

## **Evolution of Employment and Industrial Relations practice: The Nigerian Experience**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the transfer of the British Voluntarist employment relations practice (ERP) to Nigeria through colonialism; this transferred employment/industrial relations replaced the Nigerian Paternalistic ERP. In most cases transfers of management practices by the colonial masters were done with the help of the multinational companies; in the Nigerian case the multinational company was the Royal Niger Company. This was achieved through in-depth descriptive and historical case study of the transfer of the British Voluntarist ERP to Nigeria. A review of the literature of most transfers of management practices revealed that the impact of culture on the successes or failures of such transfers are at best underplayed. In an attempt to bridge this gap, this study relying on descriptive and historical sources explored the impact of culture on the transfer of management practices with special reference to employment/industrial relations practice. The findings confirmed that all groups of people no matter how ‘uncivilised’ have their own management practices built around their culture and that it will be problematic to devise a template of any management practice in a cultural area with the intention of transferring such to another cultural area.*

**Keywords:** Employment/Industrial Relations Practice, British Voluntarist Employment Relations Practice, Nigerian Pre-colonial Paternalistic Employment Relations Practice, United Kingdom and Nigeria

### **1. Introduction**

There was in existence employer-employee relationship in Nigeria before the colonial era based on the predominantly agricultural economy, culture and traditions which were the basis for systems of work and reward (Ubeku, 1993). In most cases the employer was the family head while the employees were members of his immediate family and the extended family (Yesufu, 1982). In some areas farming was carried out on a cooperative basis; people of the same age organised to work for themselves in turns (Iwuji, 1968). On such occasions, remuneration was mainly through exchange of food and drinks as the economy was rural with no acceptable monetary currency or probably to reciprocate good gestures by working on another person's farm when required, or at the extreme end by providing security in terms of invasion of the friend's farm or household by an enemy and in some cases as part of the dowry for a very beautiful fiancée (Ibid, 1968). In some cases commodities were exchanged for goods and services; this was referred to as 'barter trade' (Lovejoy, 1974). There was therefore no wage employment; in the case of a large farm or plantations the services of slaves were employed and this was integrated into the social and political systems (Lovejoy, 1974).

The employer/family head was at his discretion all-in-all as he determined the reward system, recruitments, selections, promotions, and not necessarily based on merit or seniority; he provided food, housing and security for all the employees (mostly family members) and even determined when they would get married and to whom (Iwuji, 1968). When the Obas, Chiefs, Obis and Emirs were appointed as the recruitment agents by the colonial masters, the family heads usually sent the troublesome sons or children of less favoured wives some of whom later became educated and joined wage employment. This system of employment relations practice was referred to as the Paternalistic ERP (Ubeku, 1993). This ERP was replaced with the British Voluntarist ERP which was developed based on the prevailing social, political and economic philosophy at the period of industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Britain (Florence, 1957:184).

This was that of *laissez-faire* with respects for individual liberty, which was based on the Benthamite utilitarian principle; which postulated that the individual knew what was in his/her best interests and if left free, would pursue and maximise those interests (Ibid, 1957).

## 2. Conceptual/ theoretical background

Blyton and Turnbull (2004) suggest that the current increase in the use of the term ‘employee relations’ could be because of the ‘disintegration’ of industrial relations system and the urgent need to ‘recast the field more broadly to include the formal and informal processes of people management in the workplace’ (Debrah and Mmeh, 2009:15). This disintegration of industrial relations was as a result of among other things the changes in the recent organisational environment as well as probably a reaction to the theoretical critique of the discipline (Edwards, 1995; Wajcman, 2000; Ackers and Wilkinson, 2003). The critique pointed out that the term ‘employee relations’ is more frequently used in the literature and in most cases used interchangeably with HRM; but the term ‘employment relations’ is better (Edwards, 2003).

Defining employment relations involves a range of complex patterns of interactions between different work-related groups such as trade unions and employers at organisational level, and the state and its agencies in the regional as well as the national levels (Rose, 2004). Bain and Clegg (1974) see the discipline of employment relations as the study of rules that govern employment, as well as the ways in which the rules are changed, interpreted and administered. Blyton and Turnbull (1998) and Kelly (1998) perceive employment relations as the framework within which complicated interactions between employees and employers are conducted, both collectively and individually. Blyton and Turnbull (2004) suggest that employment relations portrays the distinctive characteristics of all employment relationships either individual relationships or collective relationships. However, They (2004) contend that understanding employment relations involves locating it within the broader nature of the economic activity involved and also taking into consideration the structural basis of the probable conflict and accommodation between employee and employer; the persuasion as well as the manipulation of the larger society on employment relations is also important. In essence, the ‘nature of employment relations in any organisation should be seen in relation to wider socio-economic, political and legal structure’ (Debrah and Mmeh, 2009).

