THE USE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD IN THE STUDY OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIAN: SHARING AN EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT: *This paper presents the experiences of the researcher during the cause of these studies. The researcher used a qualitative methodology approach in investigating the causes of ineffective implementation of Federal Character Policy in Nigeria. This paper provides the procedures through which the researcher goes about this study by describing and providing a detailed and comprehensive explanation of how the method was used to study the ineffective implementation of the Federal Character Policy in Nigerian civil service. This paper provides the research design, location of the study area, how the study sample was selected, how research data was collected and subsequently analyzed. In addition, the issues of the validity and reliability of research findings were discussed and the ethical considerations aspect of the research was also discussed in this paper.*

KEYWORDS: methodology; case study; qualitative; policy implementation; federal character policy

INTRODUCTION

The philosophical assumption that underpinned research remains one of the prominent decisions the researcher needed to make while designing the study methodology. Thus, this set of assumptions that are shared by researchers working on a particular area or tradition about the nature of reality (ontology) and how it is eventually understood (epistemology). Realism, constructivism, pragmatism, positivism and critical are the most popular assumptions of composite realities (Maxwell, 1992). Thus, the research was predicated on the constructive tradition, which stated that there is no single reality but multiple interpretations of a single reality and that knowledge is not found but it is centered on historically and socially constructed (Merriam, 2009). And qualitative research is mostly found in the constructive (or interpretive) tradition to promptly achieve the constructive norms it often uses open-ended questions that give the respondents the ample opportunity to freely express their opinion of issues while the researcher makes meaning from the data collected (Creswell, 2003).

Research Design
This study adopted the qualitative method because of the nature of the issue under-investigated and by the issue, pragmatic inquiry and interpretative of the life experiences and opinion of the people concerned; in this case, governmental officials, non-governmental organizations, policy implementers and other key shareholders which prompted this use of the method. Furthermore,

the most suitable of the method for the study of public policy implementation and in this case the Federal Character Policy in the Nigerian civil service. The qualitative research method allows the researcher to ask open-ended questions, while the respondents expressed their expert opinion on this issue freely equally prompted the use of this method (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Qualitative method helps to understand complex social issue, and it emphasizes deeper understanding / interpretation of what individuals ascribed to the issue, thus capturing the essential aspect of the issue from the perspective of the study core respondents (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2014). Thus, the researcher was used the qualitative method for this study as it also assisted in providing an effective identification of the factors such as ethnicity, social norms, religion, personal interest, and corruption whose role may not have been promptly apparent identify.

The nature of the study prompted the use of case study type of qualitative research. This study purposely chose the case study because the design places emphasis on investigating contemporary issues within its real-life context and places pragmatic emphasis on understanding and comprehending issues from the people involved in its natural real-life context (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 1994; Crowe, et al 2011). The case study was selected because it provides an opportunity for an in-depth exploration of an individual, program, process or activity using multiple methods of data collection (Creswell, 2003; Brent, 2017; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Case study is a suitable approach for the research because it supports deeper, more detailed investigation requiring answers to how and why questions and allows for a variety of evidence from multiples sources such interviews and documents (Rowley, 2002). This approach allowed for a systematic understanding of how people viewed the problem under investigation and provides the opportunity for comparison to be made "between different actors within a single case, between cases and between groups of participants across cases" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:52). Case study was further used because it allows for multiple sources of evidence to add depth and breadth to data collection thus making the data rich through triangulation and enduring validity of the study even in a single case study. Hence, the use of single case study provided ample opportunity in this study of implementation of the Federal Character Policy in the Nigerian civil service.

Qualitative research is term as a case study or uses case study when it is "intrinsically bounded" and imperatively, the unit of analysis is selected on the "basis of uniqueness, typicality, success, failure and so on" (Merriam, 2009:40). In line with these criteria, the unit of analysis for study in the implementation of Federal Character Policy were the policy implementers from in Federal Character Commission, those responsible for employment distribution in the Federal Civil Service Commission well as critical stakeholders (academicians and non-governmental organizations as well as those employed and rejected during the cause of employment into the civil service), were selected for being unique and for better representation and understanding of the issue at hand.

