

REFORMING THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR: THE EFFICIENCY SERVICE DEBATE

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Abstract

The civil service the world over is an instrument of the executive arm for the implementation of the policies and programmes of government. It is established with the mandate of initiating policies in collaboration with the political class and implementing same through the different ministries, departments and agencies of government. This makes the service to occupy a strategic position in the drive towards the economic and social development of any nation. However, the dysfunctional nature of these institutions in Nigeria has adversely affected service delivery to the citizenry. The objective of this paper was to investigate the impact of reforms on service delivery in Nigeria's public sector. The study adopted the descriptive method whereby the authors described the current situation in the Nigerian civil service to show how it has hampered service delivery.

Data for the study was sourced through the secondary means using textbooks, journal articles and conference papers. The findings of the study revealed that the present civil service in Nigeria is not service oriented as a result of the negative attitude of the workers occasioned by institutional failure. The paper concluded that for the civil service to be functional once again, there is need for reforms that will be both institutional and behavioural in nature. It recommended amongst others the improvement of the incentive system that will motivate the workers to do their best in rendering services in the different government institutions.

Key Words: Reforms, Civil Service, Effective, Efficient, government and Institution

Introduction

General literature on reforms indicate that changes in socio-economic conditions in the 1970's and 1980's provided grounds for administrative as well as civil service reforms in both developed and developing countries (Caiden, 1978; 1988; 1991; Bjur & Caiden, 1978; Boudiguel & Rouban, 1988; Ayee, 2008). Underpinning these reforms was the search for efficiency and effectiveness in the face of dwindling resources (World Bank, 1997). This was elaborated in most cases into a general crusade to reorganize and modernize the public sector including the civil service (Caiden, 1988; Peters, 1992; Collins, 2000).

The implication of reforms is that there is demand for smaller but efficient and effective public and civil service. In the process of these reforms, some management techniques were adopted in the public service such as Planning, Programming and

Budgeting System (PPBS), merit system, Management By Objective (MBO) and contract-based appointments (Batley, 1994a; Batley 1994b; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000).

As the key administrative instrument of government, the civil service occupies a pivotal position in the political system of nations. Throughout the world, the contributions of civil service in promoting sustainable and equitable economic growth are receiving greater premium. Thus, efficient and effective management of the civil service is critical to sustainable socio-economic development of a nation. Thomas (1995) states that the East Asian experience has underscored the critical contributions of the civil service in fostering rapid development.

As an agency of government, the civil service plays an important role in the formulation, implementation, evaluation, and review of government policies and programmes. Civil service reforms therefore provides the ample environment for civil servants to perform their duties in an unfettered manner where fair treatment of personnel and establishment of a demographically representative apparatus abound. The main purpose of civil service reform is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service thereby

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increasing its capacity to promote economic and social development to meet the needs and aspirations of all citizens.

Moreover, a competent and motivated civil service is a prerequisite for maintenance of good governance, production and distribution of public goods and services, fiscal management and sustainability, and efficient and effective performance of government (Schiavo-Campo, Tommaso, & Mukherjee, 1997). It is necessary to state that civil service reforms should focus on creating a “government workforce with the size, skills, culture and accountability necessary for delivering quality public services and perform vital governmental functions that manifest in the success of government institutions”.

As the society developed and the need to efficiently and effectively sustain the polity arose, the civil service evolved not only to formulate policies but also to effectively implement them. In this regard, the civil service is an institution saddled with the responsibility of designing, formulating and implementing public policy and discharging government functions and development programmes in an efficient and effective way.

The biggest threats to the development efforts of government policies and programmes as can be observed today are the incompetency and ineffectiveness of the civil service in Nigeria. As a result of this, successive government in Nigeria have embarked on administrative reforms aimed at improving the effectiveness of the civil service. Despite these reforms, the service remains inefficient and incapable of reforming itself and is bedevilled by weak governance structure, red-tapism, unaccountability, low professional standards, poor reward system and corruption, low productivity and lack of control, redundancy and over-bloated self-structure.

