
BUREAUCRACY AND CHALLENGES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

State bureaucracy is thought to bolster development and good governance by providing fair mechanisms for social provision in the third world. In Nigeria, where bureaucratic ethos are unfamiliar and imperfect, clients of social provisioning express less support for their bureaucratic institutions than government. This paper theorizes bureaucracy from two major perspectives: Weberian and Marxian. Also, it assesses various definitions of governance and good governance. The paper goes further to identify the reasons that account for the abysmal performance of Parastatals and agencies of government. Among these reasons are under-funding, spoils system of recruitment, politicization and corruption among others. All these have affected efficiency and effectiveness in the Nigeria public service delivery and good governance. In effect, the paper concludes that these have slowed down the processes of socio-economic and political development of Nigeria which can only be resolved when bureaucrats become more pragmatic in their understanding of what constitutes good governance.

INTRODUCTION

The civil bureaucracy or service is the term used to describes the system of authority relationships that exist between men, offices and methods that government uses to implement its programmes. It does not cover political appointee such as ministers and Advisers or members of the judiciary at the federal, state and local government tiers of government. The primary function of civil servants is to advise the political executives or appointees on all aspects of governmental activities to ensure formulation of the policy which is consonant with the objectives of the government of the day. Advice in the context of policy formulation or initiation necessary implies the collection of relevant data, together with carefully considered alternatives, which would enable policy decisions to be made by the political heads. Related to this function is to ensure that policy decisions of government are faithfully implemented. From this brief statement of the roles of the civil servants, it will be seen that the civil service is about the most significant single institution affecting the lives of the citizenry in a polity, its influence is all pervasive, more so in today Nigeria where is striving to attain good governance, Vision 20 – 20, Seven Point Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals respectively. Obviously, these policy statements that pertains to good governance needs to be investigated. No doubt, they are laudable, but what assurance has Nigeria to its realization? This is part of our concern here. This paper explores the role bureaucracy should play for Nigerians to benefit from good governance.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF BUREAUCRACY

In the literature on public administration, the term bureaucracy is used as a synonym of administration. This is the usage to be adopted in the paper and the focus is on governmental bureaucracy/administration. The other concepts that are used more or less synonymous of governmental bureaucracy/administration are **civil service** and **public service**. Nuances in the usages of these inter-related concepts are explained as appropriate in the paper. State bureaucracy or the civil service is known to be part and parcel of the executive branch of government. It is the institution that is charged with the responsibility of formulating and implementing policies and programmes of the government. In other words, while it is the duty of the political executive to determine and direct the focus of policies, the state bureaucracy is the administrative machinery through which the objectives are actualized. The state bureaucracy could therefore be described as the agency through which the activities of the government are realized. There are two main contending views on the study of bureaucracy; namely the Weberian and Marxian. According to the former, bureaucracy is viewed as a large-scale, complex, hierarchical and specialized organization designed to attain rational objectives in the most efficient and effective manner. The realization of such rational goals and objectives are maximized through the bureaucratic qualities of formalism and impersonality in the application of rules and regulations in the operation and management of organizations. This classical bureaucracy of Weber is seen as a very superior organization mainly because of certain qualities such as hierarchy, division of labour anchored on specialization, policy of promotion and recruitment based on merit, in addition to impersonality in the conduct of official duties, security of tenure and strict observance of rules regulations, among others (Weber, 1964).

Shiriji's thesis supports Marx's view on Bureaucracy. On his own part, Karl Marx viewed bureaucracy as an instrument of oppression, exploitation and damnation in the hands of the dominant class who control and manipulate the state and its apparatus in the society. More specifically, bureaucracy is conceived as instrument usually employed by the ruling class to accumulate wealth and maintain their domination and control of the state. This basic driving force of bureaucracy is usually concealed by both the dominant class and the bureaucrats, as efforts are constantly made to project the bureaucracy as a neutral and development agency working for the interest of every body in the society. But this is only a smokescreen to hide its real motive and responsibilities. To a very large extent, the future and interest of bureaucracy are closely interlinked with those of the ruling class and the state.

