

## REENGINEERING THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE FOR OPTIMUM PERFORMANCE: THE PATH NOT TAKEN

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**ABSTRACT:** *Civil Service anywhere in the world plays a very significant role in transforming government policies and programmes into reality. In most developing countries in general and Nigeria in particular the performance of Civil Service in discharging its duties is quite below expectation even after many reforms and restructuring had been carried out. The work identified and discussed what needs to be done for optimum performance of the Civil Service in Nigeria. It examined human and environmental factors that hindered Nigeria Civil Service from realization of its intended goals. The work is of the view that the attainment of optimum performance by the Civil Service in Nigeria is predicated upon the level of commitment and fidelity by the leading operator of the service. The work relied on secondary source and observation to gather the data that were used in this work. The work recommended among others that for Nigerian Civil Service to attain optimum performance there must be vigorous and sustained campaign to make propriety the prime mood of the nation's culture.*

**KEYWORDS:** Nigeria, Civil Service, Performance, Propriety

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### INTRODUCTION

In all political systems, the civil service holds the key to the effectiveness of government and its ability to manage efficiently and judiciously the affairs of the state. The rapid expansion of the scope of governmental activities, particularly in the developing states, has made the development of an efficient result oriented civil service a sine qua non. Furthermore, there is little point in debating government policies and programmes if there is no confidence that once formulated, those policies and programmes will be effectively and efficiently implemented (Idang, 1988). Yet, one of the most pressing problems of the newly emerging nations of Africa including Nigeria is the inability of their civil service to implement government programmes as well as delivering of various social services. Most of these developing countries have inherited from their former colonial rulers systems of administration that were primarily designed for the maintenance of law, order and a few basic services. This administrative sub-culture has even persisted after independence despite the efforts of these countries to indigenize their public bureaucracies (Nwankwo, 1980). This is true of Nigeria's civil service. It has been observed that not much has changed in the activities and roles of the civil service as it is still characterized by the vestiges of the colonial structure in terms of leadership style and organizational structure. Civil Service is also plaque with poor organization, indiscipline, red-tape, secrecy, insensitivity, rigidity, apathy, incompetence, lack of creative imagination, favouritism, lateness, loitering, truancy, rudeness, laziness, high handedness, malingering and official logrolling all of which have made Nigeria civil service inefficient. The work examines why the Nigerian Civil Service has failed to attain optimum performance despite numerous reforms undertaken in effort to make it realize its intended goals.

## The Conceptual and Theoretical Foundation

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). It is an institution made up of a body of people employed and paid by the government to execute the laws, plans and policies of government (Akpomuovire, 2007). In the view of Ezeani (2006), Civil Service is the administrative machinery within which the work of government is carried out. It is a unique body that is well placed to play a major role in the effective functioning of any government. Civil Service according to Anazodo, Okoye & Chukwuemeka (2012) is the administrative apparatus which occupies an essential position in the political system. It is the nerve-centre of governmental management. Thus, it is an important conditioning factor or determinant of the success or failure of any government development policy or strategy. The logic and validity of the proposition that civil service is the nucleus of governmental management according to Idakwoji (2011) has long been acknowledged by scholars of public administration. The contributions of such scholars have led to the realization that without a vibrant and dynamic civil service, the socio-economic development of any nation will nose-dive.

The other concept, performance, as Bernadin (2010) opined is the outcome of work because they provide the strongest linkage to the strategic goals of organizations, customer satisfaction, and economic contribution'. A more comprehensive view of performance, however, is achieved if it is defined as embracing both behaviour and outcomes. This is well articulated by Brumbach (2010) when he declared.

