

Federal Character Principle and the Politics of Recruitment into the Nigerian Civil Service. A Case Study of National Drugs Enforcement Agencies (NDLEA) and the Nigerian Police Service Commission's Lopsided Recruitment 2019: Implication for Nation Building

ROTKANG, Dimlong Dimang¹, AJAKAYE, Olabode Felix², OLALEKE, Olateru-olagbegi³

¹*Department of Political Science, University of Jos, Nigeria*

²*Department of Public Administration, Crown Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria*

³*Department of Public Administration, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State Nigeria*

Abstract:-This work examines politics behind the implementation of the Federal Character Principle and the appointment into the National Drugs Enforcement Agencies (NDLEA) with a view to discussing the implications for National Unity of Nigeria. Every policy of government is expected to display high sense of indices of acceptable governance such as: transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, popular participation, service delivery and so on. Paradoxically, the reverse has always been the case with Federal Character Principle. The impacts of this have indeed pervaded the political landscape of Nigeria as majority of school leavers are found roaming the streets in search of employment. Verily, every Nigerian is adversely affected by Nigerian factors which are predicated on corruption, greed, selfishness among others. As a corollary, the much expected dividends of democracy is nothing but a ruse.

The work relies on both primary and secondary sources of information. The data sources were complemented with the administration of questionnaires and oral interview with relevant stakeholders and members of the public to elicit more information about the performance of both the Federal Character Principle and NDLEA. Data were also sourced from the internet, governmental organizations and other related agencies with the objective of assessment and comparison. The study raises critical question about the desirability of NDLEA and how it would , as a matter of concern ensure corruption free society via its job creation through Federal Character Principle as far as Nigerian political system is concerned. It noted that the aims of establishing the Federal Character Principle and NDLEA have not been fully realized rather.

The study therefore concludes that for the attainment of good governance, societal development, corruption free society and putting in the round peg in round hole, emphasis should be placed on how both the Commissions operate and to actualize these, there must be conscious efforts on the part of the government to ensure that credible people are employed to work

in those Commissions in order to engender promotion of accountability, transparency and probity. This will serve as model for others to be on their toes so as to institute good governance in the land.

Keywords: Federal Character Principle, Politics, National Drugs Enforcement Agencies and Nation Building.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

The appointment of workforce into some public offices in the country has become questionable under the federal character principle. And the much expected from the government have not been realized. Every policy of government is expected to display high sense of indices of acceptable governance such as: transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness, popular participation, service delivery and so on (Giade, 2007). Paradoxically, the reverse has always been the case with Federal Character Principle. The impacts of this have indeed pervaded the political landscape of Nigeria as majority of school leavers are found roaming the streets in search of employment. Indeed, every Nigerian is adversely affected by the Nigerian factors of corruption, greed, selfishness among others. As a corollary, the much expected dividends of democracy is nothing but a ruse.

The more concern of this study is the desirability of NDLEA and how it ensure corruption free society via its job creation by the Federal Character Commission. It has been observed that the objectives of establishing the Federal Character Principle and NDLEA have not been fully realized at all (Daily Triumph, 2009).

The study therefore submits that for the attainment of good governance, societal development, corruption free society and

putting in the round peg in round hole, emphasis should be placed on how both the Commissions operate and to actualize these, there must be conscious efforts on the part of the government to ensure that credible people are employed to work in those Commissions in order to engender promotion of accountability, transparency and probity. Meanwhile, in the course of this study, the following questions are billed to be addressed: (i) What is Federal Character Principle? (ii) How has the appointment into the National Drugs Enforcement Agencies (NDLEA) been politicized? (iii) What are the expected hope of the society considering the inherent politics of the civil service recruitment in Nigeria.

However, the study examines the Federal Character Principle and the Politics of recruitment into the National Drugs Enforcement Agencies (NDLEA) with a view to assessing the futuristic Implications for Nation Building

II. THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONAL DRUGS ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES (NDLEA) AND THE FEDERAL CHARACTER PRINCIPLE

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) is a Federal agency in Nigeria charged with eliminating the growing, processing, manufacturing, selling, exporting, and trafficking of hard drugs. The agency was established by Decree Number 48 of January 1990. The NDLEA is present in international airports, seaports and border crossing. It tries to eradicate cannabis by destroying plantings. The NDLEA also targets the leaders of narcotics and money laundering organizations. (Ahemba, 2009).

According to the former Chairman of NDLEA, Alhaji Ahmadu Giade, illicit drugs are described as "alien" to Nigeria. Cannabis, now locally grown in most states of the federation, was introduced to the country by foreigners. Ms Dagmar Thomas, the Country Representative of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), says Nigeria was one of the largest cannabis growers in Africa, with over 8% of the population abusing cannabis. Annual cannabis seizures increased from 126 metric tonnes in 2005 to 210 metric tonnes in 2007. (Ahmadu, 2007)

