

# The Interference of Politicians in the Recruitment and Selection of Academic Staff in Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study of Polytechnics in Niger Delta

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the interference of politicians in the recruitment and selection of academic staff in federal polytechnics in Niger delta. The research design was descriptive survey to investigation and observed the influence of politicians on recruitment and selection of academic staff in federal polytechnics in the Niger delta region of Nigeria .It is of utmost important for institutions within this region to discourage the interference of political office holders in the recruitment and selection processes for these polytechnics to avoid having unqualified staff and poor performing students .Findings from the research shows that the quality of graduates depends on the quality of the academic staff piloting the academic field of the institutions. Also unqualified staff are recruited and appointed to hold sensitive academic position in the polytechnics thereby ridiculing the meritocracy system. Sequel to the above , it is very important for this institutions ensure that quality academic staff of the schools are being properly recruited and selected not appointed by politicians since this has a negative effect both on the image and academic performance of the polytechnics .Some recommendations were put forward to resolve the issues of the research.

**Keywords--** Politicians, Recruitment and Selection, Academic Staff

Every organization (public or private) depends on the effective use of its available resources in order to achieve its objectives. These resources (human and material) should be in the right quantity, quality and time, if they are to be effectively utilized. However, one of the resources of the organization which is considered as the most vital, most valuable, most complicated and the least predictable is the human resource. This is because it is the human resource that processes the other resources of the organization so that the goals and objectives of the organization are achieved. Higher education is a very significant factor in the development of every nation. Personnel working in these institutions both in administrative and academic capacities are the receptacles from whom students get empowered and nurtured with skills and expertise to contribute to national development. There is therefore the need to ensure that right people are hired. Cloete (1993), states that the process of recruitment must be undertaken with a view of obtaining the services of people of quality.

Barbar (1998) indicates that there are two important phases of the recruitment processes that are very essential for good recruitment and selection processes. First, to attract large numbers of applicants and the second is the ability of Human Resource Divisions to make the best selections out of the total applicants (Barbar, 1998). According to Barber, Wesson, Roberson and Taylor (1999) recruitment process is effective if it brings enough pool of applications and the selection process is handled with ease. The effectiveness of the selection process is directly influenced by whatever happens during the recruitment process.

Dessler (2002) contends that there has been a significant amount of research examining what skills and qualities employers' value most in job applicants. Qualifications, work experience and communication or

## I. INTRODUCTION

The effective and efficient performance of any organization to a large extent depends on the quality of its workforce. The availability of the pool of qualified and competent personnel does not just happen but through effective recruitment and selection exercise. Recruitment and selection are concerned with filling and keeping filled positions in the organization structure (Koontz and Weihrich, 2005).

interpersonal skills are the most frequently identified qualities. Work experience and qualifications are measures of competence in relation to an applicant's technical skills, whereas the concept of communication skills appears to be a generic term incorporating many different specific skills. Indeed, communication in the workplace encompasses team skills; leadership skills; an ability to negotiate with or persuade others; problem solving skills; organizational skills; crisis management skills; and presentation skills. Other communication competencies include cultural adaptation, social competence and language proficiency. Berry, Petrin, Gravelle and Farmer (2011) observed that there is a conscious effort by educational agencies and institutions to recruit qualified and professional teachers since they have a direct influence on the learning outcomes of the educational process.

However, not all schools have qualified teachers (UNESCO, 2015). Given fact that not all schools have qualified and professional teachers stem from the fact that there could be loopholes in the recruitment and selection practices of the Educational System. On this premises, it can be understood that there is the need to evaluate the process of recruiting and selection practices of tertiary institutions especial in rivers state.

The general objective of the study is to investigate the influence of politicians in the recruitment and selection of academic staff in polytechnics in Rivers State, Nigeria.

#### *Specifically Objectives*

- Examine the recruitment and selection practices of academic staff
- Examine the challenges of recruitment and selection of academic staff
- Correct the recruitment and selection malpractices in recruiting and selecting academic staff
- Provide transparent recruitment and selection decisions in order to appoint qualified applicants with adequate skills to match available job openings in the system.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The concept of recruitment has been defined by several scholars in management.

Croft (1996:93) defines recruitment as “the analysis of a job and the features the organization will look for in a potential employee and attracting candidates to apply to the organization and the offering of various terms and conditions of employment to a chosen potential employee”. This definition views recruitment is encompassing the process of attracting qualified prospective candidates to apply for jobs as well as choosing the best for appointment to the organization. Recruitment is conceived here to include selection. Fatiregun (1992) cited in Onah (2003) opines that recruitment is the process of

assessing a job, announcing the vacancy, arousing and stimulating people to apply. According to Cole (2002), the principal purpose of recruitment is to attract sufficient and suitable potential employees for vacancies in the organization.