*Performance means both behaviours and result. Behaviours emanate from the performer and transform performance from abstraction to action. not just the instruments for results, behaviours are also outcomes in their own right – the product of mental and physical effort applied to tasks – and can be judged apart from results.*

Workers Performance (WP) according to Ejiofor (1984) is a function of many related and interrelated variables. Organizational Performance (OP) again is a function of three critical variables, namely, the Person working in the organization (w), the Organization itself (O) and the Environment in which the organization operates (E). Thus,  $OP = f(W, O, E)$ . Expatriating more on this Ejiofor (1984) asserted that each of these three critical variables is in turn a product, of other factors. For instance, the Workers Performance (WP) is a function of his ability (A), motivation (M) and integrity (I). Thus  $WP = f(A, M, I)$ . Similarly, Ejiofor (1984) observed that the ability of a worker (AW) is in turn a function of his genetics(g), the person's felt need (N), and the Environment (E). Based on such reasoning he opined that although several efforts have been made in Nigeria since independence to reform the public service, such efforts have not yielded desirable results partly because the reformers often assume a unilineal relationship between organizational incentive and worker performance. Indeed, as the author observe a happy worker in Nigeria may not be motivated worker. If only one variable is identified, (i.e, system of incentives) and changed while the rest are more or less left untouched the result is always disappointing.

In theoretical terms, the Civil Service is an administrative system. It comprises, as Michels (1952) sees all such outfits, people, structures, tools functions or duties, procedures, and goals

or objectives. Its rationale or *raison d'être* is effective performance or achievement of envisioned goals and objectives. It is a framework for action and activities.

It should be noted however, that as a structured and bureaucratized organization, the Civil Service, is influenced by Weber's (1952) characteristic stereotypes which include division of labour, impersonality, permanency, professionalism, impartiality, hierarchy and meritocracy among others. Moreover, as a formal organization, the Civil Service in Selznick (1952) view is constantly molded by forces tangential to the rationally ordered structures and stated goals of the system. This injects dynamism into operation and objectives of the service.

Often enough, the enthusiasm to provide for and reach set goals does not allow policy-makers or system builders to consider all the effects that may be consequent upon their decision. These other effects come, though naturally, as unanticipated consequences and influence the set-up. It cannot be said that this is not true of the Civil Service in Nigeria. Selznick (1952) derived from this reasoning his proposition that "All formal organizations are molded by forces tangential to their rationally ordered structures and stated goals." For Nigerian Civil Services, this is also true.

There is also a presumption that where the unanticipated or unintended effects or consequences occurs, some sociologically identifiable forces are at work. This assumption is informed by the knowledge that the human tools of action in the civil service, as in any other organization, come to the system shaped in special but systematic ways. Levels of aspiration and training, social ideals, class interests, ethnic values, etc., mold the character of the Civil Service personnel in Nigeria and influence its performance.

If the Service, in its various units, attempts to mobilize its human and technical resources as the means for the achievement of its ends, and some individuals within the system tend to resist being treated as means, here lies the explanation for its abysmal performance. Their behaviour is a function of their pre-service concerns. There always develop within the organizational system some informal structures which reflect the simultaneous efforts of individuals and subgroups. They attempt to control the conditions of their existence and protect their individuals class, etc., interest by influencing or trying to influence policies and policy implementation to their advantage.

Not quite infrequently such attempts are known to succeed in Nigeria. They divert policy implementation to the service of unanticipated ends. As Selznick (1952) put it, social action is always mediated by human structures which not only generate new centre of needs and power, but also interpose themselves between the actor-institution and themselves. Inadvertently, they confront the system with such imperatives as may demand measures of adaptation unforeseen by the interposing centres of power and may result in a deflection of the original goals.

### **Nigerian Civil Service: An Overview**

The Nigerian Civil Service as any other civil service is a well organized body of permanent officials, ministries and departments of government charged with the responsibility of implementing government policies and programmes in accordance with established rules and procedures. The civil service is part of the executive arm of government charged with responsibility to execute the laws, policies and programmes of government. As Udokang (2016) opined the Civil Service, transforms government policies and programmes into concrete

