

# Politics, Policy And Governance: Interrogating The Triangular Relationship In The Nigerian Socio-Political Environment

OBI Emeka Francis<sup>1</sup>, EWUIM Ngozi Christiana (PhD)<sup>2</sup>, NWOSU Azubike Paul<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Anambra State, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>[femeka2019@gmail.com](mailto:femeka2019@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Professor and Head,

[n.ewuim@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:n.ewuim@unizik.edu.ng)

**Abstract:** *It is not uncommon in Nigeria to see people dismiss a government policy statement as being a mere political statement. It is also not uncommon for governance actions to be construed (rightly or wrongly) as being undertaken to score cheap political points. In the light of the interwoven nature of these variables, this study interrogates the triangular relationship among politics, public policy and governance in the Nigerian socio political environment. Anchored on the theory of Two Publics by Peter Ekeh (1975), this study argues that centrifugal forces of cultural affinities, ethnicity, religion and geographical contiguity – that are prominent features of the primordial public – interplay in the Nigerian political space and impact greatly on public policy making and governance. Data for this paper were generated from secondary sources such as journals, books, internet publications, among others, which were analyzed based on their content. From the analysis in this paper, we conclude that variants of some of the policies we adopt in Nigeria – like quota system - are applicable in other parts of the world with success stories to show for it. Thus, it was recommended in this paper that our national values as a nation should be promoted, taught in schools and should form a core part of the orientation for public office holders at all levels – political and administrative; federal, state and local government levels. These national values are contained in section 23 of the Nigerian constitution of 1999 are discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social justice, religious tolerance, self-reliance and patriotism.*

**Keywords:** *Politics, Public Policy, Governance*

## INTRODUCTION

In a complex, multi-ethnic and secular state like Nigeria where its citizens have various religious inclinations, it is not uncommon for policy decisions and government actions to be perceived – rightly or wrongly – by the citizens as being tainted with ethnic and religious colorations. From independence in 1960 to date, ethnic, religious and geographical balancing has remained the major yardstick for the acceptability or otherwise of public policy decisions and governance actions. The argument has been that the dividends of governance must be available and accessible to every segment of the complex Nigerian society.

The complexity of the Nigerian society was better described by Osaghae (2011) in his account of the Nigerian situation captured in his book titled, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria since independence*. Osaghae asserts that Nigeria is arguably one of the most complex countries in the world and belongs to the genre of the most troubled complex societies called deeply divided societies. Many have attributed the roots of this division to the colonial experiment of January 1, 1914 when Lugard effected the amalgamation of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria which were previously administered as separate territories.

Those who believed that the events of 1914 laid the foundation for the complex challenges that the Nigerian state

is currently experiencing have continually borrowed a leaf from the late Premier of the defunct Northern Region of Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello, who once referred to the amalgamation exercise as ‘the mistake of 1914’ (Osaghae, 2011). More than one hundred years after the amalgamation, there seem to exist a cold war among the various ethnic and geopolitical segments of the Nigerian society as they struggle for resource control, allocation and utilization; landmass, natural resources and boundaries; government positions – elected positions, political appointments or appointment into the public service of the Nigerian federation; distribution of infrastructural development projects, population distribution and delineation, among others.

The struggle has been between the elites from the North and their Southern counterpart. The reasons behind the tension seem to emanate from fears in the North that the more educated South would dominate state institutions as well as the concerns in the southern part of the country that the more populated North would have an edge in electoral contests and acquisition of political power. It was observed that within the Nigerian nation, there were differences in culture, stages of social and economic development of different sections of the country and this resulted in some sections of the country having recognizable advantage in the employment of their indigenes in the public services (Suberu 2013).

The zero-sum nature of political competition among the elites precipitated a bloody civil war between 1967 and 1970. The

soul-searching that followed the civil war reflected in the quest for elite's consensus on how Nigeria should be governed to ensure political stability and fairness in the distribution of resources among the various ethnic groups that make up the country. Thus, concepts like federal character, quota system, revenue sharing formula etc. became common vocabularies in Nigeria's political, policy and governance circles.

