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**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND CHALLENGES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
THE CIVIL SERVICE PERSPECTIVE**

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ABSTRACT

Public administration is the active business part of the Government. It is conducted through the instrumentality of the social organization known as the bureaucracy for which the civil service is the best known. It comprises of both parastatals and the civil service. The paper examined the capacity of the civil service and the challenges on its way to the attainment of national Development. It submitted that the civil service is capable to do this, for it had done so before. It identified the civil service as being centrally positioned pursuant to National Development than any other component of public administration. The challenges which hindered it include among others, the operational definition of national interest, inflation in the economy, unavailability of skilled manpower to design, execute and evaluate public policies, the loss of security of tenure and that of optimal establishment to drive through national development, given the obsession of the political executive to down and Right size the civil service often. It advocated for an administrative institute with development oriented curricular for the training of the civil servant and in the process imbue them with patriotic zeal necessary to be objective and rational in their roles as one of the way out, while advocating that recruitment into the service should be base on merit rather than ascription.

INTRODUCTION

Public administration or Public Sector management deals with matters of public interest, such as national Development, no wonder the title of this paper. To discuss the above topic in this conference, the paper would be divided into three major sections. Section one would describe the theoretic two; would attempt to capture national development objectives while three would analyze the challenges confronting public administration through the civil service. The paper would then address contemporary challenges to the civil service to position it for participation in the globalize world.

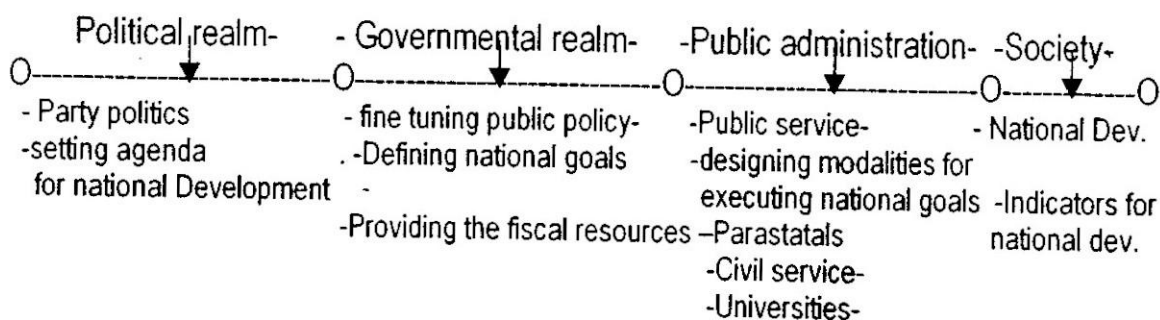
SECTION ONE

In every social system several demands are generated from the different strata of the society. These demands and the various options on how to resolve them translate into disagreements within the ordered community. Those with influence in the community aggregate the demands and seek their resolutions. This is the realm of politics-where the various needs of the society are aggregated into political party programs and are offered through various processes to the people for support. This process has (the recent election) just been concluded in Nigeria. This is the means by which people are continually agreeing on courses of action (Appleby, 1965:335). On agreeing on the course of the actions to be taken, through politics, the Government emerged to translate the consensus through public policies to concrete actions in the society. The social structure for the execution of these public policies is the public administration organs. Public administration may be defined as 'man's attempt through government to harness natural and human resources for the purpose of approximating politically legitimated goals by constitutionally mandated means (Bailey, 2003: 61). Legitimate goals being those chosen from the myriads of options which were the bases of conflict and disagreements was during the politicking. It is the business of public administration to bring to bear these goals on the larger society. Others opined that in the social system, there is the political realm, consisting of political parties, parliament, public opinion, interest groups etc, Government is form after due politicking. The Government so formed according to the constitution, lays down a set of goals and policies known as laws, programs and public policies...public administration structure or the bureaucracy is charged with the task of implementing the laws, programs and public policies to the citizens in the social system in the most efficient and effective of ways (Frank, 2007). This is done through the instrumentality of public administration or public sector management. This refers to all the social structure which stands between the Government and the rest of the society, for the purposes of actualizing the intentions and wishes of Government in the society. Fred Riggs agreed that public administration is subject to the control of the political organ. The bureaucracy he opined is supposed to be politically 'neutral'. It does not participate in policy determination, it has no specific interest of its own, it does not exercise any important power, it is, in

