AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN RESEARCH

ISSN: 2690-9626
Vol. 4, No. 8, 2023

Merit or Benefit Capture? Politics of Recruitment in the Nigerian Public Service

Anietie E. Ekang, PhD
Department of Political Science, Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit, Nigeria
ayubongekang@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Recruitment into the public service is expected to be based on merit as postulated by the public service rules and regulations. But sadly, this is observed more in the breach as more extraneous means are used to recruit people into the service. Most people come into the service through nepotism, tribalism, clientelism, favouritism, ethnicity, party affiliations, religious connections and sexual overtures. This study observed that these vices are what watered down the standard of service delivery in the public service as the people who come into service on the back of these vices lack the requisite skills, knowledge, qualification and experience that match their capabilities in rendering effective and efficient service to the people. In getting appointment or being recruited into the public service, Nigerians always like to pass through their political or administrative representatives in government whom we called in this work benefit captors. These politicians and politically exposed persons literally have "longer hands" than the rest of the people such that when government benefits fall they are the first to capture them and then distribute or dispense such benefits to members of their constituencies, family members, relations, cronies, loyalists, ethnics, religious and co-travellers, party affiliates and even their concubines. This paper argued that this trend of things culminates in running down merits in the public service but rather enhances the enthronement of mediocrity. As a way out, this paper suggested that the public service should be restructured so that recruitment and appointment be strictly based on merit and also that in employment in the public service, citizens should be strictly linked to the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) that provide the job vacancies and not through benefit captors. Finally, it was recommended that the practice of replacing dead, retired and resigned employees by few privileged people should be discontinued. All vacancies should be advertised to open room for competition.

Introduction

Every human organization is made up of four main resources. What is popularly called 4ms – man, material, money and machine. All these are important to the survival of any organization but the most important of the four is man, popularly called the human resources. Human resource is the most important because all other resources depend on man in order to be made useful or functional in any organization. Besides, it is man that can co-ordinate or transform or harness other resources to make the organization achieve its stated goals and objectives. Recruitment is the process of bringing in people to work for an organization. It now becomes important how man or human resource is brought into organization to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals and targets. The quality of human resource brought into organizations undoubtedly plays a significant role in the achievement of a result-oriented public service. According to peretomode and

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr

Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

peretomode (2005), "the effectiveness of an organization largely depends on the calibre or quality of its employees". The availability of a competent and effective labour force does not just happen by chance but it's due to a well-articulated recruitment exercise. Recruitment is therefore a very important aspect of the staffing process. It involves locating, selecting, acquiring and placing labour to fulfil human resources plan, Peretomode and Peretomode (2005).

Organizations regularly recruit in order to add to, maintain, or readjust their total work-force in consonance with human resource requirements in order to maintain a state of dynamic balance.

Generally, anytime human resources are to be expanded or replenished, a recruiting system of some kind must be established. The idea behind recruitment calls for effective human resource planning system which includes personnel inventories, forecasts of human resources supply and demand, action plans, and control and evaluative procedures to serve as a platform from which to launch recruiting efforts (Cascio and Elias, 1981).

Cascio (1991) has enunciated two theories of recruitment planning. The first theory is called the prospecting theory. This theory considers recruitment as a one-way process. That is, when there is the need for organizations to expand or replenish available personnel, they go searching for prospective employees. The second theory is referred to as the mating theory of recruitment. This theory holds that prospective employees seek out organizations to employ them just as organizations seek out prospective employees to replenish their organizations.

There are various organs of recruitment in the public service in Nigeria. These include the public service commission, Local Government Service Commission, Police Service Commission, Judicial Service Commission, Several Boards and Agencies, Governing Councils of tertiary institutions, etc. Public service Commission employs public servants in government ministries, Local Government Service Commission employs local government staff, Police Service Commission employs police while Judicial Service Commission employs judicial officers mostly from 07 up while there are several Boards and Agencies that recruit their staff. In the same vein, Governing Councils of tertiary institutions are also in charge of recruitment of staff in their institutions. According to the public service rules, vacancies for employment into the public service must be advertised for every eligible member of the public to apply. But because of the politics of recruitment into the public service, most rules of employment into the public service are often ignored or compromised to the detriment of the public.

The Problem

The problem here revolves around the politics of recruitment into the Nigeria's public service. Does the recruitment follow due process as laid down by government rules and regulations or is it seen as a 'benefit' that must be captured by top ranking politicians or political appointees to their constituencies as 'constituency projects in total disregard to public service rules and regulations?