Employment relations are therefore not only involved in the deployment or utilisation of human resources but also in the experience as well as the expectations of labour in the workplace along with the wider society. It involves the formations and implementation of policies which included activities that are intended at enhancing the working lives of the employees; which include the strategies to enhance the competitiveness of the organisation (Blyton and Turnbull, 2004). Harney and Dundon (2006) add that employment relations are designed to guarantee the strategic administration of people in order to achieve organisational efficiency and effectiveness. To achieve this is an up hill task but not impossible bearing in mind the different factors affecting the nature and characteristics of employment relations (Debrah and Mmeh, 2009). Having explained and defined the concept of employment relations, it is now time to look at the practice in the UK; this will be followed by the process of its transfer to Nigeria.

## 3. The British Voluntarist Employment Relations Practice: Historical perspective

The British Voluntarist’ employment relations practice was developed based on the prevailing social, political and economic philosophy at the period of industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Britain (Florence, 1957:184). This philosophy brought about individual freedom of contracts which included the employment contract and also restrained the State from intervening directly in employment relations practice (Flanders, 1974). The forces of supply and demand were believed to be enough to determine wages and working conditions at economically and socially acceptable levels without the State or any other institution intervening; the State has therefore played a very minimal role in the British employment relations system (Yesufu, 1982:31).

The rapid growth of industry in Great Britain at the end of the 18th and the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as the relatively new modes of industrial structure contributed to the creation of the British employment relations system; the factory system became predominant (Briggs, 1953; Clapham, 1939). Taylor (1842:4) suggests that ‘it (factory system of production) exists and must continue to exist; it is not practicable, even if it were desirable, to get rid of’.

It was the factory system that brought a large number of people together who previously were working within the cottage/ ‘putting out’ system and separated employers (owners of capital) from their employees (who only have their labour to bargain with (Carlsson, 1995). The factory system brought about major changes in agriculture, manufacturing and mining, which had a profound effect on the socioeconomic and cultural situation of the country (Taylor, 1842). There was a major transition from manual labour and draft animal-based economy to machine based manufacturing; which brought about a new socio-economic organisation and system (Carlsson, 1995). The new factory system brought about a new spirit of order and discipline (Bamford, 1893). Marx (1930:403) comments that ‘in place of the individual machine, we now have a mechanical monster, whose body fills the whole factory. Even outside the factory premises the new spirit of order and discipline of timetables spread as observed by the Hammond (1930:28) who states that ‘----.The machine in this sense governed industry where the machines itself was not in use’; invariably employees were at the mercy of both the employers and the machines.

The new factory system brought about centralised employment which Williamson (1998) claimed brought about more efficient production as leakages were reduced, skills were better utilised, transportation expenses were reduced and co-ordination made easier. Landes (1969) also claimed that the factory system brought about advanced technologies especially through the power driven technologies which required more space. Other scholars like Marglin (1974) suggests that the factory system brought about the opportunity for greater supervision and greater output can be extracted from workers at a lower cost which translated to more work but less pay. The capitalists were able to take over complete control of the production process and workers were left to decide whether to work or not to work (Marx, 1930). This is not to conclude that there were no ‘good’ employers whose ‘goodness’ was based on religion, paternalism or both; they realised that ‘good’ industrial/employment relations were good for business (Hutt, 1926). Unfortunately the ‘good’ employers realized that the ‘bad’ employers in the same industries especially in the textile industry were undermining their efforts and that there was little they could do other than for government to intervene (Ibid, 1926). Examples of such state interventions include: the Factory Acts of 1802, 1819, 1833, 1850 and 1853 (Parliamentary Papers, XX: 35-36 (1833); Wood, (1832. 10); Playfair, (1893) Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine (1833: 423). Employment relations in post war Britain in the 20<sup>th</sup> century developed in two distinct directions, one is the formal practice embodied in the official institutions, and the second is the informal system, created through the behaviour of trade unions and employers’ associations, manager’s shop stewards and workers at lower employees level (Donovan Commission Report, 1968 Paragraph 46: 2).