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other words, the obedient servant of the government, hence of the public whom the regime serves (Riggs, 1964:7). Public administration in Nigeria as elsewhere, include the Federal and state civil services, statutory corporations and local Governments, the universities, the armed forces and the police. The public services have been defined to embrace the armed forces and the police, judiciary, the Universities, the parastatals and the civil services (Ayida, 1979:217). The Nigerian constitution on the other hand, defined the public services as including the Federal and the state civil services, services of the National and state House of Assemblies, Judicial Service, services of statutory corporations, state-owned companies, enterprises in which the Federal and state Governments have controlling shares or interest, services in the Universities and other educational institutions established or financed principally by either the Federal or state government, services of the local governments, services in the Nigerian Police Force and services in the Armed Forces. These descriptions agree with the Udoji Commission's definition of 1974 (1975:5). Put differently, public administration consists of the actions involved in effecting the intents or desire of a government. The principal mechanism for routine conduct of the business of government. The principal focus of the civil service is on how to design and apply public policy honestly, economically, efficiently in the public interest. Adedeji on his part posited that politics, economics and administration in any society must be built around the people and there must be built around the people and there must be the priority of the human over the economic and the political. Lack of popular participation creates a divided society where the less fortunate are hurt, damaged and discounted by public policies which jettison social justice and sacrifice the common good. Democratically-determined development process which not only immerses the entire populace in the struggle for transformation-but in turn change the people's values, attitudes to work saving, investment and building up their sense of self-reliance, their human dignity and above all, their perception of citizenry (Adedeji, 1997:4). The emerging trend in the discourse is that, public administration structure is the bridge in social service delivery between the political executive and the society. It is the civil services and allied public administration organs that are charged with the attainment of the goals of national development. This paper is focused on the Civil service –bureaucracy and the challenges towards national development. What is the theoretical linkage between the civil service and national development? Figure 1 below, summarizes the preceding discussions and the relationships thus;

Fig. 1 Linear Representation of Public Administration in National Development



NB: The social structures overlap each other

Source: Designed and created by the author © 2007.

Figure 1 above indicates a linear relationship between politics which resolve the conflict or disagreement arising from the social system. The conflict is resolved through party politics which aggregates the demands into party programs and the larger society chooses from there through general election processes. The second sector is the Government constituted after politicking. The Government then fine tune the agenda set in the political arena into public policies towards the realization of the national agenda in areas such as poverty eradication, expanded program on immunization to reduce infant mortality etc. The Public administration structure fine tunes the policies and defines the operational modalities for the realization of the national goals set by the government. It does this through the civil service, parastatals etc. The policies are then administered on the society directly or through private contracted agencies or non-governmental organizations (NGO). Significantly, the civil service should define the social indicators with which to evaluate the functionality of the policies and the achievement of the national development goal set by the government. This explicates the linear relationship between politics, public administration(civil service) and national development.

SECTION TWO - PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: THE CIVIL SERVICE

The civil service is a body or organ which enjoys continuity of existence. Its members unlike members of the National Assembly or a House of Assembly are not limited to short term of office at the end of which they may or may not be returned to office. Each member come and go but civil servants remain in office. When a civil servant quits his office for whatever reason, his place is taken by another person who since enjoys security of employment. Collectively, civil servants command a pool of experience and know-how *for implementing Government policies*. The civil service is the instrument of the Government, but neither the service nor its members are the partisan of any particular political party. A civil servant is required *to assist in formulating and implementing the policies approved by Government* whatever his personal or private opinions or attitudes may be. This does not mean that a civil servant should undertake illegal action, if so directed; he should...attention immediately to the legal position or requirement and advice on the proper avenue to take. *He has the duty also to advise on the implications of a policy or action...* The civil service is indispensable irrespective of the type of regime, whether Military or civilian. Indeed, under the Military Rule or sudden change of Government, it is even more incumbent on the civil service to continue its traditional role as a means of ensuring that the orderly administration of the country is continuous (Idris, 1997:17-18). It is discernible from the above conceptions and figure 1, that the roles of the civil service include but not limited to;

- i) That the civil service is the link between the Government and the larger society; through the administration of public policies;
- ii) That the civil service has the stock of manpower for the implementation of the Government policies;
- iii) It is the duty of the civil service to formulate specific action-set programs out of the general policy guidelines of the government towards the attainment of national Development.
- iv) That the administration of public policy should be done in the public interest;
- v) That the administration of public policy must be built around the people, that is, there should be priority of human over economics;
- vi) Public policies must be done in the most economical, efficient and effective of ways.

These roles incidentally constitute the challenges to the service.

