

Re-Enacting the Civil Service Core Values and Strategic Policy Approaches For Sustainable Restoration of the Values In Nigeria

Prof. F. O. Okpata

Department of Public Administration

Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

E-mail: famoloks@gmail.com,

Phone:08067843346

Abstract

The paper 'Re-enacting the Core values of the Nigerian Civil Service was aimed at identifying the causes of the erosion of the core-values and legacies of Nigerian civil service with a view to strategize approaches to re-enacting these values back into the system period The study employed ex-post- facto design and relied heavily on secondary source of data in its content analytical method, anchoring the model of analysis on the New Management theory. The study showed that lack of motivation, poor remuneration, lack of commitment to duty, poor condition of service resulting in lack of job satisfaction and conflict of relationship between the political class and the civil servants were the reasons for erosion of the Civil Service core values and legacies in system. The study therefore recommended, socio-economic improvement in the condition of service of the Nigerian civil servants, harmonize salary structure of the entire Nigerian workforce for relative balance in their take-home pay and cordial relationship between the political class and the public bureaucrats to reduce conflict and clash of interest.

Introduction

In Nigeria before and after independence till date, successive governments and their people at one time or the other, have grappled with the challenge of achieving socio-economic and political development in the polity. In these attempts, this desire had found expressions and efforts in the people's commitment to several public programmes and reform policies. These public service reform policies were pursued over time in line with the cultural values and needs of the Nigerian people.

The Nigerian public service which encapsulates the civil service since independence became more visible, viable and active both in formulation and execution of developmental policies and programmes. Nigeria, perhaps more than any other country in Africa, faces greater challenges of development and rational allocation of social resources. Thus in Nigeria, the wider society looks up to her civil service not only to implement development goals and administer government policies on a day to day basis, but also play significant roles in formulating developmental

strategies, policies and programmes in such a way that will stimulate accelerated socio-economic and political changes (Nwosu, 1997; Tolu and Abe, 2011).

The Nigerian public service has not only become a vast complex organization but has also grown highly sophisticated with several public agencies and institutions including the federal and state civil service with varied activities, having expanded its spectrum and has become more-knowledge driven than ethical and value oriented in recent times.

Statement of the Problem

Government everywhere including Nigeria carryout the burden of economic and socio-political development and Nigeria, a heterogonous social environment characterized by powerful contenders, has greater challenges of development and rationale allocation of societal resources. In Nigeria, the wider society looks up to the civil service to implement development goals and administer government policies and also to play significant roles in formulating development strategies, policies and programmes in such a way that will stimulate accelerated social and economical changes. Indeed, such desired changes are naturally expected to include employment, increase social products and a more equitable redistribution of income, yet these desires remain unfulfilled in the face of festering unemployment and poverty (Tolu and Abe, 2011). The Nigerian Civil service today is a battered institution which has virtually lost its attributes of anonymity, neutrality and security of tenure, an institution in which moral has reached its nadir, in which excessive caution, undue bureaucratic practices, corruption and interminable delays have become the hallmarks.

Furthermore, arising from a long period of military rule in Nigeria, the Civil service has been militarised in nature and operations period. Thus, (Mohammed and Dalhalt, 1994:2) assert that:

But for the fact of military intervention in government in 1966, the Nigerian civil service would have matured and it would have become one of the strongest civil service in the world and consequently the Nigerian nation itself would have been developed into a strong, hard working and very proud country,

Another problem bedeviling the Nigerian civil service is the very poor remuneration package of the civil service thus the civil servants are the most disadvantaged and depressed wage earners in Nigeria. The salaries and allowances of the civil servants are very poor in relation to the rising cost of living and the amount required for reasonable subsistence.

Finally, the second major problem of the Nigerian civil service is how to confront the increasing and persistent pressure for employment and objective recruitment policy (<http://megasamit.blogspot/2008/07>). Recruitment of personnel for civil service is one of the crucial tasks of modern government and lies in the heart of the problem of personnel administration (Basu, 1994). The Nigerian civil service system emphasizes uniformity, standardization and transparency in recruitment of competent applicants, but in recent times, it is

perceived that the recruitment process lacks equity and transparency, thus making it difficult if not impossible to recruit the best qualified applicants for available jobs in the service. The above

problem situations have culminated in the lost core values, ethics and ethos of the Nigerian Civil Service. The poor remuneration, nature of the Civil Service together with the conflict of roles, pride of superiority and clash of interest between the political class and the public bureaucrats, combined to pose the challenge of lost of core value orientation of the Nigerian Civil Service. It is against this backdrop that this paper was set to identify the causes and the strategic approaches in restoring and re-enacting the core values of our Nigerian Civil Service. To this effect the following posers guided our study: What are the major causes of value erosion in Nigerian Civil Service System? What strategic approaches can be adopted to restore, re-enact and as well sustain these values in the Nigerian Civil Service System?

Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse

In order to understand and appreciate our conceptual discourse and analysis, there is need to operationalize the key concepts within the context of this paper:

i. Civil Service: This is the machinery of government or the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the decision makers and policy implementation (Adamolekun, 2002). Meanwhile, the civil service of Nigeria, according to the 1999 Constitution, section 318 (1) is: Service of the federal / state in a civil capacity; staff of the office of the President (Governor), the Vice President (Deputy Governor); a ministry or department of the federation (state), assigned with the responsibility for any business of the government of the federation (state).

Contextually, civil service refers to the body of men and women employed in a civil capacity and on non-political career basis by the federal and state governments primarily to render and faithfully give effect to their decisions and in the implementation of public policies. Such career officers normally derive their appointment from the civil service commission which also exercises power of delegating duties and responsibilities to department in accordance with laid down rules (Ipinlaiye, 2001; Tolu and Abe, 2011).

ii. Policies: A set of rationally determined courses of action of a given body, group or government on what to do or not to do. The Webster Comprehensive International Dictionary defines “Policy” as “A course or plan of action especially of administrative action, regarding any issue event programme or project. Hence public policies are those courses of action as to what government officials have decided to do or not to do, regarding a particular programme or projects.

iii. Strategy/Strategic: According to the same Webster Comprehensive International Dictionary, the word ‘Strategy’ is derived from the term “Stratagem” meaning to maneuver design; to outwit an enemy in war. Thus strategic approaches simply means carefully selected maneuver designs, adopted to accomplish a purpose and/or a programme against an opponent or even business project hence there are strategic business policies and plans aimed at actualizing business projects.

iv. Enact/Re-enact: To make into law; to carry out an action, or perform an action. In the context of our paper, to re-enact therefore means to bring back into a law for the performance of official duties of a government machinery or organ.

v. Core value: This simply means the heart of our desirables, the most important thing with intrinsic worth in our system; the most important belief or acceptable standard or cherished norm of practice, in this case, among the Nigerian civil servants.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

This paper is anchored within the ambit of New Public Management theory. This is because new public management theory is theoretical model is workable, practicable and result oriented. For Tolu and Abe (2011), the theory places emphasis on good governance as a result of the resent globalization of the economics, technological innovation and democratization. As a conceptualization of effective service, new public management theory is a relentless movement in the direction of greater transparency in resource allocation, decentralization of management authority and performance management through security quality (Pollit, 1996). New public management theory therefore captures the basics of institutional and organization restructuring as an attempt to raise it performance by improving the quality of service delivery. It is result focus rather than the process of result. The theory is concerned primarily with how to deliver public goods efficiently and equitably (Shah 2006:6). The appropriateness of this theory to this study cannot be over emphasized because in order for the civil service to deliver efficiently, there is need for both institutional re-structuring as well as management re-orientation for improvement and quality service performance.

Jones and Thompson (1999) interpret new public management as the five Rs, they are: restructuring to focus on core competences, reengineering of work process, radical organization, reinvention and realignment by introducing activity based costing and responsibility budgeting, rethinking by re-conceptualizing public sector bureaucracies or learning organizations. They focus on models of New Public Management and conceptualized four categories of model as follows: efficiency model, downsizing and decentralization model, management of change model and public service orientation to change model. These model according to them, were developed to engender effective service delivery. The new public management theory was an effort to improve government service delivery to the citizenry because of the expectation of the people. In many developing countries of Latin American and Africa, the new public management was a paradigm shift from autocracy to democracy in the dawn of democracy pluralism. New public management becomes an avenue through which democratic governance will transform into a better governance that will lead to public policies that are technically efficient and effective and also responsible to needs of large sections of the citizenry. The main current of the Public Management literature is concern not with what to do but how to do it better. It argues for an incentive environment in which leaders are given flexibility in the use of resources but held accountable for result. Top down controls are these replaced by a bottom-up focus on result (Shah, 2006: 10). New Public Management has captured vividly the reason for the 'procedure without result' of civil service operation in Nigeria. It can be said that various civil service reforms in Nigeria did not consider the option of new Public Management as alternative to excessiveness. Therefore, policies were very good on paper and implementation and workability remain a tall dream. The civil service in Nigeria is still being explainable using the 'old bureaucracy' that depends on degree of rigidity of rules, formal structuring and inefficiency, inadvertently affect sustainable development at all levels of government in Nigeria.

