

Income Distribution Inequality and the Challenges of Wage Administration in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the challenges of wage administration in Nigeria. It evaluates the nature, dimension and impact of the challenges of wage administration in the context of income inequality and administration in Nigeria. The paper adopted the content analysis in its methodology. In this context, the paper reviewed existing literature on income distribution inequality and challenges of wage administration in Nigeria and other climes in addition to other secondary data and informal observations. The results of the analysis of existing secondary data and literature established that income inequality and distribution have been the bane, purveyor and harbingers of the myriads of challenges bedeviling the development administration in Nigeria. The paper in its conclusion proffers some feasible panacea to the myriads of the challenges of wage administration in Nigeria.

Keywords: Income inequality, Income distribution, Wage administration, Nigeria, Socio-economic development

Introduction

Human progress in recent decades has been very uneven. Alongside remarkable advances in life expectancy, literary and overall human well being, there remain serious concerns about deprivations-poverty, endemic and heightened inequality and greater vulnerability of many communities and social groups in much of the world, particularly the developing and underdeveloped nations (Ki-Moon, 2010). The endemic poverty and underdevelopment of the Third World nations have been partly attributed to the income inequality, lopsided development policies and programs and the wide gap between the rich and the poor, the elites and electorates and between the urban and the rural dwellers (Obi, 2007).

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2018), rising inequality is a widespread concern because inequality within most Advanced and Emerging markets and Developing countries (EMDC), has increased, a phenomenon that has received considerable attention. The IMF(2005) report equally noted that a Research Per Research Centre (IPRC, 2014) survey found that the gap between the rich and poor is considered a major challenge by more than 60 percent of respondents worldwide and the reasons is as partly attributed to inequality in income distribution and wage administration. In the context of equality, justice, fair play and inclusive development and their intrinsic values which are central to the ideals of modern

governance, it is imperative to examine the nexus between income distribution, inequality and the challenges of wage administration in Nigeria. At the most basic level, the distributions of national income mean that aggregate welfare (where the welfare of each individual is given equal weight) is higher for any given level of average per capital income and poverty is lower (UNRISD, 2010).

Equality in all ramifications, like fairness and social justice is an important value in most societies irrespective of ideology, culture and religion. People care about inequality, including income inequality because it is a signal of lack of income mobility and opportunity – a reflection of persistent disadvantage for particular segments of the society. The widening inequality also has significant implications for governance, growth and macro-economic stability because of the political dimensions and decision implications and power in the hands of a few which ultimately, lead to a suboptimal use of human resources, cause of investment-reducing political and economic stability and raise high risks (IMF, 2015). Over the past 40 years, the gap between the rich and the poor has been growing in developed and developing countries, like in 2015, just 62 people had as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity, and the richest one percent owned more wealth than the rest of the world combined. At the same time, the poorest are being denied their fair share because since the turn of century, the poorest half of the world's population has received just one percent of the total increase in global wealth (OXFAM, 2017).

Henceforth, nowadays, Improvement in income distribution, poverty reduction and sustainable development are the main objectives and goals of economic and social development of the government all over the world. Sequel to the above premise, the main objective of this paper is to examine the impact of wage administration on income inequality challenges in Nigeria. The specific objectives were to examine the nexus between income inequality and wage administration; investigate the impact of income inequality on the overall performance of development efforts in Nigeria and elucidate how income inequality created the present developmental challenges faced by Nigeria today.

Statement of the Problem

Inequality has been a serious problem and challenge in most countries but very worrisome, pandemic and endemic in the Sub-Saharan African nations. This is because of the profound negative impact and retrogression associated with poor wage administration in this region and the efforts to develop and transform the nations and societies in Sub-Saharan nations and this perhaps explains why these nations are among the least developed and poverty ridden nations of the world. Sustainable development and overall economic progress have eluded these nations, (including Nigeria) because of the lack of equity in income distribution, transparency, and adequate allocation of resources to critical sectors of the society. This has resulted in vicious cycle of poverty and infrastructural decay and comatose economy which have become the identity and stock-in-trade of nations like Nigeria.