Having said these about the civil service, one is forced to ask why Nigeria has not been able to solve the problem of inefficiency in the civil service system as well as re-structure it for effectiveness. This question and more desire answers as far as reforming the civil service for effective service delivery is concerned. This article is set out to investigate the issue of reforms in the Nigerian civil service and how it has actually transformed and repositioned the service for effective service

delivery. In this regard, the issues and problems confronting civil service in Nigeria are raised and possible solutions outlined.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The Concept of Civil Service

In generic terms, civil service is an employment system that is based on hiring, retaining and promoting employees on their qualifications and ability to do the work. According to Encarta World English Dictionary (1999), civil service constitutes all government departments of a state and the people who work in them. Specifically, civil service is an institution which has the pivotal role of carrying out (and advising on) government policies. The civil service in the words of Okafor (2005) is seen as that apparatus of government designed to implement the decisions of political leaders. Political leaders make policies, the civil service executes it and if the civil service lacks the capacity to implement the policies of the political leadership, those policies no matter how well intended will not be implemented in an effective manner.

In this paper, civil service is used to describe two sets of ideas, namely (i) the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the political executive in formulating and implementing governmental policies, who are referred to as civil servants; and (ii) the ministries and departments within which specific aspects of government work are carried out (Adamolekun, 1999).

The Concept of Administrative Reforms

Administrative reforms are processes and practices which are concerned with improving the capacity of institutions to make policy and deliver services in an efficient, effective and accountable manner. In addition, it also involves the strengthening and management of the public sector.

The Concept of Service Delivery

Service delivery is a set of principles, standards, policies and constraints used to guide the design, development, deployment, operation and retirement of services delivered by a service provider (civil service) with a view to offering consistent service experience to a specific user community in a specific business context.

Evolution of Nigerian Civil Service

The Nigerian Civil Service Evolved from the colonial service which was established by the British authorities as the administrative machinery of the country. The civil service has been subjected to three political influences: the colonial, civilian and military. These three influences retain certain common commitments, albeit in varying degrees – for example, career orientation for civil servants and the use of the Federal Civil Service Commission for promotion, discipline and rule enforcement for the civil service. But each of these influences bequeathed different legacies. An important inherited legacy from colonial rule was the attributes of political neutrality, anonymity and impartiality. Post-independence civil regimes sought to reinforce the role of the civil servant, especially higher civil servants as confidential advisers to ministers – the political heads of ministries (Otobo, 1999).

However, some of the inherited legacies were not sustained under military regimes. For example, during the first phase of military intervention, 1966-1979, two patterns emerged with regard to the role of higher civil servants. Between 1967 and 1975 the higher civil servants dominated the policy process, leading to the virtual loss of their attributes of political neutrality, anonymity and impartiality. By contrast, between 1975 and 1979, the role of civil servants in the policy process became less pronounced (Adebayo, 1981; Adamolekun, 1986). This trend, which has since continued, is attributable to three factors. First, the mass dismissals or “purges” of civil servants in 1975/76 and 1984/85 made higher civil servants more circumspect and less likely to take a high profile role in public policy making. Second, the appointment of advisers to government with strong technical skills in various disciplines had reduced governments' reliance on civil servants. Third, economic reforms, especially privatization and commercialization of public enterprises, also reduced the opportunities for the appointment of higher civil servants to the boards of state enterprises, thus curbing their influence (Otobo, 1999; Agagu, 2008).

The size of the civil service has grown and contracted in response to political as well as economic factors. The transition from colonial rule

to sovereign independence led to the first wave of expansion in the civil service. While colonial rule had focused on the limited objectives of maintaining law and order and relied partly on traditional rulers for governance in the “indirect rule” system, the attainment of independence compelled the government to pursue broad socio-economic development objectives – requiring expansion in the numbers and mix of civil service personnel. A second contributory factor in the expansion of the civil service was the increased revenue from oil, especially in the 1970s, which enabled the government to fund various programmes and projects, most of which were initially linked to post-civil war efforts of reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation. These projects were administered mainly by civil servants (Gboyega, Adamolekun, & Abubakar, 1989; Otobo, 1999; Briggs, 2007).