The Nigerian Civil Service: Nature and Characteristics

Although Nigerian civil service dates back to 1862 when direct British colonial rule was established over the territory of Lagos, modern day civil service in Nigeria really dates back to only the second decade of the twentieth century. Meanwhile a single civil service was not immediately set up for the whole country but continued to be governed as they were before the amalgamation of 1st Jan, 1914. Like any other African country and among the commonwealth nations, Nigerian public service was built on foundation and structures inherited from the colonial period (Abba, 2008).

The civil service in the overseas is a complex organization, comprising permanent officials appointed in a civil capacity to assist the political executive in the conception, formulation, implementation, coordination and monitoring of government policies in ministries and extra-ministerial departments with which governments functions and responsibilities carried out. The civil service also is the administrative structure employed in civil capacity to fulfill government policies and programmes, giving effect to decisions and their implementation. Today, the civil service according to Ipinlaiye (2001) has come to be regarded as modern institution bequeathed to mankind in the process of revolutionizing an efficient way of organizing any large organization. In this respect and in all its ramifications, civil service is defined as the public bureaucracy of any nation.

As a body of men and women employed to ensure that policies and programmes of any government are carried out, the civil service is involved in the formulation of policies and advising generally on policy matters and responsible for the management of the machinery of government and its routine duties that public administration demands. As part of government, the civil service never dies because of its perpetual and dynamic nature.

The modern civil service in Nigeria has certain **appreciable legacies, values and ideals in their conjectures, such as the value of honesty, prestige, selflessness, neutrality, impartiality, professionalism, commitment etc** that enable every civil service to work towards accomplishing public objectives (Eze, 1995 cited in Okpata, 2009).

The civil service as the centre piece of the public service of any nation, is endowed with specific peculiarities to enable it serve any government no matter the political leaning. Its features include but are not limited to the following:

1. It is non-partisan and inviolate to be able to serve any party/government in power.
2. Its members and officials must be experience with technical and professional know-how to be able to implement public policies.
3. Its structures are orderly hierarchical to ensure proper administration and to engineer social and economic change and development.
4. There is permanence of its existence for continuity.
5. It is indispensable for continuity of the traditional role of the administration development in any government of a country (Abah, 2011)
6. It operates within and under formal rules which guide conduct and practice.

The Civil Service Core Values

Impartiality/impersonality relations: The objectivity of the goals of public service and the selflessness that characterize the system, require that an incumbent officer should be an impartial umpire, who must play to the rule of the system without selfish attachment to the policy programmes including recruitment, promotion and even staff training and development. The officer is detached to his office properties and enjoys the paraphernalia of office only as an incumbent. Objectivity of the system's goal should be paramount to any civil servants no matter the position and rank; hence any attachment to primordial kinship is an offence punishable under the law of civil service.

Honesty in Service: To establish this virtue, lure and legacy, public officers are under oath of allegiance and office, to be fair and honest in the discharge of their official duties to all, irrespective of tribe, culture creed or religion. In this, a given officer is seen to defend the ideals of the civil service and is seen to be truthful at all time, no pursuit of personal gain and not to be fraudulent in the achievement of public goals. Closely related to the value and legacy of honesty is **Commitment to duty or diligence of an officer:** One of the lost core values in our civil service today is commitment to duty. Today arising from the economic uncertainty of our time and the complex need – nature of the contemporary Nigerian worker, commitment to duty of the civil servant has been considered an old fashioned value. Only few civil servants with personal discipline and integrity can promise themselves of sitting down to carry out their statutory for the maximum of 9 to 10 hours an average civil servants is expected to spend in an office daily. Thousands and one of our modern day public servants, combine office hours with private businesses that conflict with one's official duties thus, it is no more service to the public but business as usual to self.

Political neutrality: Today, virtually every civil servant by extension has one political party affiliation or the other. The government in recent times, lay credence to this aberration, by their usual clarion call for every senior public servant to go and “deliver” during elections and such related political activities in their various constituencies, local government areas and political wards, etc.

Selflessness: In recent times, only few public servants perform certain official duties now without demanding for gratification thus, the popular bureaucratic practices are shortchanged for self gratification and aggrandizement. Today, nobody seems to be concerned hence virtually all the MDAs are involved in collecting money from poor and innocent applicants in order to give those jobs in Nigeria. Indeed, there is high level of beatification of bureaucratic corruption in our public service system

Strategic Policy Approaches for Re-enacting the Core Values and Legacies of Civil Service in Nigeria

To capture the utility of the concept of policy that is germane to address this section of this paper, we adopted the Melkwa (1975) conceptualization of Policy as ‘official statement determining the plan of action or what government wants to do’, vis-a-vis Dimock (1965) position of the concept as the “consciously acknowledged rules of conduct that guide administrative decision.

