



RE-INVENTING NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The paper examines re-inventing Nigerian civil service for effective service delivery in the 21st century. The use of secondary data was adopted as well as eloquent testimonies of the bad state of civil service as concrete evidence of inefficiency in the civil service. In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics and qualitative technique were employed. Findings reveal that the Nigerian civil service is one of the significant legacies left by the colonialists which serves as a functional tool required to put the nation on the path of recovery that could match the rising expectation of the people savouring the euphoria of independence which necessitated the reforms in the civil service. In spite of this reform, the civil service is faced with such challenges such as acute obsolescence of method, frequent postings and reshufflings of top administrators, problem of adequate and appropriate office accommodation, lackadaisical attitude of lower cadres etc. The paper therefore suggests that for effective and efficient service delivery of the civil service in the 21st century, there is the need to redesign services and deliver them digitally, organize in-service training courses for the junior cadres; and restore confidence and morale among the working force in the public service.

Keywords: *Re-inventing, Nigerian, Civil service, Service delivery, 21st century.*

Introduction

The attainment of good governance in any society depends on the effective and efficient provision of services for its citizens. Such service delivery is better performed by an arm of executive called civil service. Civil service is the administrative bureaucracy of any country that is saddled with the responsibility of implementing and enforcing the policies and programmes of government. It therefore means that for policy objectives of the state to be achieved, the civil service must be alive to its responsibilities.

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anges of development and stability of the polity depends a
ile, and accountable public service system.

The civil service is normally the thinking arm of the sovereign nations, and often draws from a country's most unique talent pool; from its established centers of knowledge production- the universities, the research centers and the entire schools system. It generates ideas to create and continuously renew the charter and mission of nationhood (Nwakanma, 2014).

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia refers to civil service as either a branch of governmental service in which individuals are employed on the basis of professional or merit as proven by competitive examinations; or the body of employees in any government agency apart from the military. Adebayo (2013) observed that civil service is not a creation of modern times but rather has its roots and dates back to the times of ancient civilization. With the emergency of modern states and the development of parliamentary system of government, the civil service evolved as the bed-rock of the executive arm of government. Therefore, for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be realized in the 21st century, the roles of civil service must not be underestimated.

Thomas (1995) observed this when he stated that the East Asian experience has underscored the critical contributions of the civil service in fostering development. Olaopa (2013) added that it does not take serious reflection to agree with Thomas Taylor Meadows's conclusion on the glory of China: -the long duration of the Chinese empire is solely and altogether owing to the good government which consists in the advancement of men of talent and merit in the civil service system. Meadows's observation was made in 1847 when he was the British Consul in Guangzhou. By 1853, William Gladstone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, reckoned with Meadows's recommendations and commissioned Stafford Northcote and Charles Trevelyan to investigate the dynamics of founding a good government on the operations of an efficient and effective civil service. The Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854 has since become the template for a modern civil service institution around which any state can ever hope to make progress through administrative facilitation of the production and distribution of public goods and services to the populace.

The civil service in Nigeria owes its existence to series of constitutional and administrative necessities. The year 1954 is very significant in Nigeria administrative history because it signals the formal establishment of a civil service structure with a truly Nigerian framework. Before this period, the civil service in Nigeria was strictly a colonial affair.

civil service witnessed the progressive reforms meant to ensure the transformation of the system (Olaopa, 2013). Over the years, research has found out that the civil service productivity and performance continue to dwindle, the reason was partly due to the lack of commitment on the part of the civil service to government work and low morale of the civil service. This situation has hampered service delivery in the public sector. Therefore, there is the need to restore confidence and morale among the working force in order to meet up with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Thus, the goal of this paper is to interrogate the reasons for poor service delivery of the civil service, the damages such inefficiency has caused the society and the need to re-invent civil service for better performance in the 21st century. Effective and efficient service delivery has become veritable tool for national development and evidence of good governance. The scope of this study is on Nigeria because it is one of the developing countries where civil service still rely on existing values rather than results or change orientation. The paper is structured into six sections, starting with this introductory part. This is followed by the evolution of civil service in Nigeria. The third section focuses on civil service reforms in Nigeria. The causes and effects of inefficiency in the civil service are found in section four while strategies for effective service delivery of Nigerian civil service in the 21st century is the basis of section five. The conclusion part is found in section six.