The size of the Federal Civil Service thus grew from less than 30,000 at independence in 1960 to 45,154 in 1970, leaping to 98,877 in 1974 and to 213,802 in 1988, peaking to 273,392 in 1990 and in the mid-1998 the civil service was about 200,000 strong. The contraction of the civil service since the mid-1980s is traceable to the “purges” in 1984/85 and the retrenchment exercise undertaken in the context of the economic reforms initiated by the Federal Government since 1986 (Otobo 1999; 1998; Philips 1988; 1989; 1990).

The Civil Service and its Roles

The civil service is at the centre of governmental activity. It is the epitome of rationality. Max Weber, a German sociologist of repute, delineated a number of important elements critical to the success of an ideal type bureaucracy. Six are described here:

- i) There is the principle of fixed and official jurisdictional areas, which are generally ordered by rules, that is by law or administrative regulations. In other words, workers have official duties, must stay within their jurisdictional areas and must carry out those duties according to rules.
- ii) The principles of office hierarchy and levels of graded authority. This means the presence of a strict chain of command or authority structure in which lower officers are supervised by the

higher ones.

- iii) The management of the modern office is based on written documents (files), which are preserved in their original or draft form. Every decision or action (recruitment, promotion, purchases, disengagement, etc.), is recorded in writing.
- iv) Hiring and promotion are based on individual's ability to do the job (or on merit). Nepotism is frowned on and relationships are impersonal.
- v) Official activity demands the full working capacity of the official. Administrative work is a full time commitment; and
- vi) The management of the office follows general rules or an established procedure covering just about everything (McIntyre, 2002). The presence of rational elements in any service is a major guarantee against personal or arbitrary rule.

There are a number of conditions in addition to the above to ensure that the civil service meets the challenges of development. Foremost is a proper understanding of the realities within which the beneficiaries of the service provided live; where are they? How do they make a living? What things matter the most to them? What are the threats to their livelihood? What is their perception of government - Local, State, Federal? A policy (intended for implementation by the civil service) must be clear, specific and thus unambiguous. The presence of good organization on ground with appropriate planning level is also a key requirement. Also, effective implementation of policies requires that adequate resources are made available just as the environment within which work has to take place needs also to be made conducive. An obvious implication of not attending to the above would result in policy implementation gap (PIG). In what ways, then, is the civil service central to governmental activities?

Three major roles of the civil service are discernible. First, it has the major task of translating into concrete actions the policies of political authorities. The civil service is the main instrument which government uses to regulate and manage all aspects of the economy of a society. It is the main medium through which all institutions obtain various types of approvals, licenses, permits, etc.

Indeed, all institutions have to deal with the civil service at one point or the other in their existence and operations. The degree to which socio-economic and political progress is attained is largely dependent or linked to the performance of the public service. Second, it has the important role of assisting in the formulation of policies, a role directly arising from the knowledge, experience and information at the disposal of civil servants. The notion of a strict dichotomy between administration and politics is always in dispute, is now facing further threats.

Administration and policies are intertwined, notwithstanding the qualification often advanced, to the effect that there is more "politics" in the formation of public policy and more "administration" in the execution of same. In the real world, where results are of primacy and failure of policy has important consequences, policy formulation and implementation are merged. A "policy" formulated without due regard to real problems of implementation fails. It sends negative signals about the wrongness of government announcing important policies of no practical value. On the other hand, in no real world situation could one successfully administer policies knowing nothing about the rationale for its formulation.

The importance of civil servants in public policy formulation was captured by GreyLonge, a one-time Head of Service of the Nigerian Federation, when he stated:

it is not true as is sometimes alleged that most permanent secretaries have reduced their ministers or commissioners to mere 'rubber stamps' What is of course true is that a permanent secretary who is worth his position is knowledgeable, experienced and so familiar with the civil service organization which exists to advise the minister and implement approved policies and programmes that when he makes submission to the minister they are in such form that they can be approved completely or with minor amendment (Ishaq, 2013, pp. 32).