Nevertheless, in spite of the eroding values and the corresponding criticisms against our public and civil service, the Nigerian civil service over the years has also been plagued with a plethora of ethical and value disorientation hence the need for a conscious effort to re-enact functional policy approaches that will restore the cherished core values of the civil services and below are some suggested but not exhaustive policies:

1. **Personnel oriented policy:** This approach contends that Nigerian government should deliberately adopt efficient personnel policies on the areas of democratic leadership, recruitment, motivation, maintenance, development and staff welfare. According to Frederick W. Taylor’s Scientific Management principles, there must be a clear-cut policy of recruitment that shall be scientifically based in the selection of workers, who shall not only be certificate – knowledge driven but also possessing practical experience. Men and women whose recruitment and selection should be objectively rational, without personal bias of political party inclination, tribe or creed and void of quota or spoil system. Again closely related to this is the issue of motivating the workers so recruited/selected. According to F. W. Taylor, when organizational management harps on the commitment of workers without a commensurate emphasis on motivational incentive, such empty management goals are usually received with a lot of nostalgia because a motivated worker is bound to achieve optimally the goals of an organization because the psychological disposition of a motivated workers is proportionally related to his level of productivity in an organization. An average Nigerian worker is not motivated. Furthermore, maintenance as well as development also comes to play like preparing well designed training and staff development programmes relevant to the needs of the organization and worker for executive development and self-realization. The human capital is an asset and must be serviced and maintained maximally for organizational profitability.
- **Political oriented policy:** *The idea of this policy is that* government, as the largest employer of labour and managers of public organizations, should be willing and courageous enough to introduce reforms policies meant to deliberately bring: (a) a change in the structure or procedure of the public bureaucracy and the re-organization of the institutional aspect of our work structure and (b) the attitude and behavioural change of the public bureaucrats involved in order to promote organizational effectiveness of the entire civil service (Onah and Okoli, 2002: 205). In this orientation, government should reposition itself to provide institutional framework of monitoring and evaluating the services of the bureaucrats, reorient existing institutional structures to make them more effective. Government should be willing to re-enforce as well as re-empower certain anti-graft bodies like the ICPC, EFCC and other law enforcement agencies to do their statutory jobs without minding bias. There shall be no sacred cows in the implementation of rule of law and in the administration of justice within the polity. New values in terms of work commitment, honesty, transparency morality and

selfless service to be re-emphasized against fraud, corrupt and sharp practices that hitherto characterize our public bureaucracy.

- **Socio-economic oriented policy:** Here, Nigerian government should appreciate the fact that the civil servant is a personality requiring esteem need of recognition socially and economically. Today, because of the exalted position of the political class, civil servants have no socio-economic value in Nigerian society because ‘money answers all things’. Following the neoclassical theory, work is a social activity and when men work in group, they actualize both personal needs and aspirations and also the goal of the organization, hence the social instinct of the worker has to be restored and respected vis-a-vis his political class counterpart. To this, the reward system of the civil servants or their pay package requires upward review periodically especially when compared with their counterparts in the political arena, since all of us operate in the same market regulated by the economic forces of demand and supply as well as inflationary and monopolistic forces. Today, Nigerian parliament is considered the costliest in the world, yet our public bureaucrats are given peanuts as their take home pay. Salary differentiation should be discouraged especially for the non-technical class of the civil service because what is good for the goose is also good for the gander. Let the salaries of every worker as much as possible be relatively attractive. The just concluded Nigerian confab refused to talk about increase wages/salaries for the civil servants yet there was no cut in the salaries/allowances of the politicians either and by extension encouraging Caste system in the entire public service of Nigeria

- **Administrative oriented policy:**

Government, in this policy option, should provide effective administrative control on all civil service. Our administrative system is void of values and there is no universally accepted principle of administering resources in Nigerian public service. There is a lot of ineptitude and ignorance among the ranks of some the administrators of our public sector. Government should periodically introduce administrative reforms, emphasis on staff development, training and retraining for human capacity development in our public bureaucracy. There is a lot of redundancy in our system as our administrative institutions and machineries lack effective functions. We need administrative reform policies to reposition government institutions (MDAs) to re-enact the core values of our civil service for a virile one indeed.

