

FEDERAL CHARACTER PRINCIPLE AND NATIONAL UNITY AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS STAFF IN NIGERIA: PERCEPTIONS AND THREATS

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Abstract. In any pluralistic nation such as Nigeria, harmonious co-existence of citizens irrespective of ethnic groups, tribes, religion and political affiliations is a necessity if spirit of nationhood is to be acknowledged. But considering the lots of agitations posing threats to the nation’s oneness, it now leaves much to desire more so in the face of progress and national goal attainment. This study therefore assessed federal higher education staff perception of federal character principle as a national unity agendum in the workplace and its threatening indices in Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative research design using narrative approach with in-depth interviews. The population for this study comprised all categories of staff (Academic and Non-Teaching Members) of the federal higher education institutions in Nigeria. The sample for the study comprised 100 respondents from the randomly selected institutions. An Interview Guide titled: Federal Character Principle and National Unity was used as instrument for data gathering. The instrument was validated using content validity while the credibility of data obtained was ascertained by subjecting it to a member check. Content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained through the

interview to answer the two research questions raised. Results showed that the practice of federal character principle in the institutions understudied does not promote national unity among the staff but rather a mere 'social interaction' (quasi unity). This was based on the common understanding that realization of unity remains fictional. The results further showed ethnic affiliations, divergent interests, poor understanding and weak nationhood spirit; tribal divisions, unenforced national unity policy and imbalanced educational development remain factors threatening national unity among staff members. Another obvious issue of nationhood threat revealed in the study is that no ethnic group is ready to turn down its notion of ethnic biases, ties and affiliations in favour of national unity; as observed in the control of all the centre by the ethnic group that controls power throughout their stay in power.

Keywords: federal character principle, national unity, higher education staff, threats

Introduction

Harmonious co-existence of any pluralistic nation like Nigeria often leaves much to desire when one considers series of agitations posing threats to its accomplishment. The amalgamation of these multi-ethnic groups in 1914 by Frederick Lugard seemed to be a British imposition which Nigerians were not ready for, and which has been the major cause of the continued disunity in the country. According to Albert,¹⁾ the colonial systems never allowed the different ethnic groups that later constituted Nigeria, to enter into any serious negotiation of their differences, in a manner that could have led to the emergence of a true Nigerian nation. In addition, Tafawa Balewa, the first and only Prime Minister of Nigeria, observed that the amalgamation of Southern and Northern provinces in 1914, which led to the official birth of the country, was a mirage. This is because Nigeria seems to be existing as a country only on paper, and it is still

far from being united. Nigeria's unity, therefore, is merely a British inheritance (Babatunde, 2015). Correspondingly, it can be deduced from the afore-mentioned statements that the peoples of Nigeria were not adequately informed by the British imperialists before the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated.

Many concerned Nigerian scholars have attributed the problems of integration that the country faces today (up till 2019) to the 1914 amalgamation. For example, Akinjide²⁾ observed that what the British amalgamated was the administration of the Northern and the Southern protectorates, and not the peoples. This lapse has turned out to be one of the root causes of the problems in Nigeria. Babawale³⁾ noted that Nigeria comprises independent kingdoms brought together to form a federation by colonial fiat long before independence, thereby raising a country (Nigeria) whose people are not only incompatible but also compelled to be ethnically conscious, given their loyalty to their regions.

The ethnic and tribal consciousness that each region exhibits is evident in every sphere of the nation's affairs, be it politics, economy, religion, and are central factors responsible for the continued disunity in the country. The ethnic agitations and regional nationalism that manifest in the governmental and bureaucratic sectors of the country's administration depict the geographical entity as a loose state without a unifying cord. In effect, the nation has been rendered a mere geographical expression. Joe⁴⁾ reiterated this while quoting Obafemi Awolowo: "Nigeria is not a nation; it is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English, Welsh or French". The above is a connotative expression that testifies to the fact that Nigerians do not see themselves as Nigerians in the actual sense. Rather, they identify with their ethnic groups. The poor integrationist culture of the peoples of Nigeria can be said to be responsible for the animosity among the various ethnic groups in the country, especially in the context of power struggle and the struggle for relevance in the country till date.

