

A Critical Examination of Recruitment Strategy in India and Nigeria

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Abstract

The 21st century has brought about a changing environment in the structure, practice and recruitment process in many countries including India and Nigeria. These innovations have tremendous impact in public service delivery. Yet some countries are still caged with their moribund practice of traditional system of administration with an ineffective and inefficient recruitment in their civil services. This paper there fore, examines recruitment strategy in India and Nigeria using secondary source of data collection. The study revealed that, the Indian civil service is more efficient and effective in recruiting more qualified staff. This is so because their recruitment is based on qualification and merit system. On the other hand, the recruitment policy in Nigeria is highly controversial and complex in nature as emphasis is laid on quota system also known as Federal character Principles where merit is being compromised. We recommends that, both the Indian and Nigerian civil service commissions should be given more autonomous existence as this would enable them discharge their functions and responsibilities effectively without fear or favor.

1.Introduction

The whole world is becoming globally inclined and the management of public affairs had become a big and complex enterprise both on account of vastly expanded jurisdiction of the government and the exploded demands of the citizens for high quality services. There is therefore the dire need for a competent civil service, which is the central bureaucracy that implements government policies and programmes. In trying to achieve the above, a careful and well – planned recruitment and selection of employees is absolutely necessary, in order to ensure that only the right caliber of staff is employed in an organization. The process of recruitment and selection begins with the manpower plan, which indicates areas in the organization where there are likely to be shortages of people, and the number of people to be recruited to meet anticipated employment needs (Ezeani, 2006).However, recruitment of workers in to the public service differs from one country to the other depending on the geographical and socio-cultural background. Although the content and mission may be the same, but the methodology may differ. In the developing world that is characterized by poverty, unemployment and underemployment the process that governs recruitment become very cumbersome and tasking for recruitment authorities.

In Nigeria for instance, recruitment into the public service is based on quota system otherwise known as the federal character principles. This act has encouraged recruitment based on ethnicity, religious background, regionalism and other form of malpractice tendencies is being witnessed during recruitment process in Nigeria. In ancient days there was no problem of recruitment as the king himself selected and appointed his employees. The problem in fact arose with the expansion of kingdoms into empires when to carry on large scale administrations, the employees were required in a greater number. It was essential to secure a capable team of employees at less cost and in a short time to run the administration successful. China is said to be the first country to develop scientific system of recruitment through competitive examinations as early as 2BC. In modern times, Prussia first introduced the system of competitive examinations. In India, the system was established in 1853 (Bhagwan and Bhushan, 2007)

2.Literature Review

2.1concept of Recruitment

The term recruitment means different thing to different people depending on the organization and the country concerned. However the contents and objectives remained the same. Recruitment according to Croft (1996) refers to the analysis of a job and the features the organization will look for in a potential employee, and attracting candidates to apply to the organizations of employment to a chosen potential employee.

While Waldo (1967), sees recruitment as the process through which suitable candidates are induced to compete for appointments. Some look at recruitment from the perspectives of stages taken by recruitment authorities to attract applicants. It is on this note that White definition becomes necessary. Recruitment means specific steps

taken to attract suitable candidates to apply for examination. It simply means specific process for declaring the right people for particular jobs, and it may take the form of advertising for large group of employees. Employment process is seen as tripartite functions of recruitment, selection and placement (White, 1955).

The concept of negative and positive recruitment; if recruitment stands for eliminating the political influence or preventing favoritism or keeping the rascals out it is termed as a negative concept of recruitment. In the initial stages merit system was substituted for spoils system through the provision of the civil service commission. Such method of recruitment aimed at providing equality of opportunities to all to compete in open markets public service. Recruitment methods did not strive to provide a competent body of public servants. They were more emphatic and “open” than on “competition”. This negative approach resulted in recruitment of mediocrities. The result of this approach was that, the rascals have been kept out perhaps, but so have many men of vision and ability (Bhagwan and Bhushan, 2007) with the passage of time, the spoils system suffered an eclipse. Now the emphasis in recruitment shifted towards securing the best and the most competent persons for public services. Thus the concept of positive recruitment emerged out. Positive recruitment therefore means that the personnel agency will recruit the best, the most talented and competent personnel. Thus in positive recruitment, new techniques will have to be employed to attract the most qualified personnel. In other words, recruitment programme will have to be so devised that the only qualified applicants get a chance to compete (Bhagwan and Bhushan, 2007).

