



Diversity Management and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Buhari's Administration in Perspective.

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Abstract

Every heterogeneous society is under obligation to devise ways of managing their differences if they must achieve unity and meaningful progress. Our concern is how Nigeria has fared in this task under the watch of Buhari's administration. The Work hinged on National Integration Theory as it attempts to investigate how Nigeria has managed its diversity with such instruments as Quota system, federal character principle and the effect on sustainable development. The research adopts a discourse approach based on content analysis. The finding is that Nigeria is still long way to joining the leagues of developed nations consequent upon poor management of her diversity through denial which has produced anti-development phenomena such as agitations, terrorism, banditry and general insecurity, corruption, unproductive economy and such like. We therefore recommend that diversity management should be a practical-based policy rather than a tool of manipulation that only serve idiosyncratic and particularistic interest.

Keywords: Federal character, Quota system, Diversity, Power sharing, Agitations, National development and Sustainable development.

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Introduction

Recently, Nigeria celebrated her 62nd independent anniversary as a nation. The federal government, amidst the height of insecurity, celebrated the anniversary in a low key, the question on the lips of Nigerians is “what are we really celebrating?” this is occasioned by the fact that after all this decades, Nigeria is still grappling with the same challenges that necessitated the agitation for self-determination and independence from the colonial masters, if not worse.. It is indubitable that Nigeria as a heterogeneous state with diverse ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic and economic differences, had continually faced the challenge on how to unify the 200- plus ethnic groups and cultures identified within its borders (Udogu, 2005; Adeosun, 2011, Akobo; 2016) According to Iheanacho (2019) “any country that have several ethnic, cultural and religious groups must devise adequate means to manage such diversities in order to ensure equality, equity and fairness in the political system” It is pertinent to state that, various regimes of government, military and civilian alike at different times diversified the core principles (Freedom, Equality and Justice) and introduced certain policy thrusts aimed at addressing the observed bifurcations inherent in the Nigerian nation with the hope to achieving the desired unity(Cornelius & Sunday, 2015).

Not too long ago, the youth in the country took to the street in a city-wide protest they tagged **#endSARS** to demonstrate and register their grievances on police brutality, high application of force and fatality meted against them. The articulated demands by the youth went far beyond the prima fascia end to the tactical police unit known as Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) to incorporate restructuring the country based on the perceived marginalization against some sections/sectors of the country. Their demand is basically a call to an end to Structural, Administrative, Resources and System (SARS) deformity which has hitherto breed injustices, inequality, agitations, terrorism, banditry and general insecurity, corruption, and unproductive economy in Nigeria among others. Obviously, these are offshoots of diversity management complications in a plural state like Nigeria.



The crux of this research therefore is to pry into how Nigeria has fared in galvanizing the diversity inherent in Nigeria for sustainable development under the watch of President Muhammadu Buhari; leveraging on content analysis.

Conceptual clarification

Quota System

The quota system in Nigeria as a policy of the federal government is aimed at allocation of values or power sharing. The plural nature of the country necessitated the quota as a measure to address the imbalance inherent in the Nigerian nation. While the quota system came into being prior to Nigeria's independence in 1960, the federal character principle became officially recognized in the 1979 constitution. Like federal character principle, the quota system is aimed at addressing the issues of ethnic representation in the public sector.

Federal character Principle

The federal character is one of the power sharing dynamic among several policies in Nigeria. Federal character principle no doubt was introduced in Nigeria to correct the disparity in terms of employment and appointments to government ministries and agencies among different ethnic groups, regions, states and local government (Akpanabia, 2012 cited in Iheanacho, 2019). The federal character principle is meant to ensure equity and fairness among different groups in Nigeria in order to achieve national unity, integration, loyalty and development. In other words, it is for equitable distribution of national values. National values here include but not limited to employment, appointment, promotion in all government establishment. The whole essence of managing diversity is to rectify the imbalance inherent in a system. Federal principle is an outgrowth of quota system.