Furthermore, ethnical orientations and affinities, as well as favouritism, nepotism and inequality, are components of the spirit of disintegration that make citizens of the country engage in competitive struggles for power at the centre, and make them suspicious of each other. A result of the fear of domination is that every region struggles to be ahead of the other. The major ethnic groups become rivals against one another, especially in determining who will be at the fore of power, and the socio-political and economic sectors. The ethnic group that controls power at the centre usually determines the fate of other ethnic groups or political zones throughout their stay in power. As such, political actors tend to favour their groups at the expense of others (Babatunde, 2015). The minority groups are marginalised in terms of power sharing, recruitment of personnel into federal bureaucracies, creation of state, and infrastructural developments, to mention just a few.

The Federal Character Principle is meant to promote policies that will ensure equity as affirmed by the 1979, 1989 and Section 14 (3) & (4) of the amended 1999 constitution. Since its establishment, it is expected that the Federal Character Principle will solve all problems of inequalities, the fear of domination, and the marginalisation of states/ethnic groups (George et al., 2014). Despite the existence of the Federal Character Commission, there seems to be no true sense of unity in diversity among the various workers in the federal higher education institutions. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the practice of Federal Character Principle and its influence in internalising in staff the sense of national unity and issues associated with this in Nigeria.

Literature review

National unity is often inter-changed with national integration. Integration is the process of bringing people of different race, ethnicity, culture, religions and beliefs into unrestricted and equal association in a society. According to Goddy-Uwa et al. (2013) national integration is the process of synergising

heterogeneous groups into unrestricted and equal association, especially on national issues. Similarly, Majekodunmi (2013) views integration as a systematic way of maintaining territorial integrity of a state through cohesion of the existing federating units. In other words, it is the cohesive relationship of heterogeneous groups to become a united group driven by a common national goal. According to Asaju & Egberi (2015), national integration is “the awareness of a common identity among citizens. It means that though citizens belong to different castes religions, regions and speak different languages, they still recognise themselves as one.

However, national unity is determined by the degree to which the various groups that constitute a plural society like Nigeria adapt to the demands of national goal, while co-existing harmoniously (Aderonke, 2013). This implies that, a true national integration in a nation becomes possible when the constituting groups are willing to do so. On the practical note, national integration is a process, but not an end in itself and it is usually affected by contending social forces such as ethnicity, nepotism and sectional loyalties rather than loyalties to the common authority. It is a process leading to political cohesion and direction of loyalty toward a central political authority and institution by individuals belonging to different social groups or political units (Asaju & Egberi, 2015). It is through this kind of integration that a united nation can be built. This will be possible when all interests are synergised into a common goal of building a united nation where ethnic nationalism, tribalism, nepotism and all other anti-unity creeds would be curtailed. In Ojo,⁵⁾ the success of integration largely depends on how the federating units of a state define equity in the sharing of national resources, including political power. If the groups are equitably treated in terms of sharing of national resources and political powers, the relationship becomes cordial and lead to national integration, but if otherwise, achieving integration becomes a mirage.