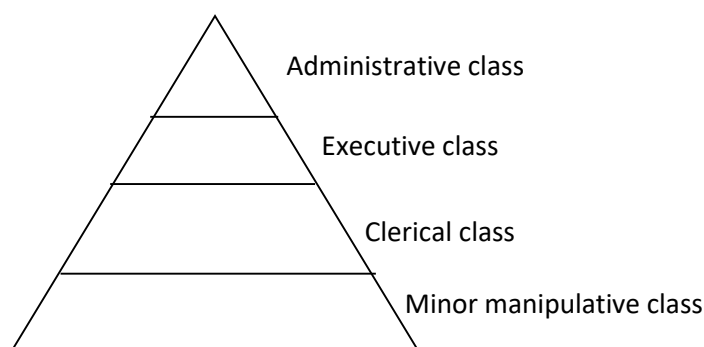
services or reality for citizens besides being that arm of the nation's political system entrusted with the general administration of government.

The 1999 Constitution as cited by Obi (2005) defined the Civil Service of the Federation to mean

*“Service of the federation in a Civil capacity as staff of the office of the president, the vice-president, a ministry or department of the Government of the federation assigned with the responsibility for any business of the Government of the Federation. (1999 constitution cited in Obi)*

The civil service in Nigeria according to Alonge (2005) has four main classes or cadres and these are

- i) The Administrative class.
- ii) The Executive class.
- iii) The Clerical class.
- iv) The Minor manipulative class.



The pyramid shape of the Civil Service class structure as Alonge (2005) observed depicts its powers and functions. Each class is given responsibility according to its importance and status. The nearness to the top of the class hierarchy conveys on one greater responsibilities and powers.

This paper focuses on the Civil Service of the federation as operationalised above. It is however, important to note that States and Local Governments Civil Services are patterned after that of the federation. They are also affected by the reforms as well as experiences challenges that we faced by the Civil Service of the federation which with the used unanimously with the Nigerian Civil Service.

The Nigerian Civil Service, as observed earlier, is a product of colonial heritage. It is composed of Ministries and Extra-Ministerial Departments. Throughout the colonial period, it underwent a series of structural transformation designed to make it more functional and relevant to the realities of the Nigeria's environment. The Harragin Commission (1946), the Gorsuch Commission (1955) and the Nigerianization of the Civil Service policy were some of the notable steps taken to restructure the Nigerian Civil Service. (Oshionebo, 1992).

By 1999, the Civil Services at the Federal, State and Local Government levels were fundamentally weak and widely regarded as politicized, corrupt, demoralized and inefficient. Nigerian Civil Services had metamorphosed from a manageable, compact, focused, trained, skilled and high-motivated body into an over-bloated, lop-sided, ill-equipped, poorly paid, rudeless institution, lacking in initiative and best by loss of morale, arbitrariness and corruption (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2008).

With the attainment of Independence in 1960, the process of bureaucratic modernization continued. A number of Commissions were set up to review salaries and wages and other terms and conditions of service in the Public Service. The first of these Commissions was the Morgan Commission (1963) which reviewed the wages and salaries and conditions of service of the junior employees of the governments of the federation of private establishments. The commission introduced a minimum wage in the country based on geographical factors. The Morgan Commission was followed by the Elwood Grading Team which was set up by the government to enquire into anomalies in the grading and other conditions relating to all posts in the Public Services of the Federation with a view to determining appropriate gradings and achieving uniformity in the salaries of officers performing identical duties. Although the Adebo Commission (1970-71) also examined existing wages and salaries, it went further to recommend the setting up of Public Service Review Commission to examine the structure, organization, management, conditions of service and training arrangements of the Civil Service. The consequent Udoji Commission (1972-74) recommended, among others (Osionebo, 1992). These reforms did not, however, create significance impact on the performance of the Civil Service. This reason perhaps informed the decision for another reform that was announced in 1988. This deduction is based on inauguration speech by the then Secretary to the federal government who admitted then that the:

*Civil service today is a battered institution, ... an institution in which morale has reached its nadir; in which undue bureaucratic practice and interminable delays have become the hallmarks. The institution that is seemingly resistant to dynamic change and has become the object of constant public criticisms (FRN, 2001).*