The implications of the political, policy and governance quagmire have remained with us. Citizens' ethnic, regional, and religious cleavages in the Nigerian society are made more problematic by systematic and overlapping patterns of inequalities that correspond to these cleavages. Those who occupy public offices appear to cater to their primordial societies first, thus, giving national interest secondary considerations. Worse still, policy decisions that represents sectional interests are carefully and craftily advanced as though it will protect the interest of all, even though history has shown that such policies end up giving an unfair advantage to a section of the country over the other. According to Soludo, (2007), these inequalities are caused by a complex range of factors, including history, geography, cultural orientation, religious affiliation, natural resource endowments, among others.

While the above factors remain constant, this paper interrogate the interplay of these factors in the Nigerian socio-political environment and fashion out a more pragmatic approach to enhancing national integration, cohesion and public sector efficiency and effectiveness. To achieve this, the remaining parts of this paper will be subdivided as follows. The next section will deal with the review of related literature where the major concepts in the paper will be discussed. The following segment will be the theoretical framework for the study. This will be followed by discussions and analysis on the core issues in this paper. At the end of our analytical discourse, the paper will make recommendations and conclude.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As it is the tradition in the social sciences, there is the need to provide a scholarly and contextual clarification of the major concepts in this paper. To this end, three key concepts were identified namely; Politics, Policy (Public Policy) and Governance.

**POLITICS:** The great Greek philosopher, Aristotle, began his conceptualization of the concept politics with the observation that 'man is by nature, a political animal. By this observation, he means that politics is the essence of social existence (Anifowose 2005). The social nature of man and his interactions with others in a social setting is geared towards achieving a whole range of personal and group objectives. These objectives include to grab a fair share of the society's scarce resources, to attain a better standing in society, to

control the means of distribution of the society's resources, among others. To Aristotle, the best way to maximize one's individual capabilities or for a group to attain its highest form of social life was through political interactions with others. These political interactions do not occur in a vacuum, but within the ambit of an institutional setting – the state. The assumption here is that politics takes place within states and that most of its forms are state-centered, though it does not preclude non-state or inter-state politics – in the forms of international, regional or global politics among various countries of the world (Osaghae, 2011).

It would appear from the above analysis that politics involves a struggle by different individuals or groups to attain competitive advantage over others in a state. This, according to Anifowose, (2005) explains why politics is seen as a controversial process of conflict resolution in a society. From a broader point of view, the idea of politics has to do with a set of actions by which the people preserve, make and alter the common rules under which they live. These set of activities include discussions, persuasion, arguments, negotiations, use of force, collective bargaining, among others.

A more popular angle to the definition of the concept politics is to see it from the point of view of the struggle for power, its acquisition and use. To this end, Max Weber, (cited in Anifowose, 2005), sees politics as the struggle to share power or influence the distribution of power among individuals or groups within a state. Continuing, Harold Lasswell, (also cited in Anifowose, 2005), defines politics as the shaping and sharing of power. Politics helps to authoritatively allocate values in societies and assists in providing answers to the question of who gets what, when and how.

The manifestations of all the definitions as highlighted above are evident in the Nigerian socio-political environment. Politics exists in every social situation where power relationships or conflict situations exist. From independence in 1960 to date, the nature and character of Nigerian politics has been succinctly summarized by Osaghae, (2011) as a long drawn-out decay or decline, whose empirical rudiments are instability in the polity, a very low level of national unity and cohesion, and economic disaster, all of which supports and reinforces one another. The main indices of political instability include constant regime change occasioned by military coups, inconclusive and acrimoniously contested electoral outcomes, political violence and the crisis of legitimacy, among others.

The periods between 1960 to 1999 encapsulates all the mentioned indices. The period experienced more than ten military coups – successful and unsuccessful, frequent and unplanned changes in government – from military to civilian, political violence emanating from elections, among others. The low level of national cohesion led to the 30-month civil war that shook the foundations of the nation with its attendant

economic consequences. Till date, the unity of Nigeria is constantly being threatened by political issues centered around the acquisition, allocation and use of political power, details of which will be discussed subsequently in this paper.

**POLICY:** In the struggle for political power, one important or underlying factor is who controls the decision making process in the public sector. The decision making process in the public sector is otherwise known as public policy. But before we delve into discussions on public policy, it will be appropriate to state here that individuals and organizations also have policies. In general terms therefore, a policy is a guiding principle that individuals or organizations conform to. A business concern, for instance, might have a policy not to sell its goods or offer its services on credit. Simply put, policy has to do with a clearly stated path or course of action which is deemed to be appropriate for the accomplishment of desired objectives as well as directing or guiding the decision making of an organization or individual towards the attainment of stated goals.