National unity becomes visible however, when effective integration has taken place among the groups that willingly come together to compromise their

different interests for a common interest. Ethnic differences and nationalities must be put aside by all ethnic groups and be more focused on building a united nation where all ethnic groups' loyalties would be directed towards the central interest. Ethnic loyalty to a central authority is a fundamental yardstick for building a united nation. Ezeibe (2010) further observes that the major challenge against the Nigerian unity is probably, no ethnic group is ready to turn down its notion of ethnic biases, ties and affiliation in favour of national goal. National integration is advantageous to the people involved, especially when integration has fully grown to a unity level. This type of integration is based on the instrumentalist conception as against the primordial paradigm. According to Albert,¹⁾ in the instrumentalist conception of a nation, a united nation has some contagious groups brought together by an accident of history to become a people. The people are placed into a particular territory, with some laws and legal rules, and national metaphysics expected to give the people a unity of purpose. National integration is capable of reducing socio-cultural differences and inequalities. It also strengthens national cohesion and solidarity which is not imposed on them by any authority. A united country and its people are in a better position to actively confront its challenges of development, nationhood and stability. Furthermore, integration is a patriotic feeling of unity within diversity. As observed by Igbokwe-Ibeto & Aremu (2017), FRN (2011) in section 15 (2) of the amended 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states the government intension on national integration. According to the Section of the Constitution, national integration shall be actively encouraged while discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited. Section 15(1) also states that, the motto of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress. All these establish the position of the constitution in the realisation of unity in diversity.

The promotion of ethnic nationalism that the nationals of the country exhibit in their relationship, especially in their race for political and bureaucratic

positions, however, could be responsible for the endemic mayhem that pervades the history of the country since independence. In other words, ethnicity is one of the main inhibiting challenges that undermine the visibility of national unity in the country. To ensure equity in the sharing of power, positions, recruitment, promotion and appointment, Federal Character Principle (FCC) was established as a pro-unity measure which has become an affirmative action in the country since 1970s. The principle fails to recognize that all the sections in the country are not on the equal socio-economic development. Ojo (2009) affirmed that there is no greater inequality than the equal treatment of unequal. The most obvious conditions that threaten the unity of Nigeria include ethnic divisions, economic underdevelopment and a weak sense of nationhood which arose from a short period of independent statehood (Ojo, 2009),

Federal Character Commission (FCC) became a necessity in ensuring proper application of the Federal Character Principle. According to George et al (2014), the National Constitutional Conference convened by the late General Abacha came with the idea of establishing FCC that would monitor the application of FCP in the government bureaucracies. The Commission was finally established by the Decree No. 34 of 1996 to prosecute heads of ministries and parastatals that failed to abide by the Federal Character Principle (FCP). The constant violation of the principle of federal balancing by the officials of government agencies called for the establishment of FCC in 1996. Ezeibe (2010) gives a background details on the evolution of FCC. He states that imbalances that exist in almost every sector of the economy and the perception of marginalization by some groups lead to rivalries among groups over share of national cake. States of the majority ethnic groups seem to be so strong that they can hold the minorities to a standstill. He further says, the minority groups are denied of their constitutional right of self-development and actualization. It is in view of solving this imbalanced relationship that the Federal Character Commission was established to uphold Federal Character Principles. The Commission was later

adopted into the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Generally, the Commission is charged with the responsibility of enforcing the Federal Character Principle in order to ensure fair and equitable distribution of posts, socio-economic amenities and infrastructural facilities among the federating units of the nation. The intention behind the FCC is for it to be the watchdog of government ministries, departments and agencies in ensuring an evenly distributed workforce that would reflect ethnic diversity and the geo-political cleavages of the country.

The visibility of these national goals has been undermined by many factors, of which political interference, corruption, nepotism, ethnic nationalism, etc; are notably central. This is because, the factors have left the government institutions with lopsidedness and imbalanced relationship, as some parts of the country are not given fair treatment. The practice of federal character in the country's national life to achieve national unity has undoubtedly produce futility, because it promotes cleavages among the Nigerians rather than foster unity as was originally intended by its makers as an equity policy for managing the challenge of equal representation of people from all segments that constitute the nation, Nigeria (Gberevbie & Ibieta, 2013). While analyzing the politico-elitist factors to the practice of federal character, Bello (2012) argues that, the principle has been maneuvered by, and channeled to promote the overall interest of the bourgeois ruling class, and however, the members of this ruling class were the ones that formulated and at same time doctor its practice for their political gains. It is very obvious from the submission that the factors militating against the proper practice of federal character include the following: (a) political interference and manipulation by the bourgeois ruling class; (b) ethnicity; (c) nepotism; (d) favoritism; and (e) institutional factors and state politics (statism).