2.0 Evolution of Civil Service in Nigeria

The civil service in Nigeria dated as far back as 18th century when the administrative organization that was set up by the Royal Niger Company was later handed over to the British administration. The colonial administrative machinery was narrowly focused to handle the state function which was basically the maintenance of law and order. The strategy for carrying out that function was essentially through an arrangement which not only excluded the colonized personnel but also facilitated the exploitation of the colonies. The colonial government established a civil service with a limited objective of ensuring peaceful administration of the colonized people. At that time the service was principally dominated by colonial officials as Nigerians were deliberately excluded in the service, especially the senior cadre.

ting 7%) of the 2,297 senior civil servants were Nigerians;
endence (Nicolson, 1966).

The year 1954 is very significant in Nigeria administrative history because it signals the formal establishment of a civil service structure with a truly Nigerian framework. The period saw the transformation of Nigerian civil service to the Nigerians where departments were considered as the main units of the central administration and ministerial organizations were also converted into public corporations.

The evolution of the Nigerian character of the civil service reached its culmination in the post-1954 period with series of reforms that constituted the beginning of the institution of the civil service system in Nigeria. Thus, from 1954, the civil service became the center of furious and progressive reforms meant to ensure that the evolution of the system would transform it into an adequate institution around which the nascent post-independence state would become true to its stated ideals of providing basic amenities to the Nigerian masses who endured the horrors of colonial administration and its exploitative logic. The Gorsuch Commission (1955), for instance, became significant for confronting from the beginning the hierarchical structure of the colonial arrangement, especially as it differentiates between the "generalists" and the "professionals". In a sense, the professionalization angle to the reform of the Nigerian civil service took its root from Gorsuch. Newns Commission (1959) took that reform initiative further with the establishment of a Westminster model organizational framework compatible with a ministerial form of government. This was achieved through the grafting of the ministerial structures on the departmental structure of the colonial service. One fall out of this was the creation of the post of the permanent secretary to whom the Minister could direct all decisional problems. These reform initiatives were progressive but not definitive. The Newns recommendations, for example, have endured with the civil service system in Nigeria to date, yet we cannot say the civil service has made historic advances that ought to transform the dynamics of governance in Nigeria (Olaopa, 2013).

Between independence in 1960 and the military takeover, the increasing influence of civil servants on policy was also clearly marked because civil service became the mainspring of policy. The dominant role which the federal Permanent Secretaries played in policy during the military regime until 1975 was a confirmation of the influence which they had established in the civilian era (Adebayo, 1984).

massive purge of the civil service, in which about 10,000 workers were dismissed for alleged inefficiency, old age, declining productivity, and doubtful probity. The exercise destroyed the esprit de corps of the civil service and broke down group cohesion. But for the military, the purge achieved one of the fundamental tenets of the administration- to put an end to civil service influence and supremacy (Adebayo, 1989).

The second republic witnessed a lot of friction in the civil service especially between the Permanent Secretaries and their Ministers/Commissioners. Even though we operated a presidential system of government, we had Permanent Secretaries whose positions were in fact recognized by the constitution. Indeed, the constitution described them as Chief Executives in the Ministries or Departments in addition to other departmental heads in a ministry. This fusion led to some degree of uncertainty, as to what the relative roles were between the Minister/Commissioner and his Permanent Secretary (Adamolekun, 1983).

After the general elections of 1983, there was a state of instability and a general atmosphere of depression in the civil service, this is because the military needed to strive very hard to restore a sense of confidence and remove the feeling of cynicism and depression which pervaded the public service. Thus, the state of the Nigerian Civil Service by 1987 was that of utter despondency and frustration with morale and enthusiasm at their lowest ebb (Adesina, 1999).

3.0 Civil Service Reforms in Nigeria

The quest for civil service reform is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. This is because according to World Bank (2002), there is a strong consensus in the international development community on the need for civil service reform in developing nations. It is therefore a topical issue of the moment as developing nations all over the world engage in the struggle to better their existence through the process of reforms for efficient and effective service delivery. Over the years, civil service in Nigeria has suffered from various policy summersaults, this has drawn the attention of past and successive governments to see the need to revitalize the civil service for efficient service delivery.

The ultimate goal of civil service reform is to raise the quality of service to support economic and social development, enhance the capacity to carry out core government functions such as revenue generation, financial management, personnel management, policy formulation etc. To achieve the above, Nigeria had embarked on many civil service reforms dated back to the pre-independence era. These reforms are in three phases such as Pre-Udoji, Udoji and Post-Udoji reforms.

Pre-Udoji Reform: Prior to Udoji reform of 1972, the following commissions were set up to review the civil service structure (Civil Service Handbook, 1997: 21-22).

