

# Effectiveness of Staff Training in Civil and Public Services in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

*Bureaucracy in Nigeria's public service has been strongly acknowledged as requisite of any successful attempt at appraising the public service. Evidently, many people perceive bureaucracy as red tapism, sluggish, cumbersome and rigid. Other critics are of the opinion that bureaucracy now exercises too much power and influence more than their calling as public servants. This work is a critical appraisal of the role of bureaucracy in the development of Nigerian public service. Findings of the study reveal among others the fact that bureaucracy remains the greatest asset of the state quest for socio-economic and political transformation. For a successful implementation of governmental policies, there is the need for a meaningful, articulated and responsive bureaucracy. To curb the negative side of public bureaucracy and direct it to the achievement of national goals and meaningful delivery of benefits to the citizens, this work strongly recommends that a strong and viable political institutions, responsible and disciplined leaders, enthronement of a responsible and people centered democracy, enlightened populace and strong, articulate and dynamic civil society organizations be instituted.*

**Keywords:** Bureaucracy, public service, civil service and training

## INTRODUCTION

The word bureaucracy is not completely and utterly clear. According to Heady (1996), it is derived from much older Latin and Greek source. The first half of the word "burrus", mean in Latin a dark and Sambre colour cloth for tables, especially those used by public officials (Nwizu, 2003). Bureau was first applied to the covered tables, then to the surrounding room or office. Eventually, the word bureaucracy was created by combining "bureau" with a Greek suffix "kratia" referring to a type of rule (Laxmikanth, 2005). This invention is credited to an 18th century French Economist and Minister of Commerce, Vincent de Gournay in 1746 after his visit to Hamburg. Therefore, the idea, which the term bureaucracy conveys has existed long before the coining of the concept of Gournay. He conceives bureaucracy as government by officials. According to him, "we have an illness in France which bids fair to play havoc with us; this illness is called bureaumania." In French, the word "bureau" means a desk (Laxmikanth, 2005). Muozelis (1969) was the first to give a dual meaning to the concept of bureaucracy in 1821. He sees bureaucracy as a form of government where power is in the hands of officials", while the second sees it as "a collective designation for officials" (Nwachukwu, 1999). Gorres dual conceptualization of the meaning of bureaucracy started the beginning of the complex development (Nwachukwu, 2010). Social scientists, most often use the term bureaucracy to refer to

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that part of government which is concerned with implementing government policies and the laws of the land. To them, bureaucracy is nothing more than that form of complex organization, which is concerned, mainly with the execution of government policies and decisions (Nwachukwu, 2010). It is hierarchically organized and its officials are recruited on the basis of professional expertise. They have specific duties to carry out and to do this, they apply a systematic body of rules and follow laid down procedures. This picture of bureaucracy painted here suggests that without bureaucracy, it will be difficult for any large-scale organization like the public service to function well. However, there is also the tendency that the existence of bureaucracy can adversely affect the smooth functioning of an organization. Eventually, many people perceive bureaucracy as red-tapism, sluggish, cumbersome and rigid. Other critics are of the opinion that bureaucrats exercise too much power and influence more than their calling as public servants. The question that naturally follows is whether bureaucracy is really necessary for the implementation of government policies? In Nigeria, should we do away with bureaucracy because of its problems? If that happens, what then is the next line of action? Pursuant to these, this study dwells on exposition of bureaucracy and public service in Nigeria, and the effectiveness of training in service delivery. It also attempts an exposition of the salient issues in the development of civil service in Nigeria.

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF CIVIL AND PUBLIC SERVICES**

Bureaucracy has no accepted conceptual meaning. In fact, bureaucracy remains complex both in its origin and meaning. Most social scientists define bureaucracy in a way intended to identify a phenomenon associated with large scale complex organizations. In this development, scholars such as Marx, Mosca, Michels, Weber, among others, have contributed greatly in exposing the concept. Max developed his concept of bureaucracy within general framework of the theory of class conflict. According to him, it is “an instrument by which the dominant class exercise its domination over the other social classes” (Onah, 2003). Marx (1968) sees bureaucrats as office holders of the State whose aim is to manage public affairs in opposition to the masses of the nation. Bureaucracy, which defines the imagined universality of State interest, is a kind of closed and hierarchical corporation, which treats public affairs as its own. The main task of bureaucracy in a capitalist society therefore, is to impose on the whole society, class division and domination and “mask this domination by interposing itself as the general interest smoke screen between the exploiters and the exploited” (Ogunna, 1999). Marx therefore, sees bureaucracy as having four major characteristics. They are, alienation, incompetence, imperialism, domination and oppression and sordid materialism (Ogunna, 1999).

