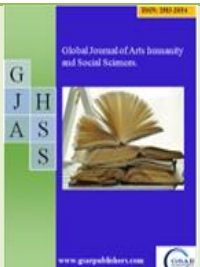
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REFORMING AND RESTRUCTURING THE NIGERIAN CIVIL /PUBLIC SERVICE FOR BETTER EFFICIENCY , SERVICE DELIVERY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

By

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Abstract

The Nigerian Civil Service has faced numerous challenges, including inefficiency, corruption, and politicization, hindering its ability to deliver effective services. This paper examines the need for reform and restructuring to enhance the performance and effectiveness of the Nigerian Civil Service for national development. It explores the concepts of reforming, restructuring, and civil service, as well as the importance of efficiency and service delivery for national development. The paper critically analyzes the challenges facing the Nigerian Civil Service and proposes strategies for reform and restructuring, drawing on international best practices and academic research. The study argues that a comprehensive and nuanced approach to civil service reform is essential for improving public service delivery and promoting economic development in Nigeria. Some reform and restructuring strategies and models were suggested. The article concludes by reiterating the fact that the Nigerian civil service is in dire need of reform and restructuring. An urgent reform and restructuring of the Nigerian civil service should be set in motion without further delay. The need to reform, restructure and strengthen the local Government civil service system is recommended.

Keywords; Civil Service, Efficiency, Reform, Restructuring, Service Delivery, National Development

Introduction

The Nigerian civil service has long been plagued by inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of responsiveness to the needs of the citizens it is meant to serve. This has hindered the country's development and eroded public trust in the government. Therefore, there is an urgent need for comprehensive reforms and restructuring of the Nigerian civil service to enhance its effectiveness and improve service delivery to the citizens. (Ake and Olowojola, 2016)

According to Olowu and Wunsch (2004), the Nigerian civil service is characterized by bureaucratic red tape, nepotism, and a culture of corruption that hampers its ability to function effectively. This has led to a situation where public services are often inaccessible, of

poor quality, and do not meet the needs of the population. As a result, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of the civil service and a lack of trust in government institutions.

Furthermore, studies by Adebayo and Ogbeidi (2016) have highlighted the need for a more efficient and merit-based civil service in Nigeria. They argue that the current system of recruitment, promotion, and reward in the civil service is flawed and perpetuates a culture of mediocrity and incompetence. This not only hinders the provision of quality public services but also undermines the country's development efforts.

In light of these challenges, it is imperative to undertake comprehensive reforms and restructuring of the Nigerian civil service to enhance its capacity to deliver services effectively and



efficiently. This will require addressing issues such as recruitment and training, performance management, accountability, and transparency in the civil service.

Several scholars have proposed various strategies for reforming and restructuring the civil service in Nigeria. For instance, Ayeni (2018) suggests that there is a need to overhaul the recruitment and promotion processes in the civil service to ensure that only qualified and competent individuals are hired and promoted based on merit. This will help to improve the quality of the civil service workforce and enhance its capacity to deliver services effectively.

Similarly, Ojo (2017) emphasizes the importance of establishing clear performance management systems in the civil service to ensure that employees are held accountable for their actions and are rewarded based on their performance. This will help to foster a culture of excellence and professionalism in the civil service and enhance its ability to meet the needs of the citizens.

In addition, Adeoye (2019) argues that there is a need to enhance transparency and accountability in the Nigerian civil service to curb corruption and instill public trust in government institutions. This can be achieved through the implementation of measures such as the publication of civil service performance data, the establishment of anti-corruption mechanisms, and the promotion of a culture of integrity among civil servants.

Overall, the need for reform and restructuring of the Nigerian civil service is undeniable. By implementing comprehensive reforms that address issues such as recruitment, training, performance management, and accountability, the Nigerian government can enhance the effectiveness of the civil service and improve service delivery to the citizens. This, in turn, will help to restore public trust in government institutions and promote sustainable national development in the country.

This article is aimed at canvassing the need for reform and restructuring of the Nigerian civil service, while suggesting some strategies and models

Literature Review

Concept of Reforming

Reforming in the context of the Nigerian Civil Service encompasses a multifaceted approach to addressing the longstanding challenges and weaknesses that have impeded its efficiency, effectiveness, and the delivery of public services to citizens. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) defined reforming as the strategic process of making changes within a system or organization to enhance its performance and operational outcomes. This definition emphasizes the need for intentional and structured interventions to transform key aspects of the civil service.

The Nigerian Civil Service, as highlighted by Adegoroye (2013), faces a myriad of issues such as bureaucratic bottlenecks, corruption, nepotism, and a lack of accountability that have undermined its ability to operate effectively and meet the needs of the populace. These systemic challenges necessitate

comprehensive reform efforts that target fundamental components of the civil service structure and processes.