In Nigeria as earlier mentioned, poverty is endemic, pandemic and pervasive, hence Nigeria has been described as the poverty headquarter of the world, with associated problems and challenges of maternal and infant mortality, insurgency, youth restiveness and insecurity,

social disorganization and political upheavals (Omorogbe, 2019). There are many casual factors of this unfortunate situation, including such factors as Nigeria being a primary consumer nation, corruption, international conspiracy and globalization, unequal and inequitable income distribution, poor wage administration, nepotism, ethno-religious bigotry amongst others (World Bank, 2016).

Although, a lot have been written on this topical issue, but to the best of my knowledge, not much have been written on the connection between income distribution, inequality and wage Administrations in Nigeria which are indeed fundamental tonational development in general. This creates a lacuna, empirical and literature gap in the discourse of the phenomenon of wage Administration and the resultant high inequality. The rationale for this paper is to fill the gap so that future discourse of these issues as they affect Nigeria will be robust and all embracing. This is the main goal/thrust of this paper. Hence, the paper focuses on the nexus between wage administration, income distribution and inequality and how these impact on development in Nigeria.

In the context of the above discourse and flowing from the analysis of the relationship between the concepts of income distribution, income inequality and wage administration, the following questions guided this paper: what are the nexus or relationship between wage administration, income distribution and income inequality; what are the impacts of the relationships on the overall performance of development efforts in Nigeria and how have wage administration created the present challenges of income inequality faced by Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework

The theory that informs this paper is the Elite theory which was viewed from the perspective of GatanoMosca who is one of the theorists that propounded and developed this theoretical approach. According to the Elite theory, we do systematic analysis using the tiny segments of the society to understand and have insight of socio-political and economic phenomena. The Elite theory comprises two broad strata or segments. The few that rules and the majority that are ruled. The stratum that rules or presides over the majority is a tiny minority but unfortunately, they always rule and have dominion over the majority and they are often regarded as the light of the society (Nolan, 2009)

The logic behind the emergence of this segment in the society anchored on the fact that as the society gets larger and complex, the more the power will be concentrated in a few hands. In this context, once leadership cohort emerges, it tends to control who has power and they make sure leadership remains within such clique/group or hegemony and to be able to change leadership, it has to be through violence means. So, leadership is usually difficult to change because they always do all within their power to perpetuate themselves. The Elites are interested in who is a member of an Elite class and why the person needs to be there and those who belong to this cohort must accept the status quo and those who challenge them are usually repressed and subjugated with the paraphernalia of the State apparatus and power, for example Police, Security Agencies and power play supremacy scenario.

The Elite theory informed this discourse because it aptly explains the nexus between the rulers and the ruled and how this translate to affluence i.e. the rich and squalor and deprivation i.e. the poor in the society and how this eventually breeds inequality for example in the Nigerian Society. It also demonstrates how this unequal and unhealthy relationship in the society is perpetuated and the status quo maintained till date.

Conceptual Explication

Income

Income may mean different things to different people in different contexts, but simply defined in this context, income is the consumption and saving opportunity gained by an entity/individual(s) within a specific time frame, which is generally expressed in monetary terms. For households and individuals, income is the sum of all the wages, salaries, profits, interests, rents and other forms of earnings received in a given period of time. While in the context of public economics, the concept may comprise the accumulation of both monetary and non-monetary consumption ability with the former (monetary) being used as a proxy for tax income (Bar, 2004, Case and Fair, 2007; Staff, 2012).

According to Kegan (2019), income is money (or some equivalent value) that an individual or business receives in exchange for providing goods or services or through investing capital, hence income is used to fund day-to-day expenditures. Investment, pensions and social securities are primary sources of income for retirees, but for individuals, income is most often received in the form of wages and salaries. In other words, individuals receiving income through earning wages by working and for making investments into financial assets such as stock exchange, bonds, and real estate for instance an investor's stock holding may pay more income in the form of annual 5% dividend. The revenue generated by income, taxes finances government's activities and programs as determined by the Federal and States governments budgets (Kagan, 2019).

Income from wages, salaries, interests, dividends, business income, capital gains and pensions received during a given tax year are considered taxable income in most countries. The types of income listed above would be classified as ordinary income, which comprised mainly wages, salaries, commissions, and interest income from bonds and it is taxable using ordinary income tax. This type of income differs from capital gain or dividend income in that it can only be off set with standard tax deductions, while capital gain can only be off set with capital losses (www.investopedia.com).