The British Voluntarist employment relations practice is hinged on the following principles: the first is that ‘a priority is accorded to collective bargaining over other methods of external job regulation’ (Flanders, 1970: 94). The main feature is that trade unions and employers through their associations act as ‘joint authors of rules made to regulate employment contracts and ---- their own relations’ (Ibid, 1970:95). Both parties may solicit for the use of third party assistance for conciliation, mediation, and arbitration purposes to reach agreements. The second principle is that ‘the British system of industrial relations has traditionally accorded a priority to voluntary over compulsory procedural rules for collective bargaining’ (Ibid 1970:96): Freund (1954) referred to this as collective *laissez-faire*. The third principle is that ‘the parties to collective bargaining have generally preferred to build their relations more on their procedural (rather) than on their substantive rules’ (Flanders, 1970:98).

The three key institutions in the British Voluntarist employment practice are employees through their representatives, employers through the employers’ associations and the State through its agencies and legislations (Ackers and Payne, 1988). The intervention of State is very minimal when compared with some other developed countries; this was what made Kahn-Freund (1954: 44) to suggest that ‘-----. There was perhaps no major country in the world in which law has played a less significant role in the shaping of industrial relations than in Great Britain and in which today the law and legal profession have less to do with labour relations’. The role of the state in the British Voluntarist employment relations practice is therefore limited to mere ‘providing an institutional framework for bilateral relations between management and labour’ (Keller, 1968:77). This ERP was transferred to Nigeria and the vehicle was the Royal Niger Company.

#### **4. History of wage employment in Nigeria: the forerunner of the transfer of the British Voluntarist employment relations practice**

Wage employment started with the advent of the British colonialists –Mungo Park and his team- on 20 July 1795 as they required the services of guides, and carriers when they stepped into the territory now known as Nigeria (Park, 1905).

Mungo Park ‘employed’ two guides - Amadi and Isaac- whom he paid wages for their services, as was and still is the employment relations practice in the UK. Unfortunately, as at that time wage employment was generally not known in the areas to be later known as Nigeria, and Mungo Park was unaware of the implications of what he did; he unknowingly started the introduction of the British Voluntarists ERP (Abdulahi, 1991). One major setback to wage employment was the lack of standardised or universally accepted currency as the silver coins were not introduced until 1872 (Iwuyi, 1968). In 1912, the British pounds, shillings and pence were introduced to all the former British colonies in West Africa including Nigeria through the West African Currency Board. Before the introduction of the bar, the cowry’s shells and the manilla, trading was by barter - using commodities as means of exchange for goods and services - These currencies could not be said to be universally acceptable as they all had fluctuating values depending on the areas the transactions were taking place and the time of the year; was it during rainy season when not much of farming was done or during harvest when farmers were busy (Dike, 1885)?

At the initial stage of wage employment, labour recruitments were done through the chief’s who acted as the recruitment agents or third party; they in most cases used slaves, their children -the troublesome ones or children of less favoured wives - wage employment was then seen as degrading; as working for another man other than a biological relative was only done by slaves (Iwuyi, 1980). The discipline involved in wage employment was not something the workers were used to as only the lowest category of slaves - those captured during the various inter-tribal wars -; followed by those slaves whose parents were owing money and could not pay in time or could not pay at all- were disciplined at work (Ubeku, 1993).

In this new dispensation, workers had to report to work at a certain time, they could only go to eat at a certain time and could only close at a certain time; this was seen as the lowest degree of slavery (Hill, 1976; Yesufu, 1982). The situation was made worst as they were fined for lateness and unauthorised absence from work: the fine was deducted from their meagre salaries at the end of the month, the fines varied in amount, but half a day’s pay was commonplace in the civil service (Yesufu, 1967). Coupled with the above was the fact that wage employment involved working away from one’s home which most natives were not used to; again only slaves worked away from their homes (Hallett, 2004).

Wage employment came into prominence fully in the colonial Nigeria after 1830 when Richard and John Lander - another set of explorers from the UK, that took over from Mungo Park who was unable to complete his second expedition of tracing the source of River Niger due to his death around 1859 - were able to finally solve the mystery of the River Niger (Iwuyi, 1980; Yesufu 1982). This was an invitation for the British traders and some Christian missionaries (and in some cases they are both traders and missionaries) to penetrate the hinterland and commence trading especially in Nigerian products; the chief of which was palm oil (Ubeku, 1993). The shrewd Liverpool trader, Macgregor was said to have led a host of other British traders into the lucrative trade of palm oil; Dike (1835) reports that in the 1830s the price of palm oil varied from £33 to £34 and that in 1834 the trade was worth £450,185. This trade dominated the socio-political and economic activities of the country for over 50 years when the ambitions of European merchants and the Nigerian middlemen made sure that palm oil dominated the politics in the Niger Delta; about 2500 Europeans and Africans -not only Nigerians- were employed by the trade in 1871; ironically crude oil and natural gas dominate the politics of this same area today (Bradley, 1983; Cohen, 2004).