Diversity

Diversity pertains to the host of individual (group) differences that makes all of unique and different from others. (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007). Diversity is a range of variety of people,



languages, opinions and culture. Nigeria as a country is made up of different ethnic groups or tribes, different languages, culture, religious etc. Nigeria has population of over 200 million people, 300 ethnic groups, 520 languages and several dialects and religion (Chidozie, 2022). The pluralistic fauna capture diversity in its core in Nigeria.

Diversity Management

Managing diversity in Nigeria is about understanding the country's heterogenic make up. It entails much more than enacting laws and creating policies, rather is a sensitive, potentially volatile and sometimes prickly issue, yet it is the key for sustainable development in any clime. It involves a deliberate, effective and practical ways of reaching a broader range of the country ,sorting and calming down tensions emerging from the root of diversity .It entails a significant philosophical shift from a long tradition of minimizing differences to amplifying them and thereby seize on the opportunities they present to create atmosphere and environment for growth and development. Diversity management is positioned as a means to promote justice and equal opportunities among social groups, as well as improve the livelihoods of minorities identified in society and organizations (Nyambegera, 2002; Akobo, 2016). Effective management of diversity requires an adoption of new perception of differences among people rather than pitting one group against another, managing diversity entails recognition of the unique contribution of every group; making sincere effort at carry every one along and giving the people a level playing ground and a maximum sense of belonging.

Sustainable Development

Pearce et al (1992 cited in Nyewusira & Nweke, 2014) defined sustainable development as a development that manages all assets, natural resources, and human resources, as well as financial and physical assets, for increasing long-term wealth and well-being. As a goal, sustainable development rejects policies and practices that support current living standards by depleting the productive base, including natural resources, and that which leaves future generations with poorer prospects and greater risks than our own, Simply said; Sustainable Development is the long term innovation that stands the test of time without raising any risk factors presently and



even in future. According to Jabareen (2008) some define sustainability as a strategy of development that results in the enhancement of human quality of life and the simultaneous minimization of negative environmental impacts. The foregoing suggested that any environment where the people or sections of the people are subjugated, oppressed, marginalized, disenfranchised does not breed sustainable development. It is obvious because sustainable development must enhance human quality of life for all.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical discourse is on Whereas Regional Integration Theory. The theory seeks to explain the establishment and development of regional international organizations (Schimmeifennig, 2018). From the Regional Integration theory the National Integration Theory is formulated to deal with diversity within the national boundary. National integration theory is predicated on the presumption that there exists a multicultural and multi-ethnic society in which the various groups are defined by their respective languages, or other self-conscious cultural qualities and that their interaction is characterized by the tensions and discontinuities on the horizontal plane (Segun *etal*, 2014). Integration therefore, is a process of inter-locking linkages where every hitherto dividing boundaries are deliberately dismantled to allow for a more frequent contact, cooperation, consensus and community (Mitchel, Morrison, & Paden, 1989; Ojo, 2009 in Segun *et al*, 2014)

Within this context, integration is used to refer to the process of creating a homogeneous progressive reduction of cultural and regional territorial political community (Bamisiaye 2013; Segun *et al*, 2014) in applying the theory of integration to the principle of sharing of power, federal quota system and federal character principle, Segun *et al*, (2014) claim that the theory therefore bring the understanding of different attempts by the Nigerian government to create an harmonious and cohesive society, culminating in the formulation of quota system and federal character principle with the intention of conjuring nationwide development. This is to address the issue of developmental imbalance, fear of dominance and suspicion between and among various ethnic groups.



The National Integration Theory is apposite to the study as it focuses on how to allocate values to the different and diverse people of Nigeria, by dismantling the dividing walls through integration. It involves conscious and deliberate maintaining of equality, equity, justice and fairness, which is the foundation for any federal state or heterogeneous society.

Methodology

The research uses qualitative approach, hence adopts a discourse approach. The study relied on secondary sources of data gathering and content analysis.