Central to the concept of reforming the Nigerian Civil Service is the recognition of the imperative to a streamlined bureaucratic procedures, enhance transparency, and promote meritocracy in recruitment and promotion practices. By implementing reforms in these areas, the civil service can mitigate issues associated with red tape and nepotism, thus fostering a more efficient and equitable system of governance.

Moreover, reforming the civil service entails the establishment of robust performance management frameworks that enable the effective assessment of employee productivity, the provision of training and capacity-building initiatives, and the alignment of individual and organizational goals. Ojo (2017) underscores the importance of clear performance management systems in enhancing accountability, professionalism, and productivity within the civil service. Such systems provide a basis for recognizing and rewarding excellence, thereby motivating employees to strive for continuous improvement.

In addition to internal restructuring, reforming the Nigerian Civil Service involves promoting a culture of integrity, ethical conduct, and accountability among civil servants. Adeoye (2019) advocates for measures that enhance transparency and accountability, including the implementation of anti-corruption mechanisms and the dissemination of civil service performance data to the public. Cultivating a culture of ethical behavior and accountability not only deters corrupt practices but also fosters public trust in government institutions.

Furthermore, the concept of reforming in the Nigerian Civil Service encompasses a commitment to efficiency gains, cost-effectiveness, and innovation in service delivery. By modernizing administrative processes, leveraging technology for improved data management, and adopting best practices from successful civil service systems globally, Nigeria can enhance its capacity to provide timely and quality services to its citizens.

Concept of Restructuring

Restructuring involves reorganizing the internal structure and operations of an organization to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability (Kiggundu, 1998). In the Nigerian Civil Service, restructuring may involve streamlining processes, reducing bureaucracy, and enhancing accountability (Olowu, 2015).

Restructuring, as defined by Kiggundu (1998), entails the reconfiguration of the internal structure and operational mechanisms of an organization with the aim of enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, and adaptability. This strategic process involves a comprehensive review and realignment of organizational components to optimize performance and responsiveness to changing environments.

Within the framework of the Nigerian Civil Service, restructuring encompasses a range of initiatives aimed at revamping administrative processes, minimizing bureaucratic bottlenecks, and

fostering greater accountability. Olowu (2015) highlights the significance of streamlining procedures, reducing redundancies, and promoting transparency as key elements of restructuring within the civil service context. These efforts are crucial for modernizing the civil service and improving its capacity to meet the evolving needs of citizens.

One of the primary objectives of restructuring the Nigerian Civil Service is to promote greater operational efficiency through the elimination of redundant layers of decision-making, the consolidation of functions, and the rationalization of organizational units. By simplifying processes and enhancing coordination among departments, the civil service can enhance its agility and responsiveness in delivering services to the public.

Moreover, restructuring involves leveraging technology and digital solutions to automate routine tasks, enhance data management systems, and facilitate communication and collaboration within and across government agencies. By embracing digital transformation, the civil service can enhance its operational effectiveness, reduce administrative burdens, and improve the quality and timeliness of service delivery.

In addition to internal reorganization, restructuring the Nigerian Civil Service requires a focus on enhancing accountability mechanisms, promoting merit-based recruitment and promotion practices, and fostering a culture of transparency and integrity. By strengthening oversight mechanisms, instituting performance evaluation frameworks, and enforcing ethical standards, the civil service can enhance trust in government institutions and promote good governance practices.

Furthermore, restructuring efforts in the Nigerian Civil Service should prioritize capacity-building initiatives, training programs, and knowledge-sharing platforms to enhance the skills and competencies of civil servants. By investing in professional development and fostering a culture of continuous learning, the civil service can nurture a skilled workforce capable of meeting the complex demands of public service delivery.

Ultimately, restructuring the Nigerian Civil Service is a strategic imperative that requires a systematic and coordinated approach to revamping organizational structures, processes, and practices. By embracing change, embracing innovation, and fostering a culture of adaptability, the civil service can position itself as a responsive, efficient, and accountable institution capable of meeting the diverse needs of citizens and driving sustainable development.

Concept of Civil Service

The civil service refers to the permanent bureaucracy responsible for implementing government policies and delivering public services (Adamolekun, 1989). The Nigerian Civil Service plays a crucial role in the country's development, but it has faced numerous challenges, including corruption, inefficiency, and politicization (Oyediran, 1996).

The civil service serves as the backbone of government administration, encompassing the permanent body of professional officials tasked with implementing policies, managing public

resources, and delivering essential services to citizens. Adamolekun (1989) defines the civil service as the bureaucratic structure that ensures the continuity and stability of governance through the effective execution of governmental functions and programs.