The sudden boom in the trade of palm oil led to some competition for labour and the major recruitment centres were Lagos, Calabar and the Niger Delta (Dike, 1935). The recruits were mostly school leavers including those who were unwilling to complete their primary or secondary school education as the temptation of wage employment was too much for them to resist while still in school (Yesufu, 1982). The demands for labour by both the palm oil traders, the British traders and the Christian missionaries who required guides and carriers pushed up wages that were enough to make some students abandon their studies for wages as well as the prestige involved in working for the expatriates (Dike, 1935).

Wage employment took a new dimension when the Royal Niger Company (RNC) was handed the absolute power to trade and administer the country (Ukpabi, 1987). The company became the first multinational company (MNC) to be granted powers to trade and rule the country with legislative, military and judicial powers (Ibid, 1987). The Royal Charter of July 1886 gave the company powers to administer, make treaties, levy customs dues and trade in all territories in the basin of the (River) Niger and its affluent (Flint, 1960).

This went on till January 1 1900 when it became apparent that a chartered company would be unable to hold its own against the state - supported protectorates of France and Germany (Burns and Burns, 1973). In effect Royal Niger Company transferred its territories to the British Government for the sum of £865,000 (Interest, 1975). Wage employment was further made popular when for economic, political and strategic reasons the Royal Charter of the Royal Niger Company was revoked and the administrations of the Protectorates of the Northern and Southern Nigeria was taken away from a multinational company –Royal Niger Company- towards the end of 1899 and was vested directly in the hands of the British Government with effect from 1 January 1900 (Cook, 1943). This led to a lot of construction works (Burns and Burns, 1973; Flint, 1960). For example, the Lagos railways were financed from the British treasury while at the same time the construction of the telegraph lines were going on (Yesufu, 1982). He (1982) confirmed that the daily wage then was about 9d for workers from Lagos and 1s for those from the hinterlands with the additional 3b as subsistence allowance.

Other sources of wage employment were in the mines like the tin ore mine in Jos, the Cameroon plantations and harbours across the country and in the Cameroon. The mines needed a lot of people and government had to compulsorily recruit people and by 31 March 1943, between 25,000 and 30,000 people were already compulsorily recruited (Yesufu, 1982). The recruits were enticed with a balanced diet, good housing, and provision of medical facilities; as a result between 40% and 60% of those compulsorily recruited opted after six months to willingly continue in wage employment (Ananaba, 1969).

The introduction of taxes for the adult male of the population forced more people to join wage employment, while the British Colonial Government also introduced incentives such as free medical facilities coupled with living in clean environments; these attracted more people into wage employment (Yesufu, 1982). The tastes of the wage earners also changed with the exposure to life in urban areas and with the contacts with the Europeans; the only way to satisfy these new tastes was to pick up a permanent wage employment, which also became a status symbol (Ibid, 1982). Since the silver coins were already in circulation, this enhanced the chances of payments of wages and made wage employment very attractive; this marked the formal beginning of the importation of the British Voluntarist system of employment/industrial relations practice to Nigeria (Yesufu, 1982; Ananaba, 1969). The British Voluntarist employment relations practice (ERP) worked effectively with payment of wages for labour; the British ERP worked unhindered and replaced the Nigerian Paternalistic employment relations practice (Onwuka, 1982).

After the abrogation of the Royal Niger Company in 1899 which led to the direct British Government take over of the governance of Lagos, Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1900, the hinterlands were opened up mainly to provide markets for the British manufactured goods and to easily reach sources of raw materials for the British factories and politically to make administration of the vast territory easy: there was a need for massive constructions of roads and railway lines which brought about more wage earners (Perlman, 1937; Aina, 1995). The two World Wars also aided wage employments as over 4000 Nigerian troops and 250 naval ratings were recruited in 1914 (Afigbo, 1991). This is because the colonial government decreed that all bondsmen who enlisted in the army or volunteered for employment in the civil service became free from their various bonds (Yesufu, 1982). At the end of the war the soldiers trained in various trades like telephonists, tailors and storekeepers opted for wage employment; about 120,000 soldiers were demobilised and two thirds of them were said to have opted for paid employment (Onimode, 1981). With the increasing importance, the increasing opportunities and the social acceptance of paid employment, the natives who found cocoa or palm kernels farming tedious and not paying as much as wage employment, were glad to go to work for a few months especially during the dry season for regular wages which enabled them to save some money (Ubeku, 1993; Yesufu, 1982).

