

Recruitment Practices in Nigeria: Issues of Equality and Diversity

Tiemo, J. A and Arubayi, D. O

Department of Business Administration,
Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: Tiemo, J. A

Abstract

This paper examined the context of recruitment practices among Nigerian public and private firms. A comparative analysis of their recruitment practices were examined to determine if they adhered to the Nigerian Federal Character Principle (NFCP). Four pertinent research questions were raised and addressed and descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data collected from 42 human resource practitioners from both the public and private sectors. The public organizations include both federal and state ministries in Nigeria while the private firms include both servicing and manufacturing companies. The results showed that there are unique similarities and differences in the recruitment practices of public and private firms. But with regards to NFCP policy adoption, public firms complied more than the private firms because they are directly regulated and controlled by the government. Private firms' recruitment patterns are contingent upon the perceived needs of the organizations. The findings also revealed that the recruitment approaches and orientations of public firms in UK differed greatly from those that are practiced in Nigeria. The study is relevance to every employer of labour as it highlights key areas they can improve upon to be able to bridge the inequality gap between men and women employees in Nigerian. Policy makers will benefit tremendously from the findings and recommendations of the study since it provides a well-grounded approach of addressing inequality issues in societies.

Keywords: diversity, recruitment, equality, selection, public firms, human resources.

INTRODUCTION

Recruitment is viewed as one of the key factors to organizations' growth and success (Tanova, 2003). The profitability and survival of an organisation usually depends on the calibre of its employees (Wickramasinghe, 2006). Taylor (2006), defined recruitment as an activity which generates a pool of applicants wishing to be employed by an organization out of which suitable candidates are selected. Though there are a range of activities and processes but irrespective of that, organizations should reflect equality and diversity in practice. Previous studies have shown the importance of recruitment practices to business success. (Tanova, 2003).

Ahmad and Schroeder (2002), opined that the first step to ensuring the success of organizations, is to make sure that employees possess the right qualities thus; effective recruitment practice reduces labour turnover and enhances employee morale (Bonn and Forbinger, 1992; Lee et al., 1999). Ayoade (2000), opined that subjecting recruitment, appointment and promotion to the Federal character usually discriminates against merit. This results in the recruitment of incompetent people in the workforce which will eventually lead to poor performance (Gberevbie, 2010). This condition is mostly common in the public sector. In Nigeria, employment discrimination has not been adequately addressed because of the quota system that is still present especially in the public sector (Fajana et al., 2011).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Nigeria federal character principle emphasizes equal representation of people from different sections of the country based on merit, political consideration and government discretion. This seemed to be a myth considering the problems that employees face in the labour market. One of the problems found especially in the public sector is discrimination against gender equality. Even though women make up sixty per cent of the Nigerian population, only a few are recruited and allowed to occupy senior management positions (Adekeye, 2008). This on-going practice of hiring men into senior management positions is seen as an instrument of control over female employees. But, Nigeria is a multi-lateral society with vast diversity in politics, economic, age and socio-cultural variables. These variables greatly impact the human resources management practices in the country thus, there is need to create awareness on them.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper sought to examine how often the public and private sectors recruit to determine if equality and diversity policies are adhered to. It seeks to know whether their recruitment practices are based on the Nigerian Federal Character Principle. It will also create awareness of workplace equality and diversity policies where there are not practiced. In view of this, the following research questions were raised;

1. How often do public and private firms recruit?
2. Do their recruitment practices adhere to workplace equality and diversity policies?
3. Are employers aware of the Nigerian Federal Character Principle for recruitment?
4. Are their recruitment practices guided by the Federal Character Principle?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Equality and Diversity in Recruitment

There has been a lot of debate over the definition of diversity and equality (Owoyemi and Sheehan, 2011; Torrington et al., 2005; Wickramasinghe, 2006). Up till now there is no unified agreement as to what the two terms really are. But they could be analysed based on the components such as age, religious beliefs, sex, nationality, race, equal pay and harassment. Equality and diversity are used interchangeably most times though they have different connotations. Equality is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfill their potentials while diversity literally means a difference (DOH, 2004).

Human Resource (HR) management is aimed at developing and implementing policies that provide a balance whilst considering the needs of different stakeholders in managing workforce diversity (Armstrong, 2006). HRM practices could be improved by adopting effective recruitment in organizations that reflects equality and diversity, (Taylor, 2005). Equality is the tendency for organisations to give out equal opportunities to all irrespective of race, sex, disability, age or marital status (Armstrong, 2006). The workplaces in recent times are cumbered with various forms of diversities coupled with differing work ethics, deep-seated attitudes, opposing perspectives and diverse motivations (Owoyemi et al., 2011).