Income Distribution

In the context of economics, income distribution is how a nation's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is distributed amongst its population. Income and its distribution have always been a central concern of economic theories and economic policies. Historically, classical economists, such as Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo were mainly concerned with the factors that affect or impact income distribution. I.e. the distribution of income between the main factors of production, namely: land labour and capital. However, modern economists

have also addressed this issue, but have been more concerned with the distribution of income across individuals and households (Arthur and Sheffrin, 2003; Nolan, 2009).

According to Andrei and Cracium(2015), in the economic theory, the economic inequality is defined as the discrepancy between the poor and the rich in terms of income distribution, the distribution of wealth, of the education, of employment, of life satisfaction and happiness within a country, between countries and geographical areas. The main channels of economic disparities are industrialization and urbanization which attracted an unequal distribution of income between the rural areas and cities,(like Lagos and Port Harcourt in Nigeria) between industries and agriculture, high inflation that deepens the income inequality, fiscal policies, globalization and technical progress, and also the factors of production differences between developed and poor underdeveloped nations (Walsh and Yu, 2012; Atkinson et al, 2011; Penalosa, 2008).

Contextually, income distribution refers to the mechanism by which national income is distributed between individuals and groups who are somehow involved in economic activities. In other words, income distribution describes how national income and the proportion of individuals are distributed among the population of a society (Nemati and Raisi, 2005). Income distribution means the spread between different groups, strata, classes and regions including geo-political zones of a nation, a sub-region or Continents and world-wide as a result of economic systems to the extent that income is concentrated in a specific group or a stratum. In Nigeria, income distribution is tilted in favour of the elites and the South Western part of Nigeria, specifically, Lagos and Ogun States and Rivers states hence income of some members of these aforementioned states far outweigh the earning of Nigerians in other states save the political appointees in Abuja and other States who earn jumbo salaries and emoluments.

Income Inequality

Inequality has to do with differences in the share of something between/among two or more persons where the share of one/some is/are greater than that of the others. Ray, (1988) succinctly posited that economic (income) inequality manifest when an individual or group of individuals is/are given some or more material resources or choices while other in the same category is/are denied the same or similar resources/choices. However, inequality can be in income, consumption, political participation, leadership position in government and organizations, wealth, gender, employment and health variables amongst others. In the context of this paper, income inequality is the subject of discourse and is defined here as the lopsidedness, imbalance, and inequitable distribution of income among the members of the Nigerian society or in the economy of Nigeria.

Wage Administration

Wage administration like many other concepts in social and behavioral Sciences has been variously defined by different authors and from different cosmology or world views. In the context of this study, wage administration connotes the management of human resources in

regards to the payment of salaries to workers when services are rendered. Wages and salaries constitute a significant part of the total cost of production in any organization or establishment (Nwachukwu, 2009) and in some public service; wages and salaries constitute more than 50% of the operating cost of any organization. Usually, there is a contractual agreement between the employers and the employees, whereby the employees render their services and in keeping with their own part, the employers endeavor to pay their workers as at when due (Obiora, 2012). To some scholars, wage and salary administration means the development, implementation and on-going maintenance of a basic pay system and the main purpose for wage and salary administration is to provide a pay system that is both competitive and equitable (Atchison, 2003). In the context of this discourse, wage and salary administration activities refer to those strategies, plans and schemes that give rise to pay policies. Such policies set the overall direction of pay within the organization or establishment, public or private. Wage administration refers to the rate of pay the employers give to the employees for services rendered and how this pay rate is determined. Minimum wage issue is properly situated in wage administration in the Civil Service and Nigeria, having a federal structure, each of the federating units ought to fix the wages and salaries of their respective State Civil Service, but the Federal Government deliberately allowed the minimum wage to remain in the exclusive legislative list despite agitations and protests by state government to move it to concurrent list (Agburu, 2012).

The administration of President Goodluck Jonathan in August 2010 approved N18,000 (Eighteen thousand Naira) minimum wage which took effect from January, 2011, but it was objected to by many State Governors who claimed that it will have negative macroeconomic effect on the economy of their States (Okon, 2014). Presently, in the year 2020, the President Muhammadu Buhari administration in 2019, approved the payment of N30,000 (Thirty thousand Naira) minimum wage which was arrived at after series of meetings and negotiations with workers' representatives and the Federal Government with some States Government claiming they lack the resources to pay such amount to their workers.