Luggard (1909) is quoted as saying that the outrageous rates of pay which were instituted for local labour of all kinds became one of the two most serious problems facing the administration. He (1909) is of the opinion that the rates for the so-called skilled labour, - clerks, artisans, engineers and pilots - were 50 percent higher than they should have been; the Indians who were considered to be more efficient earned less than their Nigerian counterparts. On the expenditures on carriers and unskilled labour, the Governor General in frustration concluded that: ‘. I hope largely to reduce (labour costs) by the introduction of wheeled traffic and motor cars’ (Luggard, HMSO, 1909:129-130). He was very optimistic that with the introduction of motor cars the government wage expenditure would be drastically reduced (Luggard, HMSO, 1909: 175).

Unfortunately, to the surprise of the colonial government officials, more of the natives were returning to farming rather than to wage employment, which was an indication that people still preferred farming to the government's wage employment (Yesufu, 1982; Iwuji, 1968). This made the Governor General to conclude some years later that there was a notable exodus from the towns where the wage employment was in abundance into rural districts to be engaged in farming (Luggard, HMSO, 1915). To solve this shortage of manpower the colonial masters resulted into recruiting from areas they had colonised earlier than Nigeria; places like Sierra Leone and Ghana (Gold coast) - this solution brought about its own problems like transportation and language problems; as times went on, the alternative was to resort to forced labour using the Chiefs (Ubeku, 1993). Lord Luggard tried to justify this practice by saying that 'among primitive tribes, a measure of compulsion through their tribal Chiefs in order to obtain labour construction and other important works is justifiable as an educative process to remove fear and suspicion' (Luggard, HMSO, 1919: 201). By 1918 the problem of labour shortage was over as there was a surplus of labour and the law of supply and demand forced down the price of labour - wages- so that even African landowners could now hire some natives (Yesufu, 1982). This made Governor Luggard to conclude in 1919 that: 'in the quick appreciation by the African of the amenities of life which he can procure for cash and his natural aptitude for work the natives are now happy to work and get paid' (Luggard, HMSO, 1919: 250). There was therefore no more need for the use of forced labour; it was then time for government to discourage the practice until the start of the economic depression of 1930 (Iwuji, 1968).

In 1930, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted the Forced Labour Convention by which forced labour was declared illegal; by 1933 the Nigerian Government through the Forced Labour Ordinance (No 22 of 1933) implemented the provision of the Convention. It must be said that forced labour still continued in the rural areas as the Chiefs were by law -Native Law and Customs- allowed using forced labour; the Colonial Administrative officers could then request the Chiefs to supply them with workers (Yesufu, 1982). All forms of forced labour were abolished in Nigeria through the 1956 Labour Code (Amendment) Ordinance, No. 3 of 1956. The acceptance of wage employment by the natives coupled with the economic depression of 1930 which created surplus of labour made the Government and other employers to reduce their labour intakes and this led to unemployment (Afigbo, 1972). At this stage, it is convenient to suggest that wage employment has come to stay in Nigeria, it is seriously and rapidly gaining more grounds as a major factor in the labour market, and that the British Voluntarist employment/industrial relations practice has totally replaced the Nigerian Paternalistic employment/industrial relations practice (Iwuji, 1968). This transfer or introduction was without any consideration for the differences in socio- cultural realities of Britain and Nigeria as well as the differences in the socio- cultural realities of all the ethnic groups merged together through the Amalgamation Act of 1900 (Haviden and Meridith, 1993). The transfer was done mainly for economic/ commercial and logistic considerations; the effect of this will be discussed in the 'Discussion section' later.

