

**PERFECTING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AS A FOUNDATION FOR
EFFECTIVE POLICE REFORM**

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AT THE 2-DAY STAKEHOLDERS BIENNIAL RETREAT ON

“SUSTAINING POLICE REFORMS IN NIGERIA”

The topic clearly suggests that the Nigeria Police recruitment process is plagued with some imperfections, that all is not well with the process, and unarguably so. The question that inevitably follows is – What characterises an imperfect recruitment process in any organisation not just the Police alone?

How does it manifest? Some obvious indicators/signs discernable from the personnel are as follows:-

- (i) Poor performance of its statutory responsibilities or duties – Degree of Professional competence
- (ii) Organisation’s relationship with the public – public perception e.g. Police-Public relationship. Does the public trust or have confidence in them?
- (iii) For the Police specifically, e.g. personal hygiene, turn out in uniform, level of civility/courtesy extended to the Public, willingness to assist persons in distress or in need, sympathy, treatment of suspects, and even complainants, self restraint in the face of extreme provocation or are they temperamental, degree of friendliness – The Police is your friend. Do Policemen justify this slogan or confirm the opposite.
- (iv) Quality of verbal expression in English language
- (v) The type of company they keep – Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are? Do they hobnob with criminals?

- (vi) Degree of objectivity, standing for the truth at all times, sincerity, not covering up the truth for pecuniary, tribal, political, religious or some other reasons.
- (vii) Level of confidence exuded, or are they timid?

The list is open ended, there could be many more.

2. PURPOSE OF RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Every recruitment process must aim at selecting the best quality personnel with the requisite competences, academic and professional qualifications, and they must be healthy.

This is to ensure that the vision and mission of the organisation are adequately met or achieved. Additional requirements may be necessary for certain organisations like the Police, Military and Paramilitary and these are usually physical. Details will be given later for the Police.

3. WHAT WAS THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS LIKE BEFORE IN TERMS OF BASIC REQUIREMENTS/QUALIFICATION

The Police Regulations under the Police Act Cap 359 LFN 1990 spells out requirement/qualifications for recruitment into the Force at the three levels of entry.

Section 72 – Qualification for enlistment

1. Only citizens of Nigeria shall be accepted for enlistment
2. The qualifications of a male candidate seeking enlistment in the Police Force as **a recruit constable** shall be as follows –
 - (a) *Age* – not less than seventeen nor more than twenty five years
 - (b) *Height* – not less than 1.67 meters in height.
 - (c) *Chest Measurement* – not less than 86 centimetres when fully expanded, and having an expansion of not less than 5 centimetres.

- (d) *Physical Fitness*- must be certified by a Government medical officer as being mentally and physically fit for service in the Force
- (e) *Education* – must be in possession of a Secondary School Leaving Certificate (Middle IV)
- (f) *Character* – must be of good character and must not have been convicted of any criminal offence (other than any offence which the Inspector-General accepts as being of a minor nature)
- (g) *Financial Status* – must be free from any pecuniary embarrassment.

Section 73 – Deformities and abnormalities to be a bar to enlistment. A candidate for enlistment suffering from any one of the abnormalities or deformities listed below shall not be accepted for enlistment:

- a) Impediment in speech – stammerer
- b) Gross malformation of teeth or jaw preventing proper mastication of food
- c) Knock knees
- d) Bow legs
- e) Bent knees i.e. knees which cannot be straightened when standing at attention
- f) Flat feet
- g) Bent arms i.e. arms which cannot be straightened at the elbow
- h) Deformed hands, or hands which cannot perform the full functions of the hand
- i) Defective eyesight, or squint eyes
- j) Amputation of any member.

Section 74: Entrance Examination - A candidate for enlistment in the Force shall, except as hereinafter provided, be required to obtain a pass in the entrance examination prescribed for recruit constables.

Section 75 Entrance Examination Syllabus –

1. The entrance examination shall consist of a written examination in the following subjects-

- a) English
 - b) Simple Arithmetic
 - c) Dictation
 - d) General knowledge
2. The entrance examination shall be conducted in the English language

Section 52 – Qualifications for Appointment as **cadet sub-inspectors**

1. The general qualifications required of a male or female candidate for appointment as a cadet sub-inspector of police are as follows -
- a) Physical Fitness – must be certified by a government Medical Officer as being physically and mentally fit for service in the Force
 - b) Education – must be in possession of –
 - i) A General Certificate of Education with passes at the Ordinary Level in at least four subjects including English and Mathematics, or
 - ii) The West African School Certificate, with credits in at least four subjects, including English Language and Mathematics
 - c) Character – must be exemplary
 - d) Financial status – must be free from pecuniary embarrassment.
2. A male candidate shall be not less than 1.67 metres in height, and shall have an expanded chest measurement of not less than 86 centimetres
3. A female candidate shall be unmarried, and shall be not less than 1.67 metres in height.