Peretomode and Peretomode, (2001) sees recruitment as an integral part of human resources which involves the process of identifying and attracting or encouraging potential applicants with needed skills to fill vacant positions in an organization.

Gold, (2007) Recruitment is the process whereby an organization generates a pool of qualified, skilled and knowledgeable persons applying to an organization for employment . In view of the above the aim of the organization is to find suitable candidates who satisfy the requirements for employment

Armstrong (2006) posits that recruitment is aimed at obtaining the right caliber and number of suitable persons to fill vacant positions in an organization. Castello (2006) posits that recruitment is described as a process where management uses methods and processes to legally obtain qualified persons to fill vacant positions.

Dessler (2002), points out that recruitment and selection is a process of attracting people for a job opening. Jovanovic (2004) said recruitment is a process of attracting a pool of high quality applicants so as to select the best among them. To Yaseen (2015), recruitment is basically attracting and finding competent pool of candidates according to the requirements of the job or key position

From the above definitions, it entails that recruitment is the process of finding the most appropriate persons to fill vacant positions/job in an organization. These individuals must essentially satisfy organizational recruitment requirements such as experience, knowledge, skill, qualification(s) and attitudes for the job.

#### *Selection*

The terms, recruitment and selection, do not mean the same thing. Recruitment, according to Croft (1996:93) “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 organization, and the offering of various terms, and conditions of employment to chosen potential employee”. Selection, according to (Corft, 1996:93) on the other hand, is a human resources management tool, which seeks to evaluate candidates in order to choose the most suitable person.

According to Casteller (1992) the purpose of selection is to identify applicants to fill vacant vacancies in an organization. Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyl and Schenk (2003), defined selection as “the process of trying to determine which individuals will best match particular jobs, taking into account individual differences such as potentials an applicant could bring on board”. Robert (2005) defined selection as evaluation of candidates, using prescribed

methods and strategies to ascertain how best to choose highly qualified personnel. Selection is more or less concerned with making informed decision to choose exceptional candidates from the available collection of prospective candidates after they have been carefully examined using proper selecting tools. In line with the above, Ejumode (2011), argued that while recruitment brings many people or persuades as many to apply for work in an organization, selection on the other hand, rejects a good proportion of those who apply. He stressed that selection is a very important process that requires proper planning and objectivity. The selection process, therefore, is a smaller part of the total recruitment process. The definitions above shows that here, applicants are supposed to meet specific requirements related to competencies of the job.

According to Ezeani (2005) and Onah (2003) for recruitment and selection to be effective at any level, following stages or processes should be followed:

**Manpower Assessment:** The process of recruitment and selection begin with the manpower plan, which indicates areas in the organization where there are likely to be shortages of people, and the number or people to be recruited to meet anticipated employment needs.

**Job Analysis:** This involves the examination of what the potential employee will be required to do in any particular job. The outcomes of job analysis are job description and man specification.

**Job Description:** Outlines in general terms, the activities, tasks and responsibilities involved in a job. It is, therefore, a written statement of job content.

**Man Specification:** This is a statement of the minimum acceptable human qualities necessary to perform a job properly. It is, therefore, a standard of personnel and designates the qualities required for acceptable performance.

**Attracting Candidates for a Post(s):** This can be done either through internal or external sources such as job posting, press, government or private employment agencies, educational institutions, et cetera.

### III. IMPACT OF POLITICS ON RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESSES

Recruitment and selection in tertiary institution is the process through which the interest of job applicants are aroused and induced to compete for available job openings in the tertiary institution. Effective recruitment exercise is very significant given the crucial role tertiary institution plays in educational and socio-economic development of the citizens of any country.

Politics of recruitment according to Osakwe (2007) is the recruitment and selection that are based on

political patronage or determined by the political class. This method are been used by many educational institutions as a criteria other than merit, qualification and technical know how in the recruitment and selection process academic staff in federal polytechnics.

Onwe, et al (2015) noted that the political heavy weights more often than not take advantage of their privileged positions to reward their political thugs who worked strenuously to see them emerge victorious during the electoral process with appointment into the state civil service. Similarly, there are cases where recruitment and selection into the state civil service are based on the concept of "god fatherism", which throws merit criteria to the wind. There has been some cases where Politicians heading various ministries and extra ministerial departments give express orders to the rectors and vice chancellors of polytechnics to appoint their preferred candidates, relation friends, social club members loyalist to lecturer position without resorting to laid down recruitment procedure. This have rendered the departmental/unit heads handicapped in the enforcement of laid down rules and regulations of the service to secure maximum organizational productivity lest they step on the toes of their god fathers.

