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**GOVERNMENTAL INSTRUMENTS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA: A  
CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OFFEDERAL CHARACTER COMMISSION****YAHUZA DANJUMA IZOM, Ph.D**

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**Abstract**

*National integration has been an issue of advocacy in Nigeria and on Nigerians since the Pre and Post independence eras by Nationalist leaders, Democratic leaders, Military leaders and various civil society organizations, hence, the research study on Instrument of National Integration in Nigeria: A critical assessment of Federal Character Commission becomes imperative at this stage of national cohesion. The objectives of this study among others are to find out whether the adoption of Federal Character Commission have yield positively, the constraints to it objectives achievement and to know how far the commission's implementation of its constitutional functions. This study adopts documentary approach using the existing work of the commission and studies made by scholars towards achieving national integration. System theory was used as a guide the work. Content analysis and logical inference were used to arrived at a solid findings and subsequently, recommends the followings that the act establishing national character principle and commission should as a matter of urgency be reviewed to improve on its mandate; that all ministries, departments and agencies should be mandated to inform the federal character commission the vacancies available in their ministries, departments and agencies before employment and the members of the commission should be selected to serve in the commission when it has been proven that such member is a man of integrity in the nation to avoid nepotism and favouritism among others.*

**Keywords:** Instrument, National Integration, Federal, Character Commission**Introduction**

Nigeria is a nation that was amalgamated in 1914 by the British Colonial Officers. It is a well known fact that the consents of the different parts that makes up Nigeria were not sort for. The amalgamation was carried out for British colonial officers to achieve their aims of exploitations and make the country their market zone for their surplus industrial goods and services. There were elements of retaliations from different parts of the country but with their military powers and the system of divide and rule, they were able to effect their colonization on Nigeria. As a result of revolts, series of

constitutional amendments were carried out during the colonial rule to accommodate the complaints of the different parts but to no avail and issue continued when the country was given independence in 1960.

Nigeria is a nation that is made up over 250 ethno-cultural groups with different societal and religious demands and each of this group want its demand actualized. However, to be specific with issue of Federal Character is dated back when the territory under the British administrative amalgamation of which later became Nigeria was divided into three administrative units namely; the colony of Lagos with its Yoruba hinterland was under the colonial office, Niger coast protectorate under foreign office and the Northern territory was under the controlled of Royal Niger Company. By 1900 these territories were merged together administratively under the Secretary of State. However, Northern and Southern amalgamation was in 1914 but the gap created by the colonial officers cannot be bridged. The period 1900 and 1946 witnessed informal federation characterized by dangerous rift in different perspective between the North and the South. The issues of Hausa/Fulani, the Igbo and the Yoruba between 1946 to 1965 in the first phase of formal federation were seen as the only ethnic nationalities in Nigeria politics. This pronouncement generated tension and conflict between the ethnic minorities and their oppressors. Most occasions this conflict is seen by the agitation for creation of more states. In 1967 when the second phase of federation commenced the issue was still in existence. Tonwe and Oghator (2009) observed that Quota system was introduced into Nigerian public service in 1958 by the government to ensure equitable representation of the various groups in the country. It was as a result of citizens out cry of marginalization that the then military leaders such as Generals Murtala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo decided to consolidate on the gains of Quota system in the drafting and approval of the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria during the transition to civilian rule (1976-1979) introduced into the Nigerian political and administrative landscapes the principle of Federal Character. (Ekeh, 1989). Earlier before now Quota system principle was in existence. It should be well comprehended that Nigeria has a complex federal problem of diversities and unevenness in development between the geo-political units.