In other words, does 'benefit capture' supercede merit in the recruitment process in the Nigeria public service? In recent times, it appears that 'benefit capture' by politically exposed persons tends to usurp or replace merit and due process in favour of political consideration, mediocrity, nepotism, clientelism and prebendalism.

In one of Marx Weber ideal bureaucratic postulations, he placed strong emphasis on the fact that recruitment into the bureaucracy should be strictly based on merit and not through primordial considerations. Sadly, this appears not to be the case in Nigeria as recruitment in Nigeria's bureaucracy or public service plays down on merit but accentuate on patronage, connection, godfatherism and godmotherism among others to get a job in the public service bureaucracy. With less emphasis placed on merit, the available job vacancies are now seen

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr
Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

as benefits that must be captured by top ranking politicians, highly placed bureaucrats or civil/public servants, prominent ethnic and religious jingoists to their constituencies, adherent's cronies and members.

Recruitment into the public service requires certain conditions to be met. These conditions for the avoidance of doubt include:

1. The applicant must not be less than 18 years of age or more than 50 years of age.
2. The applicant must possess such minimum qualification specified for the desired position.
3. He must also possess the minimum cognate experience specified for the position.
4. Must be certified by a Government Medical officer as sound in health and medically fit for Government service.
5. Must possess a testimonial of good conduct from his last employer or from the last school or college attended.
6. State whether he had been convicted of a criminal offence.
7. Must be a Nigerian citizen as defined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
8. Must be free from financial embarrassment
9. Possess NYSC discharge or exemption certificate as applicable.

In addition, the public service rules and regulations insist that all vacancies in the public service should be advertised so that all eligible Nigerians can apply for the position such that after competitive examinations, screening, interview the best candidates are then employed. Advertisement shall be published twice in the three national newspapers and response of the applicants must reach the public service commission within six weeks from the date of the first publication (Akpama, 2004).

Ideally, if these stated conditions are diligently followed then merit would have been enthroned in recruitment into the public service bureaucracy. The question then is: How many Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government have been adhering to these rules and conditions before employing people in the MDAs? The problem now becomes that any MDA that deviates from stringently following these stated public service rules and regulations regarding employment in the public service is likely to follow patronage or benefit capture system which negates the provision of government and may likely result in inefficiency and poor service delivery. And as Adebayo (1992) puts it one of the serious problems of the public service in Nigeria is "the recruitment of mediocre or totally unsuitable candidates in preference to candidates of high merit. He further asserts and it is difficult to disagree with him that when mediocre or totally unsuitable candidates are appointed to senior positions in the public service, the process of inefficiency has started to germinate. But in Nigeria, it appears political considerations tends to overshadow merit in the recruitment of people into the public service. The resultant effect of all these is the constant blame of the public service for poor and ineffective service delivery which would have enhanced national development.

Conceptual Clarification

In writing this paper, certain concepts are used in the paper which need to be explained so as to enhance a better understanding of how these concepts are used in the work. These concepts are:

Public Service

Generally, it is not easy to come up with an acceptable definition of what the public service is or is not. This is because the public service is often used interchangeably with the civil service. The civil service is more

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr
Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

preoccupied with those salaried officers working in core government ministries other than political office holders. Public service is all embracing and encompassing. It comprises the civil service, ministries and extra ministerial departments, service of state and national assemblies, the judiciary, the armed forces, the police and other security agencies, paramilitary agencies, parastatals and agencies including social services, commercially-oriented agencies, regulatory agencies, educational institutions, research institutes, etc (Bassey and Edemidiong, 2021).

The Federal Public Service Rules (2000) defines public service as the service which ranks as such for the purpose of the Pension Act of Nigeria. Public Service therefore refers to all governmental organs in the three tiers listed in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It follows therefore that a public office means a person holding any of the offices specified in part ll of the fifth schedule of the 1999 constitution (Akpama, 2004). Public service refers to the activities of all public institutions and offices that determine or execute public policies (Nwachukwu, 2011). According to the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria:

> *institution established or financed principally by the Public service covers all those employed in the service of the federation or a state in any capacity including service as staff of the National or of a State Assembly, a member or staff of the judiciary or any commission or authority established by the National or State Assembly, staff of a statutory corporation or educational institution established or financed principally by the government of a federation or of a state, staff of a company or enterprise in which government or its agency owns a controlling share or interest, members or officers of the armed forces of the federation or the Nigerian police force or other government security agencies established by law and staff of a local government.*

The public service can therefore be seen as totality of government functions, services and activities rendered to facilitate the existence of politically organized states.