Income Distribution Inequality and Challenges of Wage Administration in Nigeria: The Nexus

Income inequality is the difference in per capital income of household incomes across population within or across countries hence there have been rising concern about the relationship between wage administration, income inequality and economic development of developing countries. Income inequality affects economic development through such channels as the political economy, credit market imperfections, and socio-political instability amongst others. Income distribution affects economic development through such channels as the political economy, level of corruption, human and natural resource endowment, sectorial allocations of manpower, level of economic development and the size of government subsidiaries, (Isere, Ibrahim and Agu, 2010).

This is the crux of this discourse because, Nigeria is a country with increasing population with a staggering per capital income, widening income inequality and disparity within and between the poor and rich and this require urgent attention if the efforts for economic

development and advancement are to make any positive and realistic impact on the populace. Nigeria is among the twenty countries in the world with the widest gap between the rich and the poor and this may be the reasons why even the genuine efforts at development issues seem not to proffer solutions to issues like unemployment, corruption, rots and decay of infrastructure, poverty and squalor, youth restiveness, and the myriads of problems bedeviling the Nigerian society, (Isere et al, 2010).

Income inequality is the bane of most socio-economic problems in Nigeria, in the context of wage administration, which has resulted in myriads of socio-economic, political and ethno-religious problems like corruption, labor turnover, and incessant industrial actions, unequal access to opportunities, despair, riots, insurgencies and lack of trust and mistrust, amongst others.

Development is said to be a predictor that determines whether a country is progressing or not hence a critical assessment of Nigeria's development despite her abundant human and natural resources reveals that the country is yet to achieve the desired expectations as clamored for by her citizens (Abasilim, 2015). The reason for this underdevelopment is bad leadership because it is bad leadership that makes the government to renege on agreement reached at negotiations with labor representatives during implementation. The crux of this discourse is the problems, challenges/lacuna created by income inequality in Nigeria. As mentioned earlier, wage administration is about policies, and ideas which are focused at the development of and welfare of public servants in the context of the socio-economic, socio-political development of the society. Income inequality has been described as the defining challenge of our time (Awe and Olawunmi, 2012) and economic growth is expected to lead to economic development and increase in the welfare of the masses; and this is hoped to reduce the existing level of inequality.

However, one of the most serious problems bedeviling Nigeria today is that there is a sharp disconnect between the level of growth and development because what is rather obtainable is that there is growth without development because of the wide gap of inequality existing in the society (Akpoilih and Fargyibi, 2016). The high levels of income inequality inevitably emanated from poor wage administration in Nigeria and invariably cascade down to the several issues, resource allocation, equity, fair play and social justice. This also creates the problems of ineptitude, unproductive elites and hence breeds corruption, unproductivity, and bloated recurrent expenditures on the part of resource allocation by the government.

Extreme Income inequality polarized the Nigerian people into few billionaires, few barely surviving middle class and the millions of masses who are living below one dollar (\$1) per day. There is a big challenge of wage administration because of the extreme inequality between the few political office holders *Vis-a-Vis* the over 170 million Nigerians who are living from hands to mouth on a daily basis. The so-called political elites influence sectorial allocation of resources and budgetary allocation that are skewed in favor of recurrent expenditure which favor them- the political appointees and their cohorts. For example, over 65% of the Federal and State government budgets are allocated for recurrent expenditures meant for servicing the bogus salaries and emoluments of political office holders in and out of office.

These skewed budgetary and sectorial allocations negatively affect wage administration because little or nothing is left or allocated for other sectors and capital development.