Tudor Davis (1945): This was primarily concerned with the review of wages and general conditions of service (Civil Service Handbook, 1997).

Harragin Commission (1946): According to Garba and Jirgi (2014), the Harragin commission was the first commission set up to look into the man-power problem in the service and the discontent among the European members of what was described as poor financial reward. The commission made some structural changes by introducing "senior service" and "junior service," thus dividing the service into two rigid compartments (Civil Service Handbook, 1997)

Gorsuch Commission (1954): This commission was the first to attempt giving the regional administrative bureaucracies indigenous structure (Garba & Jirgi, 2014). It reviewed the senior and junior service categories and recommended that the service be structured into five main grades, from the lowest established posts upwards, with parallel classes for both the administrative and professional cadres. It recommended that the Public Service, which had been unitary, be split into four separate services, comprising the federal and three regional services (Civil Service Handbook, 1997).

Mbanefo Commission (1959): This was set up to review the basic rates of salary and wages payable to holders of posts in the Federal Public Service as well as the Public Service of the Northern and Eastern Regions and Southern Cameroon (Civil Service Handbook, 1997).

Adeyinka Morgan Commission (1963): This was set up to review the wages, salaries and conditions of service of junior federal civil servants and workers in private establishments. It introduced for the first time a minimum wage in the country on a geographical basis.

view of grading of officers and corresponding salary structure in various parts of the country on an ununiform salary grade level, conditions of service and uniform remuneration for officers performing the same duty in different parts of the country. It also recommended the award of a minimum living wage although; this was turned down by the government (Civil Service Handbook, 1997).

Adebo Salaries and Wages Commission (1971): This commission was set up to review the existing wages and salaries at all levels in the public services and in the statutory public corporations and state-owned companies; examine areas in which rationalization and harmonization of wages, salaries and other remuneration and conditions of employment are desirable and feasible as between the public and private sectors of the national economy; consider the need to establish a system for ensuring that remunerations in the public services, the statutory corporations and the state-owned companies are periodically reviewed and kept to proper national balance and make recommendations to the Federal Military Government. The commission reviewed the salaries and wages of workers and recommended that a public service commission should be put in place to take up the responsibility of effectively reviewing the salaries and wages (Report of the Salaries and Wages Commission, 1971).

The Udoji Reforms: The commission which was named after its chairman was milestone in the annals of Nigerian civil service because of the wide-ranging nature of its review and recommendations, which extended beyond the civil service and encompassed the parastatals and local governments as well. The terms of reference of the Udoji Commissionare among others to examine the organization, structure and management of the public service and recommend reforms where desirable; investigate and evaluate the method of employment and the staff development programmes of the public service; examine the legislation relating to pensions as well as the various superannuation schemes in the public services and in the private sector and suggest such changes as may be appropriate.

In his report, Udoji (1974) made such recommendations like the introduction of open reporting system for performance evaluation; the unified grading and salary structure covering all posts in the civil service; the opening of the post of chief executive of a ministry, referred to as permanent secretary; the introduction of the merit system as a basis of reward; the replacement of the confidential reporting system by the open reporting system; and the introduction of a new code of conduct to the Nigerian civil servant.

Reorganization Decree No. 43 of 1988 was enacted following the 1988 Civil Service Reforms. Subsequently, two major reforms were mitigated-- the 1988 Civil Service Reform and the 1994 Ayida Review Panel respectively.

The Civil Service Reforms of 1988: In 1988, General Babangida took bold and innovative measures to reform the civil service. The measures were designed to remove the uncertainties in the role of the political head of a department and that of his chief civil servant adviser; and also to infuse new life into the civil service giving it purpose and direction and thereby overhauling the whole civil service machine to make it more efficient and effective (Adebayo, 1989). The reform which was headed by Dotun Phillips made such provisions like the politicization of the service, especially its upper echelon. For instance, the office of the head of civil service was abolished, the Minister, in addition to being the chief executive, also became the accounting officer in place of the Permanent Secretary.

Civil Service Reforms of 1994 (Ayida Panel): The 1988 Civil Service Reforms had such disastrous consequences on the service that the Abacha administration had to constitute the Ayida Panel in 1994 to examine the civil service afresh, with a view to discovering factors inhibiting its effectiveness and efficiency and the various factors that had led to low morale in the service. Government decision on the recommendations was published in a white paper in June 1997 (Bhagwan and Bhushan, 2006).