This led to another and very radical reform in 1988 and its review in 1994 under panels headed by Dotun Philips and Allison Ayida respectively. In 2003 Musa Ahmed reforms was inaugurated. Anazado (2008) pointed out that most of the above mentioned review commissions focused attention on the review of conditions of service of the workers notably salaries and wages. It was only Udoji Commission, Dotun Philips Review Panel, Allison Ayida Commission and Musa Ahmed reviews that delved into the operations and structure of the Civil Service and recommended major reforms aimed at reducing corruption, mediocrity, inefficiency, ritualism, redtapism, and other problems affecting the Civil Service.

The main thrusts of the reform efforts were to modernize core operations using information and communication technology, increase the accountability of public servants to citizens, reduce waste and inefficiency, consolidate various allowances and fringe benefits into salaries, computerize payrolls and introduce a contributory pension scheme (Olaopa, 2010). All these have not significantly improved the performance of Civil Service.

Some decades ago, Adedeji (1970) identified some of the major problems that plague Nigerian Civil Service and drastically reduced its performance. These included problem arising from the structure and organization of the service, recruitment into administrative class without giving

consideration to administrative experience which has resulted in lack of professionalism, over dependence on seniority instead of demonstrated efficiency and lack of progressive wages and salaries structure to synchronize with present economic reality. Other problems identified were lack of inter-sectoral mobility of staff e.g from private sector and University to Civil Service, corruption and tribalism, lack of control of the service that could have enhance constant measurement of performance, lack of quality, dedicated and self discipline leadership as well as dearth of comprehensive, forward looking staff development and training programme. Most of the reforms and reviews made on the Nigeria Civil Service were to address those problems.

In spite of all those reviews and efforts geared toward making the Civil Service goal- oriented. Arowolo (2012) similarly observed that Nigerian Civil Service has been characterised by poor performance and inability to translate government policies and programmes to reality. Despite all measures put in place to arrest the performance failure in Nigerian Civil Service, it has defied all approaches toward tackling the problem. Some years later, Wamakko (2013: 1) speaking on the abysmal performance of Civil Service of Nigeria lamented;

*In almost all its faces without exception, the service was characterized by indiscipline, inefficiencies, ineffectiveness, lack of commitment to service, disloyalty, partisanship, absence of ethics, disregard for procedures, disrespect for constituted authority, and for rules and regulations, poor work attitudes, lack of commitment, etc. Conditions of service were dissatisfactory and everywhere, the working environment exhibited little to write home about.*

The governor observed that these problems are the antithesis of the required ingredients of a virile Civil Service, which should otherwise be the fulcrum upon which development plans, projects meant to uplift the socioeconomic well-being of the people rest. The Governor concluded;

*Concomitantly, poor quality service, mediocrity, disillusionment, declining productivity, etc., were all too obvious with regards to the performance of civil servants. It was almost as if the service was on the verge of system collapse with all the attendant implications for government service. Something had to be done, rather urgently (Wamakko, 2013:1).*

In his view, Awosilia (2014) while acknowledging that the Nigerian Civil Service is large and has contributed to the growth and development of the nation, agreed that the most elements especially of technology that make up the developmental process are not adequately provided. The result according to the author is that Nigerian Civil Service is rated as being one of the slowest to integrate technological advancement. Such impediment corruption, good mannerism, nepotism and formalism which characterised the service have presented in ineffectiveness, poor performances and productivity (Anazodo, Okoye and Chukwumeka, 2012).

The remark is indeed still tenable today as it was then as no significance change has been witnessed in spite of all the service reforms. There is still considerable hue and cry for restructuring of the Civil Service for optimum performance. Supporting this view Ejionye (1984) stated that

*a typical Nigerian worker today, is lazy and indolent. He avoids work and responsibility but loves money, wealth and all the good things of life. The*

*Nigerian worker is material oriented, pleasure seeking and egocentric and wants to get rich quickly. He loves social status and want to be seen, recognized and treated with respect as the man on the head, in charge of affairs, the “oga”. The dominant concern of most salaried employees in Nigeria was less work, longer breaks, excuse, duty certificates, approved casual leaves, the oncoming public holidays, and the looming industrial action. all these are to be enjoyed side by side with frequent salary increase, attractive allowance, accelerated promotions, fictitious claims, bounteneous benefits and bouncing bonuses.*

Such attitudes are still prevalent among Nigerian workers and these constitute impediment to optimum performance.