Merit

This has to do with having or occupying a position or positions he is worthy of or deserving. The occupant of that office or position or job has met the necessary criteria and conditions and hence deserves or is worthy of such job, position or office. In merit bureaucracy, position, job or office is achieved rather than ascribed. One works to deserve the job, position or office and it's not just imputed on the person who doesn't deserve it. The person occupying an office or seeking for an office has met the stated conditions, criteria, qualification deserving the office or job before he gets it. In merit bureaucracy, the basis of admission, employment, award of contract, promotion, appointment, etc is based on one's qualification rather than patronage or connection. One becomes a university professor, not because he or she is a primary or secondary school dropout and has a godfather, but because he or she possesses the requisite qualifications and meets the required standard to become a University Professor. The same holds true for appointment as a lecturer, bank manager, principal or registrar in public institutions, or being called to bar as a lawyer or taking Hippocratic Oath as a medical doctor. In each of these cases, one must meet the necessary prerequisite to be eligible for such appointment or position (Ekang, 2014). This is what is recommended by our public service rules and regulations as regard appointment or recruitment into our public service.

Recruitment

Recruitment is the process of identifying and attracting or encouraging individuals with the needed skills to apply to fill existing or future vacant positions in the organization by making them aware that such vacancies exist. The task of recruitment, therefore, concerns the availability of a pool of potentially employable personnel from which to make selection of the most qualified and most outstanding candidates (Peretomode and Peretomode, 2005).

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr

Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

According to Cole (2011), the principal purpose of recruitment activities is to attract sufficient and suitable potential employees to apply for vacancies in the organization. In the Nigerian public service, appointment is taken to mean the same thing as recruitment (Egeonu, 2011).

The Nigerian Public Service Rules (2000) outlines the different types of appointments made in the nation's public service. These include appointments on probation, contract, permanent and pensionable, temporary and casual basis. Let us now explain each seriatim.

Benefit Capture

These are the resources or advantages that accrue to a person or community that are intercepted by placed people in position of authority before such resources or benefits get to the people such resources or benefits were intended for. In other words, resources, advantages and benefits provided by the government to individuals or communities are grabbed by well-placed citizens mostly politicians and other politically exposed persons before such benefits get to the people they were meant for. These politically exposed people tend to have 'longer' hands than the rest of the people, such that when government resources fall, they become the first to grab such resources or benefits for their own advantage and that of their family members, cronies and disciples. These people who capture these benefits are now in position to share these benefits to whosoever, they like in their constituencies, church or social groups. These people include the politicians, Heads of Ministries and extra-ministerial departments, military, para-military agencies, educational institutions and local governments.

According to Ekong, (2019), by 'benefit capture' we mean the legal and illegal diversion or legal misappropriation of benefits meant for a certain people or group, such that the people or group for which such benefits were meant for see little or nothing of such benefits at the end of the programme or project.

Benefit capture can be regarded as being legal when such is done under the cover of law like constituency projects. Benefits are captured at all opportunities by the elites and non-elites, leaving the rest of the population totally deprived from the benefits that were mostly meant for them (Ekong, 2019). This usually leads to frustration and discouragement of the benefits target groups and the subsequent of alienation, discontentment and resentment that the expected beneficiary groups had towards the bodies from which they expected the benefits from. Politicians and politically exposed people are those who capture the benefits in terms of employment slots, scholarship slots, admission slots among others and dispense same to their cronies.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this work is the elite theory. Elite theory acquires higher analytical power in explaining the phenomenon of benefit capture by elites in the society. This theory explains the use of privileged positions by the privileged few in the society to pillage the resources such as vacancies and other benefits for their own advantage and that of their constituencies and cronies. The proponents of this theory include Vilfredo Pareto (1935), Gaeteno Mosca (1939) and Robert Michels (1962) in Attai (2019). The proponents of this theory believe that elites are gate-keepers who determine what go in or go out of the political system as benefits or privileges and they are in a position to grant people these benefits and privileges. Such privileges include but not limited to employment opportunities in the public service. The theory also explains a situation where resources, advantages and benefits accruing to the masses of the people are commandeered by a few powerful politicians, politically exposed persons, influential citizens for their own benefits and that of their loyalists, family members and cronies. This explains a situation where vacancies meant for the most qualified citizens are hijacked by political, economic, religious, military and bureaucratic elites and given to their loyalties, supporters, cronies without regard to merit. Benefit capture by elite is seen as a way of lodging corruption, inefficiency and poor service delivery in the public service.