2.3 Problems of Recruitment in India

The problems of recruitment in India are many in nature, form and character. But generally Bhagwan and Bhushan (2007) presented the problems as follows:

Location of the appointing power: The first question to be located in respect to the selection of personnel is to which authority the selection of public officials shall be vested, i.e., whether the people will directly elect the public officers or they will be appointed by some officer or organ of the government proper. The first method called the democratic method is supported on the basis that democracy can have full effect and meaning only when all public officers are directly elected by the people. To provide for effective public control over the public employees, this method is necessary such method is made use of when the service to which appointment is to be made, is purely of a policy making nature, e.g., chief executive or when the service is of a local or restricted nature, e.g. village panchayats in India. If we study this method critically, we would find that it can be made use of only when the service, to which appointment is made, is purely of a policy making nature or when the service is purely of a local and restricted nature. The second method of locating the appointing authority is vesting the power of appointment formally in the chief executive but actually in a semi-judicial autonomous body termed civil service commission. The latter functions as a general personnel agency of the government; in the United States, however, the appointment of the more important executive or administrative officers by the chief executive does not become effective until approved by the senate. It would be out of place to attempt any consideration here of the way in which the senate has used or misused this power. As a matter of act, the senate has to stretch its powers as practically it has usurped the appointment of officers. Such a system does not prevail in India.

Methods of recruitment: The next problem no less important than the preceding one is that of recruitment from within and recruitment from without. Here, methods of selection are basically two in number – selection from without the service, or recruitment, and selection from within the service, embracing reassignment and promotion. The problem goes, however, much deeper than the mere technical choice between detailed methods. It goes to the nature of the whole personnel system. upon its answer, as much as upon any other factor, and perhaps more depends the attractiveness of the service, ultimate caliber of the personnel recruited and trained and its moral. If compensation standards be regarded as the foundation of the personnel system, the lines of promotion and the levels of recruitment constitute its framework. In India situation, it may be pointed out that the problem really arises in case of the higher middle positions only. It is obvious that the lowest posts must be recruited from without for there is no lower class of personnel from which to promote, and it is also equally obvious that recruitment of fresh and inexperienced men from outside to the highest positions like those of heads of departments will do.

Qualifications of employees: The next problem in the recruitment of personnel is that of determining the qualifications of the employees. In every country, some qualifications are laid down for entry into the public service. These qualifications are of two types (i) general and (ii) special. In the former are included citizenship, sex, domicile and age; and in the latter personal qualities like education, experience and technical knowledge. Among the qualifications of employees enumerated above age remains one of the cardinal and crucial problem. The age qualifications of entrants are a matter of great importance, since the policy adopted in respect to it affects vitally the whole character of the personnel system. The British and the Indian systems preferred to recruit candidates who are between the ages of 20 and 24. In case of India the maximum age limit was 24 till 1972 and was raised to 28 years in 1979. Again in 1986, it was reduced to 26years. For the year 1992 only, the

maximum age for IAS and allied services was raised to 33years. Since 1992 it has been kept at 30years. However, the candidates at this age have received only liberal education and general knowledge and are not experienced and trained

2.4 RECRUITMENT SYSTEM IN INDIA

In India, services are classified into three major categories:

- i. All India
- ii. Central and
- iii. State services.

The all India services as provided in the constitution are the Indian administrative service and Indian police service, the successor services to the ICS and IPS of the British days. Presently, a few more all-India services had been added in the technical fields, via, Indian medical service, Indian statistical service, Indian engineering service. The All India services are common to the union and the states and are composed of officers who are in exclusive employ of neither and may at any time be at the disposal of either. In a federation usually, the central government and the government of constituent states have separate services for the administration of subjects falling within their respective spheres of jurisdiction. The creation of All India services is therefore, something peculiar. The Indian constitution provides that without depriving the states of their right to form their own civil services there shall be an All-Indian service recruited on All-India basis with common qualifications, with uniform scale of and members of which alone could be appointed to these strategic posts throughout the union.

The central services are concerned with the administration of union subjects such as Foreign Affair Defence, Income Tax, Customs, posts and telegraphs, etc. such services are 34 class 1 and 25 class 11 in number and the government of India have proposals for the constitution of a number of other central services under consideration. The officers of these services are exclusively in the employ of the union government.