Ideally, development of an economy connotes a multidimensional process involving major changes in the social structures, political attitudes and national institutions as well as acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty (Lanre and Erssons, 1997, in Isere et al, 2010). These ideals listed above in addition to qualitative and quantitative stability, advancement and progressing towards attainment of social, political and economic aspirations are elusive as far as Nigeria is concerned. There are cleavages, in political attitudes, social structures and national institutions, because the political class (elites) believes they are special crop (group) of Nigeria and do not feel the pulse of the masses' miseries, they glow in the depleting of the nations' resources under the pretense of governance hence they always support allocations of chunk of the nation's resources to maintaining their gluttonous appetite for fund and find it difficult to give a fare minimum wage to the lower civil servants, hence the wide gap in income. Those in the oil sector equally live as if they are not part of the Nigerian society, their affluence lifestyle fuels the greed and corruption which help in plaguing the oil sector with endemic and pandemic corruption, rot and decay. The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) is unarguably the flagship of corruption and decay and deeply involved in the budgetary allocation of scarce resources for oil subsidiaries and turn-around maintenance of dysfunctional Refineries in Nigeria. The billions of naira expended on subsidiaries would have brought succor to other sectors of the economy and to Nigerians.

Another challenge of wage administration is that the salaries and wages of civil servants have never been fixed in such a way that they can sustain the basic minimum basic requirements of the Civil Servants. The wage rate is usually low and this makes the workers to always agitate for more or increased pay. The politicians and those in the House of Assembly ensures that the civil servants are given peanuts as salaries and wages while they allocate jumbo salaries and allowances to themselves thereby heightening the level of income inequality in the society. For instance some State Governors claim they do not have the capacity to pay the meager sum fixed as minimum wage, yet their wardrobe allowance alone is enough to pay the salaries of staff in a Ministry or department of the State Civil Service.

There is also the behavioral challenge of wage administration in Nigeria as a result of income inequality. This is because behavior is the reference point of most administration. In this context, there is the challenge of genuineness of attitude exhibited by the so-called technocrats who flaunt rules, ethics, group dynamics and manifestation of apathy towards credibility, honesty and status quo, but because of low wage, these technocrats and other workforce indulges in cutting corners, manifest traits of avarice and grand corruption in the face of weak or non-existent public accountability mechanism all in bids to make quick money, make wealth or join the league of "big boys" who are mainly political jobbers and assistants to power –that-be (Harrison and Huntington, 2000).

There is also the political component of the challenges of the minimum wage administration in Nigeria, because political development determines above all what happens to

the efforts to bring about development. The Political system of a nation is a vital and chief determinant of productive atmosphere for the pursuit of other aspect of development (Ibietan, 2014). The catalyst, the overseeing and supervisory role of the political sector go a long way in ensuring that the set goals of the nation are not only realized but sustained and improved upon. In an attempt to provide jobs for the unemployed and to fulfill election promises, the government employs more than they actually need for efficient service delivery, and this has implications for increased wage bill and makes high wage rate difficult. The body language or dispositions, utterances and life styles to mention but a few of the political leaders usually send either the right or wrong signals to the international community, would-be-investors and local entrepreneurs who may embrace the call for investment in the economy or look elsewhere for their investments. This may also result in capital flight, brain drain and social capital depletion and indirectly affects income mobility. Unfortunately, the life styles and dispositions of Nigeria political leaders sends wrong and warning signals to the international community hence there have been massive capital flights from Nigeria.

Other problems or challenges of wage administration includes but not limited to corruption, nepotism, biased and stereotyped project and development allocations, ethno-religious cleavages, parochial and myopic leadership, urban biased development focus to the detriment of the rural areas, bloated political workforce, and their jumbo and bogus remunerations and severance packages and unhealthy rivalry between the Arms of the Government at the three-tier governments. Others are lack of healthy political culture, intra and inter party squabbles, lack of clarity in the fiscal policies of the government, subjugation of the womenfolk and hence the wasting of the invaluable potentials women would have unleashed on the Nigerian society, the mindsets of Nigerians particularly the youths and the hyper-inflation ravaging the Nigerian economy.

