

THE CIVIL SERVICE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The Civil service is one of the agents of development in any nation. The transformation of any society or system depends on the effectiveness and efficiency of its civil service, particularly, the developing societies. This paper critically assessed the role of civil service, and its contribution to national development in Nigeria. The paper also examined the factors impeding the performance of civil service in relation to sustainable development. The paper adopted secondary method of data collection to source information. The paper concluded that the Nigeria Civil Service is bedeviled with series of problems particularly corruption, and needed to be sanitized and strengthened so as to ensure effective service delivery.

Key words- Civil Service, Nigeria, Development, National Development, Sustainable Development, Developing Society and Civil Servant

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, as in other developing countries, governments are carrying the bulk of the burden of economic development. The state, being the biggest employer of labour as a result of lack of a well-developed private sector, has thus become one huge instrument for stemming unemployment and other socio-economic miseries. Developing countries depend on big governments for their development because of their peculiar circumstances (Ola, 1990).

With a heterogeneous social environment characterized by powerful contenders for state authority, Nigeria, perhaps more than any other country in Africa, faces greater challenges of development and rational allocation of societal resources (Nwosu, 1997). In Nigeria, the wider society looks up to the civil service not only to implement development goals and administer government policies on a day-to-day basis, but also to play significant roles in formulating development strategies, policies and programmes in such a way that will stimulate accelerated social and economic changes. Such desired changes are naturally expected to include reduced unemployment, increased social products and a more equitable redistribution of income. Yet these desires remain unfulfilled in the face of festering unemployment and poverty.

The crux of the development problem in Nigeria lies not in the absence of political authority, but in the existence of several legitimated authorities in the wider society which in various ways constrain the exercise of national political authority, as well as threaten the existence of political community.

The Civil service today is a battered institution, which has virtually lost its attributes of anonymity, neutrality and security in tenure, an institution in which moral has reached its nadir, in which excessive caution, undue bureaucratic

practice and in terminable delays have become the hallmarks. The institution is seemingly resistant to dynamic change, and has become the object of constant public criticism (FRN, 1988). The challenges posed for the civil service by its increased size complexity responsibilities in Nigerias' economic boom and depression, and made it a subject of public inquiry and target of mass purges by successive governments, all in an attempt to tailor it towards the accomplishment of societal goals. Example of such inquiries in post- independence Nigeria include the 1971 Adebo Commission, 1974 Udoji Commission, 1985 Philips and the Ayida Commission of 1997 (Mimiko, 1999). Besides the aforementioned inquiries, in 1975, the Murtala/Obasanjo regime purged the Nigeria civil service of some 11,000 Civil servants and also in 1984, Buhari/Idiagbon administration further relieved about 3,000 federal civil servants of their posts.

Despite incisive recommendations of the above-named panels as well as retrenchment exercise, the problems of the civil service continued unabated. This has also limit the capacity of the civil service to actually play a meaningful role in development process. It is against this background that this paper examines and assesses the role and contributions of the civil service to national development.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Civil Service- Adamolekun (2002), states that the civil service is commonly used as the synonym of the machinery of the government, this is so in Britain and most common wealth countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. In the British conception, the civil service is used to refer to the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the decision makers.

The civil service according to the 1999 constitution, section 318 sub sections 1 is :

Service of the Federation (state) in a civil capacity, staff of the office of the President, (Governor), the vice President, (Deputy Governor), a ministry or department of the federation (state), assigned with the responsibility for any business of the government of the federation (state), (FRN,1999).

The term civil service is normally used when referring to the body of men and women employed in a civil capacity and non-political career basis by the Federal and state Governments primarily to render and faithfully give effect to their decisions and implementation (Ipinlaiye, 2001).Such career officers normally derive their appointment from the civil service commission, which also exercises power of delegating duties and responsibilities to department in accordance with laid down rules.

Today, the civil service has come to be regarded as modern institution bequeathed to mankind in the process of revolutionizing an efficient way of organizing any large human organization. It is in this respect that the civil service is defined as a bureaucracy (Ipinlaiye, 2001).

The civil service can also be seen as a complex organization with a body of seemingly permanent officials appointed in a capacity to assist the political executives in the formulation, execution and implementation of the government policies in Ministries and Extra-Ministerial Departments within which the specific government works are carried out.

DEVELOPMENT

Development is a complex and multidimensional concept. It has many facets, social, political, economic and cultural. But for the purpose of this study, Development is defined as the improvement of the economy, often regarded by many as national economic management of a desirable increase in the gross national output and the equitable distribution of the output among the entire populace, the attainment of relative stability in general price levels, high productivity and full employment as well as the maintenance of a healthy balance of payments situation (Olaleye, 2004).