The structural linkages between the civil service, politics and Government and the role of the civil service has become clearer. For purposes of emphasis, it is herein restated that the civil service is positioned to define the structure, the modes and the format which would enhance the implementation of the public policies efficiently, effectively. This is why Gidado Idris the then Secretary to the Federal Government emphasized that it is the duty of the civil service to formulate and implement Government policies (1997:17). This links the civil service with national development through public policies execution.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria like all other nation, have a vision of an ideal state of affairs which is considered desirable. The Government which hold this vision of the ideal society then define its public policy in the direction which would enhance the realization of this ideal society. In the march to the preferred state, it is necessary to set targets and reference points against which short term and long terms actions and achievements can be evaluated. The aims and objectives set in the short and long term constitute the goals of National Development. Development goals in Nigeria could be gleaned from the National Development Plans as follows

- i) achievements of dynamic self-sustaining growth for the economy;
 - ii) improvement in the standard of living;
 - iii) enhanced real per capita income;
 - iv) reduction in the level of unemployment;
 - v) diversification of the economy;
 - vi) balanced development;
 - vii) indigenization of economic activities;
 - viii) more and even distribution of incomes; and
 - ix) the promotion of science and technological development.(Frank, 1998:47a). The attainment of the above goals calls for program design by the civil service towards their realization. Abstracted from the above national development goals the indicators of development necessary to monitor the achievements of the goals of national development could be defined as:
- i) life expectancy at birth,
 - ii) Infant mortality rate;
 - iii) School enrollment ratio;
 - iv) Gender equality in education;

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- v) Level of poverty; and
- vi) Democratic freedom (freedom to choose one's political leaders).

Additionally, the goals of national development include; sustainability and incorporates environmental protection, political freedom, meeting basic needs or things such as the achievement of better nourishment, shelter, health, education, living condition, and better conditions of employment for low –end poverty groups in developing countries etc. Such an index of development has been developed by United Nations Development Programs and is called Human Development Index (Nyong, 2005:15). It is instructive to note that the higher the life expectancy at birth, the lesser the rate of infant/maternal mortality, the higher the rate of school enrollment, the number of number of people in employment, the more effective the civil service had been in meeting the goals of national development. What then constitutes the challenges to their attainment through the civil service?

SECTION THREE:

The Civil Service and challenges of National Development

The challenges would be evaluated at two levels; internal and external.

Internal

i) National interest: The civil service is to operate in the national interest. How do we get the civil service to act in the 'national interest' in an era in which altruism is in short supply? What is national interest? Public interest may be presumed to be what men would choose if they saw clearly, thought rationally, and acted disinterestedly and benevolently. Put differently, public interest is the continually changing outcome of political activity among individuals and groups within a democratic political system (Uveges, 2003:510). This means that the interpretation given to the concept of 'national interest' by a political regime is subject to changes. A pertinent question is whether the civil service has the capacity utilization to change, yet discharge its roles effectively. Second, given the disparate background of the Nigerian civil servant-streamlining national interest as a guide to public service is problematic, given the purest of motives, acting in the public interest is but a difficult adventure. Could be that in pursuing self-interest, national interest is by so doing be achieved?

ii) Establishment: The Government like other organizations have staffers of different categories in order to realize its objectives and discharge its responsibilities. The staff compliment should neither be too large nor too small. If it is too large, some of the staff may not have enough work to do. The salaries and wages of such people would be unjustifiable. If the complement is too small, some people would be overworked (Idris, 1997:18). What then is the optimal establishment for the Federal civil service, given the scope of the national Development goals as outlined above. The total number of officers and staff in the Federal Public is put at 996,744 while the total number of political office holders is 1,448 (Ekaette, 2003:10). What is the actual establishment needed to be effective? The obsession of the Government to right size and down size as a result of the reforms, the issue of the optimal establishment needed to achieve national development goals via the civil service becomes a challenge.

iii) Corruption: Although this fact is categorized as internal yet it is masterminded from without the civil service. The economy which is characterized by high rates of inflation and unemployment, external debt obligations and foreign exchange misalignment creates problem for the civil service. An economy so defined by these factors, is an inflationary one, which causes higher expendable income out of the earnings of the civil servants. This is one factor which is responsible for corruption in the service. Consequent upon this, resources available for service delivery are compromised and diverted to personal use fraudulently. As a result of this national goals fail from inadequate allocation of resources.

iv) The challenge of skilled manpower: The objectives of national development as stated requires skilled manpower (trained personnel in particular skill) that are imbued with the attitudes and aptitudes which understands their social positions relative to national Development. The personnel should be made up of those capable to abstract from the general public policy and able to design programs to deliver the tangible element of development to the mass of the citizenry. This call for the skills of program design which entails the ability to establish the policy objectives, identify the relevant activities pursuant to its achievement, identify the target group to perform the activities, establish the time frame for the achievement, and embark on impact evaluation, to ascertain how it has impacted on the people thereby achieving national development. When the impact of the public policy have added value positively to the people which could not have been, then the civil service would have aided national development (that is, Pareto optimality). The civil service is replete with enormous human resources; do they have the required skills in this regard?