Gberevbie (2012), in his paper titled "Forms of Political Administrative System" noted that Nigeria is a federal society comprising of 36 states structure with a population of more than 150 million people and has more than 250 ethnic groups, which necessitate an arrangement that accommodate people from different segments of the country.. This is further noticed that Nigerian Federation was imposed from above and that is the reason why marginalization is still playing significant role in different parts of this country. As a result, federal character has the following

manifestations that major ethnic groups have threatened secession at all times, favourable attitude of the major groups to confederation, threats secession has subdivided due to creation of states and the quota system is the practical device to apply or actualize the Federal Character principle. Nzeshi (2012) noted that one of such policy alternatives adopted for the management of the public service in Nigeria for even representation is the federal character principle, which was borne out of the need to ensure spread of governments in all the regions, states and local councils in the country. At various points, the Federal Character Commission was asked to maintain its constitutional responsibilities but the peoples outcry is still the same and hence, the research of this nature.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Federal Character**

By constitutional explanation states that federal character is the distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizens of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation as expressed in section 15(3) and (4) of the constitution.

It is disappointing that no work has been achieved yet on the persistence of deep socio-economic inequalities in the country. Since the federal rule stipulates that junior posts (level 01-06) should be filled with candidates from the catchment areas (location) of the federal establishment, affirmative action has been effectively reduced to senior service or elite posts from 07 and above (Raufu, 2007). It should be well understood that Nigeria was thrown into this affirmation of federal character as a result of inequality that has bedeviled the nation. Ayilara (2015) noted in his finding that Federal Character has not indeed achieve its objective in the areas and period covered by the study

#### **National Integration**

National integration has been perceived by scholars in different angles. Sanda (1999) defined national integration as a collective orientation of members of a society towards the nation and its society in such a way that micro-loyalties are not allowed. Ifeanacho and Nwguwu (2009) observed that Nigeria's efforts aimed at achieving national integration have remained largely unrealized. This is largely we have refused to achieve the followings through its proper implementation such as adoption of the Federal System of government, the Nation Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme, state creation, Federal character principle, National symbol and Nigerian constitution. All of the above mentioned areas of ensuring national integration failed as a result of poor governance

Lai (1995) observed that Nigeria is too promising a nation to be allowed to disintegrate.

Onipe (2011) affirmed that lack of national consciousness, patriotic orientation and manifestation of uncivilized acts had painfully led to social disorder and disorientation in Nigerian society

### **Theoretical Framework**

A research of this nature warrants the use of a firm theoretical framework in order to have a direction of the work. However, this research adopts the use of system theory. This theory was postulated by David Esteem. The theory places collective emphases on organizations relationships and interdependence among the components of the system as well as the organization. The structure, patterns and relationships of a system emerge from interactions among components, thus each system is unique. This system theory is seen by many scholars as a set of related elements and interactions among them, which are disintegrated from those elements not in the system by ambiguous analytic boundaries. The theory explains the component of the system made up of groups, persons or areas where the frequency of a particular pattern of interaction falls to an observable degree. Interdependence is the uniting for in the system, this because stability and subsequently growth can only be achieved when all the components of a system work together. The relevance of this theory to this study is that if all parts of this country are given equal opportunities to contribute their potential in all human activities in Nigeria, there wouldn't have been affirmation of Federal Character Commission. Rather what this would have translate to is national integration, national development, national cohesion and the issue of dividing the country wouldn't have been agitated for. All parts should be annexed for the betterment of this nation called Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

This research study dissects the use of documentary approach by extracting from existing and relevant information for this work. The materials are textbooks, monograph, Newspapers, government circulars, government gazette, journals, articles and contemporary argument on the study.

### **Composition of Federal Character Commission/Constitutional Powers**

The commission has a total number of 37 members drawn from each state of the federation including federal capital territory. The Federal Character Commission under the ACT NO.34 of 1996 form part of the Federal Executive body saddled with the responsibilities of carrying out and making sure that the federal character principle of fairness and equity in the share of public positions and socio-economic facilities among other federating units. Federal Character Commission is enshrined in

the constitution to making sure that there is equitable distribution of bureaucratic and political positions in public service at all tiers of government in Nigeria.

Chapter 11, section 15(3) deals with the application of the federal character principle of the federal level. Thus; the composition of the governments 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 also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies.