The decisions of the Federal Military Government were that ministries and extra-ministerial departments should be structured according to their objectives, functions and sizes, and not according to a uniform pattern; minister should no longer be the accounting officer of the ministry. This function now becomes the responsibility of the Director-General; government accepted the recommendation that the title of Director-General should revert to Permanent Secretary. Government accepted the recommendation that the post of Permanent Secretary should be a career post i.e. appointment will be made from among serving senior officers in the civil service on the advice of the Head of the Civil Service and the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission (Civil Service Reorganization Decree, 1988).

Public Policy Reforms of 2003: A policy analysis unit was established in the legislative arm, with a view to building capacity for policy formulation, implementation and review.

Policy implementation and monitoring units were also set up to
the agenda.

Monetization as a Public Policy Reform (2003):The Presidential Committee on Monetization in the Public Service was set up on November 11, 2002, under the chairmanship of Chief U.J. Ekaette, Secretary to the Federal Government. The monetization policy aimed at reducing government recurrent expenditure, waste and abuse of public facilities. This is to enhance efficiency in resource allocation and move the economy forward.

(Ekaette, 2003: 16) listed some benefits currently being monetized like residential accommodation—monetized at 100 per cent of annual basic salary; furniture allowance—paid as 300 per cent of annual basic salary in line with the provisions of employment of certain political, public and judicial office holders; utility allowance and domestic servants' allowance; motor vehicle loan and transport—monetized with provision of vehicle loan of 35 per cent annual basic salary and recoverable over 6 years with 4 per cent interest rate; fueling/maintenance and transport allowance—10 per cent of annual basic salary will be paid to public servants while political office holders will be paid 30 per cent annual basic salary; leave grant—monetized at the rate of 10 per cent of annual basic salary; meal subsidy—monetized; entertainment allowance—already monetized for public servants, while 10 per cent of annual basic salary was stipulated for political office holders; and personal assistant allowance—monetized.

The Pension Reform Act, 2004: The Federal Government set up Adeola Committee to look into pension administration in Nigeria. The committee came up with a recommendation for the reform of pension administration and management in Nigeria. This recommendation was subsequently introduced as a bill to the National Assembly and passed into law on Friday, June 25, 2004. The passage of the bill into law repeals the Pension Act of 1979 and establishes a uniform contributory pension scheme for both the public and private sectors of the economy.

Eneanya (2009) highlighted the major features of the Act such as contributions of funds by both the employer and the employee to fund retirement benefits; amounts deducted from the employee's emoluments together with the employer's contributions are to be credited to the employee's retirement savings account with pension fund administrators;

ly managed and invested by professional Pension Fund
l Pension Commission; strict regulation of the activities of
Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) and Pension Fund Custodians assets under uniform laws and
regulations for both public and private sectors; and the establishment of the National Pension
Commission (Pen Com) charged with responsibility for matters relating to the regulation,
supervision and effective administration of the scheme.

SERVICOM Policy (Initiative): It was established within the Presidency to manage and effect
government commitments to the people in the area of service delivery. It is a social contract
between the Federal Government of Nigeria and its people. According to Eneanya (2009),
Servicom was empowered to co-ordinate the formulation and operation of Servicom charter;
monitor and report to the President on the progress made by ministries and agencies in performing
their obligations under Servicom; carry out independent surveys of the services provided to citizens
by the ministries and government departments, their adequacy, timeliness and customer
satisfaction; conduct Servicom compliance evaluation services provided by government
departments; award Servicom index; and view Servicom books and relevant documents.

Civil Service Reforms during Obasanjo administration (1999-2007): According to Obasanjo
(2005), the reform of the civil service is one of the central themes of the government's agenda. "For
without a transparent and effective civil service, government business and service delivery to the
public will be crippled and mired in dishonesty and graft. I am convinced that an efficient
transparent and accountable civil service should be the hallmark of our democratic transformation
and development.. The Nigeria people deserve nothing less." (Obasanjo, 2005).

In his effort to re-orientate the value system and improve the standard of living of Nigerians,
Obasanjo regime provided well remunerated packages to enhance democratic governance. Since
1999, the government has increased the salaries of workers twice, while several official hitherto
deprived of promotion have been promoted (The Guardian, May 30 2004: 15).

