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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Continuous integration of every organization is pivotal to attainment of its goals. More so, piloting the machinery towards this crucial role requires harmonizing various interrelated activities in organization. Thus, this paper examines bureaucracy from the context of the civil service and how the role of bureaucrats in the organization has slowed down various developmental activities in Nigeria, Bureaucratic issues as it impact on development are also discussed.

**Results:** The findings reveal that bureaucratic practices differ from theoretical prescriptions in organizations.

**Conclusion and recommendation:** The paper concludes that bureaucracy has been perceived to be ill-conceived, ambiguous and characterized with rigidity. It is therefore recommended that proper mechanism towards strengthening bureaucracy should be put in place and there should be periodic review to ascertain the extent to which these principles are applied.

**Key Words:** *Bureaucracy, Development, Authority, Government.*

## 1.0 Introduction

In developing nations, one of the most dominant features of state bureaucracy is its inherited legacy in spite of the post-colonial rehabilitation and reform in the administrative superstructure. Bureaucracy is defined as “a hierarchical organization designed rationally to coordinate the work of Organizational goals (Weber in Haralambos & Holbon, 2000).

Bureaucracy is so often used as a derogatory term that one forgets that it “was coined by a distinguished Sociologist to describe an institutional development that he regarded to be of great benefit to modern society” (Lynn, 1987:77 a). Weber saw bureaucracy as the type of administration which is organized rationally, logically, impersonally and according to official rules as a means of carrying out imperative control over human resources. For Weber, bureaucracy “was a necessary condition or an organizational means for maintaining the legal, economic, and technical rationality inherent in modern civilization” (Obumuya, 2004:26). Although the recent pro market reform under structural adjustment program including privatization, deregulation and liberation has created certain challenges to bureaucracy, especially in terms of its size and scope because there has been minimal change in its inherited structural normative and behavioral formations. In general, bureaucracies in African States, Nigeria in particular still reflect their respective colonial heritage; the demise of colonial rule in Nigeria has not ended the former metropolitan traditions in bureaucracy with regard to its structure, functions, classification, socialization, norms and attitudes.

The colonial legacy is evident even in the inherited pejorative features of bureaucracy such as centralization, secrecy, hierarchical rigidly, red-tapism, formal net-work, etc. Bureaucracy is the structure and set of regulations in place to control activity, usually in large organizations and government. It is presented by standardized procedure (rule-following) that dictates the execution of most or all processes within the body, formal division of powers, hierarchy, and relationship. Inferred from the above definitions of bureaucracy are its salient characteristics which include the following.

- Body of non-elective government officials;
- An administrative policy-making group;
- Government characterized by specialization of functions, adherence of fixed rules, and a hierarchy of authority;
- A system of administration marked by official rules, red tapism and proliferation.
- A well-defined division of administrative labor among persons and officers;
- A personnel system with consistent patterns of recruitment and stable linear careers;
- A hierarchy among officers, such that the authority and status are differentially distributed among actors and
- Formal and informal networks that connect organizational actors to one another through flows of information and patterns of cooperation.

However, the tasks of large scale administration and organization of management which are the concern of bureaucracy involves the challenge of controlling, managing and coordinating large scale tasks. Bureaucratic principles are, therefore, relevant to organizations or administrations both private and public which engineer societal development. Salawu (2000:34) observed that Weber has seen bureaucratic organization as the privilege instrumentality that can shape the

modern polity, the modern economy, and the modern technology. The dominant role of bureaucracy in both the economic and social affairs of Nigeria results in the country's bureaucracy being the single most important force in shaping the economic and social development of Nigeria. In the context of this paper, bureaucracy is examined within the framework of the civil service; its roles and impact in the development of Nigeria.

## **2.0 Review of Related Literature**

Literature relevant to the study was reviewed to provide a good base for comprehending the work under study.

### **2.1 Bureaucracy**

Wilmot (1985) argued that bureaucracy starts from birth (health bureaucracy) to family upbringing (social welfare), to school (educational), to work (civil service, military, commercial, industrial), to worship and death (religion): man is increasingly dominated by bureaucracy. Thus, every sphere of modern life has become very bureaucratic as people are born into bureaucracies, grow in it, live with it, and even die in it. It is bureaucracy all the way and all the time (Alukeli and Adesokpoju, 2004). Weber emphasized the technical superiority of bureaucratic organisations over all other forms of organization – comparable to the technical superiority of a machine over non – technical mode of production. Some scholars have argued that bureaucracy facilitates rational planning of complex tasks and efficient production by large organization (Lynn, 1987 b).

