

# ***Effect of Control on Public Bureaucracy in Nigeria: The Abia State Experience, 2007-2015***

**Uduma, D. O.  
Ogba, L. O.  
Emerole, O. B.**

## **ABSTRACT**

*This study is centred on the premise that the political class with the instruments of authority wields a lot of influence over the public bureaucracy and thereby controls their mechanism of operation and communication. This control has often raised comments and controversies over the neutrality of the public bureaucracy. Evidence abounds on how institutional and structural apparatus has been put in place as veritable instruments through which the public bureaucracy operate. Use in controlling the public bureaucracy. Using the structural functional theory as propounded by able Almond, the study revealed how public bureaucracy is controlled by the political class; findings were made as the kind of machinery that has been used for body control, the agencies of government involved in the control and the effects of such control on the live general; finally, conclusion and recommends were made for the research.*

**Keywords:** *Control, public bureaucracy, civil service and administration*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The origin of Nigerian public bureaucracy could be traced from the British colonial rule. This is because the British colonial administration played significant roles in shaping Nigeria as a sovereign State; as well as the performance as its bureaucracy (Okonjo, 1974). The bureaucracy, after independence was in all respect similar to the British bureaucratic administrative system that preceded it. However, between 1954 and 1966 the bureaucracy in Nigeria was completely “Nigerianised” (Adamolekun, 2002). The bureaucracy and administrative component of government are employers of a fairly large proportion of professional and technically trained people in Nigeria. The ministries and public enterprises were the products of colonial administration. These institutions were epitome of independent government agencies which are indispensable instruments for the exercise of governmental administrative authority. Nwizu (2002) has rightly observed that for good or evil an essential part of the present structure of governance consists of its far flung system of professionalized administration and its hierarchy of appointed officials upon whom society is thoroughly dependent.

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*Uduma, D. O., Ph.D* is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria. E-mail: [dickudumao@gmail.com](mailto:dickudumao@gmail.com). *Ogba, L. O., Ph.D*, a Political Scientist was the Former Speech Writer to The former Governor of Abia State, Nigeria. *Emerole, O. B. Ph.D*, is a Professor and Head, Department of Human Resource Management, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Umuahia, Abia State.

Furthermore, bureaucracy is a systematic organization of tasks and individuals into a pattern which can most effectively achieve the ends of collective efforts (Nwizu, 2011). From this perspective, he sees public bureaucracy as concerned with the activities of the public and civil servants which is designed for the smooth, effective and efficient co-ordination of human, material and financial resources of the State in order to achieve the ends of collective efforts of the State through initiation, formulation and execution of government policies and programmes for the benefit of the citizenry (Nwizu, 2002). Therefore, we can infer that public bureaucracy and politics shares a close relationship, especially when the issue of policy is concerned. From this point, it becomes difficult to alienate or separate public bureaucracy or administration from politics or insulate it from politics in general. This is owing to the fact that the civil service is the responsibility of the elected political officials in the executive arm of government.

This notwithstanding, the civil services is an organized institution of the State with all the basic features and principles of rational authority which defines its modus operandi as it is governed by rules and regulations that specifies how it operates and also its own internal control that ensures its commitment towards the government and the society in general. Therefore, control on bureaucracy is an external control which comes from the elected public office holders in the executive and legislature. This political control on the public bureaucracy (civil services) arises due to the fact that the executive is the arm of the government which controls the civil services as it implements the policies and programmes of the government, running the day to day activities of the State even in most cases get involved in the formulation of the policies of the government through the information at their disposal. Political control especially those coming from the executive arm of the government to the public bureaucracy arises also because of the fact that recruitment of personnel and appointments into key positions in governance, including those into the civil services are made in the name of the President and the Governor as the case may be. Therefore, in this study we will espouse the different ways of controlling, bureaucracy by the political leaders with particular emphasis on Abia State.