On the other hand, therefore, public policy, according to Jenkins (in Olaniyi, 2008), is a set of inter-related decisions by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of objectives and the strategies for achieving them within a definite situation wherein those resolutions are expected to be within the power of those whose duty it is to bring them to fruition. Chukwuemeka, (2008) views public policy as a government programme of action. According to him, public policy stands for the various degrees of goal articulation and normative regulation of government activities. Explaining further, Chukwuemeka added that public policy is what the government intends to do or achieve (goals) and how it intends to do it (implements). Ikelegbe, (2008) sees public policy as the output or product of the governmental process and activity. In an attempt to put forward a more encompassing definition, Olaniyi, 2008 argued that public policy concerns the formulation of a decision, its implementation and evaluation.

A key characteristic of public policy is that it has to do with the government. Public policy can be viewed generally as simply a course of action or proposed course of action set by the government and directed at achieving certain goals. Public policy, as an instrument of governance, involves and affects a wide variety of areas such as the economy, education, health, social welfare, foreign affairs, transportation, housing, infrastructure, public utilities, etc.

Generally speaking, public policy involves choice and decision making in government in the sense that it is what the government chooses to do, or chooses not to do. By implication, government silence or perceived inaction with respect to a situation can be interpreted as a decision not to act, while where practical decisions are decided upon, it becomes a government policy to take action in that respect. Public policy affords government the needed guidance and the

citizens, the needed links to assess government decisions for the purpose of accountability. Decisions that become public policies are usually clouded by subjectivity, rather than based purely on objectivity. Most of the issues often involve general sentiments that are held deeply by the people, social and economic interests and the commitment of large amounts of money for its implementation, making the policy process very complex.

**GOVERNANCE:** Governance as a concept has different connotations. According to Ozigbo, (as cited in Odo, 2015), governance denotes how people are ruled and how the affairs of the state are administered and regulated. Governance can therefore be said to refer to how the people in a nation or society administer their affairs for the common good of every segment of the society. In the task of governance, public institutions are crucial as they play important roles in providing the needed institutional and legal framework for the implementation of public policies and programmes. On this premise, Ansah, (cited in Odo, 2015) viewed governance as encompassing a state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making process and implementation capacity and the relationship between government officials and the public.

Also, governance, in active terms, is the exercise of administrative and political authority of a country to achieve economic, political and social objectives. The economic objectives include poverty reduction, income redistribution and wealth creation, economic growth and development. Governance also exist to achieve political objectives in the areas of national integration, political stability, rule of law, credible, free and fair elections, among others. Also, the social objectives of governance have to do with social inclusiveness, especially in the decision making process, conflict resolution, upholding the fundamental rights of citizens, efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery, etc.

The United Nations Development Programme cited in Guga (2014) defines governance as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs, or the complex mechanisms, institutions and processes through which individual citizens and groups communicate their preferences and interests, perform their legal obligations and exercise their rights as well as settle their differences. The governance process includes every state and non-state institution in a nation or country, beginning from the family, religious institutions, socio cultural organizations, among others. Governance also embraces every practicable method that enhances the equitable distribution of power and efficient management of public resources.

Governance according to Uddin (2009) can either be viewed as a positive or negative terms which could be good governance or bad governance. Good governance is a model of governing structure that is necessary for the economic, political and sociocultural progress of the country. It is the

ideal value system of a state that works best to achieve sustainable development, self-reliance and social justice. On the other hand, a bad governance system is neither socially inclusive nor responsive to the complexities of a society. Certainly, bad governance is economically wasteful, politically repressive and have little or no respect for the fundamental rights of individuals and groups. In the views of Kolade (2012), governance is a participatory process that involves both the governor and the governed. The governor in this case involves the leaders at various levels, while the governed are the people and all other non-state actors in the polity. According to Kolade (2012), the participatory nature of governance highlights the collective role of all individuals and groups in ensuring a quality leadership that is accountable and to restrain public office holders from arbitrary use of power.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundation for this paper is the theory of Two Publics by Peter Ekeh (1975). Ekeh's argument in the theory of two publics is that the advent of colonialism in Africa have inadvertently led to the emergence of a distinctive historical arrangement in modern post-colonial Africa – the existence of two publics instead of a single public, as is obtainable in the western democracies. Ekeh posits that many of Africa's problems are due to the dialectical relationship between the two publics.