In a different and simpler form, development implies improvement in material well being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, but everybody in the society (Gboyega, 2003). It also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. Development involves both socio-economic and political issues.

OVERVIEW OF SOME PAST NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN NIGERIA

We have had series of development plans in Nigeria. Nigeria is permanently hunted by the spectre of development. Its forty-nine years of independence actually are rolling by daily in search of development. The myth of growth and development is so entrenched that the country's history passes for the history of development strategies and growth models from colonial times up to date. No term has been in constant flux as development. This seems the only country where virtually all notions and models of development have been experimented (Aremu, 2003).

Two years after independence, the first National Development Plan policy was formulated between 1962 and 1968 with the objectives of development opportunities in health, education and employment and improving access to these opportunities etc. This plan failed because fifty percent of resources needed to finance the plan was to come from external sources, and only fourteen percent of the external finance was received (Ogwumike, 1995). Collapse of the first Republic and the commencement of civil war also disrupted the plan. After the civil war in 1970, the second National Development plan 1970-74 was launched, the plan priorities were in agriculture, industry, transport, manpower, defence, electricity, communication and water supply and provision of social services (Ogwumike, 1995). The third plan, covering the period of 1975-80 was considered more ambitious than the second plan. Emphasis was placed on rural development and efforts to revamp agricultural sector. The fourth plan 1981 –85 recognized the role of social services, health services etc. The plan was aimed at bringing about improvement in the living conditions of the people. The specific objectives were; an increase in the real income of the average citizen, more even distribution of income among individuals and socio-economic groups, increased dependence on the country's material and human resources, a reduction in the level of unemployment and underemployment (Ogwumike, 1995).

During these periods, Nigeria's enormous oil wealth was not invested to build a viable industrial base for the country and for launching an agrarian revolution to liquidate mass poverty. For instance, the Green Revolution Programme that replaced Operation Feed the Nation failed to generate enough food for the masses

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper seeks to understand the role of civil service in national development in Nigeria. It is essentially a study of the impact of civil service contribution to sustainable development. Based on this, the paper will be situated within the ambit of New Public Management theory. This is because new public management theory is the transition from process and procedure to an arrangement that is workable, practicable and result oriented. The theory places emphasis on good governance as a result of the recent globalization of the economy, technological innovation and democratization. As a conceptualization of the effective service, new public management theory is a relentless movement in the direction of greater transparency in resource allocation, decentralization of management authority and performance management through service quality (Pollit, 1996). New Public Management theory therefore captures the basis of institutional and organization restructuring as an attempt to raise its performance by improving the quality of service delivery. It is result focused rather than the process of result. The theory is concerned primarily with how to deliver public goods efficiently and equitably (Shah, 2006:6)

New Public Management theory came up with different concepts for performance and principles to achieve it (Hood, 1991). Basically, Hood identified the principles as 'accountability and efficiency; reduction of public sector expenditure; improvement in resource use through labour discipline; flexibility in decision making; competition in the public sector through decentralization and emphasis on result and not procedure.

Jones and Thompson (1999) interpret new public management as the five Rs, they are restructuring to focus on core competences, reengineering of work process, radical organization reinvention, realignment by introducing activity based costing and responsibility budgeting, rethinking by reconceptualising public sector bureaucracies or learning organizations. They focus on models of New Public Management and conceptualized four categories of model as follows; efficiency model, downsizing and decentralization model, management of change model and public service orientation to change model. These models are developed to engender effective service delivery. Also, Larbi (1998) observes that New Public Management theory centres on accountability, transparency, democratization and citizen participation.

The new public management theory was an effort to improve government service delivery to the citizenry because of the expectations of the people. In many developing countries of Latin America and Africa, the new public management was a paradigm shift from autocracy to democracy in the dawn of political pluralism. New public management becomes an avenue through which democratic governance will transform into a better governance that will lead to public policies that are technically efficient and effective and also responsive to the needs of large sections of the citizenry. The main current of the new public management literature is concerned not with what to do but how to do it better. It argues for an incentive environment in which leaders are given flexibility in the use of resources but held accountable for results. Top-down controls are thus replaced by a bottom-up focus on result (Shah, 2006: 10) The emerging focus on client orientation and results-based accountability is encouraging civil service to innovate in many parts of the world (Ibid). As a deviation from the principles of new public management, the civil service abysmal performance in Nigeria can be viewed and understood as a carry over effect of this deviation. New public management has captured vividly the reason for the 'procedure without result' of civil service operation in Nigeria. It can be said that various civil service reforms in Nigeria did not consider the option of new public management as alternative to excessiveness, therefore, policies were very good on paper and implementation and workability remain a tall dream. The civil service in Nigeria is still being explainable

using the 'old bureaucracy' that depends on degree of rigidity of rules, formal structuring and inefficiency, which inadvertently affect sustainable development at all levels of government in Nigeria.