Thirdly, the civil service is critical to maintaining continuity of government policies and programmes.

Governments change, often frequently, through coups or periodic elections but the civil service remains to service the government in power. That is why the civil service is usually referred to as “Any Government In Power” (AGIP). There have been various reforms in the country ranging from the Udoji commission of 1972 to the Obasanjo's Civil Service Renewal Programme of 1999. All these were aimed at repositioning the civil service for effective service delivery to the citizenry.

Problems of Nigerian Civil Service

The Nigerian civil service has over the years faced myriads of problems that have made it difficult for the system to function effectively as agent of development. Some of the problems are hereunder discussed.

- i. One of the major problem facing Civil Service in Nigeria is corruption. This has become more or less a recurring decimal in Nigerian public sector. Bureaucratic corruption in Nigeria continues to grow in leaps and bounds. So many civil servants have defrauded and embezzled public funds earmarked for developmental purposes. It is common to see directors and permanent secretaries in ministries own properties that are more than what they can acquire in real terms with regard to their income. This has made development difficult via the Civil Service. Recently a permanent secretary in a federal ministry was queried for buying an uncompleted building at about N70 million (*Vanguard* 14, May 2020). Also, the immediate past Head of Service of the Federation Mrs. Oyo Ita was removed from office for alleged fraud and embezzlement of funds. This goes a long way to show how corrupt the civil servants are especially those who occupy higher positions.
- ii. Despite the increment in the salaries of civil servants in Nigeria, comparatively, the salary of civil servants across the country is still low. Because of this, most civil servants are engaged in sharp practices and this affects the country. Most of them bring items to sell in their respective offices to augment the salary. This makes them devote the time they would have put in the service to engaging in personal trading.
- iii. There is the problem of over bloated civil service. The Nigerian civil service is over bloated as many are employed without responsibility. Apart from this, creation of new states is making this problem worst. When new states were created, the civil service is also invariably expanded. The urge to fill the necessary positions in the civil service by the new states always leads to urgent and compulsory promotion. So, in the process, many civil servants are promoted above their levels of competence. Also, in recent times, politicians and even the top civil servants employ people in their respective ministries without due approval in the name of “replacement”. Replacement is a situation whereby the top civil servant replaces a dead staff or a retired staff with a new staff in his ministry. This practice negates the civil service principle of fairness and merit in employment.
- iv. There is the problem of political instability that characterized Nigerian nation and this has dealt a big blow on the development and growth of civil service. Immediately after Nigeria's independence, the country witnessed frequent military intervention and consequent suspension of the constitution. With this situation, the civil service is also destabilized because of the use of decree rather than the conventional laws and regulation governing employment and dismissal of staff. During military era civil servants are sacked without recourse to laid down principles.
- v. Inadequate training and re-training has also affected the productivity of the civil service and consequently development of the nation. There is inadequate training for the civil servant especially those handling specialized functions. In the age of ICT, most civil servants in Nigeria are not ICT compliant and it becomes a problem to fully digitalize service delivery in the Nigerian public sector especially now that every country is talking about e-governance.

The Nigerian Civil Service Reforms

Civil service reforms in Nigeria dates back to the pre-independence era. The reforms before 1972 contributed mainly to improvements in salaries and wages, grading structure and strengthening

management responsibility. They include the Gorsuch Commission Reform of 1956 that created the existing structure of the Nigerian Civil Service and the Newns Committee of 1959 which integrated the executive agency-type departmental structures with the ministerial ones thereby giving Permanent Secretaries the status of Managing Directors of companies in the private sector (Olaopa, 2009c).