Chapter 11, section 16 categorically noted in clear terms the political objectives of the federation in Nigeria, as to promote national integration. Subsection 16 noted that national integration shall be actively promoted whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, circumstances of birth, sex, religion, ethnic and linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited

While subsection 3 and 4 was explicit on how national integration shall be promoted; by provision of adequate facilities and free movement of goods and services, secure full residence rights for every citizen in the entire federation, by encouraging intermarriage in all aspects and by encouraging formation of association.

#### **Achievements of the commission**

A commission of this nature cannot be said to have failed in all its responsibilities because there are still more expectations by the citizens and that is why there are clamour for division of the country as a result of what some parts sees it as a marginalization and unfairness in the distributions of public wealth and infrastructure.

However, these are some of the achievements recorded so far by the commission: that the federal character commission have succeeded in the creation of new norms and procedure for non- violence resolution of conflict over ethnic and regional access, increasingly generating data through which the nagging national problem of representation can be objectively assessed and the commission has positively changed the culture and norms of bureaucratic recruitment in Nigeria. Emmanuel (2014), in his paper titled "Civil Service Recruitment: Problems connected with Federal Character Policy in Nigeria" observed that personnel problems connected with poor application of the federal character policy in recruitment into the civil service and this affects the quality of entrants. Another research work written by Obadahum, Otohinoyi and Adamu (2016) titled "Federal Character Principle and the Challenges of National Integration in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of some Federal appointments under Jonathan and Buhari's Administration observed that

Federal Character principle have not achieved its set objectives, which is national unity and loyalty. Ahmed (2011) in his article titled "Federal Character Principle and National Integration: A Critical Analysis noted that Federal Character Principle has proved inadequate for effective national integration because it discriminates against one group and favours another. Ayilara (2015) in his research work "Assessment of the Implementation of the Federal Character in Nigeria" discovered and conclude that Federal Character has not indeed achieve its objectives in the areas and period covered by the study. Emmanuel (2014) in his paper titled " Civil Service Recruitment: Problems Connected with Federal Character Policy in Nigeria "noted that there are personnel problems connected with poor application of the Federal Character policy in recruitment into the civil service and this affects the quality of entrants.

### **Basic Functions of Federal Character Commission in Nigeria**

The major functions of Federal Character Commission in Nigeria are settling disputes among societies, providing free social services to the citizens, ensuring fair representation of all states in the public and reviewing unfair administrative decisions.

### **Other instrument geared towards National integration**

#### **National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)**

This programme was initiated after the Nigerian civil war that has created many injuries to various regions that made up Nigeria. This programme was specifically meant for graduates of universities, colleges of education and polytechnics cross fertilize cultural and social diversities which was aimed at reconciling our difference as a nation and with that national integration was envisaged to be achieved.

#### **National Symbols**

This is another instrument that Nigerians are supposed to see themselves as a people fighting for a common goal. Each Nigerian is expected to accord respect to all national symbols. The symbols are the Nigerian coat of arms, the national flag, the national anthem, the Nigerian passport and the national flower of Nigeria: *costus spectabili*. All the above should always be at the back of Nigerians. Currency is another major national symbol that enhances the exchange of goods and services.

#### **Nigerian Constitution**

Constitution is a collection of documents in which government activities of any nation is referred to. This is so because all the principle of governance is enshrined in the body of the document which is known to the citizens. Among them are the rights and duties of the citizens and the expectations of the citizens from the government. This has to do with the rule of law which controls all the citizens irrespective of an individual age and status in the country, as all the citizens are equal before the constitution

### **Unity School Exchange Programme**

The schools were established in all the states of the federation to promote national cohesion through the school exchange programme, where the students are exposed to different people from different cultural background. This was done to make sure that despite our differences, we needed to be united.

### **Sport Festivals**

This was another forum in which Nigerians can see themselves as one entity. Participants are expected to see each other and establish for the first time good relationship that can be continued for ever which will also advance our national integration.