This is a policy in which the indigenes of a state are favoured more than the indigenes from other states of the federation in terms of recruitment, stu-

dents' admission, tuition fee and the likes. Meanwhile, in the light of such discrimination, the goal of which federal character was set to achieve will be undermined and invariably unattainable. Informal connection between managers of government institutions and the applicants in order to get uneven chance of being chosen, even when s/he lacks required competence, knowledge and skills. Outright corruption in determining who gets engaged in the service. There has been a move away from the concept of meritocracy in recruitment processes due to political considerations, nepotism and ethnicity, the factors that have negative impacts on national developments and economic stability (Okeke-Uzodike & Subban, 2015). The challenge of national unity characterized the colonial Nigeria, and it ushered Nigeria to independence. Pilkinting (1956) pointed out this challenge. He posited that national unity is never easy to attain and in Nigeria it is a threefold problem aggravated by personal issues between different peoples speaking many languages and by social and religious customs which often are bolstered by prejudice and obstinacy. Pilkinting (1956) further explained the origin and various factors responsible for the disunity of the country in the colonial times. He posited that "the first slant on the problem of Nigerian unity is the division of the country into three distinct Regions, each with a Government of its own and in actual fact each with a separate ethnic and geographic entity, despite the overlapping and co-operation that is to be found among them. Wide differences of culture are represented by the Eastern, Western, and Northern Regions in which politics have their peculiar part".

The practice of federal character in the Nigerian Public Service has registered advantages and disadvantages since its establishment. Ammani in Edigin (2010) sums up the advantages of the Federal Character Principle as to provide an equitable formula for the distribution of socio-economic services, amenities and infrastructural facilities; it provides the modalities and schemes for imbalances (real or imagined); ensures that politically, no one section of the society will unduly dominate the elective or appointive offices; to ensure the corporate

existence of Nigeria and to douse the centripetal agitations; and to protect the interest of the minority ethnic groups, among others.

In spite of these advantages, there have been repeated clamour for the abolition of this principle with some issues identified by Shuaib in Edigin (2010) as promotion of mediocrity and incompetence in the public service; as a confused balancing of the merit principle and the quota system; breeding of corruption and promotion of ethnicity rather than nationalism as evident from its failure to prevent inter-ethnic conflicts such as the Jos-Plateau Crisis, Boko-Haram Crisis, Tiv-Jukun Crisis, Agileri-Umuleri Crisis, etc. Similarly, Akpanabia (2012) identified some pitfalls of Federal Character to national development such as damage to the principle of excellence, weak national leadership; undermining of standards and professionalism; and invasion of integrity and standard of Public Bureaucracy.