According to Nnadozie (2007:10):

...due to the fact that bureaucracy is not an integral part of the capitalist ruling class, it has a certain measure of autonomy which makes conflict with its master possible. But in this conflict bureaucracy is always disadvantaged and the conflict itself cannot go beyond certain limits, which are always determined, by the existing social forces and relations of production. From fore going, it follows that bureaucracy does not occupy an organic place in the social structure, as it is not directly linked with the production process. Its existence and development therefore has transient and parasitic character.

The other two Marxist characterization of bureaucracy worthy of note are those of alienation and incompetence. It is by the process of alienation that social forces escape from the control of man, attain an autonomous status and turns against man. In the case of bureaucracy, it is by alienating the populace that it becomes an independent and oppressive force, which is felt by the majority of the people as a mysterious and distant entity that regulates their activities. This attitude is reinforced by the bureaucrats` tendency to create special myths and symbols around it that mystify its action and position. In this processes, bureaucracy become a close system that jealously guards its secrets, prerogatives, and presents to the outside world a united front of silence and hostility (Nnadozie, 2007: 11-12) In the area of incompetence the Marxist stresses the lack of initiatives and imagination by the bureaucrats who are always scared of taking any kind of responsibility. The bureaucrat is not intimidated by this problem rather believes it is capable of doing anything. Consequently, the bureaucrats continually expand its area of functions and domain in order to consolidate its position and prerogatives. This "bureaucratic irredentism", helps the bureaucrats to conceive themselves as if they have statutory duty to perform.

Furthermore, this process of self-aggrandizement is accompanied by what Marx described as the "sordid materialism" of bureaucrats. That is, the internal and continuous struggle for promotion, careerism and infantile attachment to trivial status symbols and prestige among bureaucrats. The bureaucracy broadly defined, refers to that machinery of government designed to execute the decisions and policies of political office holders. Political leaders make policies. The public bureaucracy implements it. If the bureaucracy lacks the capacity to implement the policies of the political leadership, those policies, however well intentioned, will not be executed in an effective manner (Anise, 1984, Okafor, 2005). It is one thing to promise development and it is quite another to achieve it. Viewed from this strand, the role of public bureaucracy in the process of economic, social and political development looms large indeed.

According to Okafor (2005), the role of bureaucracy is critical to all areas of development process. In Nigeria, public bureaucracy is a very vital element of the development process. Bureaucratic capacity is not a sufficient condition for development, but it is most assuredly a necessary condition. The major puzzles for this paper are – what are those human and structural factors that are militating against public bureaucracy from rendering efficient and effective service delivery in Nigeria and what are the best possible ways out?

However, we will use the term bureaucracy to mean civil service, which has now become part of the agency of the executive branch of government in the newly emergent countries in Africa (such as Nigeria). By definition and for the purpose of this paper, public bureaucracy is used to refer to the administrative machinery, personnel of government at the various tiers of government and the body of rules and regulations that govern the behaviours of these personnel in government.

Put differently, the bureaucracy refers to all organizations that exist as part of government machinery for executing policy decisions and delivering services that are of value to the populace. Also, it is a mandatory institution of the state under the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as outlined in chapter VI of the constitution under the title – The executive, Part I (D) and Part II (C) which provides for bureaucracies at both the federal and state levels of government.

The public bureaucracy is made up of the legislative bodies at the national and State assemblies, the judiciary, the police, members of the Armed forces and Para-military agencies, Parastatals or extra-ministerial departments and agencies (including social service) commercially oriented agencies, regulatory agencies, educational institutions and research institutions among others.

GOVERNANCE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Debates about good governance begin with its definition. Table 1 presents a sample of recent definitions from official and scholarly sources, including the concept's complexity. While there are some commonalities across these definitions – for example, governance deals with institutional processes and the rules of the game for authoritative decision-making – they differ significantly in terms of specificity and normatively. For some, governance implies particular kinds of institutional processes and outcomes.