For the purposes of this study, we shall adopt the structural functional theory as propounded by Gabriel Almond. The structural functional theory was derived from anthropology and sociology, but in recent years, the theory has been adopted by political scientist primarily for the purpose of comparative analysis (Chaudan, 2003). The starting point and the basic unit of analysis of structural functionalism is commonly a system or a set of interesting system working as a whole towards a common goal. The theory tries to explicate the operation of a system by means of certain basic functional and structural patterns. Structural functional analysis involves a series of basic steps of procedure and the general limit of variability, identification of functional acquisition or of the conditions necessary for the units, persistence and finally some indications of the structural arrangement or pattern of action through which such functions are performed (Chaudan, 2003). This approach assumes that socio-political phenomena can be best understood in terms of function; which they perform. Almond further posits three basic questions in conjunction to this theory “what functions are fulfilled in every given society by what structures and under

what conditions” (Almond and Verba) Laud’s view whether the approach is through structures or functions in structural functional analysis, the central problems is always some form of “what function are performed by a given institution and how (Laud, 1968). For the purpose of this work therefore, the structural-functional theory would be relevant. This is due to the fact that it shows the different structures in a system, and the fact that, when a structure in a system fails to perform its functions or the functions for which it was created, the goals of such system will not be achieved effectively. In relating this theory to this study, see that there are two different structures in a system with different functions to perform for the system; and when one structure interferes in the functions of the other, it may affect the entire system leading to the failure of the organizational goals of the institutions and also depriving the institutions the requisite expertise and efficiency needed to achieve the overall organizational goals.

### **Types of Control on Public Bureaucracy in Abia State**

Public Administration is the machinery; as well as the integral process through which the government performs its functions, (Nnoli, 1980). It is a system of roles and role relationships which defines in clear and in practicable terms as possible the intention and programmes of government. It is therefore, a system that causes these programmes to be realized. Again, Nnoli (2009) sees it as a pattern of routine activities, involving decision-making, planning, advising, coordination, negotiation, conciliation, arbitration, command and data gathering through which the government carries out its responsibilities. Generally, one will explain the reasons for political control of the public officials as mainly necessitated by the desire of the political officials to be served adequately, or to ensure that the civil servants who to a great extent could be regarded as the tools with which the political executives in power hope to implement their policies. The politicians try as much as possible to plant their loyalists into key administrative areas within the public service, this is with a view to serve as the eye of the politician. Therefore, to achieve the targeted objectives, the various conducts through which control on the public service in Abia State is achieved are as follows: (a) ministerial control, (b) control through appointments, (c) control through board of membership, and (d) control through intervention in policy matters.

**Ministerial Control:** The leadership arrangement provided in the Nigeria presidential constitution falls somewhere between the British and the American presidential arrangements. In line with the American tradition of presidential type of government, the emphasis is on the individual leadership of the chief executive, the president at the federal level and the governors at the State.

**Control Through Appointment:** Our knowledge of the public service shows that there is an agency responsible for the recruitment of civil servants into the various ministries and departments that make up the civil service. While the elected political officers make appointment to various offices, especially, advisers for the convenience of their office who are not members or staff of the civil service (Ndoh, 1999). On the control of the civil service the elected politicians have extensively used the appointment of permanent

secretaries to bring the public service to dance to their tunes. However, the 1999 Nigeria constitution, empower the president at the federal level and governors at the State to appoint Ministers and Commissioners respectively, as their duly authorized representatives more, the constitution requires the governor to hold regular meetings with the deputy governor and all the commissioner's for the purposes of :

- 1) Determining the general direction of the policies of the government.
- 2) Co-ordinating the activities of the governor, deputy governor, and commissioners in the discharge of their executive responsibilities
- 3) Advising the governor generally in the discharge of his executive functions other than those functions with respect to which he is required by the constitution to seek.

In terms of control of the political class on the public bureaucracy (Civic Service) the roles of special advisers are tied specially to the apron strings of the mandate the government in power want them to achieve. The political control is achieved basically in a round about way in the form of forwarding information ordinarily which should have emanated from the bureaucrats to the State Chief Executive for action (Ihedioha, 2012).

***Control through Board Membership:*** Another direct means of controlling of civil servants is through the appointment of political party loyalists as board members to certain governmental agencies. Appointment to a board membership is mostly political and members do appreciate the government that brings them into office (Henry, 1999). This is understandable bearing in mind that such positions are usually used to settle party faithful for their roles during elections and also favorites of the political leadership. These political board members most often interfere extensively in policy matters to the neglect of the civil services rules and regulations, as they try to protect their political interests within the government.