Statement of problem

Unity among workers is fundamental to organisational goals accomplishment more so in federal government bureaucracies in which every member is a critical stakeholder. This enables a nation to achieve its objectives because it ensures the synergy of the various sub-systems that constitute the system. At 59 years after independence and 105 years to the birth of Nigeria as a country, it would have been a plus if the country no longer battles issues of marginalisation, disintegration and disunity, particularly among workers of similar ministries, departments and agencies. Studies have shown that measures such as the Federal Character Principle (FCP) and some others have been taken to mitigate this but they all leave much to desire in the quest for national unity among workers. This is evident in the observed ethnicity, nepotism, tribalism and loss of national interest among staff of federal institutions of higher education. Consequent upon this, it becomes imperative to assess the Federal Character Principle, the level of integration and national unity among staff of federal institutions of higher education in Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study: (a) how has national unity been promoted among staff of federal higher education institutions via the practice of Federal Character Principle in Nigeria; (b) what are the factors affecting national unity among staff of federal higher education institutions despite the practice of Federal Character Principle in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research design using narrative approach with in-depth interviews. The population for this study comprised of the academic and non-academic staff members of the selected higher education institutions of learning in Nigeria. The sample consisted of 100 respondents (teaching and non-teaching members), using purposive sampling technique. The research instrument used for this study was an Interview Guide titled- Federal Character Principle and Promotion of National Unity (FCPNU-IG). This was used to elicit information on the practice of federal character principle and the promotion of national unity; as well as information on factors affecting the national unity among staff. Content validity was carried out to determine the accuracy of items set for the interview. The credibility of the data was ascertained by subjecting it to a member check. During this process, the respondents were requested to read the interview transcripts to check if the contents matched their opinions. The researchers engaged each interviewee in an interview that lasted for one hour, deploying the questions in the Interview Guide (FCPNU-IG). The researchers engaged in note-taking while conversing with the interviewees, because, they were not allowed to make use of electronic devices to record the conversations. Content analysis was used to analyse the data collected using the Interview Guide, and to answer the two research questions.

Results

Research question 1: How has national unity been promoted among staff of federal higher education institutions via the practice of Federal Character Principle in Nigeria.

To answer this question, the researchers asked the interviewees, two questions each, which are discussed below.

Has the practice of the Federal Character Principle promoted national unity among staff in this institution? While responding, many of the interviewees remarked-

[T]he Federal Character Principle has only promoted social interactions among the various ethnic groups that are brought together by the FCP. This is because it enables members of the institutions to learn one thing or the other from their colleagues. Linguistic and cultural exchanges have occurred to a certain degree. Yet, these manifestations have not guaranteed real national unity, especially in terms of common interests, resource allocation and distributions.

The interview interactions showed that the practice of the Federal Character Principle had not promoted national unity in the federal higher institutions of learning in Lagos state, in any way. Although, the principle had encouraged a ‘quasi-unity’ which was referred to as, mere ‘social interactions’. The set of people interviewed clearly stated that, social interaction is not equivalent to national unity. The interviewees also claimed that the FCP had not promoted national unity among them in their institutions. This was further reiterated by the interviewees in the following statements-

[T]he practice of Federal Character Principle has not promoted the expected national unity among us as expected at all. The issue of

unity is a personal thing. It depends on the individual's understanding and the value everyone places on it. It is not what the government can achieve by any statutory measures. What the measures can only achieve is what we call a mere "social interaction". The main reason unity is difficult to achieve is as a result of divergent interests and ethnic affinity. For example, if you go to Oyingbo market, you will see a very strong social interaction among the Hausas/Fulani, the Yorubas, the Igbos and other ethnic groups who are traders. There cannot be any mayhem or misunderstanding among them as long as they achieve their commercial goals. But when matters of national interests emerge, you will see them identifying with their ethnic and religious groups. When the matter of presidency emerges, cleavages manifest along ethnic and religious lines. This kind of scenario is what we experience in our institutions, especially during appointments and elections to key posts; you will see how friendship built on mere social interactions will be replaced by ethnic hostilities. We would rather say that the promotion of unity in our schools is a mirage and merely fictional. We will also advise the Federal Government to look for avenues that will promote national unity in the country.

The researchers further asked: Do the various ethnic groups in this institution exhibit the spirit of oneness in all matters? Majority of the interviewees had the following to say-