In moving from the definition of governance to that of good governance, normative views of what 'ought to be' become even more prominent. Yet definitions vary in the degree to which they imply particular policies or policy outcomes – stable macroeconomic policy, reduction of poverty, openness to trade, decentralization, or efficient revenue collection, for example – or particular institutional forms and processes – democracy, widespread participation in development decision-making, or strong legislatures, for example. Moreover, given such broad definitions, it is often not clear how governance can be distinguished from development itself.

Beyond concerns about definitions of governance and good governance is a contentious debate about measurement, indicators and inference. Such debates are important because they are predicted on questions about how characteristics such as the rule of law, transparency or accountability can be operationalised and compared across or within countries at different moments in time in ways that are verifiable. They deal also with cause-and-effect relationship; do particular conditions of good governance lead to development or are they a consequence of it? Researchers working on these issues often differ in approach and are at times highly critical of the work of others. Yet they tend to agree that, although the measurement of good governance is problematic and inexact, it is worth the effort to attempt such work in order to clarify thinking and to set a basis for cross-national and longitudinal comparisons (See Tables I & II as Appendixes).

PROBLEMS OF THE BUREAUCRACY IN NIGERIA IRRESPECTIVE OF REFORMS

The problems besetting the civil bureaucracy in Nigeria could be discussed in three thematic formats: Structural, Administrative attitude and behaviour, and Political and economic respectively.

According to Nnoli (1980), Adebayo (2001) and Yusufu (1992) who posited that the structural problems besetting the civil service in Nigeria fall roughly into four basic categories, namely, personnel regulations, personnel qualifications, organizational structure, and work environment. Each plays its role in diminishing the administrative capacity in public bureaucracy. The personnel regulations state requirements for entry into the bureaucracy as well as procedures for promotion and dismissal. Public service in Nigeria stipulates a checklist of requirements for entry, including federal character. Theoretically, positions are supposed to be filled on the basis of merit. However, political, family, ethnic and religious factors are relevant considerations in achieving bureaucratic appointments.

Okafor (2005) adds:

... Once ensconced in a bureaucratic position, officials are promoted primarily on the bases of seniority. Rules for promotion fail to differentiate between productive and non-productive workers. Dismissal is rare except during the mass purge of Murtala –Obasanjo administration in 1975-1976. It is hard to lose a government job in Nigeria (Okafor, 2005:67).

Riggs (1963) expresses this negative aspect in this way:

Bureaucrats tended to use their effective control to safeguard their expedient bureaucratic interests – tenure, seniority, rights, fringe benefits, toleration of poor performance, the right violate official norms rather than to advance the achievement of programmes goals. Hence the career bureaucracy in the developing country fails not only to accomplish the administrative goals set for it but also stands in the way of political growth.

Adebayo (2001) and Otobo (1992) added that as regards personnel qualifications, employees entering the public and civil services through the use of spoils system might lack the required technical skills for their positions. Moreover, on-the-job training programmes are weak and ineffective. The fallout of this process is the emphasis on filing slot rather than matching employees' skills with the needs of the position.

In addition to the above factor, most public bureaucrats are poorly paid and as a result resort to multiple job-holding in the informal sector thereby impacting negatively on their attitude and commitment to work, (see Onyeonuru, 2004, Okoh (1998) and Okafor (1998). Ejiofor and Anagolu (1984) Ejiofor (1987), Onyeonuru, (2005) and Okafor (2005) added that the attitudes and behaviour of public bureaucrats in Nigeria are not conducive to the efficient administration of the affairs of their government organizations. This is because most bureaucrats are overtly concerned about the security of their positions and as such are not inclined to the initiative thus, more concerned with status since authority breeds status.

Moreover, petty corruption or "black market" bureaucracy continues to flourish in Nigeria's public service and other counter productive attitudes also continue to flourish. For example, the work habit and motivational levels of most junior and medium level bureaucrats are not substandard. Ejiofor (1987) concludes that as a result of the above, the performance of public bureaucrats tends to be sluggish, their coffee breaks prolonged, and their need for supervision constant.

