves to unleash terror and destabilize the country when they are schemed out (Gboyaga, 1989).

Mediocrity: Representative bureaucracy is introduced for purposes of ensuring ethnic balancing. In Nigeria, ethnic balancing is conceived, perfected and applied by elite for the promotion of their egocentrism through an institutionalized mediocrity. Nigeria is divided along ethnic nationalities. The most outstanding is language and it impliedly forms the basis for consideration in federal appointments. Given the share size and nationalities of the sub groups, it is repeatedly vital to acknowledge that difficulties of nation building and national integration are deeply rooted in putting the wrong peg in the right hole

Mutual Suspicion: Shortly after independence, Nigeria was faced with plethora of problems including mutual suspicion. Afigbo (1987) pointed suspicion and hatred among the major problems in Nigeria. To cushion the effects, protagonists of 1976 Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) compromised for inclusion of federal character in the constitution. Nation building and national integration were some of the slogans advocated in justification of its inclusion.

One of the major crises ever recorded in Nigeria since the amalgamation is significantly rooted to suspicion. This cuts across ethnic and religious boundaries but more pronounced across ethnic boundaries. They include 1964 federal election where political parties and alliances were more ethnic than ideological. Nigerian civil war 1967-1970, 2011 general election and so on each of these crises shook the foundation of Nigeria due to suspicion as against reasons for the introduction of federal character. There can be no successful implementation of representative bureaucracy principles amidst suspicion and hatred amongst the ethnic groups (Afigbo, 1987).

Major Findings of the Study

Nigeria is a country that consist of different languages, cultures, ancestral origins and entirely a heterogeneous society which failure to guarantee equity, justice and fairness in its allocation and distribution of resources, wealth and positions could lead to national disintegration.

The following findings were made from the study: Representative bureaucracy promotes national unity in Nigeria. This is the philosophy of the founding fathers of representative bureaucracy in Nigeria. The fact discovered remains that representative bureaucracy has not achieved the reason for which it was set up by the founding fathers. It is just being partially obeyed, but not fully implemented in Nigeria. Although, the study shows that representative bureaucracy is being

observed in Nigeria but not to a very large extent. Marginalization in employment into the federal civil service is responsible for conflicts among the ethnic groups in Nigeria.

However stated that to reduce the incidence of conflict among the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, there should be a more pragmatic way of ethnic groups' representation in the scheme of things and benefits in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, power tussle, and fear of dominance of one ethnic group over another are also factor that instigate ethnic conflict in Nigeria.

Another major finding of this study is that representative bureaucracy provides the modalities and schemes for redressing imbalances in Nigerian civil service. This among others, have generated conflict among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Representative bureaucracy does not promote ethnicity and such encourages nation building in Nigeria. Representative bureaucracy does not promote ethnicity because ethnicity is already a product of colonialism and amalgamation of various entities in Nigeria by our colonial masters. But rather is supposed to contribute immensely to nation building in a heterogeneous society like that of Nigeria. Representative bureaucracy is an equalizer mechanism to regularize the ethnic inequalities among ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Merit also should not constitute a weighty consideration even in seeking to achieve-geo-political balancing on recruitment in Nigerian civil service is also a finding of the study.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this work are gotten from the findings of this study

1. There should be functional mechanism for the effective implementation of federal character and quota system in Nigeria civil service. This will help to reduce the frequent occurrence of conflict among different ethnic groups in Nigeria which has been envisaged to be caused by marginalization of some ethnic group in the recruitment in civil service
2. Staff of the civil service should be trained on the job because representative bureaucracy tends to neglect merit and professionalism. This will help to make the workers competent and well equipped for good service delivery.
3. Issues relating to ethnic grouping should be spelt out in the constitution or in the civil service act. This will help to dazzle the tension among ethnic groups when it comes to issues of national concern like employment, recruitment, scholarship, appointment and promotion.
4. There should be also programmes that could help to promote ethnic nationalism (ethnic groups). This will help to promote unity in diversity in Nigeria. Programmes like cultural festival, cultural day, cultural week within the staff and family members of the civil service. This will help to build unity in diversity and correct the inability of representative bureaucracy to promote ethnicity.
5. Merit, competence and professionalism should also be emphasized during selection and employment of personnel. In as much as representative bureaucracy is important for heterogeneous society like Nigeria, emphasis should also be laid on quality.

Conclusion

This paper examined representative bureaucracy and its influence on nation building (a study of Nigeria).The study made some findings which include: that marginalization in employment into the federal civil service is responsible for conflicts among the ethnic groups in Nigeria. Representative Bureaucracy provides the modalities and schemes for redressing imbalances in Nigerian civil service. Representative Bureaucracy promotes incompetence but also encourages

nation building in Nigeria. This is so because when merit is placed above nation building there is all likelihood that some ethnic groups may not be represented in the scheme of things in the country. Therefore to prevent some ethnic groups from being disadvantaged, merit should not constitute a weighty consideration even in seeking to achieve-geo-political balancing on recruitment and even in appointments in Nigerian civil service and political positions in Nigeria. This study also made some recommendations among others, that there should be functional mechanism for the effective implementation of federal character and quota system in Nigeria civil service, Staff of the civil service should also be trained on the job to promote professionalism.

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