Another development in interfering politics in the recruitment and selection processes is the need to compensate political party loyalists. In this situation, principal officers of the party are usually given chance to nominate a given number of persons for appointment into the higher institution. Members of the state house of assembly, commissioners, special advisers to the governor are also privileged to nominate people for the same purpose. A case in point was the 2018 recruitment and selection exercise in federal polytechnic of oil and gas bonny where over 30 academic staff were appointed as lecturer. The slots for the above positions were allotted to, highly placed administrators and other influential politicians who sentin the lists of their favored candidates. Their candidates by and large were selected and subsequently deployed to various schools and departments.

Also another major area where politics is noticeable in the recruitment process is in the appointment of rectors, dean and head of departments in polytechnics. While this might be for the smooth running of the institution, it is usually base on political grounds. Some of the appointees lack initiative, imagination, skills, techniques, expertise and qualification in academic functioning of the institutions. In an attempt to secure their position as well as gain undue favour from the governor and members of his cabinet, they deliberately aid and abate the incursion of politics into the recruitment and selection exercises in the polytechnics. This has facilitated the rational behind why the polytechnics has compromised in ensuring impartial, objective and merit based recruitment exercise in the state. As a result of the above, many

prospective candidates searching for employment into the polytechnics in the state more often than not submitting their duplicate copies of their credentials to this top political figures with full assurance to secure employment opportunities for them in the polytechnics in the state.

More often academic staff ( lecturers ) being a sensitive position in tertiary institutions , are being used by politician as compensation to protect top principal corrupt management official for embezzlement of the institutions fund. This have facilitated the recruitment and selection of incompetent and unqualified lecturers to handle courses in the institution without having the requisite skills to discharge duties efficiently and effectively.

It is noteworthy that in some cases, the recruitment and selection processes are being faulted by political appointees who serve as chairmen or chair lady of polytechnic council and rectors to the institutions. This appointees , appoints people from the same locality, relations, friends and associates to the academic field of the polytechnics that's the single reason why whenever there is a change of government, the dialect of the new chairman, chairlady and rectors assumes the lingua franca in the institution . This shows that people from the same locality with the number one citizen are given undue consideration for appointment even when it is obvious that they don't possess the skills, knowledge and qualifications for the job . politicians and their influences also manifest in the recruitment process whenever there is undue application of federal character principle, quota system, ethnocentrism, nepotism, favoritisms etc. Sequel to this, according to Adeyemo and Osunyikanmi, (2003) who argued that while it is true that such entrants could be "brushed up" through internal training modules in the service, it must be appreciated that the modules were developed using some fundamental benchmarks of competence determinable at the point of entry .

#### IV. FALL-PART OF MERIT PRINCIPLE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF ACADEMIC STAFF

The merit system which allows applicants who successfully pass recruitment and selection process to be recruited to the institution has over the years being faulted due to the malpractices surrounding the recruitment and selection processes in tertiary institutions.

Obiajulu et al (2004) noted that recruitment in the public service of Nigeria is a deviation to the merit principle in the service. To Obiajulu et al (2004), this, to a large extent has impacted negatively the quality of services as poor input produces poor out. Recruitment is the most important aspect of public personnel management in Nigeria. The effectiveness of an institution and the quality

of services rendered by it depends upon the dependability of its recruitment process.

Indeed, recruitment can be said to be foundation of an academic institution personnel structure. Unless recruitment policy is soundly conceived, there can be little hope for building a quality workforce. From the researcher's point of view, following the merit principles, recruitment in tertiary institutions, especially federal polytechnics has been faulted , this is because of the abuse of procedures of employment, imposition of candidates by top political office holders.

To this end, efficiency and effectiveness of recruitment and selection procedure in tertiary institution with particular reference to federal polytechnics in Niger delta will be reduced if only there will strict adherence to merit principle in employment and ethical re-orientation for top politicians in public on the effects of employment by merit.

#### V. CONSEQUENCES OF POLITICIZATION OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTION

The following constitutes the impact of politicization of recruitment and selection processes in tertiary institutions ,especially federal polytechnics in Niger delta :

**Low Productivity:** This state eventually set-in when an institution fails in its task to meet its set objectives or outputs over a given period of time. However, when unqualified and bunch of touts are appointed as lecturers in polytechnics , the tendency is that productivity will always be at its lowest ebb.

**Inefficiency:** Omeje and Ndukwe, (2009) noted that Inefficiency is the absence of competence or the ability to do anything well or to achieve a desired result without wasted energy . This is the major factor that brings about inefficiency in tertiary . the appointment of unqualified and wrong type of staff into certain positions on the basis of political considerations. Most of the lecturers and heads of departments were appointed, placed on unmerited levels and grade base on political ground hence ,do not possess the needed experience, skills, abilities and qualification to lecture effectively ,thus engendering the objective of the institution .