In the context of Nigeria, the Nigerian Civil Service plays a vital role in the country's development by providing continuity in governance, expertise in policy implementation, and essential services to the population. However, the Nigerian Civil Service has encountered significant challenges that have hindered its effectiveness and eroded public trust. Scholars like Oyediran (1996) have highlighted issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and politicization as major obstacles to the optimal performance of the civil service in Nigeria.

Corruption within the civil service poses a significant threat to good governance and public service delivery. Instances of bribery, nepotism, and embezzlement not only undermine the credibility of government institutions but also divert resources away from essential services, harming the welfare of citizens. Addressing corruption requires robust anti-corruption measures, transparent processes, and accountability mechanisms to uphold integrity and foster public trust in the civil service.

Inefficiency within the civil service can stem from bureaucratic red tape, outdated processes, and insufficient capacity among personnel. Delays in decision-making, lack of coordination among departments, and cumbersome procedures can impede the timely delivery of services and hinder effective policy implementation. Enhancing efficiency requires streamlining workflows, leveraging technology, and investing in skills development to optimize operational processes and enhance service delivery.

Politicization of the civil service, where appointments and promotions are influenced by political considerations rather than merit or competence, undermines the professionalism and impartiality of the bureaucracy. This practice can lead to a lack of continuity in policies, diminished institutional memory, and erosion of public confidence in the civil service's ability to serve the common good of the people. Safeguarding the civil service from undue political interference involves establishing merit-based recruitment processes, enforcing codes of conduct, and insulating civil servants from partisan pressures.

and contribute to the country's development by leveraging its institutional knowledge, expertise, and commitment to public service. Strengthening the civil service requires fostering culture of professionalism and integrity among civil servants.

Investing in capacity-building initiatives, training programs, and performance evaluation systems can empower civil servants with the skills and competencies needed to meet the evolving demands of public administration. Implementing transparent and merit-based recruitment processes, promoting ethical conduct, and enforcing accountability mechanisms can help restore public trust and confidence in the civil service as a reliable and effective institution.

, fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement within the civil service can enhance its adaptability and responsiveness to changing societal needs. Embracing digital transformation, promoting knowledge sharing, and encouraging creativity can drive organizational effectiveness, efficiency, and service excellence within the Nigerian Civil Service.

Concept of Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the optimal use of resources to achieve maximum output (Muthiah, 2007). In the context of the Nigerian Civil Service, efficiency involves streamlining processes, reducing waste, and enhancing productivity (Salawu, 2014).

Efficiency is a fundamental concept in the management of resources within the Nigerian Civil Service encompassing factors such as streamlining processes, minimizing waste, and enhancing overall productivity (Muthiah, 2007). By focusing on efficiency, the civil service can operate more effectively and utilize resources in a manner that yields the best results for service delivery.

Concept of Service Delivery

Service delivery refers to the provision of quality services to meet the needs of citizens (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012). In the Nigerian Civil Service, effective service delivery involves ensuring that services are accessible, reliable, and responsive to citizens' needs (Ake, 1996).

Service delivery is another critical aspect of public administration, emphasizing the provision of service context, effective service delivery involves ensuring that services are not only high-quality but also accessible, dependable, and responsive to the diverse needs of the population (Ake, 1996). By prioritizing service delivery excellence, the civil service can enhance public trust and satisfaction, ultimately contributing to improved governance and societal well-being.

Efficiency and service delivery are interconnected components that play a pivotal role in the performance and impact of the Nigerian Civil Service. Through efficient resource management and a focus on delivering high-quality services, the civil service can better address the needs of citizens, promote transparency, and foster accountability in public administration.

Discussion

The civil service requires a wholistic, comprehensive and fundamental reform and restructuring, to address issues such as inefficiency, corruption, politicization, nepotism, red tapism (Ocheja *et al.*, 2024)

Ejigbo *et al* (2023) and Ake and Olowojola (2016) noted that the many civil/public service reforms did not help in addressing the issues that necessitated the reforms, this (Ocheja *et al* 2023) attributed to ulterior motive for initiating reforms and poor and dishonest reform white paper implementation, for instance it was reported that one of the motives for the 1988 civil service reforms was to reduce the power of the bureaucracy, especially the top civil servants, the government did not heed the warnings of the then head of civil service of the federation, Adamu Fika, who

eventually voluntarily retired from the civil service, Adamu Fika was vindicated, because the reform did a monumental damage to the civil service as it heightened, corruption, nepotism, truancy, inefficiency etc

There is need to set up a reform panel made up of seasoned and honest bureaucrats and technocrats and the white paper reports of such reforms should be implemented completely and honestly.

There should be a clear demarcation between positions that are meant for career civil servant and those that can be appointed into politically and there should be strict adherence by governors and other chief executives, civil servants and labour unions should resist and reject such appointments.