CIVIL SERVICE IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian Civil Service is an important institution of the state. In fact, it is almost the most important institution of Nigerian State affecting the life of citizens daily. It is essential to modern life because of the roles it plays. Therefore, the quality of the Civil Service is important to the quality of modern life. The Nigerian Civil Service has undergone various changes since the amalgamation of the socio-political development in Nigeria has over the years had some major and tremendous effects on the Civil Service. Such developments include State creation, the civil war, the Military regimes, Political instability, ethnicity, Federal Character and so on (Omotoso, 2001).

In 1900, Britain formally established its authority over the political communities in the country. The amalgamation of both the Northern and Southern Protectorates laid the framework for the evolution of a centralized bureaucratic structure in Nigeria. British imposed a unified Civil Service in Nigeria. The imposed civil Service was mainly concerned with the maintenance of law and order and the mobilization of enough local resources in order to ensure that colonial administration was self sufficient. According to Ciroma, The Nigerian Civil Service began as a force of occupation designed to facilitate colonial rule and the exploitation of the land and its people for the benefit of the colonial authority (Ciroma, 1977). The Colonial Civil Service in Nigeria was not concerned with the growth and development of the Nigeria Nation. It was more interested in exploitations of Nigerians.

The structure of Nigerian Civil Service is patterned on the British model. The service is divided into classes, viz administrative class, executive class, professional class, clerical class and the messengerial class. The nationalists agitation for independence brought about the introduction of the Nigerianisation policy. The essence of this policy was to make Nigerian Civil service entirely staffed, managed and controlled by Nigerians themselves (Omotoso, 2001).

At independence in 1960, so many British officials were replaced with Nigerians but inspite of this, the old (Colonial) method of doing things was still predominant in the Civil Service. In other words, the whites were replaced by Nigerians; yet, the west Minister-patterned General Orders and Financial instructions remained the operational codes in the Nigerian Civil Service.

At independence, Nigerians had virtually taken over the control and management of the civil service. The Civil servants were inexperienced because of the indigenization policy most of them occupied positions that their abilities and capabilities in terms of experience, training and qualifications cannot cope with. A number of factors affected the quality and performance of the civil service in the First Republic One, was the indigenization policy. The civil servants that occupied positions were unprepared. They lacked the necessary training initiative and administrative acumen (Okunade, 1990). Second, was the administrative style. The Civil servants that took over from the British officials promoted and maintained the style, customs, conventions and the traditions they inherited from the colonial administration. This was a serious problem for the Civil service as change was very necessary. Three, was the nature of politics in the country. The politics in the First Republic was ethnically coloured, the three political parties the, the Action Group (AG) The Northern People's Congress, (NPC) and the National Council of Nigerian and Citizens (NCNC) were working towards ensuring that the party from its zone takes over the control of the country. This led to a lot of crises that affected not only the civil

service but the entire country. Four, was the political Leadership. At independence in Nigeria, the leadership was immature, conservative, inexperienced and lacked foresight and vision. The meddling roles of the politicians of the first republic curtailed and inhibited the performance of the Civil Service. The second Republic Politicians were interested in all things that came their way. In fact, it can be simply said that they hijacked policy making and to some extent policy implementation completely from the Civil Service. This had demoralizing effects on the Civil Servants as they were not allowed to use initiative and to provide necessary advice for the country.

In 1999, the civil service assumed a new dimension, it became dynamic and effective, unlike the past, civil service were allowed to perform their traditional duty, which is to advise and to implement policies of government (The Punch, May 2, 2000). It is not our contention that the Civil service under Obasanjo administration was problem-free but that the regime gave new lease of life to the sector. In 1999, the civil service was revitalized by training and retraining. The change that was brought into civil service in 1999 by Obasanjo regime is still thriving, the current administration has not done much to improve on what Obasanjo did during his time, except the Eighteen Thousand Naira minimum wage for civil servants that is waiting to be approved by government, if approved at the end of the day, it will be an improvement to what Obasanjo regime did.

CIVIL SERVICE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Since earliest times, strong recognition has been accorded a permanent body of officials for the sole purpose of implementing governmental decisions. With the emergencies of modern states, the civil service of a state is a derivation of the political system within which it operates. Aside from the primary functions of civil service, which include, advising political office holders on policy formulation on all aspects of governmental activities to ensure formulation of policies that are in line with the objectives of the incumbent government and that are relevant to peoples' needs, implementation of governmental policy decision, sustenance of continuity of the state, regulation of business activities and provision of social services, the civil service also plays a dominant role in socio-economic development of any country, especially in Nigeria where the public sector plays a direct role in national development (Ajayi, 1997).