Four reforms which have shaped civil service system in Nigeria for a long time will be examined. They are the: (i) The Public Service Review Commission (the Udoji Commission, 1972-1974); (ii) 1988 Civil Service Reforms; (iii) 1994 Review Panel on Civil Service Reform called the Alison Ayida Panel (iv) Obasanjo's Civil Service Renewal Programme. Before these reforms were implemented the civil service in Nigeria was considered tradition-bound, some-what ponderous and showed signs of deterioration and several undesirable characteristics of which the following were the most prominent: over-centralization, incessant conflicts between the cadres, little emphasis on results and concrete performance, counterproductive separation of authority from responsibility at the topmost hierarchy, dangerously low staff morale and productivity and inappropriate staff development practices (Adegoroye, 2006; Babura, 2003).

Udoji Reforms, 1972-1974: the public service review commission set up in 1972 chaired by Chief Jerome O. Udoji was to examine a wide range of issues that would redirect and reposition the civil service to deliver on its mandate of delivering services that are efficient and effective to the citizenry. The commission was to amongst others examine the following:

1. the examination of the organization and structure of the public service;
2. the investigation and evaluation of the methods of recruitment, condition of service and staff development programme;
3. the examination of the existing pension and superannuation schemes in the public and private sectors;
4. make recommendations that would facilitate inter-sectoral mobility without any detriment to the retention of efficient and qualified

personnel in the public service and

5. to undertake the re-grading of all posts in the public services and establish appropriate salary scales.

However, despite the lofty nature of the terms of reference, many scholars and social analysts felt that the terms of reference was too wide and might affect the quality of work done. True to the fears expressed by scholars, it took the commission two years to submit its report. According to Obikeze and Anthony (2004), the commission's report could be summarized thus:

1. administration be transferred into management
2. promotion be based on merit and not seniority
3. the concept of result-oriented management be adopted
4. unified structure be introduced
5. public sector compensation be related to private sector (compensation)
6. financial management be strengthened and modernized
7. that pay be dependent upon content and performance
8. that personnel management practice be modernized.

As we know, policy may be well initiated but fail during the implementation process. So it was with the implementation of the reforms' recommendations. In the words of Obikeze and Anthony (2004), immediately after the report was released, several organized groups in the public sector raised a lot of dust about the effect of the review especially the upward review of wages on the private sector. The result of the discontent by the private sector was anchored in the kind of hardship they will face when there is no increment on the salary of the private workers. In response, the government set up a new review panel to handle public discontent on the government white paper on Udoji report.

On the whole, in the commission's pursuit of a development-oriented public service, it recommended the adoption of modern management techniques like the Planning, Programming, Budgeting System (PPBS), Management By Objectives (MBO) and project management in the Nigerian civil service. The commission also received and simplified the wage

scale in the public service. It must be pointed out that despite the fact that the issue of wages was the fourth item on the commission's terms of reference, it almost over-shadowed the other aspects of the commission's work and till date, the issue of minimum wage is still occupying the front burner in the civil servants demand list.

On other aspects, the commission introduced a number of key features in the civil service such as opening of the post of chief executive of the ministry referred to as permanent secretary to both administrative and professional/specialist staff; the harmonization and unification of job grading and salary system throughout the system as well as the introduction of the new code of conduct for all public officers.

It is instructive to note that though the work of the commission was to bring up innovative means to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service, we can boldly say that though some minor improvements were made specifically with regard to salary increment, the reform did not actually achieve much and the service has basically remained the same till date occasioned by negative attitude to work, corruption, nepotism and the like.

The 1988 Reforms: the 1988 civil service reforms were largely inspired by the economic reforms tagged Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) launched in 1986. The objectives were to: (i) enhance professionalism, decentralization and delegation of functions; (ii) institute checks and balances; (iii) promote general modernization; (iv) enhance the combination of responsibility with authority; (v) align the civil service with the spirit of executive presidentialism; and (vi) enhance efficiency, effectiveness and speed of operations (Phillips 1990; 1989; 1988).

Some of the highlights of the Reforms were: (i) the merging of ministerial responsibilities and administrative controls and their investment in the minister as chief executive and accounting officers; (ii) replacement of the designation of Permanent Secretary with Director-General, whose tenure will terminate with the Government that appointed him/her and who will serve as Deputy Minister; (iii) greater responsibility in the appointment, promotion and training and discipline of staff; (iv) vertical and horizontal restructuring of ministries

to ensure overall management and effectiveness; (v) permanency of appointment as every officer is to make his/her career entirely in one Ministry; and (vi) abolition of the pool system, which allows professionals and administrative officers to move around various ministries instead of each professional being expected to spend his or her career in one ministry (Igbuzor, 1998).