### **The Nigerian Civil Service and the Environment**

By the way it operates, the Civil Service is an open system. Its behaviour agrees with Easton (1965) and Koontz, et al (1980) and as adapted by Simon (1952) to formal organizations among which is the Civil Service. The internally interrelated parts or organs-ministries, departments, divisions, etc., receive inputs or imports in various forms from the environment, transform them, and generate outputs or products in the form of policies and programmes which are exported back to the environment. This cycle of input-transformation – output with a feedback process, according to the second law of thermodynamics, results in negative entropy as the system seeks and establishes a steady state or equilibrium internally and externally by adapting to the environmental changes or conditions. The major components of the environment are social, economic, and cultural in nature.

It is a known fact that, the present day Civil Service in Nigeria is an adaptation of the Presidential System which is operative in the United States of America. It is also acknowledged by Anderson (2006) and Sachs (2005) that the ability of a Civil Service to perform its assigned role cannot be divorced from the cultural and social environment within which it is expected to function. Drawing from this, it is not difficult to agree that in the United States of America both the Civil Service and the environment have reached a comfortable state of entropy that enhances the satisfactory functioning of the service.

For example, according to Umoh (1992) the average American worker cares little about what will happen to him after he retires from service. He knows that the nation’s social security system will take care of him. He trusts and has confidence in the system. In the housing, his problem is not whether or not he will be able to find a house to rent or buy at any time he wants one and at a price or on terms that he can afford. His problem is, rather, that of choice.

The American economy, Umoh (1992) observed again is not at poverty level. It allows the civil service to meet the budgetary needs of its various units and programmes beyond and not at the level of tokenism. Social checks and ethics produce and maintain a general culture of propriety that allows the civil service to realize its objectives. Besides, government is oriented toward development. It identifies and finances the high-priority infrastructure projects, and makes the needed infrastructure and social services available to the whole population, not just a selected few. Such role by the government enhances adaptation to and utilisation of new innovation such as e-administration which in turn boosts the performance of the civil service. The government also creates an environment conducive for investments by private business by exercising self-restraint in demanding bribes and side payments (Sachs, 2005).

Such is the environment within which the civil service now operative in Nigeria was adapted. To say that the Nigerian environment is a far-cry from the American type is to state the obvious. Agreeing with this view Yesufu (2000) opined that Nigerian labour was not as productive as it should be on the average, particularly when compared with counterpart workers in Europe and other developed countries including United States of America because of the debilitating environment and comparative disabilities of education, training, and inferior standards of management among others.

### **The Path to Take**

Having put the Civil Service into a class and tried to direct attention to its natural accidents or characteristics, there are many things that need to be done to enhance optimal performance of the service. Most people in Nigeria as evidenced in the report of the Political Bureau (1987) argued that the collapse of first and second republics was not the fault of the system but that of its operators. This can also be said of the civil service. The first thing that needs to be done to aid the Civil Service to succeed and attain optimum performance therefore, it to take a break from the immediate nauseating past and put in the relevant positions persons who will not, as in the past fault the system. They include, first and foremost, the president, the governor and the members of their executive councils, chairmen of local government councils and members of their cabinets. Others are permanent secretaries, Directors and all departmental, division, branch, etc., heads at the Federal, State and Local Government levels.

They provide leadership to the Civil Service system. The Civil Service will realize its objectives and meet its intended goals to the extent of commitment and fidelity that this cadre of officers owe to the service and its objectives or goals. It is they who command the system. They are the key operators of the Civil Service. If the system collapses or does not realize its intended ends, the fault finders will start their search from them.