***Control through Intervention in Policy Matters:*** This is the culmination of all other forms of political control on public bureaucracy in Abia State; that is the effective representation of political interests in the appointment permanent secretaries, special advisers, board members and even commissioners. It becomes very easy for political intervention to take place in matters that concerns the internal affairs of the Ministries or departments. This kind of control mechanism makes it difficult for policy decisions to be made independent of the political environment. Therefore, the ability of permanent secretaries and Heads of Non-Ministerial Departments to be able to use their experiences and knowledge gathered to lay out suggestions for policy issues for the effective running of their ministries only becomes a matter of recovery consideration as the interests of the political executives and their ideas of what policy lines each ministry should follow.

### **Appraisal of Control on Public Bureaucracy in Abia State, 2007-2015**

Situating the Abia State bureaucracy within the context of its functions, the paper is to appraise the degree of political control on bureaucracy in Abia State, between 2007 and 2015. The civil service is a professional body of permanent officials who work and carry

out governmental policies and programmes (Ndoh, 1999). Within this context of executing salient functions for the Abia State government, are an executive which enhances the professional competence of public bureaucracy in the State. Generally speaking, within the context of Abia State bureaucracy, the bureaucrats are tools with which political executives in power use to implement the policies of the government. In Abia State, between 2007 and 2015, the public bureaucracy has come under serious political control through recruitment, promotion, strategic transfer and dismissal of public bureaucrats. The State civil service commission has since been reduced as a willing tool in the hand of the class. In a State, where the highest echelon ton of public bureaucrats was dominated by loyalists of the former their governor, Oji Kalu who ruled Abia State between 1999 and 2007. The task of the new administration was geared towards establishing its grip of bureaucracy. However, with a strain in relationship, between the two political allies, new policies were introduced. The tenure of permanent secretaries, directors and heads of non-ministerial departments was pegged at 4 years for permanent secretaries, but renewable after 4 years, if the performance is effective (Adiele, 2011).

### **Effects of Control on Abia Public Bureaucracy**

As an instrument of government, public bureaucracy occupies a central place because of its capacity for achieving results by its own operations. It is eminently suited to function as an agent of policy, to give policy immediate meaning by affecting both economic and social behaviours (Augustus, 1981). There is no doubt that in virtually all modern bureaucracies, that a line is drawn between the political executives who own their positions to politics and career executives who own theirs to advancement within a bureaucratic structure on some mixed basis of merit and seniority. However, as posited by self, the political concern or obsession with issues of control, conflicts with the administrators interest. In effect of delegation of discretionary authority, which is necessary to increase the consistency and promptness of decision-making and also perhaps to widen the administrators powers (Self, 1984). While that of directors was changed to 8 years, even without completing the mandatory 35 years in service or reaching the terminal 60 years five retirement (Adiele, 2011). Again, towards the end of the reign of T. A. Orji, as governor of Abia State to ensure that the initial circular or government directive does not affect his loyalists, a he reverted the tenure of office for permanent Secretaries director's to the status-geo ante (Adiele, 2014). There is no doubt that government is a continuum, and also that the public bureaucracy is politically neutral and serves to protect the interest of the government that is in power. This notion of serving any government that is in power absolutely negates that basic principle of neutrality. Political control of the negative type consists in the abdication of political leadership and the responsibility for policy formulation and exclusive pre-occupation with the end of products of policy. Furthermore, positive political control entails knowing where the regime is heading and ensuring that the bureaucratic engine is properly turned to get the administration right; it also includes looking out for bureaucratic impediments to the realization of policy objectives. It is therefore the contention this paper that a high degree of political control could be to a great extent tend to delude the public

bureaucrats. They now tend to behave like machines and react to every button that the politicians may press, and this situation affects their jobs. The way to resist a fight back when circumstances arise tends to be decreased for the desire to retain their jobs at all possible cost is now given a top priority, and rebellion against the political executives' desire might be the quickest way to lose their jobs. On the other hand, it is the opinion of this paper that no public bureaucracy exists in a vacuum; more can be abstracted from its societal context (Uduma, 2012). The public mixture mentality is a tangible mix of organizations, policies, physical plan and people conducting observable and identifiable activities drawing resources from society and transforming them into public service. It is therefore, under pressure from many different sources. The political leaders as we have seen want to use the public bureaucracy to consolidate their position and reputation. On the citizen's part, they want a competent service bureaucracy that is open to all. These pressures converge on the bureaucracy and whose instrument it is at anytime cannot be answered simply by references to constitutional means.