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr
Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

It is to be noted that these elites are rent-seekers who utilize their redistributive powers to enrich themselves and their loyalists. These elites are also in a position to decide who gets a contract, employment, loans, public lands and houses, market stalls, scholarship awards and where government projects are sited. They often transfer public wealth, opportunities, privileges and positions in the public service to party loyalists, supporters, cronies, religious associates, ethnic allies and family bloodline (Uneke, 2010). The above scenario discredits the merit system in the public service and gives undue advantage to the glorification of patronage and mediocrity in the public service. According to Bassey and Edemidiong (2021), the enormous power and privileges conferred on political office holders in capturing and dispensing benefits to the people can be harmful in the long run because it is only those who are loyalists or close to the political office holders that can get the benefits. This kind of arrangement seriously deemphasizes merit but accentuates patronage and benefit capture syndrome in the public service.

Analysis of Merit and Benefit Capture System in the Nigeria's Public Service

Merit and benefit capture are diametrically opposed to each other. The rise of one is the fall of the other. But in the Nigeria public service, there appears to be a preponderance of benefit capture over merit in dispensing of benefits, resources, positions and advantage. According to Peretomode and Peretomode (2005), the ultimate objective of recruitment exercise is to select persons who are most capable of doing the job. This explains the reason why selection often follows immediately after recruitment. Selection is the process of identifying (from the pool of those recruited) the applicants with the best requirements for the job, and choosing the best individuals for the job. Recruitment and selection are like Siamese twins, one cannot be really separated from the other without doing grave damage to reality. The importance of good recruitment and selection exercises has been amply articulated by Mullins (1996) thus:

> *Whatever the nature of an organization, the effectiveness of its operations and functions inevitably depends largely upon the staff it employs..... When you really think about it, the most important function in any organization is effective recruitment and selection. Everything comes back to people. If you don't appoint staff with the right ability, temperament and willingness, all these fancy theories of motivation, empowerment and commitment, etc, aren't likely to be of much use.*

In the first place, there has to be a large pool of applicants from which selection is made from among the most suitable and most qualified in terms of training or formal educational qualifications, skills, job-related experience while those who do not meet statutory requirements are eliminated or 'screen out'. There has to be an interview to ascertain the suitability or otherwise of the applicant for the job. In some organizations, the initial screening is by test or preliminary interview. Whatever the case, information during interview is collected judgmentally, that is, by interview (face-to-face oral), or mechanically (that is by written tests).

Also the candidates have to be medically examined to ensure that they are medically fit for the job. In some organizations, a letter of appointment is offered only to a candidate who has been certified medically fit for the job. In other organizations, according to Peretomode and Peretomode (2005), where job offer is made after an applicant has successfully passed through the interview and selection hurdles, his or her actual assumption of duty and placement of name in the pay voucher depends on successful complement of medical examination. In a situation where job requires a substantial manual effort, the organization may need a physical examination to adjudge the candidate physical capability to perform the job. For example, the job of a pilot requires sound eye sight, therefore, the organization may test that characteristic with a physical examination. According to Nwachukwu (1988), jobs involving weight lighting, standing for a long time like traffic wardens, police, soldiers, paramilitary personnel, etc require physical examination by a competent medical doctor. The purpose of physical/medical examination for applicants before they are engaged include to screen out individuals who have contagious diseases; to determine the capability of an existing medical conditions; to eliminate applicants whose poor health could result in too many days of sick leave, lateness to

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr
Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

work, and accidents that could endanger the applicant's life and the lives of others and to provide a record to protect the organization against claims for previously existing medical conditions. It is after all these processes and procedures have been exhausted that the candidate is given placement. Placement implies the assignment of an employee to positions in an organization. This involves sending out appointment letters to employees after which orientation and induction courses are organized for the newly employed.

