

## **FEDERAL CHARACTER PRINCIPLE AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA: FOCUS ON FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE RECRUITMENT**

**NNAMANI, Desmond; TOCHUKWU, Nwachukwu; UGWUANYI, Chigozie and OKEKE, Ego K.**

### **Abstract**

Nigeria is a product of British experiment with social cloning of 250 ethnic groups. Prior to 1914 amalgamation, all the 250 tribal groups in Nigeria existed independently and distinctively in socio-cultural tradition, the amalgamations midwife the countries replica of unified catholic marriage which cannot be separated easily. In 1954, the British government displayed their political dexterity and introduces federalism and in all this did not provide the desired national unity. The inherent problems with federalism gave birth to federal character principle along together with national integration as a palliative measure enshrined in 1979 and 1999 constitutions respectively. The extent in which federal civil service recruitment has achieved its fundamental objectives for nation building demands scholarly excursion. The paper therefore investigates that in spite of the content that nation building has not been fully achieved there is still lopsidedness in public service appointment. The objective of this paper is to identify issues that derail federal character principle as options to facilitate desired nationhood. The issues are ethnocentrism, mutual suspicion, elitism and mediocrity using descriptive analysis and opted for value orientation, meritocracy, patriotism, honesty and fairness to enthrone confidence among Nigerians and facilitate the desired peaceful co-existence.

**Keywords:** Nigeria, federal character principle, nation building, federal civil service.

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is distinguished not only by its geographical location but peculiarities involving heterogeneity in ethnic diversity, religious and cultural affinities. It is important to note that ethno-religious differences have contributed most of the problems in the country (Kukah, 2003). Over the years, some regimes designed constitutional principles, provisions, policies and programmes aimed at promoting peaceful co-existence among diverse ethnic nationalities. Specifically, sec.14, (3) of the 1999 constitution states that the composition of government of the federation or its agencies shall be carried out in a manner to reflect federal character to promote national unity, and command national loyalty to lessen predominance of persons from few ethnic or sectional groups in any of its agencies.

The structure of Nigeria comprises three dozen states with 200 million people and 250 ethnic groups that necessitate an arrangement to accommodate people from different segments in the public bureaucracy (Gberevbie, 2012). As a federal state, Nigeria is faced with the challenge of how to imbibe the principle of federalism in practice. The idea of quota system as introduced in Nigerian public service in 1958 is to ensure equitable representation of various groups (Tonwe and Oghator, 2009). To consolidate on the gains of quota system, the military government under Murtala and Obasanjo draft and approve the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria during transition to civil rule (1976-79) in Nigerian political landscapes the principle of federal character (Ekeh, 1989). Federal character principle gave opportunities in education and employment at the point of entry to disadvantaged group to enable them compete and catch up with more advanced areas of the nation (Ekeh, 1989). In the words of Eliagwu (2009), it 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 (Okorie, 2013). The concept gained popularity due to diverse in culture, tradition and religion in Nigeria after amalgamation in 1960 independence. The existence of Nigeria is divergent bed fellows and its corporate existence hinges on advocacies and policy trust to restore confidence, safety and sense of accommodation irrespective of the differences. Federal character and quota system is one of the principles introduced to guarantee nation building (Elaigwu 2009). In the application of federal character principle, provision of basic services has been evenly distributed among various geo-political zones; no geo-political zone is discriminated in basic services. In order to demonstrate unity, Shagari administration establishes federal universities and admission to these institutions based on catchment area for educational less advantaged states. These assist many admission seekers to gain admission into higher institutions. In the words of Talib (2005), the introduction of imbalance in developing various multiplicities ethnic nations that constitute Nigeria federation, efforts in addressing unity in diversity among the federating units in Nigeria have been

bedeviled by factors that hinder the achievement of desired goals on the proponents of federalism in Nigeria. One factor is misapplication of merit displacement where mediocrity has been used into the appointment and promotion of staff.