Diversity characterizes the preferences, motivations, personalities, group identity and visions of people as well as their supernatural ambitions for dominate. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2009, 2010) Code of Conduct stipulates that the recruitment process should have an accurate and updated job description that does not discriminate against sex and avoid over inflated job criteria in terms of person specification. The code also covers areas like interview process, selection criteria, training and development and promotions. Workforce Diversity and Equality in the United Kingdom is covered by the Equality Act of 2010. The Act harmonises and replaces previous legislation such as the Race Relations Act of 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995. Thus, the employment law in the UK and Nigerian both protect employees from discrimination.

The Nigerian Perspective

Nigeria has the largest population in Africa with an estimate of about 160 million people thus; it has an abundance supply of human resources. Its natural endowment in oil attracts investors from across the globe and it is gradually integrating into the global business environment. Globalization has impacted HRM practices because it demands that organizations conform to global standards of operations (Fajana et al., 2011). But increase in globalization further increases the diversity of the work place.

Recruitment in Nigeria is governed by the Nigerian Labour Act of 1974 and also the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria hence, section 14 (3) states that the composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity. And also, to command national loyalty by 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 in any of its agencies. The significance of the Federal Character Principle cannot be overemphasized but some human rights activists believe that it is a mere euphemism for balancing ethnic dichotomy (Bodunrin, 1989; Ayoade, 2000 in Fajana et al., 2011).

Public and Private Sectors Recruitment Practices In Nigeria

Similarities and differences occur in the recruitment practices in both the public and private sectors which are reflected in the methods, budget, organization culture, skills and knowledge requirement. The public sector is characterized by an aging workforce (Greenfield, 2007) thus, there is need to recruit others to replace the retiring workers. All public organizations are mandated by the Federal Character Principle (FCP) of 2003 and Quota System Policy (QSP), to recruit employees according to the national diversity legislation. In the public sector, equality in recruitments is marred by personal interests such as preference by management, ethnic and social class influences (Fajana, 2009). The private sector is more rigid in applying best HRM practices to ensure that only credible candidates are recruited into vacant positions.

The public sector is highly unionized towards protecting employees' rights. The private sector has not witnessed a high participation in workers union in the private sector (Fajana et al., 2011). These trade unions could be used as forums to identify and discuss issues not only concerning work relations but also issues of an effective recruitment process such as diversity. The similarities between the public and private sector is seen in their struggle to manage equality and diversity.

METHODOLOGY

The mixed methodology approach was adopted in this study drawing data from both secondary and primary sources. The population included all government (federal and state) ministries and private firms operating in Asaba, Delta state. A sample of 42 HR practitioners were randomly selected; 22 from public and 20 from the private sector. Primary data was collected through interviews and focal group discussions. The public sector included 10 federal ministries and 10 state-owned ministries, while the private sector included 10 service companies (banks) and 10 manufacturing firms. The secondary data was collected through a review of existing employment legislations, previous researches and other existing literature.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Distribution of HR practitioners in the public and private sector

HR Practitioners	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Public Sector	22	52.38 %
Private Sector	20	47.62 %
Total Respondents	42	100 %

Source: Survey Data, April 2012.

Research question 1: How often do you recruit in your organization?

Table 1a: Responses from the public sector

Recruitment periods	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Annually	12	54.6 %
When there is Vacancy	8	36.4%
Based on recommendation	2	9 %
Not sure	-	0 %
Total	22	100 %

Source: Field Data, April 2012.

Table 1b: Responses from the private sector

Recruitment periods	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Annually	8	40 %
When there is Vacancy	10	50 %
Based on recommendation	2	10 %
Not sure	-	0 %
Total	20	100%

Source: Field Data, April 2012.

Research question 2: Do your recruitment practices adhere to equality and diversity policies?

Table 2a: Responses from the public sector

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	81.8 %
No	2	9.1 %
Not Sure	2	9.1 %
Total	22	100 %

Source: Field Data, April 2012.

Table 2b: Responses from the private sector

Responses	No. of respondents	Frequency (%)
Yes	15	75 %
No	4	20 %
Not Sure	1	5 %
Total	20	100 %

Source: Field data, April 2012.

Research question 3: Are you aware of the Nigerian Federal Character Principle (NFCP) for recruitment as provided by the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria?

Table 3a: Responses from the public sector

Responses	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	22	100 %
No	0	0%
Not Sure	0	0%
Total	22	100 %

Source: Field data, April 2012.

Table 3b: Responses from the private sector

Responses	No. of respondents	Frequency (%)
Yes	16	80 %
No	-	0 %
Not Sure	4	20 %
Total	20	100 %

Source: Field data, April 2012.

Research question 4: Are your recruitment practices guided by the Nigeria Federal Character Principle (NFCP)?

Table 4a: Responses from the public sector

Responses	No. of respondents	Frequency (%)
Yes	18	81.8 %
No	2	9.1 %
Not sure	2	9.1 %
Total	22	100 %

Source: Field data, April 2012.