It is to be noted that most recruitment and employment in the Nigeria's public service do not pass through these processes and procedures. Those whose hands are 'taller' than others are usually the first to capture the benefit of employment and dish out the slots to cronies and loyalists without background checks to authenticate the suitability of these cronies and loyalists for the job. The time-tested practice is that after the conduct of selection interview, organizations have to conduct reference checks and background investigations on applicants who have performed well in the interview. According to Stahl (1995), reference checks are questions addressed to former employers, former co-workers, and acquaintance concerning the experience and behaviour of job applicant. Reference checks are better done verbally instead of using letters because letters of references have the greatest chance of being positively biased in favour of the applicant because the reference check is typically that of the job applicant. The reasons adduced for reference include to provide additional insight regarding an applicant and to further screen and authenticate the candidates' credentials/certificates in these days of increasing certificate forgery.

All these are hardly done by our benefit captors in the process of recruitment or employment in the civil service. They rather rely on patronage system. According to Ekang (2014) in patronage bureaucracy public positions are used as personal reward and favour to those who had supported successful candidates in election or their cronies. In other words, those who worked for or supported the emergence of a particular candidate in any contest or election are expected to be rewarded in a quid pro quo arrangement. Under this kind of arrangement, appointment such as Ministers, Commissioners, Directors-General, Heads and members of Boards, Agencies and parastatals are dependent on patronage. Even employment in these agencies and boards are contingent on benefit capture by politicians and politically exposed persons. In this kind of setting in the public service, the relationship that exists is that between the patron and the clients. The clients will always get what they want without hindrance such as employment slots, contracts, promotion, scholarship awards, appointments, posting to a better station, etc, as long as he or she remains loyal to the patron.

Patronage in the public service comes with a lot of disadvantages which may ruin the system in the long run. First, since neutrality is assumed to be one of the major features in the public service bureaucracy, patronage through benefit capture contravenes the concept of impartiality which Weber identified as characteristic of public service bureaucracy and leads to exhibition of low hanging fruits and traits such as low discipline, erratic principles, low morale, and lack of competence, ethnicity and godfatherism. It usually creates internecine conflicts as appointments and promotions are based on patronage. This type of system creates a condition in which junior workers are promoted above or tend to have power over their senior officers. Clerks, messengers, typists, security guards, etc would tend to disesteem senior officers because of their connections or relationships with the benefit captors or patrons. Here, corruption becomes institutionalized. Nepotism, clientelism, favouritism become the order of the order and the ultimate aim is that the public service suffers inefficiency and waste of resources. This appears to be the incubus that presses Nigeria down and impede effective public service delivery. Benefit capture tends to fan the ember of godfatherism, nepotism, clientelism, favouritism, religionism, ethnicity statism, among others. Let us briefly discuss each of these variations of corruption.

Godfatherism

Godfatherism thrives in a patron-client relationship. According to Eminue (2001) “it is a pattern of cooperative social arrangement involving an interchange of non-comparable goods and services between

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by “Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr

Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

actors of unequal socio-economic ranks". Nwachukwu (2011) opines that godfatherism is an anxiety reducing behaviour built up by workers in the lower cadres of the public service in an effort to cope with the scarcity of resources, benefits and good things of life. On this Richard 1991) observes that:

> *An individual seeks the support and protection of an oga or a "god-father" while trying to acquire the basic social and material goods-loans, scholarship, licenses, plots of urban land, employment, promotion….. and the main resource of the patron in meeting these requests is quite literally the piece of the state.*

Nwosu (1985) is in support of the patron-client relationship in the public service. According to him, the expectation in the peripheries of the society is that senior officers should use their privileged position to deploy as many unskilled labour as possible from their areas within the ambit of what is tolerable, and what will not incense negative public feelings and perception of ethnic balancing. This poses as a conundrum. The question now becomes: How much of patron-client relationship is tolerable so as not to seriously undermine the effectiveness, efficiency and productivity of the public service?

As splendid as this argument is, godfatherism as practised in the Nigeria's public service is despicable, contemptuous and pitiable. It leads to indiscipline, indolence and insubordination (Nwachukwu, 2011). According to Agi (2001), an awareness on the part of subordinates that they have a "godfather or godmother or patron" who will protect them at all time, leads to a disturbing trend of indiscipline, insubordination and disobedience in carrying out lawful instruction or directives of superior officers in the MDAs. Other disadvantages of godfatherism had been discussed elsewhere in this paper.