The problem of imbalance in our national life has revolved around other sectors of the economy that is why this call for research investigation on employment in Nigeria federal civil service commission using federal character principle. There has been gross misconduct in employment due to sectional identity and nepotism by those in authority in MDAs. Federal institutions recruit on the basis of nepotism and favoritism without minding the effect of such practices for effective service delivery and quality of output to the nation. Even when the federal character principle is observed, the institution will not consider efficiency of the candidates as long as they are relatives will not follow the due process thereby cutting corners in recruitment exercise. All these influence nation building negatively in Nigeria. The objective of this study is to investigate whether the application of federal character principle in Nigeria has positive influence on nation building.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Federal Character Principle**

The basis of Nigerian federalism few years after independent was shaken and this culminated into the civil war from 1966-1970. Some of these problems were neither realized nor envisaged by some of the nationalists before independence. Osifeso (2011) observed that political boundaries inherited at the independence did not cut across tribal lines. The ethnic groups are divided along history, customs, beliefs, religious, languages or tribal lines affinity. Subsequently, party politics becomes polarized along ethnic and tribal lines while the political elites represented and defended their ethnic groups rather than national unity, thereby encouraging ethnic accentuations which instigated the first military coup and counter-coup in the country as well as the Biafran civil war (Chukwuma, 2014).

As noted earlier, these problems of national integration or unity and stability have been created at amalgamation in 1914. One cannot gainsay that fact that successive administrations made several efforts to promote national integration and stability. Anyone conversant with Nigerian politics cannot be oblivious of this fact. For instance, Tafawa Balewa formed an inclusive national government comprised of the three dominant political parties (which represented and defended the ethnic groups); He introduced quota system which was used by successive governments for admission of students in government schools, recruit military personnel and public service among others. Aguyi Ironsi regime claimed that the introduction of unitary system promote national integration and stability, by dismantling regionalism that accentuates tribalism. Gowon's regime later restored the federal system and expanded the structure from four regions to twelve states. According to Gowon, this was meant to

protect the right of minorities in the event of a civil war, and invariably give the minority a sense of belonging in the national arrangement. Murtala increased the number of states to nineteen in an attempt to find solution to these problems of disunity and agitations resulting from suspicions among the various ethnic groups (both majority & minority). This trends of state creation as a mechanism for resolving the problem of national integration and stability continued through the Babangida's and Abacha's regimes, even till this moment where eighteen more states were recommended by the last National confab. Beside state creation as a mechanism for maintaining unity in diversity, the Late General Murtala muted the idea of introducing the Federal Character in his address to the opening session of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) on Saturday the 18th of October 1975 (Ammani, 2014, Okolo, 2014). Federal Character refers to *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 enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* (Ammani, 2014). This was an effort to re-address the unbalanced structure and ethnic domination in government in order to achieve national integration (Osman, 2004). The principle arose out of the need to reduce ethnic conflict arising out of competition for political power, government appointments, citing of public industries and institutions, employment into public organizations. (Edigin, 2010). In fact, since its adoption in the 1979, the successive constitutions (1989 and 1999) have retained the federal character principle as part of their provisions. Recognizing its necessity, General Abacha established the federal character commission for the implementation of the policy in Nigeria. Federal character supposed to protect the right of the minority, accommodate the disadvantaged and ensures even distribution of resources among the various federating units as evident in Section 14 Subsection 3 of the 1979 Constitution *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 command national loyalty to ensure that there is no predominance of persons from a few states or few ethnics or other sectional group in governance or any of its agencies*. The constitutional provision generated controversies in Nigeria administrative and political discourse, but enthusiasts like Edigin, Osaghae, Ammani believe that federal character helped in consolidating national stability by reducing ethnic politics and makes it difficult for ethnic bigot to take over power and subdue other ethnic groups and it is desirable and inevitable in a severely-divided society as Nigeria (Osaghae 1989). In the words of Ammani (2009) and Chukwuma (2014), the principle provide an equitable formula for distributing socio-economic and infrastructural facilities; provides modalities for redressing imbalances; ensures equitable admission in federal universities; ensure that no one section of the society dominates the elective or appointive

positions; provides equality into armed force, police, protect the interest of minority ethnic groups, even spread in recruitment into federal civil service among civil servants, has corporate existence of Nigeria and douse the centripetal agitations (civil wars).