Location of Study
Abuja the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria is the center of the administrative activities of the government and capital city of the country where the activities of both Federal Character Policy and the Nigerian civil service are carried out. It came into being 4th February 1976, but governmental activities officially started 12th December 1991 with the presumption that Abuja will become a symbol of unity and greatness of the country and a melting point of different

cultures, beliefs, nationalists and religion (Adeoye, 2006). Abuja is discussed here because the two agencies investigated were located there that is the Federal Character Commission of Nigeria, an agency of government responsible for the application of the Federal Character Policy and the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria responsible for employment into the civil service of Nigeria.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was deliberately selected for this research because it enables the researcher to identify and select appropriate respondents needed to achieve the set research objectives (Patton, 2002). This simply involves identifying and selecting individuals that are experienced, knowledgeable, and having the ability to communicate their opinion/experiences in an articulate form with regards to the phenomenon of interest as well as available and willing to participate in the research (Creswell & Plano, 2011; Bernard, 2012). Importantly, through the use of this sampling technique, individuals that have first-hand knowledge, experience, and are competent to communicate these experiences and share opinions in a comprehensible manner were promptly selected and used for this research. Furthermore, the sampling allows for a small scale but wider representation to ensure that all key respondents relevant to the research are included thus allowing for an in-depth investigation into the implementation of the Federal Character Policy in the Nigerian civil service.

Selection of Respondents

Respondents that are experienced, knowledgeable, and having the ability to communicate their opinion/experiences in an articulated manner as it regards the subject under investigation were identified. Those knowledgeable and experienced individuals identified regarding the implementation of the Federal Character Policy in the Nigerian civil service were eventually selected and used for the research. Furthermore, these selected respondents aside from having the experience and knowledge of the phenomenon of interest were equally selected and used because of their availability and willingness to participate in the research. The respondents that met the above criteria were used for the research as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Description of Categories of Key Respondents

Category	Description of Respondents	Number	Criteria for Selection
A	Staffs from Federal Civil Service Commission	4	Experiences, Knowledge, Responsibility and Willingness
B	Staffs from Federal Character Commission	4	Experiences, Knowledge, Responsibility and Willingness
C	Academicians (with expertise in public policy)	4	Experiences, Knowledge and Expertise
D	Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	4	Experiences, Knowledge and Interest
E	Serving Civil Servants (Employed) / Applicants (Unemployed/Grassroots)	6	Experiences
F	Job Search Industries (Recruitment Agencies)	2	Experiences, Knowledge and Interest
Total		24	

The table above shows the categories of the research key respondent. Category A in the table are from the Federal Civil Service Commission. Category A respondents were specifically selected based on their experience, knowledge as well as they are responsible for providing and handling employment distribution of staff into the Nigeria civil service. Category A was further grouped into respondents A1 to A4. It is apparent from the table illustrates that category B were from the Federal Character Commission who were selected and used based on their experiences, knowledge, willingness and importantly their line of responsibility which ensures the implementation of the Federal Character Policy in Nigerian civil service making them very appropriate for the research. Category B was further grouped into respondents B1 to B4. The table further shows that category C of the respondents used for the research were drawn from academicians with expertise in public policy who were purposely selected based on their experiences, knowledge, and expertise on the issues and public policy implementation and who interest centers on public policy in Nigeria. This category of respondents are specifically academicians from the universities around the location of the study. The Category C was further grouped into respondents C1 to C4.