Nepotism

Nepotism implies the process of giving unfair advantages to one's own family members or relations when one is in a position of power or authority, especially by giving them jobs. Here, the office holder prefers to give jobs, appointments, contracts, scholarship, import licenses to family members and relatives, such as wife, brothers, sisters, children, nephews, nieces, cousins or in-laws. This trend is very rampant in Nigeria today both in public and in private sectors of the economy, churches included. Thus, many public office holders in the country today prefer nominating, appointing or recruiting members of their family or relations into office when they are in power. According to Ekang (2014), some public servants in the judiciary, academic, military, para-military health, civil service and religious institutions now 'Plant' their children or family members to take over from them when they retire from service. In fact, this appears to be a sort of an unwritten commandment in the public service these days. This trend in the recruitment of personnel into the public service leaves much to be desired as benefit captors bring into service family members and relations who are most times not qualified or less qualified in the face of other qualified people around. Most of these family members and relations do not attend interview, do no medical test of fitness, have no job experience, no screening of academic credentials or background checks, yet they are employed into the public service, sometime in a position higher than what their qualifications and experience can carry. This is what usually waters down standard and effective service delivery in the public service.

Favouritism

Favouritism is a situation that makes it possible for one to get what he is not qualified to get and deprive another of what he is qualified to get. In every favouritism situation, as one gains favour (usually the unqualified person), the qualified person loses out. Favouritism encourages and promotes mediocrity in the public service and downplay meritocracy. Mediocre, unqualified or semi-qualified and incompetent people because of favouritism usually find themselves employed or appointed into positions in the public service and in most cases such positions are beyond their abilities to handle.

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr

Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

According to Nwachukwu (2011) favouritism is most of time reinforced by ethnic chauvinism and religious bigotry in the country. Many people in the public service would readily prefer to favour people from their own ethnic or religious groups in appointments and recruitment into the public service and even in admission into government own schools and even tertiary institutions. Favouritism is one of the challenges the public service faces that weakens or compromises merit, hard work, discipline and encourages discrimination, indiscipline, ethnicity, sectionalism clannish tendencies and lackluster commitment to public service job. Public office holders should resist the temptation of using their offices to favour their relations, ethnic groups, religious brothers and sisters, political co-traveller and cronies.

Religionism

Religion plays a serious role in the public service administration of Nigeria. The influence of religion on public service is mostly between the two popular foreign religious groups in Nigeria, namely, Islam and Christianity (Mamadu, 2009). According to Kalu (1978) and Amucheazi (1986) the trend in Southern Nigeria, especially the East, is the interplay between religion and politics and was confined mostly to inter-denominational conflicts between two Christian organizations - the Catholics and Protestants. Here, there are always several incidences of disputation between governments and religious establishments over educational policies and representation in government appointments. At the federal level, the contestation and disagreement are between Muslim and Christians in political appointments, admission into tertiary institutions, award of contract, issuance of import licenses and other types of licenses, employment and promotion in the public service bureaucracy. Kalu (1978) asserts and it's difficult to disagree with him that:

> *The making of (federal) cabinet and promotion into the higher echelons of the (public) civil service had to be fought in an ecclesiastical version of the scramble for the national cake.*

In the public service of recent, government appointments, recruitment, award of contracts, admission into unity schools, federal tertiary institutions, promotion in the public service among others have to reflect 'religious character' of the country otherwise there will be protest from the perceived marginalized religious group.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is another factor that vitiates effectiveness and efficiency in public service delivery. According to Nnoli (1980), ethnicity is a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups. Ethnicity has a debilitating effect on effective public service delivery. The entrenchment of federal character principles and quota system in recruitment in the public service has only helped to water down standard and promote mediocrity over meritocracy. It is a way of rewarding ethnicity through unwise policies because the two policies (federal character and quota system) are hardly implemented dispassionately without resorting to favouring some born-to-rule ethnic group over others. Federal character principle asserts that all top political and administrative cum bureaucratic positions in the country should be shared to all states and sections of the country to accommodate the ethnic diversity of the country. But this is hardly done. Positions and appointments are disproportionately shared and skewed to favour some sections of the country over others. Attempts by minority ethnic groups to fight this glaring injustice always appear to be fought with broken swords because such fight hardly yields any result.

Statism

Statism is one social malaise that has inflicted the public service irredeemably. Statism refers to a situation whereby people get employment or other benefits in the public service on the basis of their state of origin and as such owe their loyalty to their state of origin. For example, a child from Akwa Ibom state, born and bred in say Kano state all his life cannot claim Kano as his state of origin simply because his father, by accident of birth come from a geographical are called Akwa Ibom state. To link up to the national government in terms

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr
Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

of employment, admission, appointments, etc, he has to do so through his certificate of origin which he has to get from Akwa Ibom state and not Kano state. Federal character principle has thus failed to achieve the much touted representation and ethnic balancing but has fanned the ember of disunity and statism.