Accordingly, Ogunna (1999) posits that the central element in Mosca’s theory of bureaucracy is power. On this part, Mosca classified all governments into feudal and bureaucracy. In the bureaucratic form of government, the ruling class is structured into distinct organs, each being entrusted with a specific function of government. Again Mosca conceives bureaucracy as part of the ruling class. To him, they are not servants of the rulers but rulers in their own rights. It is however necessary to highlight here that Mosca’s

bureaucracy has three characteristic features namely specialisation, centralisation and salaried officials (Albrow, 1970). Bureaucracy was developed within the framework of the theory of “iron law of oligarchy”. The focus of the theory is that the first class always the less is numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first. Furthermore, the minority dominates the majority and veils this domination with democratic guts. Robert Michels therefore, sees bureaucracy as an organizational oligarchy where democracy was “a mere facade, to be found only in official regulations and code books” (Muozelis, 1967). The development of bureaucratic structure is quite inevitable. The price of increased bureaucracy is the concentration of power at the top and the diminishing of the influence of the masses (Ogunna, 1999). In essence, bureaucracy is a field psychology inquiry traceable to Weber. Weber surely occupies a central place in subjecting bureaucracy to a detailed and systematic inquiry. His bureaucratic theory is based on the nature of authority and this made him to conceptualize authority as traditional authority, charismatic authority and legal rational authority. Accordingly, Weber (1946) sees bureaucracy as a rational organization controlled on the basis of rational management, hierarchical authority and technical knowledge aimed at maximum organizational efficiency.

This is because no bureaucratic organization exhibits discernable characteristics as postulated by Weber. This perhaps explains why Weber’s ideal type bureaucracy remained a subject of criticism and controversies by many scholars. The arguments leveled against him by his critics like Blay, Selenick, Riggs, Gouldner, Stone, Heywood, La Palombara, Crozier, Smend, Merton, Mayo, etc, derive from his idealistic conception. For example, Merton cited in Ogunna, argues that “emphasis on precision and reliability in administration may well have self defeating consequences. Rules, designed as means to ends, may well become ends in themselves” (Ogunna, 1999), Heywood, criticized Weber’s focus on mere formalism thereby ignoring “the various ways in which bureaucracies can be organized as well as differences that, arise from the political, social and cultural contexts and or environments under which bureaucracies operate (Heywood, 2003).

However, it is important to emphasize that Max Weber was concerned with an ideal type of bureaucracy, an empirical, mental and conceptual construct which is *in tandem* with real life situations. Again, some scholars see bureaucracy as red-tapism, which impinges organizational efficiency. This group of scholars perceives bureaucracy as negative, troublesome and contrived. Laski quoted in Buechner (1968), sees bureaucracy as a system of government, the control, of which is in the hands of officials that their power jeopardizes the liberty of the ordinary citizens. Furthermore, he sees the characteristics of bureaucracy as the “tendency to refuse experiment, delay in decision-making, too much routine in administration, rigidity in rules and regulation manipulation of government (Buechner (1968). With all the various conceptualizations of bureaucracy as seen above, we cannot but agree with Ogunna (1999) that bureaucracy as a form of government designating the *rule by* officials: a complex system of administration by officials means efficiency and inefficiency in an organization. Despite the shortcomings associated with

bureaucracy, this study agrees with the general consensus of other scholars that it is inevitable in organizations and by extension development. By generating and coordinating various developmental projects, bureaucracy serves as an instrument of change, innovation and transformation (Eisenstadt, 1963). Conceptualizing the developing societies within his prismatic matrix, Riggs (1963), is of the view that bureaucracy is necessary, desirable and inevitable in their march from the “fused” societies, where there is no bureaucracy to “prismatic” societies, where bureaucracy is fully developed or modern societies, where bureaucracy is poorly developed. Riggs is of the opinion that as a society becomes more developed and complex, bureaucracy becomes more necessary and inevitable as a tool for efficiency and development.

### **Concept of Public Service**

The term public service is used interchangeably with the civil service by most authors. However, they may mean the same, but, technically speaking they are not. The 1999 Constitution Chapter 8 Part IV (Sections 18) also clearly differentiates the two. If proper understanding of public service is hinged on 4 factors: the concept of public, nature of service, status of the institution employed to carry out activity and the status of the persons employed. The word public could mean govern not the people as a body. To use the later meaning will not suffice as the people do not have legal personality. Government on the other hand includes the people. It is therefore better to use the word government. This means that the public service and government can be used interchangeably; therefore public service is the same as government service. Also, the second issue of service: Government service before now is limited to providing social and welfare services but with increasing participation of government in commercial activities, it has become inadequate to limit government service to social and welfare sectors alone. Therefore, service is used to include both social and commercial services of government. Again, it is the status of the department or agency carrying out the particular activity on behalf of government.