### **Development of Abia State Public Bureaucracy in Historical Perspective**

Nigeria's historical as any entity today was formally a British Bureaucracy just after independence was largely influenced by the British system of public bureaucracy. Nigeria became a unified southern protectorates were amalgamated into a simple administrative system (Ogunna, 1997). Nigeria like many colonial bureaucracies was structured in a way as to achieve efficiently with least cost. The functions of the department administration covered various areas. The principal goals of maintaining law and order and resource mobilization were achieved by the colonial administration (Ademolekun, 1984) despite the Nigerianization policy the public bureaucracy remains essentially a British class-oriented system. It is this British oriented public bureaucracy that Abia like other States inherited when it was created out of old Imo State on 27th August, 1991.

As the body that moves the administrative machinery of the government the public bureaucracy implements policies and programmes of the government through human beings. It is therefore, the quality of the available human beings that determines the efficiency of the administrative system of any State. With the expanding activities of State, the role and importance of public, bureaucracy is also increasing. It is evident that the State reaches to the individuals through the public bureaucrats who are trained, skilled, and permanent and a body of professional officials (Nwizu, 2002). Presently, Abia bureaucracy like any other State is characterized by salient features that make the public bureaucracy thick from the features it is organized in structures. The Abia State public bureaucracy structures consists of ministries of with commissioners at the head of the ministries, departments or divisions with directors as heads, commissions and boards with chairman as the heads and sections with deputy directors as heads (Uduma, 2010).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study espoused the various political control of the public bureaucracy in Abia State, through the elected political leaders, who try to assert their political interest on the public

bureaucracy in order to achieve their political interests which may not be in accordance with the rules and regulations that are guiding the operation of the civil service and the civil service commission in Abia State. From the findings, it is clear that what is needed in Abia State is control of the positive type which must strive to make the State policy relevant to the basic needs of the people. It is pertinent to suggest that in place of rigid kind of political control, political executives should come with a publication or publications to the different governmental ministries/departments or parastatals that give them a general and broad outline of the policies of the political party in power within the period in question. In relation to the affairs handled by ministries, departments or parastatals which define the goals and purpose of government, the political officials should also put aside their personal and selfish interests. The public officials are expected to serve their political masters without fear or favour. The public bureaucracy in Abia State cannot perform effectively and efficiently given the level of political control of the negative type as we have it today. Negative political control brings bad blood into the public bureaucracy as appointment into key positions is not necessarily based on merit, but on political patronage. Also political control of the negative type brings about strikes and legal battles between the government and the public bureaucrats thereby making the public bureaucracy unable to affect positively the well-being of the citizens of the State by rendering them with efficient and effective services that will improve the standard of living of the people.

It is therefore, the opinion of this paper, that excessive political control of the public bureaucracy have not brought about any change or improvement into the public bureaucracy, but rather it has generated a conflicting and non-cooperative relationship between the public bureaucrats and the political executives. It is therefore our view that Chief Executive of the State should make out time to have periodic meetings with the career heads of department and permanent secretaries to discuss problems facing the ministries and exchange ideas on the way forward. Thus through this meeting, intervention could come in the form of advise which the public bureaucrats could accept or reject depending on how much it appeals to them in relation to their job.

Political offices should be filled competitively by politicians, while bureaucratic offices should be filled competitively with public bureaucrats. The political official should be selected on the basis of his political competence; as bureaucratic officials are also to be selected based on their bureaucratic competence. Some glaring motivating factors should be introduced into the Abia State public bureaucracy, there must be some aspect of training where administrators could be trained and socialized into an administrative culture that will enable them to acknowledge the dominant roles of politicians in respect to political judgment. Again, it is our contention that the tense atmosphere which exists between the bureaucrats and the politicians in the State does not make for an ideal working co-operation which the bureaucracy needs to attain its desired goals. It should be known equally that a depoliticized bureaucracy saves political parties the trouble and expense of rebuilding the public bureaucracy with every change of political composition in the government, also government is saved the expense of strict supervisory mechanisms in order to ensure compliance and obedience to lay down rules and regulations.

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