Federal character has enabled appointments into political, administrative, bureaucratic to be made to reflect federal character. With this arrangement, some people representing each state and in some cases geo-political zones are appointed into several political offices in the country. These appointees only see themselves as representing people from states or geo-political zones and not Nigeria as a whole. So all the job vacancies under their control are seen as benefits which they must capture to the people or zone he or she represents.

Nnoli (2011) puts it more succinctly thus:

> *The rule of the big man/woman ensured that merit was not the basis for the distribution of resources, jobs and other amenities. The big man/woman made sure that he/she appropriated most of these valuables for himself/herself, using nepotism, clientage, and ethnic chauvinism to spread the benefits (capture) to others. A system was then created to the effect that to obtain any benefit from society one had to go through a big man/woman. The search for scholarship, admission to good secondary schools and universities and jobs had to be routed through "him/her". But the petty bourgeois (Benefit Captors) would, first and foremost, satisfy the wishes and demands of relatives, friends and co-ethnics. In this system of distribution, the vast majority of the underprivileged classes were utterly marginalized. They had no one to speak for them, to satisfy their demands. They were too isolated from the rich (Benefit Captors) both spatially and socio-psychologically to obtain assistance from them. And they could only rely on merit. The gap between the rich and poor just continued to increase (P. 139-140). Emphasis in bracket mine.*

What Nnoli (2011) explains above is typically scenario that plays out when our politicians, politically and administrative exposed persons capture benefits from the government. They now arrogate to themselves the rights to dispense these benefits at will and at their own discretion to their family members, relations, cronies, loyalists, co-ethnics, co-religious travellers, etc, mostly with disregard to merit. Finally, is the issue of sexual harassment which makes some people, especially but not limited to women, to have favour, benefits or advantages they do not really deserve once they give in to the sexual demands. Sexual harassment is actually two sided. Men can be harassed and women can also be harassed. But the later always take preponderance over the former. Sexual gratitude is often offered in expectation of getting a job, promotion, contract, appointment, scholarship, admission into competitive tertiary institutions. The common denominator is that most of these sex vendors do not merit getting such offers but rather resort to using that despicable and ignominious means to get advantage over others which in most cases they are not qualified to get. This continues to plunge the public service into poor service delivery. In most cases, these women of easy virtues are mistresses to the benefit captors and they get the jobs, contracts, appointments, etc that they (the mistresses) do not deserve or merit. These vices are elixir that the public service needs to purge itself off if Nigeria must move.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The process of recruitment into the Nigeria's public service has always been contentious as it has always been. In orders to get public service jobs, appointments, contracts, scholarship, public urban lands or houses, licenses to operate schools, health facilities, import and any other thing, people usually go through "big men/women: who they believe are more connected to the power that be and have 'taller' hands than them to easily grab the benefits once they fall. These benefit captors are mostly politicians or politically exposed persons or elites that are better placed in the socio-political cum economic ladder of the society to capture the benefits first once the benefits 'fall or rain' and dispense same to their family members, relations, church

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr
Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

members, cronies, loyalists, co-ethnics, etc. These benefits capture may include job slots, political or administrative appointments, scholarship, contract award, promotion and even favourable positions in the public service among others. All these cannot conduce to the achievement of effective public service delivery because it produces mediocrity over meritocracy. Efforts to solve these problems using federal character principle, quota system, following procedures in recruitment have been a remedy worse than a malady.

Consequent upon the above, the paper suggests the following recommendations:

(a) There is the urgent need to restructure the public service to enhance efficiency and promote merit over patronage. This will make corruption, favouritism, mediocrity, religious sentiments, ethnicity, sexual harassment, opportunities and godfatherism less attractive, recruitment, appointment, promotion, etc should be strictly based on merit.

(b) In employment or recruitment, people should be made to link directly to the source of employment (be it Ministries, Departments and Agencies) and not link through the benefit captors or politicians who now arrogate to themselves the rights to dispense of government benefits - like employments slots, contracts, scholarships, licenses to operate, promotion, etc, to the people.

(c) The practice of replacing dead, retired or resigned employees of some public service organizations with cronies, loyalists, religious co-travellers, co-ethnics, family members, relations, party men and women, and with those in immoral relationships or affairs should be discontinued. Vacancies should be publicly advertised for every qualified person can apply and compete for the job so that the best candidate can get the job. This will promote efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery.