The researcher equally consulted members of Non-governmental Organizations grouped into category D to get an "outsider" perspective on the issue under investigation. The members of the Non-governmental organization selected and used have the needed experiences, knowledge and interest on the implementation of the Federal Character Policy in the Nigerian civil service. The Category D was further grouped into respondents D1 to D4. While the other category of the informant was grouped into E. The E category is serving civil servants (employed) / applicants (unemployed/grassroots). The researcher finds it necessary to consult and use the E category because of their experience as it related to the issue at hand. The category was purposely chosen to get the opinion of the issue since they through the rigor of employment process in the Nigerian civil service, thus the researcher deems it necessary to seek their opinion and experiences on the subject matter. The last category of respondents was selected from the Job Search Industries (Recruitment Agencies) to ensure wider representation. The respondents as illustrated on the above table was categorized into F1-F2. The Job Search Industries (Recruitment Agencies) were specifically selected based on their experiences, knowledge, and interest. The researcher selected twenty-four (24) key respondents because of the design adopted which mainly focused on those who have the experiences, knowledge, experts and are willing as well as able to communicate these experiences while ensuring wider representation of respondents and opinions and importantly researching saturation (Boyd, 2001; Creswell, 1998).

The researcher did not provide the names of the respondents in order to maintain the confidentiality of these respondents who provided the needed information against harm especially the member of the Non-governmental Organizations used who falls into category D and are not government employee as well as Job Search Industries (Recruitment Agencies) who falls into category F. While categories A, B, C and 3 of respondents' E category who have duty with the government (civil servants) and employee of public institutions who may lose their jobs because of the information their provided and may be subject to harassment by the government and their respective institutions. Thus, the confidentiality of these sets of respondents was also maintained by the researcher. While the confidentiality of remaining respondents that fall on category E who are

unemployed (grassroots) individuals were also maintained because they hope to seek employment into the Nigerian civil service one day, thus in order to ensure that the information they provided the researcher does not hinders their chances of employment their identities were also protected.

Data Saturation

Saturation literally means data sufficient which means all aspects of the phenomenon have been captured or obtained where additional data or collection more data is unlikely to provide newer insight (Morse et al. 2002; Creswell 2007; Mason 2010). Saturation was reached using these key respondents due to the richness and thickness of their information/experience shared (quality of the data) and importantly little to no new thematically code emerged from the data that will prompt including an additional set of respondents (Morse, et al 2014; Boyd, 2001; Creswell, 1998). Saturation was reached when the researcher, in consultation with peer researchers shows that no new or additional thematic codes were identified from all the categories of the respondents (Morse, et al 2014). And the calibers of the respondents interviewed provided a piece of in-depth information to attained data saturation because no new theme emerged. This was further achieved by how the interview questions were structured which allowed the researcher to ask multiple respondents the same questions as well as interview a wider variety of people (Bernard, 2012). In addition, another researcher was used to conduct coding and checking of the transcripts to ensure saturation of the data. Data triangulation also facilitated the saturation of the data.

Data Collection

Primary and secondary sources of data collection techniques were used. The primary source of data collection was basically an interview of the research key respondents, while content analysis served the aspect of the secondary source. These two major methods of data collection were carried out simultaneously during the period of data collection in order to minimize the risk of prejudice and to guarantee an effective as well as a comprehensive assessment of the validity of the information gathered and research findings. The data collection began by seeking permission from these institutions of government for this research and to avoid deception and false pretense which can undermine the ethical and moral responsibility of the researcher and the research work (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016; McFadyen & Rankin, 2016). Also, the gatekeeper helped ensure that the respondents within their institutions remained protected from coercion internally and externally during and after the course of the research. Gaining access to the key respondents commenced with obtaining a letter of introduction certifying the researcher as an academic undertaking a study on the implementation of Federal Character Policy in the Nigerian civil service from the researcher's supervisory committee which was submitted to the appropriate institution where the respondents were gotten from.