According to Ekeh, the two publics are the primordial and the civic publics. The primordial and civic publics operate different principles of morality, yet connected to each other. Ekeh categorized the primordial public as private and related the civic public with colonial administration that existed in what is now regarded as the public sector. Even though these two publics appear to be different, politicians nonetheless, operate concurrently in both the primordial and civic publics. The imposition of colonialism and its impact in the shaping of African politicians led Ekeh to explain the two publics in terms of the native sector and the colonial or westernized sector. The native became a primordial.

In the native sector, morality is highly regarded. The westernized sector became the civic public where, in the views of Ekeh, morality is not as highly regarded as it is in the native sector. The primordial public, in the views of Ekeh, has no economic reward. Its usage and importance is in the admiration respect and security that is obtained from one's cultural society, while the civic public is exploited for economic gains where one is ordinarily not obligated to give back in any form. As such morality is not highly regarded. In the Nigerian situation, Ekeh categorized the educated elites as being members of the two publics. He is of the view that privileged and educated Africans take advantage of the civic public to make financial gains in order to please their local communities. This activity helps them to get the needed acceptance and support from their primordial public. As such,

Ekeh asserts that it is acceptable for a public official in the civic space to be corrupt in order to employ the proceeds of such corruption to strengthen his or her primordial public. This dual loyalty in favour of the primordial public is a major factor that is crippling African politics to this day.

Professor Ekeh's postulations in the theory of Two Publics aptly captures the essence of our discussions in this paper. The interplay between the primordial and civic publics in the Nigerian society has remained problematic. For example, when government officials skew recruitment exercises to ensure that various PARTS (native public) of the country are represented in the organisation, it becomes a testament to the existence of multiple publics. In political appointments more especially, those who are opportune to get to positions of authority in the civic space (government setting) exploit such advantages to advance their ethnocentric agenda in terms of tilting the implementation of government policies in favour of their family, clannish and ethnic sensitivities.

Finally, these attitudes and predispositions have created what we call **dual patriotism** where one's personal, family and ethnic leanings takes pre-eminence over the achievement of the goals of the government or the public sector organisations they are working for. All these interplay to place primordial, pecuniary and personal interests over and above the interest of the public in the delivery of public goods and services.

### THE POLITICS OF REVENUE SHARING IN NIGERIA

Revenue sharing has remained a boiling point of in the Nigerian socio-political environment with huge implications on policy making and governance. Since the amalgamation of 1914, different ethno-religious groups in the country have continued to mistrust one another and this has led to stiff competition among the various federating units for political, administrative and financial privileges. According to Oluwole (2013), working out an acceptable revenue sharing formula has remained a thorny issue in pre and post independent Nigeria. Akume, (2014) contends that Nigeria's fiscal relations have been characterized by bias, distrust and contention in the adoption of an acceptable formula for revenue sharing between and among the various units of governments. The implication of this misnomer is the constant disagreements in the pattern of relations it has resulted to in modern day Nigeria.

This unpleasant situation had led to the decision by successive governments to set up commissions with the sole mandate to develop sets of principles or modalities for revenue sharing that will be seen to be fair, equitable and just in order to assuage the growing internal disagreements. It is worthy of note that the adoption of federalism in Nigeria since 1954 (apart from the 1966 unitary system of Gen. Aguiyi-Ironsi) has ensured the continuous decentralization of governmental structures, power and responsibilities hence the periodic changes in fiscal arrangements. The approach adopted to

solve the age-long problem is the distribution of national revenue on the basis of recommendations made by revenue allocation commissions or committees appointed by the federal government from time to time.

There have been several principles advanced to ensure an acceptable and equitable sharing formula. The Phillipson Commission (1946-1951) advocated the principles of derivation and even progress or even development, thereby allocating 24 percent of the total revenue of the federation to the then Eastern region, 30 percent to the Western region and 46 percent to the old Northern region. As observed by Ekpo (2004), the derivation principle has since become a problematic issue in Nigeria

Also, the Hicks-Phillipson commission according to Chiamogu, Onwughalu & Chiamogu (2012) recommended that more powers be given to the regions to raise, regulate and appropriate certain tax revenues. Further, relating to the criteria to be adopted, Akume (2014) noted that the Hicks-Phillipson commission of 1951, while retaining the principle of derivation, included needs and national interest. It also made provision for the fiscal autonomy of the various regions in the country.