Earlier in this work the Civil Service was portrayed as a framework for action and activities. As an organization, it is as Bernard (1952) put it, a cooperative system held together by a common purpose, a willingness of members to work toward that purpose and the effective communication. The executive has, among his functions, to maintain the organization by developing a communication system, by securing essential services from individuals, and by also formulating common objectives that reflect the present needs of the people.

As every executive probably knows, continued cooperation comes only when the organization meets its purpose and satisfies the personal motive of individual members. This is important because it is the contribution of members that aids the service to meet its purpose. With judicious and fair use of incentives, individual contributions are not uneasy to secure. Here again, the executives manage this economy of incentives.

Furthermore, the Government has a major role to play to husband the Civil Service to success and effectiveness. It has to initiate and pursue policies that improve the general condition of the economy of the nation. It should diversify the economy by investing in agriculture and exploiting other natural resources that are available in the country to reduce the nation's dependence on oil as only source of revenue. This will help the nation to leap out of the present economic quagmire which has been the case for quite sometimes now. With the resulting improvement in the financial position of the nation, there should be some marked increase, too in the budgetary allocations to the various Ministries. In that way, the Civil Service will be able to meet its internal needs and finance its programmes. This will reduce some of the influences

that impair desirable interactions between the Service and the society. Without adequate funding the Service will be unable to capture the reams of its reformers. As experiences show, it is most pernicious and frustrating to be saddled with responsibilities but not equipped with tools of action and fund to perform the expected functions of the office.

There are some impressions that the Nigerian governments have not done enough to raise the ethical consciousness of the Nigerian peoples. Corruption has profoundly proliferated in the society. It has penetrated everywhere and daily exerts deflecting pressure on the civil service. The danger matures where the push from the environment meets a similar disposition inside the Services. As earlier put, the ability of the Civil Service to perform its assigned role cannot be divorced from the cultural and social environment within which it is expected to function. The Civil Service, as a part and microcosm of the society cannot function better in a culture that condones corruption.

Corruption which now looms large in the society vitiates the productive energy of the Service and hinders its success. As an adaptive social structure or system, the performance of the Civil Service has to be analyzed and measured not only in structural but also in functional terms. Vigorous and sustained campaign to make propriety the prime mood of the nation's culture is urgently necessary. This is to be done to create the requisite cultural environment that promotes the proper types of entropy for the effective working of the Civil Service.

Nigeria being one of the most ethnologically heterogeneous country in Africa, there is a big need to mount sustained campaign for unity and a sense of togetherness. Such exercise can curb, within and without the Service, the popularization of debilitating human structures that hinder policy formation or implementation and not only cause deflection but also induce unanticipated negative consequences from previously well thought out actions.

To ensure high productivity and better work performance, in the Nigeria Civil Service, the government should consider making work environment conducive for the employees at all levels by providing appropriate working tools that will make their duties easy, faster, and effective. Full introduction and application of modern technology in the civil service will make employees achieve better results. Thus, good organizational climate with available modern working tools arouse employees confidence and spur their commitment to their jobs.

Some employees in the civil service manifest negative attitude to work in form of loitering, truancy, lateness to work, negligence of duty, insubordination, indiscipline, abuse of office and so on. There should be adequate application of disciplinary measures on such employees in order to prevent or control any negative behaviours that will militate against organizational goals in the civil service. Such disciplinary measures should, however, be used as the last resort.

The work started with an overview of the Civil Service and its reforms. It attempted to situate the Civil Service and the reforms within some theoretical frame as a system. In this regards, the importance of the environment to the working of the system is briefly mentioned. On the path to take, the work places the responsibility for the success of the Civil Service on the shoulders of its leading operators. It stresses that the civil service will realize its objectives and meet its intended goals to the extent of commitment and fidelity that this cadre of officers owe to the service and its objectives and goals. The work goes on to make a few suggestions comprising of what more needs to be done for maximum realization of the intended goals of the Civil Service.

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