Discussion of findings

Diversity Management and Sustainable Development

Many scholars, environmentalists and governments agree that sustainability could be achieved through the effective balancing of social, environmental and economic objectives (Berke & Kartez, 1995; Healey & Shaw, 1993; Meadows, Meadows, & Randers, 1992; Robinson & Tinker, 1998; Scruggs, 1993 cited in Jabareen, 2008). However, at the core of social sustainability is the concept of equity. The concept of equity represents the social aspects of Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development might be seen as a criterion for environmental justice. The concept of equity itself encompasses various concepts such as environmental, social and economic justice, social equity, and equal rights for development, quality of life, equal economic distribution, freedom, democracy, public participation and empowerment (Jabareen, 2008). Haughton (1999, p. 64 cited in Jabareen, 2008) argues that, “the social dimension is critical since the unjust society is unlikely to be sustainable in environment or economic terms in the long run” To this extent, Agyeman, Bullard and Evans (2002) believe that a truly sustainable society is one in which wider questions of social needs, equity, welfare, and economic opportunity are integrally related to environmental limits imposed by supporting ecosystems (Jabareen, 2008).

Asiedu (2002, 2006 cited in Akobo, 2016) highlights corruption as an institutional variable that obstructs development and is a deterrent to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Nigerian society. In addition, the government’s inability to enforce and monitor contracts issued for development



planning and the political instability in the nation stand as variables restricting the growth of FDI in Nigeria. In line with such institutional struggles preventing development. Agundu *et al.* (2007 cited in Akobo, 2016) argue that development is a sustainable process of good governance and socio-economic progress that 'has the integrity, well-being and security of the individual and society at its core'. Sustainability as a strategy of development must result in the enhancement of human quality of life. There are two types of equity according to the literature on sustainability: intergenerational and intragenerational. Intergenerational equity refers to the fairness in allocation of resources between current and future generations while Intragenerational equity refers to fairness in allocation of resources between competing interests at the present time (Jabareen, 2008).

The most frequently used definition of SD emphasizes intergenerational equity: "Development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p. 43). Sustainability from the lens of intergenerational equity is a matter of distributional equity, about sharing the capacity for well-being between present people and future people (Solow, 1991). Boyce (1994) in support of intergenerational equity argued that a more equitable distribution of power would contribute to improvement in environmental quality). It apposite to note that there is a positive correlation between power distribution and degradation. Degradation occurs in social parlance when the people's well-being is compromised either in part or whole. Boyce, Klemer, Templet, and Willis (1999 in Jabareen, 2008). Provide empirical support for the hypothesis that greater power inequality leads to greater environmental degradation. Disparities of power appear to affect not only the distribution of the net costs and benefits of environmentally degrading activities, but also the overall magnitude of environmental degradation.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that Nigeria as a heterogeneous society is bequeathed with rich cultural heritage. These manifest both in abundant human and material resources. The way these resources are managed to a large extent determined whether the nation will progress on the trajectory of development or not. The ability to manage this rich diversity will also give room for sustainability. Fairness in allocation of resources will make room for sustainable development.



President Buhari and diversity management

It is instructive to note that the dominant social identities recognized in Nigerian include gender, ethnicity and religion and often embrace others like class, political affiliation and age. These dominant social identities are socio-cultural characteristics that take precedence in various parts of Nigeria (Ikpe, 2009 in Akobo, 2016). We shall measure the dexterity or otherwise of President Buhari's administration in handling diversity along these dominant social identities of gender, ethnicity, age and religion.