Evidently, there were issues with the implementation as other commissions of inquiry were subsequently established. For instance, the Louis-Chick Commission (1953-1957), the Raisman-Tress Commission (1958) among other commissions that was established after independence. Since the dawn of Nigeria's fourth republic, beginning from 1999, the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal commission proposed the following as the revenue sharing formula;

- Federal Government – 52.68%
- State Government – 26.72%
- Local Government – 20.60%

The horizontal allocation formula which captures factors/principles and percentage was shared thus:

- Equality – 40%
- Population – 30%
- Landmass/Terrain – 10%
- Internally Generated Revenue – 10%
- Social Development Factor – 10% (comprised of Education 4%, Health 3% and water 3%).

All these adjustments have not stopped the agitation for more revenue by different segments of the country. For instance, while most parts of southern Nigeria, especially the South-South have been clamoring for full resource control or in the alternative, an increase in the 13 percent derivation approved for mineral producing areas, other segments of the Nigerian society – like the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF) is proposing that more resources be allocated to the states. In the final analysis, it appears that the myriad of adjustments and

reforms have not succeeded in addressing the onerous task of achieving an equitable and generally acceptable formula for revenue allocation in the Nigerian socio-political milieu.

## THE POLICY OF FEDERAL CHARACTER, AND QUOTA SYSTEM

The Nigerian socio-political environment has a unique influence on its public personnel policy especially as they are applicable to the federal civil service. An important environmental factor is the populous, complex and diverse nature and character of the Nigerian society. These complexities and diversities manifest in the forms of ethnic, cultural and religious inclinations. According to Osaghae, (2011), Nigeria has more than 252 recognized ethnic nationalities, each with its own customs, language and traditions. All of these features justify Nigeria's decision to adopt federalism as a system of government. The complexity in the nature and character of the Nigerian society have not been harmoniously managed, thus, affecting the relationship between policy formulators and implementers with respect to public personnel management.

Faced with the challenges of national cohesion even before independence, the Nigerian state, immediately after independence, was confronted with a situation where the political space was largely controlled by Northern elites. On the other hand, the machineries of the bureaucracy were, at the time, dominated by intellectuals and experts from the Southern parts of the country. For the political decision-maker to successfully implement its policies, it required a helper in the bureaucracy, which the North appears unable to provide in terms of the requisite manpower with the required skills, educational qualifications and experience. In this regard, the South with better qualified human capital held sway in the public bureaucratic space. By implication, while people from the Northern part of the country controlled the political space, their counterpart from the Southern part of the country, controlled the bureaucracy. Thus, in order to address the imbalance of north and south dichotomy, manifesting in the domination of the political scene by Northerners and Southerners' domination of the bureaucracy, representative bureaucracy was introduced in the form of the Federal Character Principle. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 recognized the importance of federal character to the administrative and political system in Nigeria as provided for in section 14 (3) of the said constitution.

It must be noted at this point in our discussion that one of the greatest capital base of any government in power is the legitimacy it enjoys from its citizens. In political science discourse, legitimacy has to do with the acceptance of a constituted authority, usually a government, by the people in a society. A government viewed as legitimate usually has the right and justification to exercise power. In politics and administrative parlance, legitimacy is a baseline requirement

for governing a society or exercising political authorities without which a government will not succeed or even collapse. To achieve the dual mandate of maintaining unity in diversity, part III, subsection 3 (a) of the Federal Character Establishment Act (1997) expressly states that:

*The indigenes of a State of the Federation shall constitute not less than 25 per cent or more than 3 per cent of all officers including junior staff at the head offices of any national institution, public enterprise or organisation. In the case of branches or local offices, not less than 75 per cent of these categories of staff shall be indigenes of the catchment area;*

The simple implication of the above provision is that the indigenes of any state where federal institutions are located stand to benefit from such institutions by way of higher considerations in terms of employment. In the Nigerian situation, it will not augur well for national integration for an institution to be cited in an area, while the staff strength of that institution is populated by people from other areas, regions or tribes. In order not to create the impression that one region or tribe is dominating the other, the Act stipulates that the state where the headquarters of any federal institution is located shall have its staff strength constituting not less than 25 per cent of the indigenes of that state and in the case of a branch or local office, 75 per cent of the staff strength should come from the state. This is notwithstanding the three per cent contribution of all states of the federation to the staff strength of such institution.