In the opinion of Harold Laski, bureaucracy is a form of government in which officials effectively rule, with resulting 'officiousness' (in Waldo, 1982). Similarly, World Bank (2003) stated that "Nigeria's public sector lacks transparency and accountability". This is further confirmed by a recent publication of Transparency International, which rated Nigeria as the second most corrupt in the world. To Weber, bureaucracy is an inevitable feature and the outcome of modernization and the increasing complexities of human institutions. He saw bureaucracy as the decisive feature of modernity, the key to change in economics, politics, law and even cultural life. It is the effort to run large organizations with greater effectiveness that brought bureaucracy (Alukeli & Adekpoju, 2004). Udoji Report (1974) charges the Nigerian Bureaucracies with nepotism, ethnic loyalties, sectionalism, and more importantly corruption. The report also concluded that not only is the entire bureaucracy corrupt, it is not result-oriented. Thus when the Murtala/Obasanjo regime took over the reign of power in 1975, one of the first steps it took was the massive purge of the Bureaucracies. More than ten thousand top level Bureaucrats were sacked on grounds ranging from old age, inefficiency, declining productivity, drunkenness and, most importantly, corruption (Anise, 1986). According to Obatemi (2009) the bureaucrats running the nation's bureaucracies were tainted with the cankerworm of corruption, ethnicity and socialization. Evidence abounds of their active participation in the power struggle among politicians, the aided and embattled election rigging, manipulation of census, falsification of reports and poor report of implementation of development plans. In another instance, Katakao (2010) stated that routine bureaucratic services have been slowly converted into an intricate network of favor provided only in exchange for other favors rendered or expected.

## 2.2 Development

The problem of development has occupied the attention of scholars, activists, politicians, and development workers, local and international organizations for many years with an increased tempo in the last decade. Even though there are different perspectives to development, there is a general consensus that development will lead to good change manifested in increased capacity of people to have control over material assets. Todaro (1985) see development as a multidimensional process involving the reorganization of the entire economic and social system. This involves, in addition to improvement of income and output, radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structure as well as in popular attitudes, customs and belief. In his contribution on the meaning of development, Seers (1969.p.3) argued that: the question to ask about a country's development is therefore what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality?. If all three of these central problems have been declined from higher level, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development, even if per capita income doubled. Development in human society today is not a one-sided process but rather a multi-sided issue. Some individuals perceive development as increase in their skill and ability; others view it as maximum freedom, the ability to create responsibility and so on (Schumpeter, 2000). Dudley (1977) defined development on the basis of human well-being. For him, development does not mean only capital accumulation and economic growth but also the condition in which people in a country have adequate food and job and income inequality among them is greatly reduced. It is a process of bringing about fundamental and sustainable changes in society through bureaucracy. It encompasses growth, embraces such aspects of the quality of life as social justice, equality of all citizens, equitable distribution of income and the demonstration of the development process (Lawal, 2007:3; Egharevba, 2007).

Rodney (2008) conceived development whether economic, political or social to imply both increase in output and changes in the technical and institutional arrangement by which it is produced. In other words, development as a multi-dimensional concept is basically about the process of changes which lies around the spheres of societal life. From the foregoing, it becomes obvious that development involves the capacity of a society, government or social system to manage resources efficiently to improve the well-being of the citizens. This fact, therefore, demand the institutionalization of good governance element such as adherence to rule of law, accountability and growth with equity, in which the poor and the rich both benefit as well.

It is the absence of these processes that creates room for the existence of corrupt tendencies where those who control political power and their allies (the bureaucrats ) begin to circumvent the laws and appropriate the wealth of the nation for their personal interest and aggrandizement through treasury looting, abuse of office, power, and position (Khan 2008). It is this occurrence of political corruption that impedes development, erodes governmental legitimacy and minimizes the ability of government to reduce poverty, provide essential social services and infrastructure which influence people's freedom to live a better life.

### **2.3 Bureaucratic role in government**

The success of government rests as much on the way the public bureaucracy functions. An efficient and neutral public bureaucracy is a sine-qua-non to a healthy democratic system, and a healthy democratic system is critical to efficient public bureaucracy. Though, to some, bureaucratic and democratic institutions are two antithetical poles, with different objectives (Blau lee, 2009). The public bureaucracy had significant role to play in the administration of government whether autocratic or democratic. However, the role of bureaucracy may vary significantly under each of the systems.