### **Origin of Federal Character Principle in Nigeria**

Scholars like Afigbo (1989:3-18), Ekeh (1989:19-44), Gboyega (1989:164-185) and Uroh (2000:191-200) on the origin of federal character principle in Nigeria seem to be similar. Afigbo (1989:3) was however more specific, when he posits that “the term federal character is one of the inventions of the Constitutional Drafting Committee (CDC) inaugurated by the late General Murtala on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 1975.” Others traced the origin of federal character to 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Afigbo (1989) corroborated the view, when he argues that “it was in the course of the debate on that section of the report of the sub-committee on the executive and the legislature which dealt with how to promote national loyalty in a multi-ethnic society that federal character was coined 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 the environment of Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is logical to state that CDC highlight issues agitating the mind of Nigerians on how to make every segment of the society to be represented in formulating and implementing government policies known as “National Question” While canvassing for support on the adoption of federal character principle in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution as strategy for peace, equity and stability, the CDC (1977) argued that there has been inter-ethnic rivalry to secure the domination of government by one ethnic group or combination of ethnic groups to exclude others. It is important to have some provisions to ensure that the predominance of persons from few states, ethnic or other sectional groups is avoided in composing government appointment or election to high offices in the state.

The desire of Nigerians to promote national unity by CDC (1977) is an indication that there is need to reappraise Nigerian federal system to achieve enduring unity and development. Afigbo (1989) submitted that federal character of Nigeria must be taken to mean the character of the Nigerian federation. The character of the Nigerian federation must be the innate or primordial characteristics of Nigeria's federal society going back to the days of yore; the quality and performance of the statesmanship which has sought to harness the inborn characteristics of Nigeria's federal society to a federal constitution; the degree of harmony existing between the primordial features and usages of Nigerian society; the structure of the constitution; and the character of the Nigerian federation has been rather dynamic in response to the changing perceptions of statesmanship and other relevant forces.

The import of the above exposition is that the term federal character becomes lucid mainly in the light of history, because the problems which federal character encapsulates has existed in Nigeria in different forms and with varying degree since the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates in 1914. Ekeh (1989) however argues, “the problems that the doctrine of Nigerian federal character deals with are partially federal in nature. The issues associated with federal character relate as much to unitary systems of government” As enshrined in the 1979 constitution, federal character is all about distribution of privileges and benefits among the primordial components of any state organization.

It is this preoccupation with sharing privileges and benefits that come with participation in government not in resource generation or cake-baking is the major albatross of applying federal character principle in Nigeria. The need to tinker this practice with a view to ensure administrative effectiveness for sustainable development in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Gboyega (1989) posits that the objectives and principles of state policy in 1979 constitution explains federal character as the composition of federal government, any of its agencies and the conduct of their affairs shall be carried out in a manner to recognize the federal character of Nigeria to promote national unity and command national loyalty. The predominance in that government or its agencies of persons from a few ethnic or other sectional groups shall be avoided.

The above constitutional mandate was made with a view to enhance participation of people from different segments of the Nigerian society in the process of governance. However, Onyeoziri (2002) observes that “the implementation of the federal character has caused a lot of tension among the different federating units in the country. The reasons for the tension are as follow: the fuzziness that pervades its application in certain areas; the arbitrariness that seems to accompany its application even in areas where the application seems straight, especially during the military regimes; lack of political will from the leading elite to employ sanctions when the rules are breached; and lack of definite guideline in achieving balance between equity and efficiency in the application of the principle. These factors highlight the liabilities to the judicious practice of the principle and poses serious encumbrances to the realization of sustainable development in Nigeria (Onyeoziri, 2002).