In keeping to this policy, the people of the area are meant to feel a sense of belonging, benefit from the nation's assets and where necessary, contribute to its sustenance, growth and development. It is the believe of the researchers that the federal character principle is more of a political solution proffered to address political issues and concerns that bothers on national assets, opportunities and privileges and the failure of human resources experts, professionals and the academia to appreciate this fact have led to the negative profiling of the federal character principle, the height of it being the call in some quarters for the scrapping of the policy (Eneanya, 2009). The major accusation has been that the federal character principle encourages mediocrity over merit in the recruitment of persons into the civil service.

## **GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS: THE JOURNEY SO FAR**

Our discussion so far has been on the interplay among the triangular variables of politics, policy and governance. Looking at the politics of revenue sharing, it is evident from our earlier discussion that the issue is far from over. But beyond the question of who gets what and how much each gets, there has been the serious challenge of revenue underutilization. In the Niger Delta region for instance, there

has been the issue and agitation for total resource control or in its alternative, an increase in the percentage that the region gets from the federation account based on the principle of derivation. Aside from statutory allocations to the states and local government areas in the region, the region gets 13 percent additional revenue based on the principle of derivation. There are also other intervention agencies like the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Management of these funds have been bedeviled with brazen corruption and pilfering of public funds in the forms of award of ghost contracts, inflation of contracts, poor execution of contracts among other issues. The messy probe by the Nigerian House of Representatives of the activities of the NDDC in July 2020, and reported in the major news outlets in Nigeria is an adverse testimony of the monumental corruption in the Nigerian public space. If we also consider the fact that almost at the same time, there was also a probe of alleged misappropriation of a whopping one hundred billion naira by another intervention agency, the North East Development Commission (NEDC), it becomes obvious that corruption and mismanagement in the Nigerian civic space is no respecter of ethnicity, tribe and religion – the major dividers of the Nigerian people.

Another governance issue to discuss in our journey to nationhood is the debate on equity versus efficiency in the public service, the question of merit. In the educational sector for instance, Nigeria operates a quota system that seek to accommodate all segments of the Nigerian society. For admission into federal government owned unity schools, what constitutes a pass mark for assessment for a student from Adamawa, Borno or Yobe state all in the Northeastern part of Nigeria, is different from what constitutes a pass mark for students from Imo, Abia or Anambra state in the Southeastern part of Nigeria.

For the National Common Entrance (NCE) – an assessment test for pupils who have completed their six years primary school education and seeking admission into junior secondary school (JSS1) – students from Adamawa, Borno or Yobe state will have to score 62, 45 or 2 (for male) and 27 (for female) in their NCE to be admitted to federal government owned unity schools, while students from Imo, Abia or Anambra state will have to score 138, 130 or 139 before he or she can be admitted to the same school. This uneven measurement scale does not consider the fact that the pupils in question might live in the same part of the country, attend the same standard of schools and write the same set of exams. Yet, by virtue of ethnicity, accident of birth and geography, the standard of expectation is higher for one and deliberately lowered for the other in the same society.

Qualification for admission into federal government owned tertiary institution is not any different. There is a percentage for merit. Then the Nigerian system reserves another chunk of the admission placement to catchment areas. By Nigerian

definition, a catchment area is the adjoining states within the same geo political grouping of the state where a federal institution is situated. The standard for catchment is usually lower than that of merit. Then we have a special consideration for the Educationally Less Developed States (ELDS). Here special consideration is given to students from certain states in the Nigeria federation considered to be educationally disadvantaged. The ELDS category has the lowest measurement scale and the standards are far below those of merit and catchment areas.

All these students will be lumped in the same institution, taught the same set of courses and upon graduation, this unholy practice continues even up to employment in the public sector, promotion and many other facets of our national life. The pitiable state of our educational system in terms of global ranking of our higher institutions, quality of research output among others, are reflections of the effect of our brand of politics, policy making and governance as a nation.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude this discussion, it is important to stress that the principle of equality, inclusiveness and representation otherwise known as the federal character principle in Nigeria is being practiced all over the world. To cite a very popular example, every sports organization in the world has quota or slots for all the continents in the world during world tournaments. Be it football, basketball, table tennis, etc. Africa, for instance, has five slots for world cup competitions. In this wise, the over 50 member nations of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) compete among themselves in series of qualifying matches and the **best** and **most competent** five nations among them qualify to represent not just their countries, but the continent in the global tournament. The above point is important to note because variants of some

of the policies we adopt in Nigeria are applicable in other parts of the world with success stories to show for it. What then could be done on the Nigerian situation? The subsequent section will proffer some recommendations.