From the foregoing, we can summarise the role of bureaucrats as coordination of federal ministries, advising the political officials, formulation and implementation of government policies, gathering and supplying of data for policy makers, ensuring continuity of services and public relations service. Furthermore, bureaucracy is entrusted with the public property. “The public entrusted the ministers with the government of the country and the ministers in turn entrust the civil service with the property of the public “ (Baner, 2010). The public property may be either tangible or intangible. The tangible property among others include cash, stationary, building equipment, vehicles, furniture, stores, etc the civil servants are responsible not only for their safe custody and maintenance, but also their proper and effective utilization. All the roles highlighted above are so crucial to the smooth running of any administration that will foster the development of Nigeria. Underscoring the importance of bureaucracy, Downs (1967) stated that: it is ironic that bureaucracy is primarily a term of scorn, in reality, bureaus are among the most important institutions in every part of the world not only do they provide employment for a very significant fraction of the world’s population, but they also make critical decisions that shape the economic, educational, political, social, moral and even religious lives of nearly everyone on earth ... The ability of bureaus to outlive their real usefulness is part of the mythology of bureaucracy... The important roles of the civil service discussed above, notwithstanding, experience has shown in Nigeria that many government laudable policies that would have contributed to the development of the country have been marred by poor implementation strategies (i.e. bureaucratic procedures) adopted by the civil service, charged for the implementation. Development in its most basic, to meet basic needs have eluded Nigerians. Basic utilities are generally lacking. Even when such utilities are budgeted for, the twin evils of bureaucracy and corruption contrive to deny the people sorely needed infrastructures.

Salawo (2000) in his work revealed that, there are stories of trunk roads that have received budgetary allocations for over ten years but have not been built. There are cases of over-invoicing. There are government hospitals which records indicate that they have been furnished but are still very much bare. There are cases of poverty alleviation schemes which impacts do not reach those at the grass roots level because they are hijacked by the elite group through the civil service (the bureaucracy). The civil service has a way of putting obstacles in the way of policies formulated by the political officials, especially those policies on which they hold divergent opinions. Various tactics are employed “to thwart implementation of policies about which they are skeptical “ranging from procrastination, ‘discovering’ insurmountable obstacles effecting unworkable solution etc (Greenworld and Wilson, 2007; Oktoni, 2010).

## **2.4 Bureaucracy and Corruption in Nigeria: The Nexus**

The phrase, bureaucratic corruption often referred to as petty corruption is the most frequently practised type of corruption in our national life. This acclaimed “holy crime” exists on a routine basis ranging from the hospitals, offices, forces, Educational institutions. (Nwaze 2012). This negative trend has almost become the cultural affinity without exception. Dike (2008) observed that corruption in most develop nation is geometrically increasing despite the existence of anti-graft agencies; this is because the institutions and political class turned to be powerful people as against the strong and reliable institutions that should fight corruption. No wonder the nation’s corruption index has been on a steady increase, it is worthy of note that Nigeria scored 26 points out of 100 and by implication Nigeria is the 136 least corrupt nation out of 175 countries on the 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption Index in Nigeria averaged 19.78 Points from 1996 until 2015, reaching an all time high of 27 Points in 2008 and a record low of 6.90 Points in 1996 (Transparency International, 2015).

Nwaze (2012) further revealed that the bureaucrats are the major culprits of corruption because they are mostly responsible for aiding and abetting corruption for the political class. Moreso, apart from creating fertile land for corrupt practices by the political class, the bureaucrats also exhibit some of these corrupt practices which have obviously been responsible for the steady increase in corruption bedeviling our common wealth. The bureaucrats engage in fast – tracking of payment with juicy kick – backs, over – invoicing, commercialization of official duties, engaging in dummy academic programmes, evading of tax, fictitious allocation of land with intents to convert same for personal gains, gratification, sorting, use of personal companies for public contracts, receiving payments for tracing of files, embarking on pilgrimage and other Religious obligation with government funds, ghost workers syndrome, etc. These negative trends according to Nwaze (2006, 2012) characterized Nigeria’s public service and have almost become a common practice. Though, evidence abound that the Political class are also corrupt with the several charges and prosecutions of past political class in recent times, these corrupt politicians would not have succeeded without the cooperation of the bureaucrats. For example, the Bureau of public procurement is responsible for regulation of contracts, Code of Conduct Bureau being responsible for asset declarations by both the political class and the bureaucrats but these offices are managed by the bureaucrats who manipulate things in the interest of the political class. The Judiciary in recent time has not been freed from this ugly scenario considering the evidence of judgment being induced by subjectivity and personal gains while false age declaration in the public service has been aided by the judiciary. Therefore, the paper posits that the bureaucrats are more responsible for the corrupt practices in our Nation and aggressively tackling the problem from that angle will go a long way in reviving the Nations battered and shattered image.