It has been observed from the application of the federal character principle that rather than ameliorate, it provokes ethno regional division; furthermore, it suffers from a fundamental contradiction as a policy option for managing the national question in Nigeria (Onyeoziri, 2002:18). 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 inconsistent that a policy directed at strengthening loyalty to the nation-state is anchored on

primordial sentiment and cleavages as basis for recognition. Olagunju (1987) defined federal character as a deliberate design to accommodate less dominant but often forcibly expressed interest. Ekeh (1989) says that federal character principle involves a deliberate plan to construct means of ensuring the proper distribution of amenities and government projects in a country. 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.

### **National Integration**

National integration is a multifaceted and multidimensional concept, it is the process of unifying a society which tends to make a harmonious city, based on order its members regard as equitably harmonious. Akinbade (2004) views integration as the process of maintaining territorial integrity of a state in sharp divided society with 'babel' of voices like Nigeria, it is a task that must be implemented for the purpose of securing stability and adaptability within the state.

According to Fatile and Adejuwon (2012), national integration has to do with geographical or territorial mass of a country. In the light of this, it could be achieved if different parts that make a country are lumped together as monolithic whole. The unification of different parts of the state serves as a deterrent for co-operation and interdependence. It binds together various interest groups in a territorial entity to pursue common goals or objectives (Okafor and Okeke, 2008; Iwokwagh, 2008). National integration is a specific problem to create sense of territorial nationality and eliminate subordinate parochial loyalties. It is presumed that an ethnic plural society in which each group is characterized by their language or other self-conscious cultural qualities. The integration used the tensions and discontinuities on horizontal plane to create homogeneous progressive reduction of cultural and regional territorial political community (Bamiseye, 2003).

National integration reduces socio-cultural and economic differences to strengthen national unity that is not imposed by any authority. People share ideas, values and emotional bonds; national integration is feeling of unity within diversity. National identity is cultural unity, constitution, territorial continuity, common economic problems, art, literature, national festivals, national flag, national anthem and national emblem to promote national integration ([www.wikianswers.com](http://www.wikianswers.com)). National integration can be seen as the process whereby several desperate groups within a given territorial are united together or cooperate under conditions which do not appear to permit satisfaction of their system needs in any other way (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2012).

According to Elaigwu (1987), states that national integration is determined by the degree to which members and groups in a plural society adapt to the demands of national existence while co-existing harmoniously, usually affected by contending social forces. National integration led to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalty toward a central political authority and institutions by

individuals belonging to different social groups or political units. For national integration to thrive, Ibogje and Dode (2007) stated that there must be a central authority to serve as a rallying point. In the quest for national integration, citizens are expected to respect the overriding supremacy of the national government. This entails subordination of institutions and cultural values to the demands of the central authority. Often, intra- and inter-ethnic crisis task the state's security apparatus. The ability of the state to resolve the recurring crises and create an environment where the people's respect and love for their nation is enhanced affect the tempo of the nation's integration positively. National integration covers a vast range of human relationships and attitudes, the integration of diverse cultural loyalties and the development of a sense of nationality; the integration of the rulers and the ruled and the integration of the citizens into a common political process. It has a common link in that integration is what holds a society and a political system together.

### **Civil Service**

Adamolekun (2002) describe civil service as a machinery of government most common in Britain and other countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. In British conception, civil service is the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the decision makers. Section 318 sub-section 1 of the 1999 constitution define civil service is service rendered to the federation, state or even local level in a civil capacity, staff to the office of the president, vice president, governor, deputy governor, ministries, departments and agencies of the federation and state with the responsibility to business of the government of the federation or state (FRN, 1999).

The civil service is the body of men and women employed in a civil capacity and nonpolitical career basis by the federal and state governments primarily to render and effect government decisions and implementation (Ipinlaiye, 2001). Such career officers got their appointment from civil service commission, and exercise power of delegating duties and responsibilities to ministries, department and agencies of government in accordance with laid down rules. Presently, civil service is an institution bequeathed to mankind in revolutionizing an efficient way of organizing large human organization. It is in this respect that the civil service is regarded as bureaucracy. Civil service is a complex body of permanent officials appointed to assist the political executives in formulating, executing and implementing government policies in ministries and extra-ministerial departments within which government business is carried out.