Gender inequality

Elaborating on the socio-cultural values, Akobo (2016) aver that "it includes the expectation on women to perform domestic roles, which sometimes alienates her from opportunities available to men". President Buhari in a state visit to Germany, reacting to the interview during a joint press briefing with German chancellor Angela Merkel, made this infamous remark "I don't know which party my wife belongs to, but she belongs to my kitchen and my living room and the other room". This is the height of discrimination by a sitting president to his wife and the womenfolk. Linking this to marginalization of women in Africa, some identified indicators that contribute to this marginalization include violence and harmful traditional practices, lack of basic human rights, and lack of access to education, health and employment opportunities (World Bank, 2012). Similarly, a number of factors that affect women in Nigeria include poverty, child labour, religious practices that support early marriage, illiteracy and other socio-cultural values that promote gender inequality (Ajala & Alonge, 2013 in Akobo, 2016). The school girls whose lives and destiny were truncated by the bandit who adopted them are still pointer to the dehumanization women suffers in Nigeria. It appears worse under the Buhari's administration, whose best effort stops at commiserating with the victim's family and vow to fish out the perpetrators, while another incident will overtook the first.



Ethnicity

Right from 2015 when President Buhari was sworn into office, the members of his kitchen cabinet have been predominantly northerners. The service chiefs were all but one Northerners. This can best be adjudged to be lopsided and gross denial of the differences in Nigeria.

Buhari's appointment 2015

S/N	Position	Name of Appointee	State	Region
1	Aide de camp to president	Lt. Col. Abubakar	Kano	North- west
2	Special adviser media, & publicity to the president	Femi Adesina	Osun	South-west
3	Senior Special assistant media, & publicity.	Garba Shehu	Kano	North- west
4	State chief of protocol/special assistance	Lawal Abdullahi Kazaure	Jigawa	North- west
5	Accountant general of the federation	Ahmed Idris	Kano	North- west
6	National security Adviser	Babangana Monguno	Borno	North- East
7	Chief of defense staff	Abayomi Olonishakin	Borno	North- East
8	Chief of Army staff	Tukur Buratai	Borno	North- East
9	Chief of naval staff	Ibok-Ete Ekweibas	Cross- River	South-South
10	Chief of Air staff	Sadique abubakar	Bauchi	North- East
11	Chief of defense intelligent	Monday Riku Morgan	Benue	North-central
12	Director General, state security services SSS	Lawal Daura	katsina	North- west
13	Chairperson, Independent national Electoral Commission	Prof. Mahmood yakubu	Bauchi	North- East
14	Managing Director Nigerian Port Authority	Habibu Abdulahi	Kano	North- west
15	Special Adviser Niger Delta	Paul Boroh	Delta	South-South



	Amnesty office			
16	Acting Director General, Nigerian maritime Administration, Safety and Security Agency, NIMASA	Baba Haruna Jauro	Kano	North- west
17	Executive vice-Chairman/Chief executive Officer, Nigerian communication Commission	Umaru Danbatta	Kano	North- west
18	Executive Chairman Federal Inland Revenue services. FIRS	Babatunde Fowler	Lagos	South-West
19	Director General, Budget office of the Federation	Aliyu Gusau	Zamfara	North- west
20	Secretary to the Government of The Federation	Engr, Babachir David Lawal	Adamawa	North- East
21	Chief of Staff to the President	Alhaji Abba Kyari	Borno	North- East
22	Comptroller-General, Nigerian Custom Service	Col. Hammed Ibrahim Ali (rtd)		North-central
23	Comptroller-General, Nigerian Immigration Service	Mr. Kuremartin Abeshi	Nasarawa	North-central
24	SSA to the president on National Assembly matters	Senator Ita S. J Enang	Akwa-Ibom	South-South
25	Group MD NNPC	Emmanuel Kachikwu	Delta	South-South

Source: Abada, Okafor & Udeogu (2018 in Abada, Okafor & Omeh, 2019)

The table showed that Buhari's appointments favoured the Northern parts of Nigeria. The worst aspect of his lopsidedness is that these his appointees are predominantly Muslim even few of the non-Northerners are Muslim faithful. This is nothing short of nepotism. Meanwhile Federal character purports to deal with the privileges and benefits among the primordial component of any state organization (Eke, 1989; Akpanabia, 2012 cited in Iheanacho, 2019). First and foremost, we should recall that the essence of federal character principle, according to Majekodunmi (2013 in Iheanacho, 2019) "is to allow the composition and conduct of public institutions and affairs reflects the countries diversity. It is premised on the ground that when national institutions and affairs are reflective in composition and conduct of the pluralism of the country, then a sense of belonging is likely to be evoked from the citizenry "Sustainable



development can only work where there is relative peace. Peace which represent absence of disturbances, crises and agitations strives in the climate of justice, equity and fairness.