Holistically, the 1988 civil service reforms led to the (i) conscious and deliberate politicization of the civil service; (ii) misuse and abuse of power by ministers and Directors-General who saw their ministries as a separate entity and run them as personal properties; (iii) increase in the cost of running the civil service due to the imposition of uniform structures on ministries, the proliferation of parastatals and increase in personnel without a corresponding increase in productivity; (iv) absence of a coherent and systematic training policy throughout the civil service; (v) glaring shortage of skill manpower, especially in the technical and professional cadres in virtually all the ministries; (vi) prevalence and virtual institutionalization of corruption; (vii) disregard of the rules, regulations and procedures resulting in arbitrary decisions and general loss of direction; and (viii) complete emasculatation of the Federal Civil Service Commission regulatory role in the appointment, promotion and discipline of federal civil servants (PAC, 1999).

However, the 1988 civil service reforms, despite its lofty ideals of efficiency, professionalism, accountability and checks and balances, did not achieve its desired objectives. In fact, "the harm done during the reforms was so much and so deep that it would take time, patience and determination to restore the lost glory of the Service" (Ayida, 1998).

Alison Ayida Panel Reforms, 1994: the Ayida Review Panel on the civil service reforms was inaugurated on November 10, 1994 to, amongst others, re-examine the 1988 reforms. The report of the Panel was highly and constructively critical of the 1988. It reversed most of the reforms of 1988. Specifically, the reforms recommended that the: (i) civil service should revert to the system that is guided by the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Civil Service Rules and the Financial Regulations and

Circulars; (ii) the ministers should continue to be the head of the ministry and should be responsible for its general direction but he/she should not be the Accounting Officer. Instead, the Permanent Secretary should be the Accounting Officer of the Ministry; (iii) the title of Permanent Secretary should be restored. She/he should be a career officer and should not be asked to retire with the regime that appointed him/her; (iv) the post of Office of the Head of the Civil Service should be re-established as a separate office under the President and a career civil servant should be appointed to head the office; (v) the pool system be restored for those professional and sub-professional cadres that commonly exist in ministries/extra ministerial departments; (vi) ministries/extra-ministerial departments should be structured according their objectives, functions and sizes and not according to a uniform pattern as prescribed by the 1988 reforms. Each could have been between two to six departments; (vii) personnel functions in the civil service should be left to the Federal Civil Service Commission with delegated powers to ministries; (viii) financial accountability in the civil service should be enhanced through strict observation of financial rules and regulations; (ix) recruitment into the Federal Civil Service at the entry point should be based on a combination of merit and Federal character, but further progression should be based on merit; (ix) Decree 17 of 1984 which empowers government to retire civil servants arbitrarily should be abrogated; (x) the retirement age in the Civil Service should be 60 years irrespective of the length of service; (xi) government should harmonize the pension rates of those who retired before 1991 and those who retire after 1991; and salaries, allowances and welfare packages of civil servants should be substantially reviewed upwards and should be adjusted annually to ameliorate the effects of inflation and discourage corruption (Kaul, 1996).

The Obasanjo Civil Service Renewal Programme, 1999-2007: When the Obasanjo administration assumed office on May 29, 1999 after years of military rule, it identified a civil service in crisis occasioned by inefficiency in service delivery, insensitivity to general welfare, indifference to the norms guiding the conduct of public officials and rampant corruption (Olaopa, 2009c). Faced with

the challenges of transforming a totalitarian state to a democratic one and a global context of administrative reform, the government launched its Civil Service Renewal Programme (CSRP) in 2003. The programme was articulated in a new framework for the Federal Government Reform Agenda called the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

The activities of the reform were designed to focus on the core functions of government, namely policy making, service delivery, value orientation and accountability. These culminated in nine areas of reform, namely, civil service, pay, integrated payroll and personnel information system, public expenditure management, SERVICOM-service delivery, monetization of fringe benefits, pension and anti-corruption (Olaopa, 2009c).