References

1. Adebayo, A. (1992). *Principles and Practice of Public Administration in Nigeria* (Revised Edition). Spectrum Books Limited, Ibadan, Nigeria.
2. Agi, S. (2001). Religion, Ethnicity and Public Administration in Nigeria. In: E.J.C. Duru, M. Ikejiani-Clark and D.O. Mbat (Editors), *Contemporary Issues in Public Administration*. BAAJ Publishers, Calabar, Nigeria.
3. Akpama, A. (2004). *Nigerian Public Service and Government Regulations.* Jamel Publishers, Calabar, Nigeria.
4. Amuchezi, E. (1986). *Church and Politics in Eastern Nigeria 1945-1966: A Study in Pressure Group Politics*. Macmillan Publishers, Lagos, Nigeria.
5. Attai, A. (2011). Power, Group and Elites Theories of Politics. In: E. J. Tom, D.A. Adam and A. J. Attai (Editors), *Political Analysis.* University of Calabar Press, Calabar, Nigeria.
6. Bassey, J. and Edemidiong, E. (2021). Patronage Verus Merit: A Systematic Review of Recruitment Dynamics in the Nigerian Public Service. *Aksu Journal of Administration and Corporate Governance.* 1(2):71-81.
7. Cascio, W. (1991). *Costing Human Resources.* Kent Publishing Company, Boston, USA.
8. Cascio, W. and Elias, M. (1981). *Human Resources Management: An Information Approach.* Reson Publishers, Reston, USA.
9. Cole, G. (2011). *Personnel and Human Resource Management.* Bookpower Publishers, London, UK.
10. Egeonu, P. (2011). Appointment in the Nigerian Public Service. In: L.C. Nwachukwu, O. Onwubiko and E. A. Obi (Editors), *Readings on the Nigerian Public Service.* Bookprint Publishers, Onitsha, Nigeria.

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr

Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

11. Ekang, A. (2014). *Theories of Administration and Management*. Ani and C. Publishers, Eket, Nigeria.
12. Ekong, C. (2019). "Benefit Capture", Aspirin Solution", and "Corruption" in Nigeria's Quest for Development. 73rd Inaugural Lecture, University of Uyo, Nigeria.
13. Eminue, O. (2001). *Introduction to Political Science.* Clear lines Publication, Calabar, Nigeria.
14. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2000). *Public Service Rules.* Government Printer, Abuja, Nigeria.
15. Kalu, O. (1978). Church Unity and Religious Change in Africa. In: E. Fashole-Luke (Editor). *Christianity in Independent Africa,* Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, Nigeria.
16. Mamadu, T. (2009). *Corruption in the Leadership Structure of Nigerian Polity.* Jochrisam Publishers, Calabar, Nigeria.
17. Mullins, L. (1996). *Management and Organizational Behaviour.* Pitman Publishers, London, UK.
18. Nnoli, C. (1980). *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria.* Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria.
19. (2011). *The Struggle for Democracy in Nigeria.* PACREP Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria.
20. Nwachukwu, L. (2011). The Problems of the Public Service in Nigreria. In: L. C. Nwachukwu, O. Onwubiko and E. A. Obi (Editors), *Readings on the Nigerian Public Service.* Bookprint Publishers, Onitsha, Nigeria.
21. Nwachukwu, C. (1988). *Personnel Administration in Nigeria.* University of Port Harcourt Press, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
22. Nnwosu, H. (1985). *Political Authority and the Nigerian Civil Service*. Fourth Dimension Publishers, Enugu, Nigeria.
23. Peretomode, V. and Peretomode, O. (2005). *Human Resources Management.* Onosomegbo who Ogbinaka Publishers, Lagos, Nigeria.
24. Richard, J. (1991). *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic.* Spectrum Books Limited, Ibadan, Nigeria.
25. Stahl, M. (1995). *Management, Total Quality in an Global Environment*. Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, UK.
26. Uneke, O. (2010). Corruption in Africa South of the Sahara: Bureaucratic Facilitator or Handicap to Development. *The Journal of Pan African Studies,* 3(6): 111-128.

ISSN 2690-9626 (online), Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
under Volume: 4 Issue: 8 in Aug-2023 https://globalresearchnetwork.us/index.php/ajshr

Copyright (c) 2023 Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/