### **True Democracy**

Democracy is said to be government of the people, by the people and for the people. This shows that democracy is a collection of people who should have similar ideologies for them to agree to work together. Therefore, if different people in different parts of Nigeria have agreed to work together for a common goal then this signifies that there is national integration in the nation. But if all the regions refused to agree with each other then is a sign of disintegration and it can occur when there is no transparency in the process of election that manifest with rigging, snatching of ballot boxes, vote buying and killings.

### **True Allocation of Wealth and Infrastructures**

When transparency is guaranteed in the equal distribution of nation's wealth and infrastructures, then there will be issue marginalization and that will translate to achieving national integration in the country. In this regard, it expected that due process through constitutional provisions are strictly maintained.

### **Challenges of Federal Character Commission**

The challenges of the commission will be summarized and discussed under the following headings: Nepotism, Forgery and falsification of state of origin by applicants, Favoritism, political interference and non-co-operation of some federal ministries. In an academic work titled "Nigeria's Federalism and Challenges of Implementing Federal Character Principle" identified the challenges facing the commission are forgery and falsification of the state of origin by applicants, political interference among the political officeholders, favouritism, manipulations by some staff in-charge of implementation and failure of the ministries to declare and advertise vacancies before recruitment (Olu and Adeleke, 2021).

### **Data Analysis**

As earlier mentioned, content analysis and logical inference is the tool of analysis

used in this study. The amalgamation of Nigeria the way it was constituted it was not with the consent of various parts that made Nigeria today. It was amalgamation to serve the interest of the colonial officers. Nigeria is made up of about over two hundred and fifty socio-cultural groups with different demands. Hence, the demands are not the same, agitations are expected from the different parts and in the process of meeting these demands some parts feels marginalized. The agitation issues started from the colonial infiltration into the country where some tribes were given recognition by the colonial officers ie the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. The other tribes feels sidelined in the political administration of the country and same system of administration still manifested in post independence era.

Major political and bureaucratic positions were usually allocated to these so called major tribes. It is on this premise that amendment of constitution were done at each successive regime to make sure that some of these salient issues are address to ensure national integration particularly reflection of federal character in position sharing which is aimed at accommodating all parts of the country into its governance.

More so that civil war has caused injuries to different parts of the country and there was the need to ensure that these injuries are healed to achieve national integration, hence, adherence to federal character principle was timely and as a better option if the country is to move forward. From the collection of scholarly researches, it was noted that the federal character principle and the commission have not been able to achieve it mandate as enshrined into the constitution. It is on this ground that there are agitations and conflicts in position sharing, local government and state creation in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

The study has shown that the aim of establishing Federal Character principle in Nigeria has not been achieved. This is evidenced by so many factors which has impeded national cohesion and integration which has translated to the issue of marginalization in various parts of the country. Various studies carried out by many scholars also noted that federal character principle has not been fully implemented that will establish national integration in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

1. That the act establishing national character principle and commission should as a matter of urgency be reviewed to improve on its mandate;
2. That all ministries, departments and agencies should be mandated to inform the federal character commission the vacancies available in their ministries, departments and agencies before employment;



3. The members of the commission should be selected to serve in the commission when it has been proven that such member is a man of integrity in the nation to avoid nepotism and favouritism;
4. That any ministry, department and agency that is found to have defaulted in the due process of the principle should face stiffer punishment to serve as deterrant to others;
5. That government should avoid unnecessary interference with the commission, while they trying to carry out their legitimate functions to make sure that no part of the country is marginalized;
6. That the commission should make sure that all officers cadre appointment are evenly allocated to all the zones in the country;
7. The commission should note that no tribe (s) is superior to one another irrespective of where that tribe is located in Nigeria for appointment as this will strongly provide avenue for national integration;
8. That this principle of federal character should also be mandatory at the second and third tiers of governments to ensure equity in al governmental affairs.

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