The Yar'Adua administration which took over from the Obasanjo regime in 2007 built on the foundation laid by its predecessor. In this connection, when Yar'Adua took over, he promised a commitment to the rule of law, national restoration, and leadership by example. Accordingly, one of the ways of achieving this commitment was to develop a long-term National Strategy for Public Service Reforms (NSPSR), which had four pillars, namely, (i) creating an enabling government and institutional environment; (ii) an enabling socio-economic environment; (iii) public financial management reform; and (iv) civil service administration reform (Olaopa, 2009).

Challenges Facing Civil Service Reforms in Nigeria

There are several challenges facing civil service reforms in Nigeria. Some of these challenges are hereunder discussed:

- i) Civil service reforms are based on the wrong premise – on the idea of “affordable” civil services rather than “required civil services” dictated by the logic of a democratic, developmental state.
- ii) Civil service reforms in Nigeria are based on poor diagnosis – that Nigerian civil service is over-bloated. The civil service is poorly structured and concentrated. It has surpluses at the base but substantial shortages at the

- professional levels. Skilled personnel are also not well distributed in space, as there is a tendency to over-concentration at the centre.
- iii) Civil service reforms constitute a wrong prognosis; they represent the application of a wrong prescription to the problem confronting Nigeria.
 - iv) Civil service reforms have tended to be generally minimally participatory, often excluding the key stakeholders, the civil servants. It is generally feared that the involvement of the stakeholders might slow down the implementation of retrenchment programmes in the civil service.
 - v) Civil service reforms have tended to focus on the short term gains rather than the long term, because donors, who have provided the impetus for most reform efforts, must come up with immediate results to appease their domestic constituents;
 - vi) Civil service reforms are largely disconnected from other political and economic reforms. With the exception of a few countries like Uganda and Ghana, they do not include critical public sector reform issues such as decentralization, strengthening accountability and improving transparency, which are all cornerstones of reform in the political and economic realms.
 - vii) Civil service reforms involve changes not only in structures but also in organizational behaviour. Changing behaviour takes time to bear fruit, for which some observers have suggested a period of 10 to 15 years. But the donors who provide funds for reform need to show quick results to convince their domestic constituencies (Okafor, 2005).
- commitment and support of politicians and bureaucrats at the highest level since most successful reforms are politically driven.
 - ii) Enhancing policy development capacity and strategic planning within the government by strengthening offices of the president and setting up inter-ministerial committees and task forces for special policy issues and national forums involving private and public sectors.
 - iii) Improving human resource systems through tailored training, rewarding achievement, establishing a fast track monitoring results through performance of contracts and promoting accountability and transparency and anti-corruption measures, personal contracts and public reporting and redundancy management founded on a culture of realism.
 - iv) Reviewing and re-examining structures of government including structuring for efficiency, establishing efficient programme and introducing market testing.
 - v) Introduction of quality management and customer-oriented programmes by developing a public sector ethos by creating a working culture based on quality, performance, openness and transparency.
 - (vi) The use of information technology (IT) and the development and use of internal and external advising skills through the use of IT for revenue collection, financial management and accounting, interdepartmental communication systems, automation of programmes, e-governance and the use of IT to provide better interface with customers by developing "one stop/non-stop" service centres and public information systems;
 - vii) Improving financial management to make it more performance or output oriented. Developments in the area include the provision of efficiency dividends to the departments, the introduction of departmental charges, payments by department for internal government services, shifting from cash to accrual accounting, improving estate management through valuation of land, buildings, equipment and infrastructure owned by the government and public reporting through the strengthened roles for government auditors, the increasing use of value for money

Approaches for Improving Civil Service Efficiency in Nigeria

There is no doubt that concerns exist about the nature of civil service reforms in Nigeria, but experiences show that there is no unique solution or approach (Kaul, 1996). This notwithstanding, a set of key strategies has emerged as major instruments for the implementation of the civil service reforms and repositioning of the service for greater efficiency. They include:

- i) Securing leadership for change, that is, the

reviews, annual audited financial summary statement and consolidated balance sheets.