Strategic Approaches

Central to the strategic approaches required to re-enact the core values of Nigerian civil service is what I refer to as “*General need assessment definition*“. The term “Need” according to Boydel (1975) implies that something is lacking. Need exists when the application of systemic assessment serves to overcome a particular weakness. The following need assessment has become imperative if we must re-enact the core values of our civil service. According to Ibrahim (2003), they include:

Organizational need assessment approach

This involves an establishment of holistic organization’s appraisal, aimed at reestablishing and/or re-determining its philosophy as to whether it is achieving its purpose of existence. In this, an

organization appraises its objectives, workforce, technologies and methodological approaches adopted over time. In this, the organization also assesses its strength and weaknesses with a view to repositioning itself for efficient work towards achieving its goals and objectives.

Individual need assessment approach: Here the worker as a person is assessed, his suitability,

skills, abilities and knowledge requirement for his job in the organization; his social as well as welfare needs. In doing this, the organizational management has in mind to determine his personal needs and aspirations and how these affect his job performance in the work place. This need assessment enables the organization to plan for staff development and to initiate staff welfare programmes as well as recondition the work environment for greater and maximum productivity.

Politico-administrative need assessment approach: Here, organization assesses its policies, administration of personnel and resource allocation. It evaluates its policy on recruitment, manpower development, reward system and administration of wages, industrial relations 'and its technique of performance evaluation ' etc. Management also reviews its style of decision making as well as policy formulation and implementation; power relations, political authority and interest etc.

System's need assessment approach: This is a holistic perspective assessment of the business of the entire work system, its interaction with the workforce, work environment (internal and external), manpower planning and development approach as integrated with allied functions of the organization such like recruitment, promotion, and staff development and training. The purpose of this is to identify the strengths and weakness of the entire system, its values and work ethics, aimed at re-evaluating the entire system for effective performance. The Nigerian civil service system requires total re-appraisal of the government approach, the organization's structural suitability, the workforce and the work environment, all aimed at stimulating work and the workers towards building efficient and virile public bureaucracy for public goal achievement (Armstrong, 1984, Boydel, 1975 and Heaton, 1974). S

Conclusion

So far, we have established that the Nigerian civil service is an instrument that catalyses socio-economic development of Nigerian nation. Re-enacting core values of the Nigerian civil service therefore is a subject that requires the collaborative efforts of the government, the public bureaucrats, the people and the existing institutional frameworks like the ministries, departments and government agencies. It also calls for responsive and responsible public service and the involvement of all the stakeholders in the governance of our public system. It is our belief that to re-enact the eroded core values of our civil service, the entire system needs overhauling and re-orientation of both the institutional structure and as well as behavior disorientation in respect of the negatively acquired vices hunting our commitment to duty.

Recommendations

Indeed, to restore the core values of the civil service system aimed at ensuring sustainable efficiency and effectiveness of our public bureaucracy, the following recommendations have been put forward as a guide:

- Our civil service should be provided with adequate management education, thus constant training and re-training of the staff for the development and continuous acquisition of technical skills and competences required for effective bureaucratic performance.
- There is need to establish the autonomy of the civil service and depoliticize our public service system so as to achieve efficiency in service. Conflict of value and interest in policy formulation and implementation should be reduced, especially in recruitment, promotion, admission, appointment and staff development.
- There is need to adopt both democratic in leadership principle, justice and fairness in the personnel administration of the entire public service. Thus bringing in personnel related policies in the management of public bureaucracy. As we emphasize the need for workers commitment, there is also need to match same with motivational incentives as well as participatory management in decision making process. This will boost workers morale for increased productivity.
- Government must endeavour in this morale boosting of the workers, to pay attractive salaries and wages to the public bureaucrats so as to reduce fraud and corruption among public servants because poverty share relative boundary with corruption in the public service. Furthermore, salaries/wages differentiation should be discouraged as harmonized/unified salary structure for both federal, state and local governments will be ideal for all public servants.
- Government should show enough political will and courage to adopt and enforce policy reforms to re-position the public service generally and empower the anti-graft agencies for pro-activity in their operation without sparing any sacred cows in our public service. Government also has to re-energize existing institutions of the civil service to respond to the need for effective supervision, control, monitoring, evaluation and as well as feedback. Management of public institutions and agencies (MDAs) should adopt periodic organizational, individual, administrative and systemic need assessment, to ensure that we operate within the need values of our organizations. Finally, corporate and good governance and exemplary leadership is required by all and sundry and the need to introduce welfarism in the governance of our people and in the management of the public service have become very imperative. This is because according to Marx thesis, man must first eat, wear cloth and live under shelter before he can talk and practice politics, philosophy, religion and law.

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