Encyclopedia Britannica (2004), states that civil service is the body of government officials employed in civil occupations that are neither political nor judicial. Bezzina (1994) assert that civil service is the employees selected and promoted on the basis of merit and seniority system, which include examination. World Book Encyclopedia (2004) noted that civil service consists of people employed by state to run public institution of a country. Abba and Anazodo



(2006), argue that civil service in Nigeria comprises staff in various ministries, departments and agencies apart from political office holders.

### **Application of Federal Character Principle for National Integration in Nigeria**

In view of this Nigeria ethnic nationalities strongly believed that application of federal character and its affiliate concepts are faced with certain problems, some of which include:

**Ethnocentrism:** Nigeria should be an estate of our great grandfather Othman Danfodio, we must prevent a change of power. We use minorities in the North as willing tools and South as conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us and control our future (Shilgba, 2011). This was stated by one nationalist from northern oligarchy in 1960. Alhaji Shehu Malami and Alhaji Maitama Sule created a storm when they informed their listeners on Hausa superiority. Hausa-Fulani acquired their dark skin from inter-marriages with the local Africans and were endowed with leadership qualities (Kukah, 2003). The evils of tribalism cause idiosyncrasies, these lead ultimately to variety and superciliousness and disharmony. Hausa man may think a Yoruba man is inferior, while the Yoruba man in turn communizes the Igbo; and Igbo man concedes to himself that both the Hausa and Yoruba are just the people without gut (Ngozi, 2012). This captures the reason and current situation in Nigeria due to ethnocentrism. An ethnic group is distinguished by language, culture, religion or both (Nnoli, 1978).

Ethnocentrism is a self-judgment that one's ethnic group is superior to others. Such assumption promotes antagonism evidenced in Nigeria. In response to many challenges orchestrated by ethnocentrism, Awolowo (1968) described Nigeria as irreconcilable entity. The principles of federal character, nation building and national integration are irreconcilable with the composition and attitude of most Nigerians. Nweke (1995) described ethnocentrism as attitudinal in nature and perceptual in content. It is not erased when the leaders do not display convincing attitude that our strength lies in the diversity and exploration of resources for equitable benefit of every citizen irrespective of affiliation or originality.

**Elitism** Afigbo (1987) noted that the principle of federal character arose out of a compromise among the protagonists of 1976 CDC. In view of this Agbodike (2003), assert that federal character has been manipulated to serve the overall interest of the ruling class while elitism represents interests of the few minorities that champion the principle and policies indirect benefactor, it is another form of expanding their solid-political and economic empire (Guaba, 2004, Agarwal, 2006 and Chaturvedi, 2006).

The emergence and rise of elitism in Nigeria is traced to the 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. Gboyega (1989) aptly states that federal character principle is a ploy that could not improve the lot of the down-trodden in whose name it is raised. They constitute cabals and use ethnic sentiment to cover their ills. They strategically position their agents in offices who act as political representatives against the set goals of the establishment where they work. Nigeria has more crises since the introduction of federal character, some of which are the Nigeria civil war, some election violence particularly in 2011. These serve interest of elite who are eager to use their slaves to unleash terror and destabilize the country when they are schemed out.

**Mediocrity:** Federal character 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 the basis for considering federal appointments. The share size and nationalities of the sub groups is vital to acknowledge the difficulties of nation building and national integration which is deeply rooted in putting square peg in a round hole. This is one of the major challenges of public enterprises in Nigeria. Federal character is introduced in Nigeria as acceptance of bad and non-responsive governance. Okata (2004) posit that public enterprises is a progression and requires that administrative managers should possess certain kind of education, knowledge, skills and values as prerequisite for effective performance in the job. This suggests that competence not quota system or ethnic balancing is the nexus for effective and efficient performance of public organizations. Abba (2003) and Sharma et al., (2011) affirmed that politicization of public enterprises breeds mediocrity and this is destructive to inefficiency in most public organizations. Also, mediocrity is loyal to their godfather due to incompetence; they frustrate organizational goals and go unpunished.