Interview

A total of 24 key respondents were interviewed in order to ensure a balance of information (data) and a wider representation of all relevant and key stakeholders, while pilot studies were conducted before the commencement of the core respondent's interview. The key respondents interviewed were from the Federal Character Commission which is the department responsible for the implementation of the policy. In order to ensure balance and triangulation of information other key respondents were interviewed drawn from the Federal Civil Service Commission which is the units

responsible for providing employment and subsequent distribution of employment into the Nigerian civil service. Apart from governmental bodies responsible for implementation of the policy and employment distribution in the civil service, other key respondents interviewed were selected from Non-governmental organizations in Nigeria, Academicians, Civil servant (employed) and the Applicants (unemployed/grassroots), as well as those from job search industries in order to guarantee probity, unbiased information gathering and wide in representation of respondents.

The interviews that were conducted on these selected respondents provided an opportunity to gather sensitive information in an atmosphere of guaranteed confidence and strict ethical consideration. This provided the freedom for an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of these stakeholders' opinions, experiences and perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation (Ritichie, et al 2013; Merriam, 2009). Also, semi-structured interview questions were used for the research because of the flexibility. An example of this kind of interview is, what do you think about the implementation of Federal Character Policy in the Nigerian civil service? What are the factors hindering the effective implementation of Federal Character Policy in Nigeria? Can you shed more light on the implementation challenges of the policy? Why is the Federal Character Policy ineffective in its implementation stage? Semi-structured interviews where the respondents have to answer prepared open-ended questions and were conducted once for a duration of 30 to 60 minutes (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). These comprised several cores and other associated questions related to the research objective, and these interviews assisted in answering the questions, it also allowed the interviewee to diverge into other issues to expatiate on the response and opinion in details. A semi-structured question was most suitable for the study because it provided the research respondents some key guidance on what specifically to discuss (Gill, et al, 2008). Equally, the flexibility of this approach allowed for the revelation and elaboration of information that was vital to the research which may have not been previously considered important to the study (Gill, et al, 2008). Follow-up interviews were conducted where necessary for more clarification and additional elaboration on the information. The interviews that were conducted were recorded using a quality audio tape recorder (device).

Content Analysis
The researcher analyzed relevant documents from the Federal Character Commission of Nigeria (FCCN), the body responsible for the implementation of the Federal Character Policy. Equally, the researcher analyzed the records of the Nigerian civil service obtained from the Federal Civil Service Commission of Nigeria (FCSC) and the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) was used. Other important documents that were subjected to analysis include manuals, brochures, books, diaries, scholarly articles and journal publications. The document analysis served the purpose of triangulation and it involves a systematic search for relate/relevant themes, words and patterns which in turn help to answer the research questions (Merriam, 2009). It equally helped to facilitate the collection of the large and multiple amounts of credible information from authorized sources without necessarily subjecting too many people to questioning. It also helped to avoid bias that may have aroused from a single source of information (Ritchie et al, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Furthermore, content analysis carried out helped the researcher to

evaluate existing documents in electronic and print materials, thus making positive deductions based on the issues investigated.

Data Analysis
A thematic analysis which involves identifying, analyzing and subsequently reporting pattern (themes) within collected data was used for this research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The thematic method of analysis was used mainly because of its flexibility and it has a specific goal of identifying themes in the data which are imperative in answering the research questions and importantly it produces an insightful analysis that assisted the researcher in answering the research questions (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus the research adopted and used the Braun & Clarke (2006) steps of thematic analysis which is the most influential approach in the social sciences and it offers a clear framework of the analysis. Thus the Braun & Clarke (2006) steps used in analyzing the data were as follows: Step 1: Become familiar with the data: the transcript of the recorded interview was read, and re-read this is to enable the researcher to get familiar with the data collected while one or two notes jotted down. Step 2: Generate initial codes: the second step was the organization of the data in a systematic and meaningful way by signing codes thereby reducing data to small chunks of meaning. Having the research objectives in mind the researcher coded each section of the data that were relevant, interesting and provide sufficient information as it regards the research questions. Thus, using open coding which involves developing and modification of codes during the coding process because the research has no pre-set codes.