The position of Permanent Secretary in longer permanent and has been bastardized and so should be abolished and replaced with the designation Director General, which should be a career civil service position, it sounds more like it to have Directors work under Directors General, but this designation should not be used for chief executives of parastatals and agencies, who should use the designations of Managing Directors or General Managers. The principle of tenure and permanence has been violated, as seen in the mass purge of 1975/76 by the Murtala regime, retrenchment exercises by many state governments, arbitrary sacking/dismissal of civil servants of in many states some for partisan reasons, the universities are not spared too as witnessed at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1996, University of Ilorin in 2001, Kogi state University in 2017, Edo state University, Ekiti state University and in many other universities and higher institutions, and leaving them to languish in courts for many years, due to an inefficient, inhuman and corrupt judicial system in Nigeria.

According to Ocheja *et al* (2024) some analysts believe that the mass purge in the civil/public service by the Murtala regime in 1975/76 contributed to increasing corruption in the civil/public service, because the principle of tenure and permanence were eroded.

The issue of loyalty is a contentious issue in which civil/public servants may choose to be loyal to the society, by doing what is right and just or being loyal to chief executive at various levels whose actions could destroy the system. In the opinion of the authors loyalty to the society should be paramount

Appointments, promotions, postings should be guided by the principles of merit, competence and performance, but this is not the case to a very large extent in the federal, states and local government civil services.

The poor remuneration in the civil service also contributes to the inefficiency and corruption in the civil/public service, Absenteeism, truancy, divided attention are fall outs of poor wage system, in which the salaries are small and are not in line with current economic realities, late payment of salaries and salary back logs of between 2 to 48 months are common place in many states and local governments. There is also the issue of ghost workers, salary padding, salary duplication/multiplications, which is now a hydra headed problem, arbitrary screenings have led to the dropping of the names of genuine staff from the pay roll, this has

led to the death of many civil servants, some were done to settle scores or better still out of vendetta or just to reduce the wage bill by all means

Thus Ocheja *et al* (2024) recommended the payment of a living wage to civil servants without further delay . the wage system should be such that it is adjusted automatically every 2 years in line with economic realities , inflationary trend and exchange rate , this will help curb strikes and time and resources wasted on negotiations and setting up of committees

There should be an overhaul of the appointments, performance evaluation, promotion and reward system to become more objective, honest ,open and merit based, these matters should no longer be secrets but can be put in the public domains for scrutiny.

The anti corruption and whistle blowing mechanisms should be strengthened , each Ministry ,Department and Agency should have a monitoring and evaluation department , with an anti corruption unit manned by specially trained staff

Retirement age should be strictly 60 years of age and the length of service should remain 35 years , no staff or sector is indispensable, a situation where by many sectors, professional and unions are clamoring for their retirement ages to be raised to 65 or 70 years . Just because it obtains in a few sectors/professions is really unfortunate. In a country where many educated and able bodied youths are jobless, retirement at 60 will help create openings for the jobless, similarly contract appointments after retirement should be abolished

To further strengthen the local government system, devolve more powers to it , to curb rural- urban migration, and boost farming activities the local Government civil service needs a major fundamental reform and restructuring , to provide succor and a fresh breath of life. The grading system should be elongated to Grade Level 17. The Departments should be headed by Directors on GL 17 , while Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors , heading Divisions and Sections/units should be on GL 16 and 15., the most senior Director should be appointed Director General (equivalent of Permanent Secretary) The salary of local government staff should be improved to be at par with what obtains in the federal civil service. All back logs of salary arrears, including those arising from percentage salaries should be settled. With this many will like to join the local government service and those already in it will want to remain

Conclusion

In conclusion, reforming the Nigerian Civil Service is a critical imperative that requires strategic interventions to address systemic challenges and transform the operation of government institutions. By focusing on aspects such as bureaucratic efficiency, merit-based recruitment, performance management, transparency, and integrity, the civil service can enhance its capacity to deliver services effectively and restore public trust. Through evidence-based reforms and a commitment to best practices, Nigeria can position its civil service as a pillar of good governance,

accountability, and service delivery for sustainable national development.

The Nigerian Civil Service, despite its challenges, remains a critical pillar of governance and service delivery in Nigeria. By addressing issues of corruption, inefficiency, and politicization, and by promoting professionalism, integrity, and innovation, the civil service can fulfill its mandate more effectively and contribute significantly to the country's development and well-being.

Recommendations

The Nigerian civil service is in urgent need of reform and restructuring to enhance its capacity to deliver services effectively and efficiently. By adopting strategies that address issues such as recruitment, training, performance management, and accountability, the government can improve the quality of public services and restore public trust in government institutions. It is imperative for policymakers to prioritize civil service reform as a critical component of Nigeria's development agenda.

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