**Indiscipline:** When deans and head of departments has no stake in the appointment of staff, they should not expect total respect for laid down rules from such staff. This is due to the fact that they are highly connected and no amount of acts of indiscipline such as lateness to work, truancy, abscondment, laxity, outright absenteeism etc can attract punitive measures

against them. This is because of their affiliations with this politicians who appointed them.

**Lowering of Standards:** Over politicization of recruitment and selection gives rise to the lowering of the institutional standards .since the appointed staff don't have the required skills ,competencies ,know-how and qualification to compete favorably with international standards with other institution

**Shut Down:** The recruitment and selection of academic staff, who are the most valuable assets of any polytechnic, is critical for the standard of education to remain competitive at international levels. The education sector requires academics with relevant qualifications from credible universities polytechnics, college of education etc, with significant experience, who are capable of contributing to teaching, research and community service of any institution ,thus when this qualifications and skills are not there , there is every tendency of schools shutting down due to lack of competent personnel's .

**Mediocrity:** This is also a direct result of politicization of recruitment and selection exercise. This appointment and placement of mediocre at the expense of the most qualified applicants. When this happens, the institutions is compromisingly stocked with bunch of good for nothing staff who lack the wherewithal to turn around the civil for better public service delivery. Other influences of politics of recruitment and selection includes the following low staff morale, poor leadership this unity, among others.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The present study has tried to establish the reason why the recruitment and selection process in tertiary institutions (federal polytechnics) in Niger delta tends to be a failure. The key challenges affecting the recruitment and selection of academic staff are political undue influences in appointing academic staff. As a result, of this recruitment and selection malpractices orchestrated by this politicians, this have adversely affected the quality of recruitment and selection of highly qualified, skillful and experience academic staff in various federal polytechnics in Niger delta. We cannot deny the contributions of most politicians in the educational system, however the corruption and political interference in ensuring that their unskilled, unqualified and incompetent loyalist are recruited as academic staff in detriment to both the institution and students of the polytechnics , cannot be overlooked or ignored in a hurry. In the tertiary institutions, staff recruitment and selection system and practice is with extra-institutional factors that alter the demands for meritocracy which constitute a threat to the effectiveness of tertiary institution in the Niger delta region of Nigeria.

The effect of the manipulation of the staff recruitment and selection process in tertiary institutions is

responsible for the low performance of students in most of the departments in this institutions. At this point it is worth concluding that people are asked to assume academic responsibilities without receiving or having the appropriate training, skills qualifications and/or development, these have caused a major negative impact both to the institution and students being taught by this unqualified recruited staff since wrong input has the tendency of producing negative output .

Furthermore, what seems to look like recruitment and selection in this institutions is merely a camouflage .this is because the recruitment and selection exercise is replaced with a mere appointment and compensation program which is heavily influenced by politicians. it is worth saying that most of this institution don't carry out recruitment and selection processes but rather a reward and compensation system since the principles of meritocracy is not being implemented for the exercise .

## RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations are put forward for consideration. It is hoped that if these recommendations are implemented, the federal polytechnics in the Niger delta region Nigeria would come alive and become the envy of both public and private institutions within the region.

1. The Nigerian independent corrupt practices commission (ICPC) should be part of the moderating body in checkmating the recruitment and selection processes to ensure that no unlawful discrimination occurs in the recruitment and selection process
2. Academic Staff recruitment and selection in the tertiary institutions, should not be based on favoritism nepotism tribalism etc but rather base on meritocracy This will not only benefit the institutions but also ensure that staff teaching the students in this institution , are of global standard.
3. A strict law and severe jail term discouraging the interference of political office holders in recruitment and selection of academic staffs should be enacted . This is to discourage the appointment of unqualified, unskillful and incompetent staff to the academic field which have a negative impact in the image of the institutions.
4. An independent recruitment body comprising of individuals from all the geo political zone in Nigeria should always be constituted to carry out the recruitment exercise. This will not only ensure that people from all part of the country is participated but it will ensure check and balances between the geo political zone so as to ensure that the issue of tribalism is curtail and eliminated.

5. Tertiary institution employers should be guarded in choosing recruitment and selection methods as well as assessing the prognostic value of the methods in order to maintain credibility among applicants. The parameters used before employment should be sound, reliable, valid not biased and up to date.
6. Academic staff positions should be advertised in news paper, televisions etc in other to publicize the positions and also ensure that it is not recruitment before publication as this is the case in most Nigerian recruitment processes. This is to ensure public knowledge and follow up.

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