The state services administer the subjects within the jurisdiction of the states such as Land Revenue, Agriculture, Forest, Education, Health etc, and the officers of these services are exclusively in the employ of their state governments.

Recruitment to All- India Services made by the union public service commission on the basis of a competitive examination supplemented by a viva-voce test. Only a university graduate Art, Science or holding equivalent qualifications can appear in such examinations. The written examination is known of a standard higher than that of graduation. After the various stages of examinations and the series of interviews. Whatever marks a candidate secured in the interview, began to be added to the marks obtained in the written examination. Thereafter, the commission or recommended the list of the selected candidates in order of merit to the government.

3.The Indian Public Service Commission

The Indian public service commission came into existence for the first time in 1926 when the central public service commission was established under the government of India Act, 1919. It was renamed as the Federal Public Service Commission after 1st April, 1937, on the introduction of government of India Act, 1935. This Act had also made a provision for the creation of provincial public service commission. The constitution provides for a public service commission for the union and a public service commission for each state, but it also provides that if the legislatures of two or more states authorize the parliament by resolutions, it may establish a joint commission for those states. Moreover, the union public service commission may also if requested by the governor of a stat agree with the approval of the president to perform the work of a state commission.

3.1functions of Indian Public Service Commission

In the initial stages, the commissions were created to keep the rascal's out- a sort of negative role. However, with the passage of time its role became positive. It hunts for talent. The commissions were so deigned they could not go beyond advisory role. Personnel development has never been its concern. The functions of the commission as prescribed in Article 320 of the constitution fall into two categories:

- (a) Administrative
- (b) Advisory

The administrative functions relates to recruitment to all civil services and posts under the union government or the state government by written examination; or/and by interview.

The advisory functions relate to advising the government on all matters including the following:

- i. Relating to the methods of recruitment, principles to be followed in making appointments to civil services and posts and making promotions and transfers from one service to another.
- ii. All disciplinary matters affecting government employees. About three hundred such cases are referred to it annually
- iii. Any claim by or in respect of persons who are servants or have served under the government in a civil capacity
- iv. For reimbursement of any expenses incurred by them in defending legal proceedings instituted against

- them in respect of their official acts and in any claims for the award of compensation in respect of injuries sustained by government servants while on duty;
- v. Relating to temporary appointments for periods exceeding one year but not exceeding three years, grant of extension of service and reemployment of certain retired servants. About 1000 cases of this type are referred to it every year
 - vi. Concerning matters like regularization of appointment
 - vii. Matters referred specifically to it by the president. It is usually obligatory for the government to consult the commission in all the above matters. (Bhagwan and Bhushan, 2007).

3.2 Recruitment Process in the Nigerian Civil Service

The recruitment process in the service involves all those activities prescribed and designed by the civil service commission to secure a supply of possible candidates for employment in the service. These activities usually culminate in the selection and placement of applicants adjudged to be most suitable for the available jobs. Prior to the 1988 civil service reforms, recruitment in to the service was vested in the various civil service commissions. In practice however, authority for recruitment, appointment, promotion and discipline of staff on salary grade level 01 to 06 was delegated by the civil service commissions to ministries and extra ministerial offices which performed such delegated functions through their departmental advisory committees or DACs as they were commonly known. The civil service commissions reserved to themselves the power to recruit civil servants in to posts of salary grade level 07 and above.

With the introduction for forms in the service in 1988 however, the power to recruit and make appointments into posts of salary grade level 01 to 06 and grade level 12 and above was passed to the PMB, SSC and JSC of ministries and extra ministerial departments. These agencies were however required, in performing this function, to adhere to the approved schemes of service and civil service rules, and to comply strictly with regulations and guidelines that may be issued by the relevant civil service commission from time to time. On the other hand, the reforms reserved to the civil service commissions the power to recruit, appoint and promote civil servants in to grade level 07 to 10, based on the approved staff establishment of each ministry and extra ministerial department. The rationale for this reserved power is that the commissions were thought to be better placed in applying the principles of geographical spread, commonly known as the principles of state/federal character.

3.3 Recruitment into Junior Posts

Recruitment of junior staff on salary grade level 01 – 06 is a function delegated to the junior staff committees (headquarters and state/zonal office) of ministries/extra-ministerial offices which are required to apply the principle of federal character (in the case of recruitment at headquarters) and state character (in the case of recruitment at state/zonal offices) in their appointments. A representative of the state civil service commission in the state/zone is consequently expected to attend the meetings of each state/zonal staff committee. In all cases, recommendations of the junior staff committee of each ministry/extra-ministerial office must be submitted to the permanent secretary for approval and implementation.