Reforms among others include professionalizing the service with skilled and knowledgeable technocrats with appropriate motivation to assist in up-grading the operations of government; reducing waste and inefficiency by monetizing fringe benefits within an incentive structure that supports private sector development by out-sourcing services which are considered to be unnecessary and only tangential to effective government and operation of the service; improving morale by instituting a more transparently managed contributory pension system that guarantees pension payment as and when due and under direct control of the retiree; rightsizing the workforce of the service by weeding outsourced cadres and those that do not have the qualifications, which required discipline or the proper state of physical and mental health to serve effectively; instituting fiscal and budgetary reforms within the context of a Medium-Term Public Expenditure framework in order to sanitize budgeting and funding of government programmes (Yayale, 2007).

4.0 Causes of inefficiency in Nigerian Civil Service

There is no doubt that in any dispensation in Nigeria be it military or civilian, the civil service is looked upon to provide certain fundamental services for smooth governance in the country. Unfortunately, the civil service has been variously attacked by renowned bureaucrats, seasoned administrators and academician for its inactivity(Adebayo, 2013). The following are the causes of inefficiency in the civil service:

Acute obsolescence. It is suffering from acute obsolescence. In other words, it is using antiquated method to manage a modern government economy (Udoji, 1997).

Frequent posting and reshuffling of top administrators. The effect of frequent re-shuffling of Permanent Secretaries is that they have no time to settle down and master the intricacies of their departments.

Problem of adequate and appropriate office accommodation. There are numerous cases in various states of the federation in which a department has sections and divisions of the department scattered about in various parts of the town in rented private buildings. There is no telephone system connecting these offices with the headquarters, therefore, supervision and coordination is extremely difficult.

civil service at the lower cadres exhibits attitudinal behavior members of the public, malingering, presenting false sick certificates in order to attend to private business. Therefore, members of the public form their impression about the civil service through the innumerable services that are haphazardly executed (Sekwat, 2002).

5.0 Strategies for effective service delivery of Nigerian Civil Service in the 21st century

One area the civil service has become an albatross to the nation is in the area of ghost workers. Every year billion of naira is lost to these fake workers and the money ends up in private pockets. As a result of this, the present administration introduced the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS). This idea exposed fake public servants who were weeded out of the system (ThisDay, April 20 2015). In order to make the civil service result oriented, it needs to become more skilled, less bureaucratic and more unified. Therefore, leaders at every level of the civil service are to support their staff to build their individual skills and competencies.

The attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has called for the need to redesign services and deliver them digitally. This enables government to meet users' needs more effectively. Civil service often faces criticism from the public which dampens the morale of the civil service. Avoiding unwarranted and unfair criticism of the public service will boost their morale and make them to be more productive. Also, government needs to provide public servants with the requisite tools and equipment for their work. Nothing can be more frustrating to a skilled and enthusiastic worker than to know what to do, be willing to do it, but have no tools and equipment with which to carry out his assignment. While addressing his country-men during the Second World War, Winston stated: Give us the tools and we will finish the job (Adebayo, 1989). Therefore, leaders must be equipped with the tools that they need to be able to deliver substantive reductions in public spending.

Another strategy is by organizing frequent in-service training courses for the junior cadres. In addition, and more importantly, there should be severe punishment meted out to all those caught in these despicable lapses. There is also the need to restore confidence and morale among the working force in the public service. We must give public servants a sense of pride in their work and career, to create in them a feeling of belonging and to foster in them a sense of participation in the task of nation building (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1997).

The paper has A-rayed the need to re-invent Nigerian civil service for effective service delivery in the 21st century. Civil service is the administrative bureaucracy of any country that is saddled with the responsibility of implementing and enforcing the policies and programmes of government. It therefore means that for policy objectives of the state to be achieved, the civil service must be alive to their responsibilities. The Nigerian civil service is one of the significant legacies left by the colonialists which serves as a functional tool required to put the nation on the path of recovery that could match the rising expectation of the people savouring the euphoria of independence. In recognition of the roles of civil service in socio-economic and political developments of the country through effective and efficient service delivery, both civilian and military governments have developed strategies towards improving the performance of civil service through series of reforms. The ultimate goal of civil service reform is to raise the quality of services delivered to the population, support economic and social development, enhance the capacity to carry out core government functions such as revenue generation, financial management, personnel management, policy formulation etc. Unfortunately, the civil service has been variously attacked by renowned bureaucrats, seasoned administrators and academician for its inactivity which are due to the acute obsolescence of method, frequent postings and reshufflings of top administrators, problem of adequate and appropriate office accommodation, lackadaisical attitude of lower cadres etc. Therefore, for effective and efficient service delivery of the civil service in the 21st century, there is the need to redesign services and deliver them digitally, organize in-service training courses for the junior cadres; and restore confidence and morale among the working force in the public service.

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