Finally, the factor involved in the definition of public service is the status of the individual employed. A person employed by an agency or institution that does not have the status of a government arm cannot be regarded as a government or public officer, it is therefore clear that a public officer is one employed in a public service. The 1999 constitution defines the public service of the federation as service in any capacity in respect of the government, it includes the Clerk of the National Assembly, members of staff of the courts, staff of any commission or authority established by the constitution or act of the National Assembly, any statutory corporation established by an act of National Assembly, staff of any company in which government or its agency has controlling shares etc. It is to be noted that staff of ministries and departments are not included. These sets are referred to as civil servants; government in this case includes states and local government as the case may be. To refer to public service as all organisations that exist as part of government machinery for implementing policy decisions and delivering services that are of value to the citizens is not out of place. All employees of such organisations are referred to as civil and public servants. From the above, it is clear that the concept of *Bureaucracy* in general term includes not only public service but civil service.

### **Historical Perspectives of Bureaucracy in Nigeria**

Just like its counterparts in other parts of Africa, the Nigerian Public service is a colonial heritage. Its origin can be traced to the last quarter of the 18th century when the administrative organisations set up by the Royal Niger Company were handed over to the British colonialists (Adebayo, 1995). In 1886, the British parliament gave a charter to the Royal Niger Company, a British company trading in Nigeria. The charter gave the company the authority to administer, make treaties, levy customs and trade in its area of influence (Ikeme, 2004). According to Ikime (1999), the British government later decided to fully colonize Nigeria. This necessitated the setting up of a colonial administration in place of the administrative organisation of the Royal Niger Company. Administratively, the British colonialists decided to transfer the Whitehall model of administration to Nigeria.

Some of the values of the Whitehall model include recruitment by merit, anonymity and impartiality of civil servants. To this end, a secretariat organization with relevant departments was established (Nicholson, 1969). This stage was a period of great uncertainty, because the colonial masters through Lord Lugard were more interested in establishing a firm control over the territory they christened Nigeria. They ruled Nigeria more like a military administrator with little or no regard for principles and laws. Between 1900 and 1950, the public bureaucracy in Nigeria was dominated and controlled by British administrators and technocrats (Ogunna, 1999). These officials are not accountable to the administered people but to the colonial office, in London. This makes them to regard themselves as masters rather than servants of the people they were administering. The point being made here is that the British colonial government laid the foundation of bureaucracy in the Nigerian public service. Thus, it was the men who were in the administrative position till 1914 when Nigeria was amalgamated and executed Her majesty's and the colonial masters order formed the pillar of what eventually became the Nigerian public bureaucracy. From 1914 up till early 1950s, it was the expatriates that were exclusively appointed into key positions of responsibility in the public bureaucracy (Kirk Greene, 1971).

Furthermore, as at 1948, "there were some 1,500 expatriate and (only) 200 Nigerian senior service officers on duty running a country of some twenty-five to thirty million" (Nicholson, 1969). The ratio between the expatriate and Nigerian officers was indeed very wide and the Nigerian nationalist movements were not comfortable with this development. At the end of World War II, there was a dramatic change in the colonial policy of the British government, which favoured the ideal of self-government for all British colonies. The colonial Governor in Nigeria decided therefore, to Nigerianize the public service (Ogunna, 1999). As a result, a commission was set up under Sir Hugh Foot to work out modalities for the Nigerianization of the public service in 1948. The commission was "to make recommendations as to the "steps to be taken for the execution of the declared policy of the government of Nigeria to appoint Nigerians to post in the government senior service as fast as suitable candidates with necessary qualifications come forward with special reference to scholarships and training schemes (Nicholson, 1969). This Commission recommended that Nigerians should be appointed into the senior civil service

as soon as suitable candidates with the necessary qualifications were found, that a new Public Service Board with unofficial majorities, should be set up to judge suitability, and that a special effort should be made to give adequate scholarships and training courses to ensure that the necessary qualifications were found, that a new Public Service Board obtained. The commission recommended four hundred and fifteen new scholarship and training awards for the next three years. The recommendations of the commission were accepted (Ogunna, 1999). As the Nigerianization policy gained currency and with the gaining of independence in 1960, more and more Nigerians were recruited or appointed into the public bureaucracy to take over from the departing British colonialists. It is necessary to point out here that the philosophy of colonial public administration in Nigeria was fundamentally based on the maintenance of law and order. This was necessary since it was only in an atmosphere of tranquility that the colonial administration could carry out its historical exploitation and evacuation of raw materials from Nigeria to Britain. With Nigeria gaining independence in 1960, the philosophy of government naturally changed from colonial administration to development administration.