3.4 Recruitment into Senior Posts

Applicants for senior post (grade level of and above) must obtain, complete and return to the civil service commission the relevant application forms. For direct appointments or transfers in to posts of grade level 12 and above, the commission will normally advertise such posts (twice in three national dailies) based on inputs (e.g. requisite qualifications and experience, vacancy position, etc) provided by the relevant ministries/extra-ministerial offices. For posts of grade level 14 and above, the civil service commission will forward applicants responses to the advertisement to the relevant ministries/extra-ministerial offices for short listing of candidates and comments. Names of short listed candidates are then returned through the office of the head of service to the commission which subsequently arranges for the selection interview and appointment.

3.5 Selection Interview

The selection interview is the most widely used technique for the selection of short listed applicants for appointment in to the Nigerian civil service. The widespread use of this technique by the various civil service commission (CSCs) across the country is probably due to the assumption that it requires no specialized skills or knowledge which other more technical techniques like psychological testing (intelligence tests, aptitudes tests, attainment tests, and personality tests) or work study require. The variant of the interview selection technique preferred seems to be the panel interview in which one or more interviewees are faced by several interviewers, usually comprising all CSC commissioners and a representative of the ministry for which the recruitment exercise is being conducted. In practice, schedule officers will, before the commencement of a selection interview, make available to members of the panel partially completed selection interview format on each candidate. The last item on a typical selection interview format usually constitutes the rating instrument for use by panel members in assessing the candidate during an interview variables which attract scores on most instruments in the civil service usually include:

- Dress and general appearance

- Language control
- Aptitude
- Qualification
- Experience

The score for each variable may differ but the total for all variables usually adds up to 50 or 100 questions put to candidate usually include those on the nature, trends, requirements and problems of the job applied for as well as current affairs. Panelists assess the aptitude and language control of each candidate as he answers these questions. The score for qualification is usually fixed for various grades/classes of candidate's certificates while the score for experience is based on the number of years of cognate experience, if any. In most cases panel members will agree before hand how questions are to be allocated while leaving the allocation of supplementary issues or questions to the discretion of the chairman.

Members of the interview panel will usually assess each candidate simultaneously. To obtain the overall score for each candidate, his assessment score by each panelist is summarized and the total averaged out by the number of panelists. The scores for all the interviewed candidates are then arranged from the highest to the lowest, thus providing a selection field (Olagboye, 2005).

3.5 Selection of Candidates for Appointment

Selection is the process of choosing from the candidates interviewed those who are most likely to be suited to the job under consideration, based on the approved job specification and the selection field provided by the interview. A job specification is a description of the qualification and disqualifications such as age, education, experience, health, etc required of a person who is to be appointed to a position. Job specifications in the civil service are in the form of schemes of service approved by the national council on establishments for all the recognized cadres of the services. These are embodied in volumes which are reviewed from time to time in line with prevailing conditions of service for the various cadres. Consequently, the appointing authorities normally make their selection on the basis of existing schemes of service, taking into consideration the principles of geographical spread. To do this, members of the interview panel will normally thoroughly verify the originals of the credentials of candidates in the course of interviewing them. Be that as it may, for eligibility for permanent and pensionable appointment in to the service, the base line is that an applicant should not be less than 18 and not more than 50years of age, he must be a Nigerian and able to present a certificate of local government and hence, state origin, be certified as sound in health and medically fit for service by a government medical officer; and possess a testimonial of good conduct from the last educational institution attended or from his last employer. He must not have been convicted of a criminal offence or been dismissed from a previous employment in the public service. He must have the qualification requisite for the job. If applicable, he must possess the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) discharge certificate. Once the selection process has been completed, letters of appointment will normally be issued under the hand of the Director of Personnel in the ministry or extra-ministerial office or by the permanent secretary in the case of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) based on the authority of the approved minutes of the sittings of the relevant appointing authority. Thereafter, all other recruitment formalities such as obtaining a character or referee's report on the appointee, production of letter of acceptance of offer of appointment, record of each appointee's data of assuming duty, security clearance from the presidency/governor's office, where necessary, and confirmation of each appointee's Local Government Area of Origin, will be routinely handled by the relevant schedule officers