- viii) Evolving new arrangements for governing, attracting and retaining scarce category of skills in the service as part of the effort of qualitative and quantitative orientation of the civil service which demands the selective reform of the country's higher education system and the mobilization and increase in the inputs of civil society and non-state actors in the policy and reform processes (Kaul, 1996; Olowu, 2003; Bentil, 2004; AfDB, 2005).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The public mandate of the civil service as the implementation arm of the Executive branch of government makes it a very important institution of the state. To say the least, the Nigerian civil service is an essential institution of the state affecting the lives of the citizens. It is the pivot within which the activities of government revolve. Hence, the ineffectiveness of the service inadvertently results in poor and ineffective governance. Following from this, therefore, the need for an efficient, effective and strong civil service base cannot be overemphasized in a democratic system.

In this paper, attempt has been made to demonstrate that the civil service is key machinery in the implementation of government policies geared toward accomplishing national development goals and effective service delivery. This perhaps is the reason why successive governments in Nigeria have embarked on various reforms to reposition the civil service for better performance of its core functions. Against this backdrop, a number of recommendations are hereunder outlined as remedy to the falling standard of performance and poor service delivery in the civil service so as to reposition it to achieve the mandate for which it was established:

1. ***Reforms should focus not only on management but also on the behaviour of personnel working in Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)*** - public and civil service reforms as implemented have focused on improving the management of organizations. But the problem of civil service also include poor attitude on the part of workers in

government organizations. Management involves a set of processes to help keep the complicated system of people and technology running smoothly, including planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling and problem-solving. Conversely, behaviour has to do with attitudes, feeling, psychology and the aptitude of the personnel in these government institutions. Though management sets the pace for organizational accomplishment, it is the human factor (personnel) that accomplishes the task. Hence the behaviour of civil servants must be modified and monitored as well.

2. One of the paradigms to re-engineer the civil service is to reduce the civil service workforce. Linert and Mordi (1997) agree that measures are to be taken along this line and they must come in phases. The first stage could be call "cut back management" which will help in curbing public spending and civil service staffing in response to fiscal constraints of the country. This could be done through further down-sizing exercise of the civil service staff which could be achieved through the removal of "ghost" workers, elimination of vacant posts, retrenchment of redundant staff or recruitment slow down, freezing of hiring, compulsory retirement at a legal age, transparent privatization of government functions/ activities, establishment of guaranteed jobs for graduates, voluntary retirement, and laying off of non-permanent staff.
3. **Reforming the Incentive system** -The importance of adequate salaries and a transparent incentive system in promoting efficient civil service cannot be over-emphasized. Increasing employee remuneration would not only stem the outflow of workers from the civil service but also reduce corruption. Discussions on salary reform must be open and honest; however, they must be based on dialogue between the government and the other stakeholders, especially the unions. Such a dialogue would help educate the stakeholders about the budgetary constraints faced by the government as well as provide an opportunity for the government to impose upon the stakeholders the need for increased effectiveness as a way of justifying higher wages

(Cited in ECA, 2010).

4. For the civil service to be efficient, reform efforts should be guided by a holistic vision, shared by all key stakeholders, as public and civil service reforms requires champions and political commitment from the highest levels of government and society.
5. There should be a strong institutional building, development-oriented leadership and committed workforce. These variables play an important role in nurturing a well-functioning civil service system.
6. The recruitment process in the civil service has also contributed to the poor performance of the Nigerian civil service. Unqualified and incompetent personnel are recruited into the civil service without adherence to the laid down procedure and due process under the disguise of "replacement". However, some of these personnel are incompetent and sometimes not specialists in the fields in which they are employed. For efficiency, recruitment into the civil service must not only be transparent but should be based on professional expertise, merit and competence.

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