Section 41: Qualifications and conditions of service, **Cadet ASPs** – The appointment of cadet assistant superintendents of Police shall be restricted to trainees destined for general duties appointments in the Force.

Section 42 (1) - The general qualifications required of a male or female candidate for appointment as a cadet assistant superintendent of police (general duties) are as follows:

- (a) *Age* – not below twenty three years or above twenty eight years
 - (b) *Physical Fitness*- must be certified by a Government Medical Officer as being physically and mentally fit for service in the Force
 - (c) *Education* – must be in possession of a **PASS DEGREE** from a University recognised by the Federal Ministry of Education
 - (d) *Character* – must be exemplary
 - (e) *Financial Status* – must be free from any pecuniary embarrassment.
- 2) A Male candidate shall be not less than 1.67 metres in height and shall have an expanded chest measurement of not less than 86 centimetres
 - 3) A female candidate shall be unmarried, and shall be not less than 1.67 metres in height.

Fresh graduates going into the Civil Service were expected to have a minimum of Second Class Lower division degree. The Police job was treated then as second class or inferior job, and for the not too intelligent. Pass degree holders had to make do with lower grade level/rank in the civil service, yet that was what was required to enlist as a cadet ASP.

4. RECRUITMENT PROCESS AS AT TODAY

- i. Advertisement in the print and electronic media – internet, for maximum publicity
- ii. Written examination still retained for certain category.
- iii. Pass Degree holders no longer recruited as Cadet ASPs, a minimum of Second Class Lower Division degree, now required.
- iv. The 12 months cadet ASP Scheme for graduates will be scrapped soon since the Police Academy Wudil Kano that trained both cadet Inspectors and ASPs is now degree awarding like the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) Kaduna. The Police Academy will now combine both Professional Police Training with Degree programmes like NDA for the military.

In the Military, if an army private or any junior rank for that matter does not go to NDA, he cannot be promoted beyond the rank of Warrant Officer I.

Only NDA graduates are officers and can aspire to be Service Chiefs to head the Army, Navy and Air Force.

Unlike in the Army, every Police Officer who enlisted either as a Recruit Constable, Cadet Inspector or Cadet ASP aspires to and indeed can be promoted to Inspector-General of Police. This accounts majorly for the poor quality of some superior Police officers and even very senior ones at that, to the extent that some of them wear ranks beyond their mental and professional capacities/capability.

4. HOW AND WHY DO THESE IMPERFECTIONS COME ABOUT IN THE POLICE

A number of reasons but mainly -

- (i) Undue Political interference
- (ii) Favouritism
- (iii) Warped application of the otherwise well intended Federal Character Principle or Quota system. Equal representation does not mean compromising standards or applying different standards from state to state.

All of these compromise standards and the very high rate of unemployment has not helped matters.

Ideally in the midst of surplus manpower – unemployed people (the quality today is another issue entirely), we ought to get the very best to promote and entrench the culture of meritocracy as opposed to when applicants are few or unwilling, thus making room for “ANYTHING GOES”. Competition that ordinarily should throw up the best is jettisoned.

Daily Sun, Wednesday October 30, 2013 at page 47 carried Nigerian Defence Academy’s (NDA) “Application for admission into the NDA 66th Regular Course advert” the advert clearly spelt out information on:-

- (a) Sale of Application Forms
- (b) Submission of Applications
- (c) Admission Requirements
- (d) Examination conditions
- (e) Examination date and requirements
- (f) Nature and Duration of Training
- (g) Administration, and
- (h) Reference Materials – In response to request from candidates for reference materials, the Academy offered a Compendium of Past Questions and Answers at the cost of N3,000 only which can be purchased from the Registry Department, NDA or from designated Zenith Bank Branches. The Police needs to take a cue from the military in this regard to guide applicants.

Website: www.nda.edu.ng

Application Portal: www.ndaapplications.org

E-mail: info@ndaapplications.org

The advert was signed by the Academy Registrar, Brig. Gen. HE AYAMASAOWEI. The rank and office of this officer shows the importance the military attaches to training.

iv. For a recruitment/selection process to be credible, it must be transparent, competitive, open and presided over by honest persons. Nothing must be compromised.

Only persons who are truly desirous of being Police Officers should be identified and recruited. The mentality of “let him/her just manage this until something better comes up must be jettisoned, or prospective applicant can’t make it in school or he is too stubborn – all others in the family are doing well so let him or her join the Police must never be condoned. The force must not be turned into a dumping ground or a place for the never do well.

v. My experience as AIG Zone 6 Calabar in 2010.