Religion

Closely following the issue of ethnicity is religion in the component of Nigerian diversity with predominant religion as Christians and Muslim. Under the watch of President Buhari as the highest office holder and father of the All Progressive Congress (APC), the party is fielding a Muslim-Muslim Ticket for the 2023 presidential election. Could that suppose that there is no Christian among the APC chieftain that is capable of holding the office of the president or vice president in Nigeria? Maybe the president is set to accomplish what was in his agenda even before emerging as president in 2015, but lacked the opportunity and power since he needed all hands on deck then to wrest power from the incumbent?

Age

We must give kudos to the present administration for signing “The Not-Too-Young-To-Run” bill into law. A fundamental step for political inclusion for the youth. However the money politics that characterizes the political space in Nigeria is still a major roadblock. Though no age class is excluded in the injustices and disparity meted against Nigeria under the watch of President Buhari’s administration, the youth has been the worst hit in form of police brutality, military high handedness against the youth, political exclusion and many other injustices and inequalities. These injustices have recently fueled a protest by the youth under the slogan *#ENDSARS*. It is pertinent to note, that in the over sixtieth years of Nigerian existence, the spate of youth protest across the major cities of the nation, especially the southern part is unprecedented. What started as protest against abuse of human right and brutality including fatality of the youths in the hands of the Special Anti- Robbery Squad (SARS), took another dimension as the youth agitates for restructuring of the structural, administrative and political architecture of the country for progressive and sustainable development. This is one other area the President Buhari have scored below pass mark. According to The Cable, President during a panel appearance with world leaders at the commonwealth Business Forum in London criticizes the youth as lazy and uneducated (Ogundipe, 2018). Buhari had said “More than 60 percent of the population is below 30, a lot of them haven’t been to school and they are claiming that Nigeria is oil producing



country, therefore, they should sit and do nothing and get housing, healthcare, education free” this exposes the philosophy of function of Buhari toward the youth. The party he is leading today (although other parties are guilty of this) is fielding a man that is well stricken in age as the presidential flag bearer for the 2023 election. Where are the youth under the Buhari’s administration?

Conclusion

The approach hitherto had been an attempt to eliminate discrimination by deliberately ignoring or denying the difference among these plural citizenries. That account for the failure. Despite several efforts, agitations of ethnic nationalities have not been doused, a phenomenon responsible for recurrent calls for political and economic restructuring of the country (Ikeanyibe, Ori, & Okoye, 2017 in Idikeet al, 2019). The major issue may not actually be policy thrust to handle these challenges, but the will to enforce them. The federal character principle and other diversity management mechanism would have reduced the imbalance inherent in the Nigerian system if they are implemented to the later in the spirit of integrity and nation building. But the opposite is the case. Akobo (2016) commenting on gender inequality buttresses this point thus “it is pertinent to state that the legislative framework encourages gender balance. However, the lack of enforcement of these policies reinforces the reality of discriminatory processes for women’s education at the primary, secondary and higher education levels, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria (World Bank, 2012).

Recommendations

The state should create initiatives/policies that will uncover and understand differences among the groups and find ways to appeal to a broader set of the citizenry (population). It is going to be a comprehensive complex task nonetheless; it will assuage the needs and reduce the pull on the centripetal of the federation. Again, diversity management should be a practical based policy rather than a tool of manipulation that only serve idiosyncratic and particularistic interest. Government and its agencies should make accessible the criteria for recruitment, appointment, promotion and sharing of national values and resources. Religion should be expunged in documents for Nigerian citizens, since it has contributed more to divide us further than unite us.



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