## **2.5 Problem and Prospect**

Bureaucracy in Nigeria is faced with a number of problems that hamper its effective role in governance and development in the country. One major problem confronting the public bureaucracy in Nigeria is its politicization of appointment into top public offices. Several offices in the civil service were at one time or the other politicized by every successive government; these include the office of the Permanent Secretary, Head of Service, etc. Although, there is nothing wrong with bureaucrats performing political functions, the fear is that unless such political functions are carefully controlled, they can further aggravate the already strained

relationship between the political officers and the bureaucrats, with unpleasant consequences especially during a democratic regime. The political officers would regard such political roles performed by the bureaucrats as usurpation of power and trespass.

Another problem is the high level of corruption associated with the public bureaucracy in Nigeria. The World Bank Report stated that, Nigeria's public sector lacks transparency and accountability". This is further confirmed by recent publication of Transparency International, which rated Nigeria as the second most corrupt in the world (World Bank. 2003). There are cases where bureaucrats frustrate development policies and programmes that would have assisted in reducing poverty, unemployment and inequality. Other problems that are associated with bureaucracy the world over are its rigidity, resistance to change, lack of innovation, impersonality, and excessive aloofness, ritualistic attachment to routines and procedure" (Kramer, 2008). This is the capsule in what some refer to as red-tapism that hinders quick action and effective communication among public bureaucrats. The problem of rigidity and resistance to change by bureaucrats has contributed to the failure of many civil service reforms in Nigeria right from the colonial time till date.

### **3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

Bureaucracy in Nigeria has suffered a lot of setbacks due to its numerous problems. In the area of service delivery, many citizens have lost confidence in bureaucratic institutions charged with the provision and delivery of public goods and services. However, some scholars believe that bureaucracy is quite useful. In the view of Arnold (2004) "experience tends to show that the purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization is ... capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency ...". In the final analysis, the vitality of democracy depends on the capacity of government to deliver essential services and to resolve the problem that confront society and the world and this in turn depends very largely on competence, integrity and motivation of professionals in government service (or in other words the bureaucracy)" (Argyiades, 2003). A fundamental question before us is "how can we make bureaucracy in Nigeria functional?" Several steps must be taken which include the following.

First, the idea of representative bureaucracy tagged "Federal Character" in Nigeria, must be critically re-examined. According to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, "the composition of the government of the federation and its agencies or in the conduct of any government affair should be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria... Thereby ensuring that there should be no predominance of person from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies" (section 14.3). In principle, it has not helped the bureaucracy in Nigeria. For example, in some instances, the federal character has been carried too far to the detriment of the system. In the bid to have every state or ethnic group represented in appointment to the public bureaucracy, many unqualified candidates have been appointed to occupy important positions, where they neither function nor perform.

Secondly, it will be useful for a civil servant "to think of himself generally as a trustee. If he does so, he will help to achieve the goal of good governance and public administration. "Increasing the happiness and improving the welfare of the people: Baker (2004) argues further that this will assist in "building up or maintaining for the civil service a reputation of being honorable and fair, a reputation which inevitably will lead to greater efficiency".



Thirdly, effort should be made to resolve the conflict between the generalist and the specialist in the service. Similarly, the conflict between the career and political officials must also be resolved.

For an effective bureaucracy in Nigeria, the present deployment system, whereby 40% of the federal civil servants are retained in the various ministries in Abuja must be redressed. The need for government to commit itself to reforming and revitalizing the civil service, rebuilding them around the ideals of professionalism, meritocracy, work ethics and accountability, responsiveness, and provision of quality services to citizens cannot be over-emphasized.

Finally, the public bureaucracy in Nigeria has been hounded by colonial legacy, the prolonged military rule, unstable political environment, economic crisis, social menace, constitutional lapses, unfavorable public policies such as the Federal Character, bureaucratic bottlenecks (such as re-tapism, rigidity, centralization. Excessive bureaucratic layers), poor conditions of service, etc. all of these factors have in one way or the other impeded the effective performance of the public bureaucracy thus hampering developmental activities in the country. However, bureaucracy, being one of the longest standing institution in Nigeria, will continue to be relevant to governance, its short coming notwithstanding.

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