## WAY FORWARD

In view of the conclusions reached in this study, we recommend as follows;

- **Upholding our national values:** Many of political leaders and elites neither understand nor appreciate the guiding national values of the Nigerian society. For instance, section 23 of the Nigerian constitution of 1999 espoused our national values to be **discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social justice, religious tolerance, self-reliance and patriotism**. These values ought to be taught in schools and should form a core part of the orientation for public office holders at all levels – political and administrative; federal, state and local government levels.
- **Building of strong institutions:** In a visit to Ghana during his first term in office, former President of the United States of America – Barack Hussein Obama, charged Africans to build strong institutions and not strong men. The 2020 Unites States presidential elections have shown that strong institutions are not respecters of strongmen and are vital to the preservation of national values. Strong institutions can be built through systematic and pragmatic reforms of existing institutions. A strong institution can effectively withstand the pressures of negative politics and politicking and ensure stability in policy making and governance.

REFERENCES

- Akume, A. T. (2014). The effect of intergovernmental relations (IGR) on Nigerian federalism: An examination. *Intergovernmental management (IGM) 1999-2007. Canadian Social Science Journal* 10 (3): 171 - 180
- Anifowose, R. (2005). The nature and scope of political science. in R. Anifowose & F. C. Enemuo. (Eds.) *Elements of Politics*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publications.
- Chiamogu, P., Onwughalu, C. & Chiamogu, P. (2012). Politics of inter-governmental relations in Nigeria: An appraisal of current issues. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*. 2 (11): 1892-1905.
- Chukwuemeka, E. (2008). *The substance of Public Administration in Nigeria: A compendium of public policy and local government*. Enugu: Computer Edge.
- Ekeh, P. P. (1975), Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17 (1): 91 – 112.
- Ekpo, A. (2003): Fiscal federalism: Nigeria post-independence experience 1960-90, *World Development* 22 (8): 65 - 71
- Ekpo, A. (2004). *Intergovernmental fiscal relations: The Nigerian experience*. Paper presented at the 10th Year Anniversary of the Financial and Fiscal Commission of South Africa, Cape Town, South Africa, August 10-12.
- Eneanya, A.N. (2009). *Principles and Practice of Public Personnel Administration in Nigeria*, Lagos: Concept Publications Limited.
- Guga, A. (2014). Good governance, a key driver to sustainable development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 2 (1), 1-11
- Ikelegbe, A. (2008). *Public Policy Analysis: Concepts, Issues and Analysis*. Lagos: Imprint Services.
- Kolade, C. (2012). The possibility of good governance in Nigeria. <http://www.businessdayonline.com/NG/index.php/news/111>.
- Odo, L.U. (2015). Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: F Political Science*, 5 (3),1-7
- Olaniyi, J. (2008). *Foundations of Public Policy Analysis*. Ibadan: Sunad Publishers Limited.
- Oluwole, E. (2013) Intergovernmental fiscal relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Issues and challenges. *Covenant University Journal of Politics and International Affairs (CUJPIA)* 1(2), December.
- Oni, O. E. (2013). Intergovernmental fiscal relations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Issues and Challenges. *Covenant University Journal of Politics and International Affairs (CUJPIA)* 1(2), December.
- Osaghae, E. E. (2011). *Crippled Giant: Nigeria since independence*. Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Limited.
- Soludo, C (2007). *Preserving Stability and Accelerating Growth*, Central Bank of Nigeria, Speech by the Governor, 16th January.
- Suberu, R. (2013). *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*. Washington D C: United States Institute of Peace Press,
- Uddin K. S., (2009). *Good Governance: Meaning and features of Good Governance*. Retrieved from: [www.reportbd.com/articles/2010/1/good-governance-meaning-and-features-of-good-governance-part-02/page1.html](http://www.reportbd.com/articles/2010/1/good-governance-meaning-and-features-of-good-governance-part-02/page1.html).
- United Nations Development Programme Report (2010). <https://businessday.ng/news/article/reps-to-probe-n100bn-misappropriation-in-n-east-development-commission/>