### **5. Methodology and methods**

The descriptive and historical method has been resulted to because Hopf (1944) (cited by van Fleet and Bedeian 1977) observed that descriptive and historical method was beneficial because the historical point of view which is the point of view of change will enhance the understanding and extend the horizon. It will be difficult to find a more confident and clearer statement in support of descriptive and historical methodology than this. This is because Hopf's (1944) statement was based on the belief that the changing events and developments of the past provided understanding of the dynamics of ordered human enterprise (Whiting, 1964). This type of research methodology was regarded as one that does not fit into either quantitative or qualitative research method (Knox, 1980). It utilises elements of both within the same study, and this was reflected often in the research questions. This type of research methodology can also employ multiple variables for analysis; on the other hand it is unlike other methodology in that it requires only one variable, and in the present study the variable is culture (Whitfield and Strauss, 1998). The four main purposes of secondary sources methodology are: to describe, to explain, to validate findings and to infer from all the findings having been validated to be true (Black and Champion, 1976).

Description emerges following the creative exploration, and helps to arrange the findings in an order that will help to be fit for explanations and these explanations can then be tested to validate the variables being studied and with the aid of description, knowledge is illuminated and facts that were ignored can now be brought to light and better understood (Whiting, 1964). This method also helps in describing natural and man-made phenomena that will be very useful to other researchers and policymakers while prediction is also made easier at least to some extent (Borg and Gall, 1989).

## 6. Discussion

When the British left after granting independence, the Nigerian civil service was dominated by the Southerners who were exposed to Christianity and western education while most of the Northerners who were exposed to the Islamic education could not be recruited (Adamolekun *et al*, 1991). So in order to foster unity, the constitutional provision of the ‘Federal Character’ was introduced (Dia, 1993). The elites from the North with the coalition of some British administrators had to delay the granting of independence so as to be able to catch up with the Southerners; this was done by introducing the phrase ‘independent as soon as possible’ during the 1958 constitutional conference held in London (HMSO, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1958 vol. 594: 741-2). Independence was eventually granted on 1 October 1960, but it was observed that within the new nation that there were differences in culture, stages of social and economic development and even in levels of political awareness of the people (Ekeh and Osaghae, 1989). There also existed a lot of disparities in the educational developments among the different states which led to employment advantages for some Nigerians from some states and employment disadvantages for their fellow Nigerians from other states (Nnoli, 1978). For example it was discovered that people from the southern states were more educated than their brothers and sisters from the northern states and even within the southern states educational disparities occur; for example people from Ogun state are more educationally advantaged than those from Cross River State (Afigbo, 1989).

There was therefore a need for employment to be according to state of origin rather than according to merit as prescribed by the British Voluntarist employment relations practice (Ekeh and Osaghae, 1989). This was because if it was left to merit, only people from certain states or regions especially some states/regions in the south will be employable; while people from most parts of the north would not be employable (Ekeh, 1989; Nnoli, 1978; Afigbo, 1989). The 1979 Constitution of Nigeria therefore enacted the ‘Principle of the Federal Character’ and made provisions for the creation of the Federal Character Commission. Quota System was therefore introduced yet the problem could not be properly addressed and by 1975 it had manifested into a serious political issue that if not well handled the country would break into smaller units (Afigbo, 1989).

To avoid this situation by 1979 a Constitutional provision known as Federal Character Principle was enacted (Agbaje, 1989). The effect of this was that the Northerners who were not educationally and professionally qualified were brought in or the post would be offered to an expatriate on contract while a Northerner was trained as quickly as possible (Afigbo, 1989). In some instances the less qualified Northerners ended up being the boss of a more qualified Southerner. All these went on in the Judiciary, Foreign Service, and every arm of the government including the Presidency which the Northerners saw as their birth right; so far since independence in 1960 more Northerners have occupied the post (Nnoli, 1975). In the educational system, Northerners were offered admission to the Federal government financed universities with lower qualifications as compared with their counterparts from the South especially from the South West; the whole idea translated to ‘holding’ the south down so that the north could ‘catch’ up; The Federal Government of Nigeria spends more money on education in the Northern States than the Southern States up till today (Odesola, 2009: 34).

## 7. Conclusion

One could therefore conclude that the transfer of the British Voluntarist ERP to Nigeria (and other former British colonies) is problematic and that part of the reason for this is the differences in culture between Britain and Nigeria as well as differences in the culture of all the ethnic groups that were forced to merge to become what is now regarded as one Nigeria. It is therefore obvious that socio-cultural factors play important roles in the transfer of employment relations practices as well as other management practices (Kirk-Greene, 1967). It also follows that it is problematic if not impossible to devise a template of employment relations practice or any other management practice (political democracy inclusive) in one cultural area with the intention of transferring same to another cultural areas.

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