Step 3: Search for themes: at this phase, the researcher examined the identified codes, while those of them who clearly fitted together into a theme. For example, we had several codes that related to activation of sanction and sanction as a punitive strategy. The researcher collated these codes into the initial theme called the Application of Sanction. At this step which search of themes the codes were organized into broader themes that specifically answers the research questions. Step 4: Review themes: this phase the researcher review, develop and modify these themes that were early identified. While all data that were relevant to each theme were gathered together into each of the themes. 5: Define themes: At the step, the identification of what the emerging themes and sub-themes are talked about, how subthemes relate and interact was discussed. While some of the themes were subsumed under others in order to come up with appropriate and realistic themes and sub-themes that served as the research findings and answers to the research questions. Step 6: Writing-up: The writing followed appropriately. The data analysis was followed by a discussion of findings in the course of which, were back and forth movements between the data from this study and the literature on policy implementation. It is imperative to note that the discussion and analysis of the findings were done simultaneously in conjunction with relevant literature.

Validity and Reliability
Validity and reliability of the study started with pilot studies which were conducted to check the interview line-up and to help identify ambiguous interview questions and to ensure the interview questions helps in meeting the research objectives. As well as to ensure credibility and value to the research work (Calitz, 2009). The internal validity of the researcher was best achieved through triangulation, which was done by using multiple sources of data. The multiple sources of data were

done through the interviews conducted from different categories of respondents and relevant documents relating to the implementation of the Federal Character Policy in the Nigerian civil service were used as well as compared and cross-checked for validation. For instance, what the respondents say during the interview were checked with the available documents and with other respondents' opinions. The researcher equally used member check which done by contacting the respondents to determine if the research findings truly reflected their opinions. Peer reviews were done by sharing the research findings with peers who are knowledgeable with interpretation and analysis of qualitative data. Reflexivity which involves the researcher's background knowledge of the issue and position as an academic assisted too (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Regarding external validity (transferability), the researcher emphatically provided a comprehensive and detailed description and procedures of the issue in the methodology section (chapter 3) to enable future researchers to compare with their phenomenon of interest. Also, the researcher did a comprehensive description of findings with sufficient evidence from scholarly pieces of literature, interviews conducted which were presented in the form of quotes where necessary. The reliability of the current research was best achieved through the credibility of the findings and thus ensuring consistency of the findings of the research with the data collected. And line with the Lincoln & Guba (1985) recommendation the research kept an audit trail, thus allowing an independent reader and those interested in the research work to verify the finding of the study by following the researcher on the journey through the trail provided.

Ethical Measures

The interest of institutions or respondents that were willing and ready to provide information was protected. The researcher's adherence to the ethical principles as stipulated by Bell and Bryman (2007), by adequately acknowledging the works of other authors and scholars that was used in this research. Particularly, the concerns of the respondents about their identities and interest were safeguarded against any possible harm that may emanate. Hence, acronyms were used for confidentiality and to replace the real identity of the respondents in the study. Creswell (2007) confirms that regardless of the methodological approach of any research permission is needed before embarking on data collection, thus permission was sorted before data collection. And ethical concern was taken seriously during the in-depth interview to protect the respondents. And objectivity in the discussions and analyses throughout research were held on high esteem.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the research work which was aimed at understanding the reasons for the ineffective implementation of the Federal Character Policy in the Nigerian civil service. The research design used was qualitative research method with a case study approach because it gives the researcher the opportunity to places pragmatic emphasizes on identifying and comprehending the current phenomenon through the experiences of the key stakeholders/respondents to unravel the issue at hand. While data collection in this study was through in-depth interview, with semi-structured questions and analysis of relevant/related document and articles. The sample was purposive sampling technique, where key respondents were the Federal Character Commission; to ensure balance, respondents were equally selected the Federal Civil Service of Nigeria and to guarantee the credibility of data an independent public policy analysis also served as respondents and other

stakeholders. These individuals were approached and interviewed to get their opinion and experience as it related to the issue under investigation. While ethical consideration was taken seriously and with an ultimate priority to ensure the confidentiality. Finally, methodology adopted helped in achieving the research objectives eventually.

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