External

v) The optimal performance of the civil service is a function of the availability of the necessary tools human and materials required for operations. But recently Nigeria's precarious fiscal and monetary posture could no longer sustain the requirements of its public sector enterprises, particularly the civil service. The implications are that several human and material requirements necessary in the course of the attainment of the national development are lacking. It is not uncommon to have a situation in which salaries are paid late, and in extreme cases, workers are not paid for months. In such situations, it is difficult for the civil servant to work towards the national interest. This challenge is exogenous to the civil service.

vi) It is the civil servant who assists in the formulation of development plans and policies as well as their execution. In order that he may be able to discharge these functions effectively, his training becomes of paramount importance (Adedeji, 1969:452). The need for this becomes significant because there is nothing in the educational background which he brought unto the job which has prepared him for the task of administration in general and of development administration in particular. The broad based pre-entry qualifications have to be supplemented with professional training if the administrators' are to be effective in discharging their responsibilities to the public (Adedeji, 1969:455). The challenge of administrative training include among others, that of the curriculum; at the moment the content is basically about the techniques, that is, on how to do the work rather than on why you do it. Valuable resources are spent on teaching financial regulations, government orders preparation of cabinet papers, techniques of minuting in files and the political history of the country. The content of administrative training produces civil servants who are not connected to national development goals. Sometime they are not aware of the nexus between them and national development.

vii) The 1975 debacle: In 1975, there was a purge of the civil service which has caused a lasting scar on the service. The purge of 1975 has instituted considerable challenges to the Nigerian civil service. Many qualitative civil servants who had conceived and programmed national development projects were summarily 'retired with immediate effect'. Then the projects which they all know were important for the Nigerian economy, petrochemical, you find out everything... some of which had been negotiated up to a point or to the stage for them to complete the negotiation were jettisoned in a desire to denigrate the previous government and so we had a massive discontinuity... This exercise 'destroyed the objectivity and courage of the civil service, now you have 'yes governor...' What then happens is to 'make hay while the sun shines'. Since you have no guarantee of tenure, no more prestige, it's a recipe for self-insurance; self-insurance is corruption... The position was compounded in 1988 reforms in which the Minister was now to appoint and sack (Asiodu, 1996:17). This was the final blow on the integrity, unity and national development focus of the civil service to the 'self' rather than the people. The challenge is how to rebuild the civil service and refocus it on national development.

The dialectic of the above scenario manifest numerous dimensions, one of which according to the Head of service (HOS, Lagos State) accounts for the failure of public policies in developing countries is traceable to disregard for fundamental principles of public administration... such as probity, transparency, accountability, neutrality and anonymity, among others... the consequence of this has been the failure to effectively influence the initiation of good policies and programs and seeing to their implementation towards improving the lots of the common people (Fanimu, 2006:29) and enhancing the quality of lives of the people, which is the essence of the civil service.

CIVIL SERVICE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A SCHEMA

In this section of the paper, we discuss the essential steps crucial to the restoration of the civil service to the position of a catalyst for national development in the light of the identified challenges. The most critical of the challenges is that of skill-manpower. It is herein posited that the civil service need an institution in the mold of the French *École Nationale d' Administration* (E.N.A). It should embark in lengthy training courses especially designed for the main groups of administrators, so that they emerge with a broad understanding of the characteristics and functioning of modern societies (Self, 1979:217). This institution' should be located in one of the Universities. This is to take advantage of researchers and to ensure that the curricular of the courses are current and relevant to the national development goals. This should be different from what the civil service training and management institutes are presently offering. Within the institute the attendees should be taught the connection between their roles and national development and made to internalize same. The curriculum should include the principles of policy analysis and social impact evaluation. Civil servants as a whole regarded their greatest benefits to be job security and pensions. But when situations such as the '1975 debacle' and the 1988 reforms removed their security, then self-interest takes over national goal. The civil servant is inadvertently asked to make the best for himself as he could go any day. Security of tenure must be restored to the service and all reforms in the future should factor in this fact. The security of the service should not only be restored, the society should attach high premium and personal prestige and status

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to a successful administrative career rather than scorn at a civil servant who has retired without amassing wealth. This call for a change in the societal value system. The training and retraining of the civil servants should be the process to imbue them with the patriotic zeal as well as updating them with relevant skills to meet national development goals. This involves the funding of the bureaus that would be responsible for the type of training advocated herein. The executive arm of the government is hereby enjoined to manage the national economy to achieve micro and macro economic stability. Low inflation would reduce the pedigree to induce the civil servants to misappropriate resources meant for public service delivery.

CONCLUSION

National development through the civil service structure would be possible when the service is refocused and the economy is managed in a way to apportion rewards as at when due. When recruitment into the service is on merit, training made often and security of tenure restored, the civil service would have been positioned for national development. The institutions; code of conduct bureau and its tribunal, public complaints commission, public accounts committees should be strengthened and incorporated in the operations of the civil service. The punishment should be meted to those found wanting by these organizations. The civil service would have been made ready to deliver national development.

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