Reproduced hereunder was my experience with somebody who desperately wanted a young lady to enlist in the Police – the text messages we exchanged:

- (a) My dear Elder, my member, a girl MINA ABASI AMINA (not real name) 21, is interested in joining Police. She submitted form but is 1.3m in height. Please help her. Pst XYZ - received 30-6-2010.
- (b) My reply: She is under height, she cannot be taken.
- (c) His Response to me: My AIG, am told there are people like that taken in Uyo with connection. She is a Dominite, please use your office and help her. She is desperate for it - received 30-6-2010.

I rejected her outright, my relationship with the man who made the request notwithstanding. It takes courage to do this, the same set of people turn round to criticise and abuse the Police if you concede.

- vi. Practice of backdoor recruitment for children of the privileged or the well connected after the exercise has long been concluded. No examination, no interviews etc, or those who wrote but failed. The good performers who are well qualified are dropped for the highly connected dregs/failures. You now see why some officers' ranks are too big for their mental/professional and academic capabilities, a situation you can never find in the military because they don't and will never tolerate it. A colonel in Sokoto and another in Bayelsa, no difference in their performance, carriage, disposition, personal hygiene, verbal and written expression, comportment, confidence level etc, but in the Police, you wonder how some officers got the ranks. We have had statements like that ASP ought not to have gone beyond the rank of a sergeant. These are fallouts of an imperfect recruitment process.
- vii. Factors that can mar a perfect recruitment process and compromise standards
 - (a) Political Interference - List from every stratum of the Political class whether qualified or not. Anytime the Police wants to recruit, very senior Police officers are inundated with requests for assistance.
 - (b) Warped and selfish/unpatriotic implementation of the Federal Character (Quota System) Principle. Equal representation is a very good policy but we

must insist on the best from every state, it doesn't matter whether applicant is the child of a pauper, or a mister nobody. We must insist on merit.

(c) Deliberate exclusion or marginalisation of some/certain persons.

(d) A service chief's desire to enlist his tribesmen in the Police and CP KDs response/reaction then sometime past. A bus load of under height applicants, some not physically fit, others could hardly express themselves. The CP asked the Chief's P.A whether the applicants could be recruited in their service in all honesty, and he was honest enough to say NO.

viii. The issue of cut off marks for the just concluded 2013 National Common Entrance Examination released by the Federal Ministry of Education – See Daily Sun, Tuesday June 25, 2013 at page 37.

This is clearly absurd. **This is the process that produces prospective recruits for the Police.** How do the Zamfara and Sokoto male applicants who are expected to score a minimum of 4 and 2 respectively over 200 to qualify for admission match their male counterparts from Anambra and Imo states who are expected to score a minimum of 139 and 138 respectively over 200 if the figures are true? There are brilliant and intelligent Nigerians in every state.

ix. A number of applicants have been recruited using certificates that do not belong to them. Is there in place a certificate verification mechanism to checkmate this? If not, one must be put in place.

x. Can the Force still continue to recruit and retain officers who cannot read and write, a situation being compounded, by falling educational standards at all levels today?

xi. A perfect recruitment process will guarantee policing our nation with our best/first eleven once the aforementioned interferences and other militating factors are eliminated.

xii. A selection process based on merit that is competitive and transparent throws up the best. Any applicant who fails should be encouraged to re-write the examination.

A perfect or near perfect recruitment process backed up with good training in a good training environment manned by professionally – competent and well motivated instructors/resource persons will guarantee high quality officers and men to police Nigeria. The Police Service Commission can now proudly perform its constitutional duties as prescribed in Sec 30 (a) and (b) under the Third Schedule, Part I, and Section 215 (1) (b) of the CFRN – 2011 as amended.

In conclusion, the Police needs to take a cue from the Military on how their training is administered, how their Training Institutions are managed, motivation for their staff that makes them to be so committed, putting in their best, ensuring only the very best get posted to Military Training Institutions, unlike in the Police where posting to Police Training Institutions is perceived as PUNITIVE. The Pass Staff College (PSC) and PSC + (dagger) culture must be sustained in the Police and I wish to commend the IGP for introducing it. All Police Training Institutions' facilities must be up-graded, brought up to standard, made habitable, decent with state of the art teaching /learning aids, staffed by dedicated, professionally sound, highly experienced, well motivated instructors and of course a very rich modern and loaded curriculum/training programme.

Without all of these, a recruitment process no matter how perfect will produce half-baked products at best.

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