Development administration refers to an attempt by developing countries to use the institutions of public bureaucracy to exploit the resources of their countries to improve the well being of their citizens and also attain higher levels of development. This situation necessitated the growth of the public service both in scope and function. As the public service grew, the public bureaucracy inevitably grew too. From the small secretariat Lord Lugard set up in Lagos in the early years of colonialism to the present thirty-six States structure and the federal capital territory, which also includes the various ministries, government parastatals, institutions, agencies, public enterprises, public utilities, etc, it has indeed been awesome in its strides. Apart from the Foot commission, various administrators in Nigeria-colonial, military and civilian have at one time or the other initiated administrative reforms, commissions of inquiry and even mass retrenchment all aimed at positioning and energizing the public bureaucracy so as to enable it deliver the necessary goods to the citizenry. However, despite all such reforms and commissions of inquiry starting from the Tudor-Davies Commission of 1945 to the Service Delivery Reforms (Due process) of 2003 of the Obasanjo administration, most commentators and scholars are of the opinion that the public service has not acquainted itself and served the citizenry, satisfactorily (Uduma, 2012). On the contrary, as bureaucracy grew in the public service, it came to acquire an odious connotation. At present, it is associated with inefficiency, lack of initiative, un-intelligent rigidity in the approach to human problems, undue fussiness and bossiness on the part of officials and downright stubbornness (Adebayo, 1995).

We should bear in mind that bureaucracy is not a virtue in administration but an element of administration and inseparable from it. This is the main reason why Adebayo (1995), has enumerated and explained five underlying causes of “bureaucracy” in the Nigerian public service. Also, there is the need for accountability, organisation and its inevitable hierarchical structures and process that brings about rigidity and delay and the need for specialisation which tends to narrow public officials but is very necessary efficient discharge of complex functions. In all, factors put together mostly results in cumbersome

process, which slows down actions in the public service. It is important we point out here that some of these problems in the Nigerian public service could be ecological and systemic in nature; while some are actually caused by inefficient and corrupt officials and has nothing to do with bureaucracy per se. As a matter of fact, bureaucracy remains indispensable as instruments for the achievement of efficiency in large scale organizations like the Nigerian public service. According to Odegard (1954):

*A government without bureaucrats is like a centipede without legs unable to move-even to save itself and powerless to accomplish any goal for which governments are instituted among men.*

From the foregoing, the importance of bureaucracy in Nigeria can not be over emphasized. This remains the greatest asset of the state quest for socio economic and political transformation. For a successful implementation of governmental policies, there is the need for a meaningful, articulated and responsive bureaucracy. According to Akinwale (2007), other merits are:

1. Provision of a firm basis for predicting the behaviour of both organisation and the employees in the organisation.
2. Placement of objective standards in the workplace through conformity to regulations,
3. Harmony with organizational objectives,
4. Encouragement of specialization and division of labour.

For sure, bureaucracy as a process and an element of administration has really come to stay, it has no alternative for now. Hence, we cannot even talk about jettisoning it, our opinion is required in our context is for us to take a hard look at the factors constraining the public bureaucracy. When this is done, we will now be in a better position to embark on innovations, reforms, sensitisations, changes, etc, of the operating system with a view to enthroning more result-oriented, creative, productive and responsible public bureaucracy in Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study has demonstrated so far that the public bureaucracy is a creation of the colonialists. It has however grown tremendously over the years with the widening of governmental functions from that of maintenance of law and order to development administration. Although its development received criticisms from many scholars who described it as red-tapism, they have however not provided nor recommended an alternative device for managing a complex large-scale organization like the Nigerian public service. So, we see bureaucracy as an indispensable mechanism for the efficient and effective management of the public service in Nigeria. Again, we are not unmindful of the ecological, systemic and human factors that are capable of impinging or negatively conditioning the bureaucracy. There is therefore the need to take a critical look at such constraining factors with a view to putting things in their proper perspectives thereby making the public bureaucracy a veritable instrument of meaningful development in Nigeria. To curb the negative side of public bureaucracy and direct it to the achievement of national goals and

meaningful delivery of benefits to the citizens, this work strongly recommends that a strong and viable political institutions, responsible and disciplined leaders, enthronement of a responsible and people centred democracy, enlightened populace and strong, articulate and dynamic civil society organizations be instituted. The outcome of this will help facilitate the development of a people oriented public service that is strong, reliable and self driven, comparable to any other public services institutions in a 21st century world.

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