4. Discussions and Lessons For Nigeria

The Indian recruitment process is very unique and distinguished itself from that of Nigeria in different perspectives. For example in India, merit system is a fundamental ingredient up on which recruitment is being carried out. In this regards, qualitative written tests, oral test or interview to achieve the merit status in recruitment. Jobs opportunities and appointment are given based on competitive written and oral test examination. Another important characteristic that gave rise to reputable recruitment process is that in India, the independence of the public service commission is relatively guaranteed. The public service commission is an independent statutory body constituted under Article 315 (1) of the constitution of India. In order to emphasize and ensure the independence of state commission, the constitution debar its chairman for further employment either under the government of India or the government of a state. A member other than the chairman of the union common is however, eligible for appointment as chairman in that commission or of a state public service commission, but for no other government employment. The chairman of a state public service commission is eligible for appointment as the chairman or as a member of the union public service commission.

Again in India, he president cannot remove the chairman or member of public service commission. They can only be removed from office by the order of the president on the ground of misbehavior only after the Supreme Court on a reference being made to it by the president, has on enquiry reported that the chairman or the member should be removed from office.

The Indian public service commission has adopted the positive recruitment method. This type of recruitment stands for eliminating the political influence or preventing favoritism or keeping the rascals out. In this situation, merit system is not substituted for the spoils system. The method of recruitment in India is aimed at providing equality or opportunities to all to compete in open market public service. Recruitment of mediocrities is thereby discouraged. Incompetent persons and rascals have been kept out perhaps, but so have many men of vision and ability. It is also interesting to understand that in India, the public service commission do hunt or search for the most talented and competent personnel to be recruited in the service.

All we have discussed so far are good evidence of competent and standard recruitment process and strategy adopted by the Indian government which made them to be competing favorably with the developed economy especially in the health sector. One would therefore argue that there are good lessons to be learnt by Nigeria from the Indian recruit process and policy that gave birth to the concept of positive recruitment. The lessons to be learnt by Nigeria include the following:

- a. Recruitment based on merit system that would guarantee efficiency and high productivity in the service
- b. Another lesson that Nigeria may learn is the consideration and practice of professionalism in the process of recruitment in the Indian civil service which is greatly lacking in Nigeria.
- c. Also in India, the concept of ethnicity, religion and regionalism is not promoted during and after recruitment.

The Summary and Conclusion

We have noticed in this paper that the world is becoming globally inclined where by the management of public service has also over the years expanded its jurisdiction thus creating avenue for a proper and balanced recruitment process or procedures. The paper has been able to analyze in critical terms the recruitment strategy in India and Nigeria where there exist divergent processes and procedures of recruitment strategy. In Nigeria for instance, quota system or federal character principles is the guiding principle or procedure that is recognized in the constitution as a recruitment policy. The Nigerian quota system or federal character principle is not practiced in India as direct recruitment is done based on talents and experience. India practices the merit system; the merit system implies a system in which the appointment and conditions of an employee are determined solely at his own intrinsic merit which includes his educational and technical qualifications, personal capacities and physical fitness. Under this system, recruitment is made through open competitive examination held by a general personal agency. No distinction is made between citizens on the basis of any party affiliation. Civil servants remain neutral in politics and promotions take place strictly on the basis of merit. While in Nigeria, we are still practicing the spoil system that encourage corruption, inefficiency, incompetence and recruitment based on religious, ethnicity, regional and political affiliations. One can therefore conclude that Nigeria is still practicing the negative recruitment policy while India has gone far ahead in adopting the positive recruitment policy which has also propelled her economy to be productive in nature. The paper made the following recommendations:

- That there is an urgent need for both Nigeria and the Indian governments to carry out reform in their recruitment that can accommodate realities rather than principles. Although, Indian government have gone far ahead in practicing this but they should do more.
- There is the need for merit system to be encouraged in the recruitment process in Nigeria. This should be done through competitive written examinations and interview test just as it is practiced in India
- It is also recommended that the civil service commission should go out and hunt for talents and competent personnel who are vibrant and productive as it is being done in India. In India, the Indian civil service go about to hunt for talented and competent personnel
- Finally, it is recommended that both the Indian and Nigerian civil services commission should be given more autonomous independence. Although in India, the civil service, commission enjoys more independence but is not enough. They should be given financial, recruitment, placement and posing independence without interference from the government.

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