Furthermore, the ethno-religious hostilities in Nigeria and the crisis of confidence from the populace tend to reinforce and compound the problems of Nigerian public bureaucracies. As identified by Okafor (2005) while quoting Soley (1989) "public bureaucrats, regardless of their dedication to national goals and the norms of professionalism, tend to be viewed as biased and self serving by the masses" (Okafor, 2005:68). Nnoli (1980) adds – "the masses tend to make the basic proposition that bureaucrats are influenced by religious, ethnic and other parochial considerations and act accordingly. As a result of the above thesis, the populace became ignorant of the role of the bureaucracy occasioned by their poor orientation and see government jobs as `no body's job and which must provide for every one'".

Finally, a politically neutral, professional core of senior administrations is rare in Nigeria (Ejiofor and Anagolu, 1987, Soley (1989) and Okafor (2005). Okoh (1998) and Okafor (2005) provided reasons that account for this practice. First, political leaders in Nigeria are under intense pressure to reward their supporters. Second, few political leaders accept the premise of a neutral civil/public service. As most change of regimes were a result of military coup, it is only logical to expect that incoming leaders would view incumbent senior bureaucrats as part and parcel of the regime they had just overthrown. Third, incoming political leaders, and particularly leaders would want to shape the ideological direction (if any) of the public/civil service for their easy control (Okoh, 1998).

In other words, there is a problem between civil service and political leadership. In Nigeria, for instance, there has been a certain amount of frictional resistance between the ministers, commissioners and the executive departments under them due to difficulty of reconciling their respective spheres of responsibility. The career civil servants tend to assume an air of superiority and self-relevance and often have contempt for the politicians many of whom as appointed lack academic background which some of the career civil servants possess.

Katako (1971) observes that "...the politicians are also partly to be blamed for not remedying the situation. Their educational and professional background may be the reason, some of the politicians, of very humble origins, who have never had the chance to work with administrative and professional contributions, they tend to make a valuable and effective contribution to the process of nation-building, then it is absolutely essential that a certain amount of confidence should exist between civil servants and the politicians" (Katako, 1971:417).

In the economic environment of public bureaucracy in Nigeria, two points are worthy of note. First, public and civil service salaries constitute a major component of most budgets over the years. Except on few occasions, marked increases in salaries are a fiscal impossibility without a major reduction in civil service staff (The Guardian, May 11, 2005). The present democratic administration has come to grips with the hard reality that the efforts to attract the most highly skilled personnel to bureaucratic position will necessitate slimming the size of their bureaucratic establishment. Second, as noted above, governments do not always have sufficient funds to finance all the programmes that they promise. Most development and social service projects in Nigeria are severally under funded (New Age, June 17, 2005).

CONCLUSION

REFORMING THE BUREAUCRACY FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Available evidence shows that the Performance of the public service in virtually all tiers of government and in extra-ministerial departments in Nigeria has remained very abysmal, hence the present state of underdevelopment (Obasi, 1987, Jike, 2003, Adebayo, 2001 and Okafor 2005). The abysmal performance of parastatals and agencies of government, like the former National Electric Power Authority and the Nigerian Telecommunication is very obvious in this regard. Nigerians are demanding more and better improved services and their demands are not being met, by all indications on the basis the score cards of the civil service and the Parastatals (The Guardian, May 1, 2005). In effect, this has slowed down the process of socio-economic and political development of Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If the civil service is to attain the desired results of good governance in Nigeria, far-reaching reforms are needed. First, recruitment, and promotion of civil servants should be based on merit system as opposed to spoils system. This is because the enthronement of federal character principle of recruitment and other spoils system techniques have sacrificed efficiency and effectiveness in the Nigerian public service. Second, while rules and regulations are sine qua non for systematic and orderly government, they should be flexible and pragmatic. To ensure this, there is a need for the rules and regulations, which were designed to serve colonial policies, and interests are revised (updated or repeated) to meet the demands of the 21st century.