Income Distribution, Inequality and the Challenges of Wage Administration in Nigeria

The development of an economy connotes a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, political attitudes and national institutions, as well as acceleration of economic growth with indices like the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty (Lanre and Erssons, in Isere et al, 2010). This connotes a qualitative and quantitative stability, advancement and a progress towards attainment of social, political and economic aspirations. MaziMbah (2006), elucidated the treatise of Aristotle(384BC-3BC) on the State as inherently concerned with public governance as the conclusion of human development which was termed as teleologism. Aristotle viewed the State as the highest form of human social and political development, allowing its citizens to find and live the good life because the State is established for the good of the citizens. In this context, aligning with this position Apeh (2018), stated that governing or administering an organization or a society, nation or a community of nations, is basically of the need to evolve, execute and maintain or improve on the policies that will ensure that the people in that group or nation have a common goal. Also, Adefeso and Bolaji (2010), succinctly posited that the major goals of a government are the achievement of macro-economic goals which entails full employment, stability of price level, high and

sustainable economic growth and external balance amongst other and these have been the priority of all nations of the world whether developed or underdeveloped.

Wage administration is one of the most used and effective instrument for affecting the wage administration and attaining sustainable development in most nations of the world. As a result of its pivotal and important role, wage administration has remained a contentious political issues and object of controversies among government, workers, organizations and employers, and these controversies results in challenges that manifest in various dimensions (Benassi, 2011). One of the major challenges of wage administration in Nigeria is because of socio-economic impact. This is because wage administration to workers which result in vicious circle o are anchored on the illusion that “money answereth all things” but the value of wages usually dwindle quickly hence there is constant decrease in the value of increased earnings to workers which result in vicious circle of demands in wage in Nigeria. The real challenge in wage administration is matching wages with expenditure in the context of the cost of living and hyper-inflationary forces in Nigeria ((Agbonifo, Agbadudu and Iyayi, 2006).

Another challenge of wage administration in Nigeria has to do with the wage and administration policy of monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring and evaluation is often an integral function of an organization’s human resources department but in reality, this function is diffused because the larger an organization/unit of government the more likely it is that its wage administration is handled by more than one department. This creates rivalries and suspicion/lack of trust and inefficiencies (okeke, Nwale&Achike, 2017).

Poor and bad leadership and lack of political will are major challenges of wage administration in Nigeria. Wage administration are usually trivialized, politicized and bastardized by politicians and their cohorts in the civil services of Nigeria. As a result of unwholesome publicity of Nigerian wage increase or payment of any arrears, the goals and aspirations of such wage increase are usually defeated sue generis, before the increase or payment is made (Ileka&Muogbo, 2020). The nonchalance and laxity currently being observed among some civil servants is a result of loss of confidence in the government as a result of challenges of wage administration in Nigeria.

Wage administration in Nigeria also face the challenge of implementation and enforcement measures and lack of compliance with the legal framework. Wage administration is only restricted to the formal sectors of the economy hence the redistribution of income from the informal sector are down-played and ineffective. In other words, there are not built-in mechanism for the enforcement of the policy of wage administration and this stereotyped lopsided administration policy and development thrusts of Nigerian government negatively impact on the overall socio-economic development.

Conclusion

This paper elucidated the nitty-gritty of income and wage administration and its challenges in Nigeria. It espoused the reasons why poor wage administration is the progenitor and purveyor of income inequality and other myriads of challenges of development because

income inequality breeds negative attitude and isolationist dispositions to the endemic poverty ravaging the Nigerian society. Attempt by the rich and very rich to fund and maintain their life styles compels them to influence the polity and political gladiators to tilt the balance in their favor, hence they continue to appropriate the scarce resources and opportunities available in the society for their benefit and that of their cohorts and successors. This is why the few megaWalt generated by the Power Generating Company of Nigeria is distributed among the residents of government Residential Areas (GRA), while residents of slums may not have light for months and this will not make headlines in Newspapers. This paper also espoused the lopsided capital allocation and development by the political class especially those in the realm or corridor of power/ governance either the Executive or Legislative Arms.

It is imperative that these challenges of minimum wage administration should be tackled head-on else the gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria may continue to grow. These challenges are from within and without but they are surmountable hence all hands should be on deck to redress these anomalies so that the income inequality gap could be bridged and Nigeria can be developed and be among the Committee of developed nations of the world for the benefit of all and not for a few.

Recommendations

To tackle the challenges of Inequality and Development Administration, the paper recommends that:

1. Efforts should be made towards income redistribution in Nigeria for the sake of social justice, equity and fair play.
2. There should be constitutional amendment to check-mate the bogus allocations of resources to the political office holders and
3. Equity and fair play should be observed in allocations of resources to all sectors of society in the country.

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