According to Utume (2003), fear among officers, secured by provisions of federal character is like political office without paying due attention to their duties. The variation in human and material resources across ethnic board promotes good governance and reduces tension of ethnic revolt. Nigerians need responsive government that has the courage and will to do the right thing at all times and for all Nigerians.

**Mutual Suspicion** Before 1914 the amalgamation and 1954 federalism made each sub-nationality lived independently and enjoyed autonomy which explains insignificant social strives compared to experience after the amalgamation. The problems bedeviling Nigeria described it as a mere geographical expression (Awolowo, 1947). Also, Ahmadu (1962) and Onu (2008) affirmed the amalgamation is the mistake of 1914, shortly after independence; Nigeria was faced with plethora of problems including mutual suspicion. Afigbo (1987) &

Ezigbo (2007) point that suspicion and hatred among the major problems in Nigeria, to cushion the effects, protagonists of 1976 CDC compromised for inclusion of federal character in the constitution. National integration was some of the slogans advocated in justification of its inclusion.

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. This includes 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 the crises shakes the foundation of Nigeria against reasons for the introduction of federal character. There can be no successful implementation of federal character principles amidst suspicion and hatred amongst the ethnic groups.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The bureaucratic theory by Max Weber (1846-1920) was adopted as the framework for the paper. The theory described an ideal-type organization as the most rational known means of achieving efficiency in a formal organization based on legal-rational authority. He view that efficiency is achievable through division of tasks, a defined hierarchy of authority, impersonality and detailed rules and regulations.

Weber believes that adherence to features of bureaucracy would create a predictable, enduring, efficient and organized structure. The feature of this theory is that control of work by structuring the work of employees is the responsibility of managers. The rights, duties and functions are assigned to positions not to persons. It is believed that efficiency in large complex organization can only be achieved through the following features:

- Hierarchy of authority and offices.
- Rules impersonally carried out.
- Selection based on technical competence.
- Division of work according to specialization.
- Use of written records.
- Salary based on position.
- Training for each new position.

The theory can be a useful framework of analysis on issues bothering on inefficiency of public organizations. It can be applied in explaining corruption in public organizations. The bureaucratic theory becomes the yardstick for the evaluation of an organization and consequently its efficiency and effectiveness.

In the case of Nigeria, and federal character commission, there is need to introduce written examination among contestants of a particular position. This will facilitate the selection that shall be knowledge based and competence. This will lead to efficiency and improved productivity of public officers and at the end lead to better service delivery. It will encourage hard work because promotion

will only be based on written examination and on competence. This will make public officers to put in their best in the official duties with the consciousness that it is the basis for promotion. In Nigeria officials are selected or recruited based on prebendalism, godfatherism and primordial consideration, the bureaucratic theory specifies that this kind of situation that is prevalent in Nigeria is what this theory tries to standardize by placing an acceptable way by which officers are supposed to be recruited. Officials are subject to an impersonal order: The officials are not influenced by primary group sentiments or emotional considerations in dealing with cases rather they are influenced by the rules and regulations of the office. In Nigeria, most public servants or civil servants apply "I don't care attitude" simply because of the way in which they find themselves in public service. As a result of their godfathers, or politicians that helped them secure jobs, they tend to misbehave and treat the job with levity. The theory of bureaucracy tries to correct this anomaly.

### **Methodology**

The methodology adopted for this paper is descriptive based on the topic which states the implication of federal character on nation building, the main variable is federal character. Ifidon and Ifidon (2007), see descriptive as collection of data in order to answer questions concerning conditions or relationships that exist, practices that prevail, points of view, or attitudes that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are felt or trends that are developing, such reports the way things are. The data was collected from secondary sources like journals, newspapers, textbooks and online materials constitute data.

### **Analysis on the Practice of Federal Character Principle in Nigeria**

In order to test this hypothesis, content analysis will be used the policy suffers from a faulty philosophical premise. It is a policy that was supposed to have been designed for the benefit of the underprivileged. But it was designed for the benefit of the ruling class in the Nigerian context, resulting in the further disempowerment of the powerless." As a result, it made nonsense of the checks and balances embedded in the original arrangement, and it resulted in geometric diffusion of mediocrity, public service ineptitude, and manifest decline in public morale (Suberu 2001).