[N]o! It does not exist. This is as a result of ethnic affiliations that an individual promotes while relating with others. Cleavages occur whenever the matters of leadership or resource sharing come up. Everyone's action is driven by ethnic affinity instead of the spirit of oneness. There are some people in high positions who use their offices to

promote ethnic bias, in that they favour people who are from their ethnic groups. Let me give a scenario of an Igbo man who was the Dean of a faculty in this institution. By the end of his tenure, 70 per cent of staff members in the faculty were Igbo. What a high degree of nepotism? When this table turns to another ethnic group, the person in charge may likely do the same thing, thereby leading to unhealthy ethnic rivalry. The balanced representation that we promote in our institutions in Lagos state does not exist anywhere in the country. We are accommodating in the way we make all offices open to every Nigerian, irrespective of their geo-political zones or states of origin. Our concern in this institution is to achieve our goals. We need competent hands, not mediocres. I have a friend who has been lecturing with his PhD since 1989 in one Polytechnic in Kaduna State. He has not been offered any appointment. He gets disqualified along ethnic lines. Can we say we are one? Does the spirit of oneness exist in such an environment?

From the perceptions of these respondents, it is evident that the practice of the Federal Character Principle in the institutions has not promoted national unity. It has only encouraged mere “social interactions” among the heterogeneous groups that constitute the workforce. From the responses garnered, it was evident that various ethnic groups in the institutions do not exhibit the spirit of oneness, especially in matters relating to allocation of values such as positions, appointments and elections of principal officers. Almost everyone supports candidates who share the same ethnic and religious backgrounds with them. The interviewees pointed out ethnicity and ethnic nationalism as the main obstacles to the realisation of the spirit of oneness in their institutions. The exhibition of the spirit of oneness is relative in these institutions, as it exists when an issue of common interest is not involved.

Research question 2: What are the factors affecting national unity among staff of federal higher education institutions despite the practice of federal character principle in Nigeria?

The researcher asked: In your own understanding, what are the factors affecting national unity among staff despite the practice of federal character in your institutions? The following is the interviewees response-

[M]any factors really affect our practice of national unity despite the introduction of federal character principle. So that our statements will not be misconstrued, it becomes proper to explain these factors as they are mentioned, one after the other: On the results of factors affecting national unity despite the practice of the Federal Character Principle in federal institutions of higher education, majority of the respondents agreed that imbalance in educational development across the geopolitical zones was one thus causing some people to undermined the full scale application of FCP. Another is ethnic orientations and affinities; the location of the institutions which makes some to feel it's their inheritance and that no one can come to their land to claim collective ownership. Others include qualifications and professional abilities of the workers which cause some to be superior to others; non objectivity and merit system commonly observed during selection process which was considered an aberration to the fundamentals of federal character principle; also the technical competence and skills of the applicants. Disrespect for workers from other regions across the nation was also one of the factors that affected the full scale national unity. The responses thus depicted several factors as affecting national unity among staff of federal higher education institutions as: (i) imbalance in the educational development of some geo-political zones; (ii) location of the institutions; (iii) qualifications and professionalism of the workers; (iv) issue of compliance to objectivity and merit system; (v) technical

competency, skills and qualifications of some workers; (vi) inadequate reception of colleagues from other regions across the nation by some people emanating from tribalism and nepotism; and (vii) poor understanding of the Federal Character Commission's formulae.

The interviewees mentioned quite a number of factors which affect national unity among staff of federal higher education institutions despite the practice of federal character principle in Nigeria. These factors include: the technical incompetence of candidates; an unbalanced educational development; a low number of applicants from other regions; the location of the institutions; ethnicity and indigeneship clauses; low academic qualifications and; manipulations by the Federal Character Commission's officials. These factors were also explained by the interviewees.

Discussion of findings

The results of the findings from research question one showed that the practice of federal character does not promote national unity among staff of federal higher education institutions of learning in Nigeria. This was depicted in the qualitative results obtained from the respondents' responses. All the participants interviewed reported that the practice of federal character in their institutions had only promoted a mere 'social interaction' (Quasi Unity), while the realisation of unity remains fictional. The managers reported that "ethnic affiliations and divergent interests" are the two contributory reasons as to why unity has not been achieved among pluralistic groups in their institutions. Interestingly, this finding is incongruent with Ammani's position as cited in Edigin (2010), that the Federal Character Principle has the ability to ensure the corporate existence of Nigeria, to protect the interest of the minority and douse centripetal agitations. Rather, it aligns with Pilkinting's (1956) view that national unity is never easy to attain, especially in a nation like Nigeria, where it is a threefold problem aggravated by personal issues between different peoples