In another climate, curbing of drug trafficking is the purpose for which the commission is established. It is on record that a lot of accomplishments have made in this section. For instance, the United States has donated full body scanning machines for the Lagos, Kano, Abuja and Port Harcourt international airports and has provided security training and orientation airport officers. The machines have proved effective in catching smugglers and couriers taking cocaine from Latin America to Europe by way of Nigeria. Between 2006 and June 2008 over 12,663 suspected drug dealers were arrested, with seizure of over 418.8 metric tonnes of various hard drugs. For example, in July 2009 a woman about to board a KLM flight at the Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport was arrested by NDLEA officers and later excreted 42 wraps of cocaine, weighing 585 grams. In September 2009, the NDLEA arrested a Guinean woman en route from Brazil

to Europe with 6.350 kg of pure cocaine at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport in Lagos. (United States Department of State, 2009). In 2008 Nigeria was certified by the United States of America in the anti-narcotic crusade, for the eight successive time. President George Bush said that Nigeria had made significant progress in counter narcotics and had effectively co-operated with the United States on drug-related and money laundering cases. In Katsina State alone, one hundred people were convicted for drug offences from January to May 2008, and 358 people were arrested for drug offences in this period.

On Drug Barons, Speaking of efforts to go after the organizers of the trade, Ahmadu Giade, chairman/chief executive officer of NDLEA in 2008 said the agency had seized N270 million worth of shares from drug barons, as well as cars, houses and other property worth hundreds of millions of Naira. After a September 2009 meeting with the head of the Nigerian Immigration Service to discuss exchange of biometric data of convicted drug barons and traffickers, Giade said cooperation between the agencies would help deny passports to convicted drug barons. (Ahmadu, 2010).

On its own part, the Federal Character Principle is conceptualized by The CDC (1977) as:

the distinctive desire of the peoples 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 it is their desire to nourish, harness to the environment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The above definition of federal character by the CDC according to (Daniel and Jide, 2013) appears very inadequate and suffers on many counts. Similarly, Afigbo (1989:5) observed that federal character cannot be an aspiration. Besides, It appears reasonable to say that the CDC only tried to highlight some issues agitating the mind of Nigerians on how to make every segment of the society more represented in the formulation and implementation of government policies known in Nigeria as "the National Question." (Daniel and Jide, 2013). Advocating the adoption of the federal character principle in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution as strategy for peace, equity and stability, the CDC (1977:ix) opined thus:

There had in the past been inter-ethnic rivalry to secure the domination of government by one ethnic group or combination of ethnic groups to the exclusion of others. It is therefore essential to have some provisions to ensure that the predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups is avoided in the composition of government or the appointment or election of persons to high offices in the state. (Daniel and Jide, 2013)

Considering the importance of the principle of federal character, the 1979 constitution explains that:

The composition of the Federal Government or any of its agencies and the conduct of their affairs shall be carried out in such manner as to recognize the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and to command national loyalty. Accordingly, the predominance in that government or its agencies of persons from a few ethnic or other sectional groups shall be avoided.

In view of the above, it implies that the main objective for the establishment of federal character is to ensure the attainment of national unity, national loyalty and love. This becomes very important in view of societal decay in term of employment opportunity and other benefits like political, socio-economic gains etc.

III. FEDERAL CHARACTER PRINCIPLE AND ITS POLITICS OF RECRUITMENT INTO THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE

The federal character principle which has found its way into the Nigerian politics and administration through the drafting and adoption of the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria seems to be a normative expression (Daniel and Jide, 2013). This is because it has been observed from its application that rather than ameliorate, it provokes ethno-regional division. (Daniel and Jide, 2013). Besides, in the words of (Onyeoziri, 2002:18): *“federal character principle suffers from a fundamental contradiction as a policy option for managing the national question in Nigeria”* This is so because rather than the principle to treat the Nigerian citizen as an individual in his/her own rights, it considers the individual as a member of an ethno-linguistic group within the state, thus reinforcing the integrity of those sub-structures instead of the general structure (nation), and make them attractive to the individual. It is logically inconsistent that a policy directed at strengthening loyalty to the nation-state is anchored on primordial sentiment and cleavages as basis for recognition. (Daniel and Jide, 2013)

In his own perspective, Alubo (2003:54-66) points out that the lack of representation in policy making and implementation by some segments of the Nigerian society in the past has denied them the opportunities for education and economic advancement.

In order to drive the implementation of the federal character principle, the Federal Character Commission (FCC) was established by decree 34 of 1996, and the powers of the commission was summarized by Mustapha (2007) to include: *“working out formula for sharing posts and services; compliance monitoring; enforcement of compliance through legal actions; demanding and reviewing data on staffing; and institutional investigations.”* The FCC is a commission under the presidency; its members are appointed by the president, but subject to the ratification of the Senate. To ascertain equity in representation, the law establishing the commission states that the executive chairman and secretary are to be appointed in such a way that if the chairman comes from the North, the secretary must be chosen from the South and vice

versa. However, Nzeshi (2012:98) argues that “since its establishment, the Federal Character Commission has been headed mostly by Northerners.” This therefore suggests the politics inherent in the principle.

Implementing the principle sincerely, a bill is expected to be sent to the National Assembly for amendment for the accomplishment of: *“effectively enforcing the principles of equity and fairness ... also enable public officers to comply with rules and regulations issued by the commission”* (Nzeshi, 2012:97). The implication of this is to amend the FCC act so that the principle and the structure put in place would achieve the needed goals for nation building and integration.

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