The downside is that the policy is engendering federal instability rather than integration that it was intended to serve. The policy has failed to integrate the society as it merely promoted ethnic and sectional consciousness. Some experience has shown, no unity can result where the application of the principle discriminates against one group and favours another. The principle is even predicated on false premise. Its object is to achieve distributive justice, the equality of states. But states are not equal in population and they are far from being equal too in size of the pool of eligible candidates for appointments. There is no greater inequality than the equal treatment of unequal (Ojo, 2009). There are those who argue that federal character principle is to foster nation building

among Nigerians by giving every ethnic group a sense of belonging in the national scheme of things. This appears as a fine argument on the surface.

The sense of belonging is that our son will be in government and our people will be carried along. Instead of federal character principle uniting Nigerians, it has done more harm in dividing the people in Nigeria. It is in the process of its operations created a class of ethno-regional lords, local godfathers and their appendages exploit national resources without any corresponding contribution. The answer to this came recently when Professor Soludo's spoke at the 2012 ABTI-American University Convocation in Yola. He noted that federal executive council is many a time like a mini-United Nations, where each member represents his state of origin or region but not his portfolio. In view of the above from scholars, the researcher can deduct and conclude that there is no significant relationship between federal character and nation building in Nigeria federal civil service.

Federal character principle has solved the problem of ethnic conflicts and encouraged nation building in Nigeria. Perhaps, as Ojo (1999) and Popoola (2002) argued, the most chronic of the banes of federal character principle in Nigeria is that it potentially invades the integrity and standards of public bureaucracy and such other governmental bodies that normally require safeguards from the ravages of politics. The result in this regard has not been the promotion of national loyalty but inertia and alienation as those who hail from states and communities which have suffered from federal character discrimination become resentful and also eventually alienated from the overall body politics.

As Ojo (1999) & Okoli (1990) rightly submitted, competent people who are disqualified on the grounds of states of origin and such other spurious criteria cannot be willing materials on which to erect the unity of the nation. They must feel wanted in order to volunteer themselves for national sacrifice. Tonwe and Oghator (2009) submit that "federal character allows ethno-regional patrons and their clients to exploit and mismanage state resources without contributing to any meaningful development. Supporting the importance of merit as strategy for manpower procurement in the nation's quest for administrative effectiveness and enhanced performance for sustainable development, Soludo (2012) argues that the emergence of merit driven culture is an outcome of Vision 20:20:20 and an area of immediate policy focus.

A comprehensive review of ethnic balancing measures and diversity management related laws such as the implementation of the federal character principle will be undertaken with a view to ensuring greater promotion of merit for sustainable development in Nigeria. According to the transformation agenda (2011-2015), Nigeria's inability to attain sustainable development in the past has been attributed to the nation's inability to tackle development challenges such as poverty, unemployment, corruption and security hinged on bad governance and ineffective agencies of government. The poor implementation of the federal character in Nigerian public service is capable of bringing into the service

incompetent workforce that lacks the ability to implement the policies of government for sustainable development (Gberevbie, 2010).

The effect of federal character on public sector in Nigeria as viewed by Forrest (1993) that the implementation of federal character in the public service not only led to poor appointments but enhanced mediocrity instead of meritocracy. In the words of Ojo (2009), federal character principle in Nigeria is elitist and class biased, it result to blurring of the boundary between the pursuit of meritocracy and ethnic balancing thereby creating multiple system of citizenship in the polity. Federal character principle was introduced to foster national integration; its implementation is fraught with different problem and this has result in tension among the sub units of the federation.

The reasons for the tensions are the fuzziness that pervades its application in certain areas; the arbitrariness that accompany its application in areas where the application is straight especially in military regimes; non political will from the leading elite to employ sanctions when the rules are breached; and non definite guideline in achieving balance between equity and efficiency in applying the principle (Onyeoziri, 2002).