Again, there is a need for the mental attitudes and beliefs of the civil servants to be reoriented, so that they can cope with the policies of the new governments. Furthermore, there is a need for strong political elites, who are able to articulate political goals and to establish and maintain a framework of both political and legal institutions. They must also maintain communications with the major social and political group in order to sharpen governmental objectives/programmes. Nigeria equally needs a bureaucracy that is characterized by a high degree of deconcentration and decentralization of the decision-making process, a bureaucracy in which there is effective communication and coordination in which appreciate the thoughts and feelings of the people when formulating and implementing policies.

Finally, corrupt officials should be sacked, the behaviour of civil service personnel must change, they must be trained and retrained to embrace the spirit of achievement, and prudent use of material and human resources instead waste that have characterized public bureaucracies over the years.

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Table 1: Definitions of governance and good governance

Source governance?	What is governance?	What is good
World Bank (n.d)	‘the process and institutions through which decisions are made and authority in a country is exercised’ (p.3) accountability and replacement of authorities (voice and and lack of violence); efficiency of	Inclusiveness and ‘selection, accountability; stability Institutions, regulations, resource management (regulatory framework; government effectiveness); respect for institutions, laws and interactions among players in civil society, business, and politics (control of corruption; rule of law) (pp. 3, 7)
UNDP (1997)	‘the exercise off economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and decision-making over the allocation of development meditate their differences” (p. 12)	Characterized as and social and society and that are heard in resources’ (p. 12)
IMF (2005)	For IMF purposes, ‘limited to economic aspects of of law, improving the efficiency and accountability governance ... in two spheres: improving the management sector, and tackling corruption’ (p. 1)	‘ensuring the rule of the public

	of public resources ...; supporting the development and maintenance of a transparent and stable economic and regulatory environment conducive to efficient private sector activities...' (p. 4)	
DFID (2001)	'how the institutions, rules, and systems of the state – the executive, legislative, judiciary and military – operate at central and local level and how the state relates to individual citizens, civil society and the private sector' (p. 11, note a)	'seven key
	opportunities for all people...to influence government policy and provide macroeconomic stability... to promote the growth reduce poverty; to implement pro-poor policy; to guarantee universal provision of effective basic service; ensure security...; to manage national security arrangements develop honest and accountable government...' (p.9)	provide practice; to necessary to the equitable and personal safety and accountably ...; to

Table 1: Cont'd

Source	What is governance?	What is good
USAID (2005)	'The ability of government to develop an efficient, effective, and accountable public management process that is open to citizen participation and that strengthens areas: legislative strengthening, decentralization and democratic governance, anti-corruption, civil-military relations, and improving (p. 1)	Democratic decision-making, on five local policy implementation'
Hyden et al. (2004)	'The formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic and social actors interact (civil society, political society, government, bureaucracy, economic to make decisions" (p.16)	Can be efficiency, society, judiciary)

Kaufmann (2003) 'the exercise of authority through formal and informal measured along six dimensions (voice and external accountability; traditions and institutions for the common good, thus and lack off violence, crime, and terrorism; government encompassing: (1) the process of selecting, monitoring, effectiveness; lack of regulatory burden; rule of law; control of and replacing governments; (2) the capacity to formulate and implement sound policies and deliver public services, and (3) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them' (p.5)

Hewitt de Alcántara (1998) 'the exercise of authority within a given sphere... efficient management of a broad range of organizations and activities... understanding of reform, more dialogue about institutional and involves building consensus, or obtaining the consent or programmatic change, more concern with the public sphere (state and acquiescence necessary to carry out a programme, in an arena and how to strengthen it, more integration of economic where many different interests are at play' (p. 105) institutional reform, more attention to both national and that affect governance (pp. 112-13)

Can be political stability corruption) Processes through technical civil society) policy and and international factors

**Source: Grindle, M.S (2007:556-557)"Good enough Governance Revisited,"
Development Policy Review 25(5) 553-574**