Civil Service in Nigeria occupies a unique position in the formulation and implementation of national development plans. The Public Service Review Commission main report of (2004) is concerned primarily with development and the use of the public service for this purpose. The report argued that we must consciously understand and articulate our objectives and define appropriate means to achieve them. The commission affirmed that a trend in social change in Nigeria is the increasing role of government in sustainable development. This required that public services, especially the civil service increasingly adopts management methods, development requisite managerial skills and acquires a new approach that include project management that will ensure and assure sustainable development.

As analysed in the previous section of this paper, the civil service had to a great extent been affected by the nature and politics of Nigeria since independence. During the colonial era, the civil service was mainly concerned with the maintenance of law and order and existence of a peaceful climate suitable to the colonial masters. After independence, the emphasis was on social and economic development. The civil service had to adapt its basic role to the new challenges. With the advent of the military government in January, 1966 and the suspension of the constitution, the civil service became exposed to functions essentially incompatible with its traditional roles (Olagunju, 2000).

After the civil war of 1967-1970, the role of the civil service shifted to preserving national unity, nation reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. With increase in oil revenue, emphasis shifted to the development of infrastructures and provision of social services. From early 1979, the role of the civil service has had to adopt to modern challenges of managing an ailing economy through Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Rationalization, Nationalization and of recent, Privatization, Poverty alleviation, empowerment e.t.c.

It should be noted at this juncture that series of reforms have been carried out in the Civil Service over the years. These reforms are put in place to bring sanity to the system and to effectively position the Civil Service for effective service delivery capable of ensuring sustainable development in Nigeria. Most of these reforms are also implemented at state and local level so as to generate development in the grassroots.

CHALLENGES OF THE CIVIL SERVICE AS AGENT OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria civil Service has over the years been facing myriads of problems that have also made it difficult for the system to function effectively as agent of development. Some of these problems are analysed below.

One, is poor remuneration, despite the increment in salary, the civil service salary in Nigeria is still very low. Because of the low salary, Most civil servants are engaging in sharp practices, most of them keep business letter headed papers, invoices receipts of various companies owned by them and because suppliers and contractors even to their own offices. This affects their contribution to development.

Two, is corruption, this has become more or less a permanent problem in the Nigerian civil service. Bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria continues to grow by leaps and bounds. So many civil servants have defrauded and embezzled government money earmarked for developmental purposes. Most of them would demand for money before rendering their supposedly service to the members of the public. This has made development difficult via the civil service (Omotoso, 2001). Most of the civil servants are living above their income.

Three, is the over bloated civil service, the Nigerian civil service is overbloated as many are employed without doing anything. Apart from this, incessant state creation exercise is also contributing to the problem. When new state is created, civil service is also expanded, therefore, the urge to fill the necessary position in the civil service by the new state always lead to urgent and compulsory promotion, so, in the process, many civil servants are promoted above their efficiency and productivity.

Four, is political instability, the political instability that characterized Nigerian nation has caused a fatal blow to the development and growth of the civil service.

Five, is inadequate training and retraining this affect the productivity of the civil service and consequently development of the nation. Training is not adequate in the civil service, even when it is carried out, it is politicized.

Six, is lacking of planning and vision. Most Civil servant do not have genuine interest for development. They are not committed to the course of development. They are mostly interested in what will benefit them and their immediate family. They are less concerned about the overall development of the country.

Seventh, is the use of old and obsolete equipments. Today, most government ministries and parastatals both at federal, state and local government levels are still working with typewriting machine in this age of computer. The funny aspect of it is that most civil servants are not computer literate. They do not know how to work with modern machines. As a matter of fact, this will affect their efficiency and productivity.

CONCLUSION

Having discussed civil service and national development, it is observed that the Nigerian civil service is an important institution of the state. In fact, it is almost the most important institution of Nigerian state affecting the life of citizen. It is essential to modern life because of the roles it plays. Therefore, for civil service to be more effective in its developmental roles, the following suggestions are put forth.

One, the civil servant should be trained and retrained on regular basis if the stock of mental tools and Professional techniques are not to become obsolete. Such training should be deliberately planned, made compulsory and geared towards the achievement of specialization and professionalism.

Two, Appointment into civil service must be based on merit and qualification.

Three, the civil service should be made attractive in all respects, and accorded greater recognition and responsibility. Civil servant should be motivated to stimulate them to effective efforts, because individual productivity capacity depends very largely on one's level of psychic satisfaction. This will increase the level of commitment, hard work, creativity and disposition among the civil servants.

Four, promotion should be based on merit, while outstanding performances with concrete achievement should attract preferment. The merit principle is to preserve objectivity, rationality and consistency in handling personnel matters in the loyalty and commitment of carrier civil servants.

Five, the use of modern equipment such as computers should be introduced across board. And civil servant should be trained for these modern equipments to enhance greater productivity.

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