speaking many languages and by social and religious customs which are often bolstered by prejudice and obstinacy. Gberevbie & Ibieta, (2013) corroborated this finding that the practice of federal character, which was designed to achieve national unity has undoubtedly produced futility, because it promotes cleavages among the Nigerians rather than foster unity as was originally intended by its makers, who proffered it as an equity policy for managing the challenge of equal representations of people from all segments that constitute the nation, Nigeria.

Furthermore, Ojo (2009) claims that the most obvious conditions that threaten the unity of Nigeria include ethnic divisions, economic underdevelopment and a weak sense of nationhood which arose from the short period of independent statehood. Similarly, Odumegwu-Ojukwu as cited in Edosa (2014) posits that the true problem that confronts Nigeria is that, the country is fully engulfed in an identity crisis and the uneven promotion of ethnic nationalism as against the promotion of national loyalty. This identity crisis is connected with how the people of the country identify themselves and direct their loyalties toward their ethnic groups almost in **all** matters.

However, this finding is not in line with Part IV, Section 318(i) of the amended 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which states that the federal character is the distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation as expressed in Section 14(3) and Section 14(4) of this Constitution (Igbokwe-Ibeto & Aremu, 2017).

Research findings from question two pinpointed factors affecting the practice of federal character in entrenching integration and unity. These findings agreed with the position of Idowu & Sayuti (2016), who mention ethnocentrism, elitism, mediocrity and mutual suspicions as challenges confronting the practice of federal character in Nigeria. As regards the imbalanced educational development, Adeosun (2011) observes that, the Southern domination of bureaucracy was not a deliberate policy to marginalise the North, but was as a result of the imbalanced educational development between the North and the South. In other

words, Yorubas were found to be the dominant ethnic group in the staff composition of the sampled institutions, due to the inequality of states/geo-political zones in terms of educational status and qualified candidates for the positions. Ojo (2009) reiterates the unfairness of inequality in the following quote- “there is no greater inequality than the equal treatment of unequal.” As regards ethnicity, the results are in tangent with Ojo’s view (2009), that the most obvious conditions that threaten the unity of Nigeria include ethnic divisions, economic underdevelopment and a weak sense of nationhood which arose from a short period of independent statehood.

Conclusion

It was also concluded that the practice of federal character in federal institutions has not promoted national unity, but a mere “Social Interaction” (Quasi Unity). Ethnicity, imbalanced educational development across geopolitical zones; ethnic orientation and affinity; location of the institutions and divergent interests among the plural groups that constitute the workforce are main factors that precluded the feasibility of the expected unity.

Recommendations

Since imbalanced educational development across geo-political zones is one of the factors affecting the effective national integration and practice of Federal Character Principle, the federal government should devise a practical measure to ensure that majority of Nigerian youths possess first degree as their minimum academic certificate; to do this, government should make tertiary education a compulsory task for all youths and ensure that serious sensitization is embarked upon and scholarships are given by all levels of government. Federal Character Commission should constantly organize seminars for recruiters on the importance of nationhood and sense of belonging among newly recruited staff so that with time, the issue of national integration can be fully achieved. To actualize national unity in the institutions, managers should devise some

measures that will enable all ethnic groups to have a sense of belonging. Representatives of all ethnic groups should be involved in decision making and organizing of inter-ethnic groups' activities, are possible measures that can be used to promote unity among ethnic groups in the institutions. To overcome the problem of ethnicity and divergent interests, Federal Character Commission should work closely with the National Orientation Agency to embark on nationwide sensitization of people on the importance of unity in diversity.

NOTES

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