Table 4b: Responses from the private sector

Responses	No. of respondents	Frequency (%)
Yes	8	40 %
No	2	10 %
Not sure	10	50 %
Total	20	100 %

Source: Field data, April 2012.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this paper show similarities and differences in the recruitment practices of both the public and private sectors. It revealed that public firms recruit annually as opposed to their private counterparts that recruit only when the need arises. HR practitioners in both public and private sectors consider equality and diversity in their recruitment practices but argued that equality is difficult to attain because of the twin factors of favouritism and nepotism found within the Nigerian work environment. The public firms have awareness of the NFCP but, about 18% still believe that they have not been strictly adhered to. Recruitment in the private sector is hinged upon the perceived needs of individual organizations which may usually be at variance with specified guidelines. HR practices in Nigeria differed greatly compared to those in the UK in terms of awareness and recruitment policy implementation. This finding is in line with Harris and Foster (2010) discovery that seventy-three per cent of UK public firms have equal opportunity

policies which control the rate of diversity and that the figure had rose to ninety-eight per cent in recent years.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper identified that there is little research in the area of diversity and equality especially with regards to recruitment in Nigeria thus; academic research is needed to help address the dilemmas of equality and diversity. This is deemed compulsory if the effects and gap of inequality must be reduced to achieve the fundamental millennium goal of eradicating poverty in Nigeria. The government is therefore enjoined to pursue policies of equitable balance especially in the area of gender discrimination. HR experts and agencies could be engaged to recruit credible candidates based on their capabilities. This will help organizations to curb the factors of nepotism and favouritism in the workplace.

REFERENCES

- Adekeye, O. A. 2008. Prevalence and Patterns of Gender Violence: Major Variables in the Exposure to HIV/AIDS among Women in Nigeria. *Gender and Behaviour*, 6 (2): 1827–1840.
- Ahmad, S., and Schroeder, R.G. 2002. The importance of recruitment and selection process for sustainability of total quality management. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management* 19, 540–550.
- Armstrong, M., 2006. *A Handbook of Human Resource Practice*. 10th Edition. Koganpage, London.
- Ayoade, J. A. A. 2000. The Federal Character Principle and the Search for National Development. In K. Amuwo Agbaje, A., Suberu, R. and Herault, G. (eds). *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria*. Spectrum Books, Ibadan.
- Bodunrin, P. 1989. Federal Character and Social Justice. In P. P. Ekeh and E. E. Osaghae (eds) *Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria*. Heinemann Educational Books, Ibadan.
- Bonn, M. A., and Forbinger, L. R. 1992. Reducing Turnover in the Hospitality Industry: An Overview of Recruitment, Selection and Retention. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 11 (1): 47-63.
- CIPD, 2009. *Recruitment, Retention and Turnover: Annual Survey Report 2009*. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, London.
- CIPD, 2010. *Factsheet: Online recruitment*. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, London.
- DOH, 2004. *NHIS Equality and Diversity Policy*. Department of Health. Available: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4090843
- Fajana, S. 2009. *HR Management in Africa: The Social and Economic Framework*, Personalfuhrung ,7: 80-86.
- Fajana, S., Owoyemi, O., Elegbede T. and Gbajumo-Sheriff, M. 2011. *Human Resource Management Practice in Nigeria*. *Journal of Management and Strategy* 2 (2): 57-62.
- Gberevbie, D.E. 2010. Strategies for employee recruitment, retention and performance: Dimension of the Federal civil service of Nigeria. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4 (8): 1447-1456.
- Greenfield, S. 2007. *Public Sector Employment: The Current Situation*. The Center for State and Local Government Excellence. < <Http://slge.org/vertical/Sites/%7BA260E1DF-5AEE-459D84C4-876EFE1E4032%7D/uploads/%7BB4579F88-660D-49DD-8D52-F6928BD43C46%7D>.
- Harris, L. and Foster, C. 2005. Easy to say but difficult to do – managerial perspectives on implementing diversity in retailing. *Human Resources Management Journal*, 15 (3): 4-17.
- Lee, T. W., Mitchell, T. R., Holton, B. C., McDaniel, L. S. and Hill, J.W. 1999. The unfolding model of voluntary turnover: a replication and extension. *Academy of Management Journal*, 42 (4): 450-62.
- Owoyemi, O. A., and M. Sheehan. 2011. Exploring Workplace Bullying in an Emergency Service Organisation in the UK. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6 (3): 63.
- Tanova, C. 2003. Firm size and recruitment: staffing practices in small and large organisations in north Cyprus. *Career Development International*, 8 (2): 107-14.
- Taylor, S. 2005. *People Resourcing*. 3rd Edition, CIPD Publishing, London.
- Torrington, D., Hall, L., and S, Taylor. 2005: *Human Resource Management*, 6th Ed. Prentice Hall, London.
- Wickramasinghe, V. 2007. Staffing Practices in the Private Sector in Sri Lanka. *Career Development International*, 12 (2): 108–128.