These factors highlight the practice of principle and poses serious encumbrances for national development in Nigeria. Federal character principle ameliorate the negative effects of ethnocentrism, provokes ethno-regional division and suffers a contradiction to ensure nation building. The principle does not encourage treating individuals as members of the nation-state, but views them from the lens of ethno-linguistic group within the nation state, thereby reinforcing the integrating of the units instead of the nation-state (Onyeoziri, 2002). In view of this, the paper rejects the hypothesis that federal character principle has solved ethnic conflicts and encouraged national integration in Nigeria and concludes that federal character principle have not solved the problem meant to solve due to the above factors.

The federal character principle can be strengthened and used as a veritable tool to promote Nation building in Nigeria federal civil service. Sanusi (2012) aptly criticized the constitution as a document that hinders development. The mistake has been made and is unlikely that it will soon be deleted. Efforts should be to thinker smart options for survival as a nation such as true federalism, patriotism, honesty and fairness. There is need to replace quasi or centripetal federation with true fiscal federation.

Federation purports that everybody can be satisfied by nicely combining natural and territorial interests within a complex web of checks and balances between a general, or federal government on the one hand, and a multiplicity of regional government, on the other (Mclean and Mcmillian, 2003). From the above assertion, true federalism is a system of government in which the states within a country have control over their own affairs, but are controlled by a central government for national decisions (Kobojunkie 2012).

True federalism grants constitutional autonomy to states as well as local governments. This will reduce tension at the centre because different tiers will

have shared responsibilities. For years Nigeria has been practicing quasi federalism that is a shift from the status quo that require constitutional amendment or sovereign national conference which will permit autonomous and independent status in decision making for the continuation of Nigeria state. There is need for sub-national autonomy in areas of resource control, policy making and implementation, fiscal relationship and so on.

There is need for value re-orientation; Nigerians are known for hard work, high moral standard as epitome of each sub-nationality. In recent times, corruption and immorality is celebrated thereby promoting evil. Value orientation will re-shape the attitude of Nigerians particularly the elite who are the major actors and benefactors of federal character. Good moral value will entrench national patriotism rather than ethnic primordialism, fairness rather than sentiment (Okolie C.O). The misapplication of federal character principle worried Emir of Kano states that the principle should be strictly on merit rather than ethnicity. Sanusi spoke at the 10th memorial lecture of Chief Kehinde Sofola on the role of legal profession in nation building in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Peaceful co-existence in Nigeria requires focused emphasizes on those tenets and values that promote individual habit for integration. The paper has presented conceptual and contextual explications of the principle of federal character and the affiliate concepts such as national integration and nation building. It x-rays issues with the application of federal character in Nigeria include ethnocentrism, elitism, mediocrity, mutual suspicion and so on. It further highlighted the options such as: true federalism, patriotism, honesty and fairness. It is the submission of this paper that more efforts should be dedicated in high moral value in every Nigerian and more importantly making political office holders, corporate institutions and career officials more responsive and responsible. This will undoubtedly give every Nigerian hope, improve their future and make government accountable to the people. The paper recommends as follows:

1. There should be mechanism for effective implementation of federal character and quota system in Nigeria civil service like patriotism, honesty, institutionalism and fairness. This will reduce frequent occurrence of conflict among different ethnic groups in Nigeria as the root cause of marginalization from some ethnic group in civil service recruitment.
2. True federalism and decentralization of federal powers should be encouraged; the country should be restructured to reflect true federalism to promote ethnic autonomy and enhance nation building by doing this the concentration at the centre will reduce drastically and the regions will develop.
3. Promotion of value system is at its lowest ebb in Nigeria, the value of Nigeria have succeeded in institutionalizing corruption and unethical standards, we celebrate the end rather than the means, that was why the elite class hijacked federal character for their selfish interest at the detriment of the masses. It is

manipulated to serve the overall interest of the petty bourgeoisies ruling class, elitism represents interests of the few minorities

4. Emphasis should be laid in merit, quality, competence and professionalism during selection and employment of personnel in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria.

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