

NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE REFORMS AND THE FOURTH REPUBLIC EXPERIENCE: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the development of the Nigerian Public Service from its inception as a colonial service through its transformation as a Nigerian Public Service at independence, to the various reforms that have been instituted as a way of making the service of relevance to the development of the nation-State. The paper while identifying factors responsible for the inability of past reforms to deliver on their promises, also interrogates conditions necessary for the success of the current reforms to ensure that the service is properly placed for development of the country especially within the context of much needed structural change that will engender a service that is not only people-oriented but sustainable by giving substantial room for people participation in the service agenda.

Keywords: Public Service, Reforms, Development, Nigeria, Fourth Republic and People.

INTRODUCTION

This paper traces the development of the Nigerian Public Service from its inception as a colonial service through its transformation as a Nigerian Public Service at independence, to the various reforms that have been instituted as way of making the service of relevance to the development of the nation-State. One thing that remains incontrovertible about the Nigerian Public Service is that it has a chequered history of development. This history however can translate into a prospective and sustainable future for the service if only the various past and on-going reforms are implemented to overcome some of the myriad of problems affecting the service. This study is divided into sections. The first section briefly examines what the Public Service is all about with Nigeria as a case study. The second section examines the various stages of the development of the Nigerian public service to date while the third section considers the challenges facing the service. The Conclusion then follows.

ON THE PUBLIC SERVICE

The Public Service is often referred to as the employees of government who are responsible for the functioning of government through the implementation of government policies (Onuoha, 1993:278-279). In other words, those who are in the public service constitute the permanent officials of the various government departments that are responsible for the execution of government policies and programmes (Adebayo, 1981). Specifically, within the Nigerian context, and in relation to the task of engendering sustainable development, Olugbemi sees the public service as “the mill through which those acquired and vastly expanded responsibilities of the country’s government(s) are processed (Olugbemi, 1987:431)”. Therefore, the public service in Nigeria is made up of workers in various government ministries, parastatals and agencies. However, workers in the inner core government ministries that are also known as civil service are

separated from other parastatals and agencies which include the Nigerian Railways Corporation, the then National Electric Power Authority, Central Bank of Nigeria, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, the Armed Forces, Police and other para-military establishments such as the Prisons and Customs Services and the Federal Road Safety Commission.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE THROUGH 1966

The Nigerian public service has its origin in the British colonial administration which was established essentially to maintain law and order in the colony. At its inception, the colonial service has to incorporate the traditional rulers and chiefs under the 'Indirect Rule' system, which Lord Lugard introduced first in Northern Nigeria but later, extended it to the Western and Eastern Nigeria. The involvement of these chiefs and rulers initially in the colonial administration, it must be noted, is an acknowledgment of the existence of "institutionalized arrangement for the conduct of public affairs" even before the coming of the colonizer (Okunade, 1993:19).⁴ The development of the Nigerian Public Service is often traced to 1861 when Great Britain established direct rule over the Colony of Lagos. However, civil service organization structure did not emerge until 1906 in Southern Nigeria while the 1914 Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates had a colonial administration under a Governor-General, with each of the Northern and Southern Protectorates still having Lieutenants-Governors at the top. The colonial administration system was alien and essentially imposed for the maintenance of law and order. The administration was also marked by a concentration of executive, legislative and judicial powers in the hands of appointed British officials who were responsible to their home government (Admolekun, 1986). Administration was thus centralized in the Nigerian Secretariat with various central departments under Lord Lugard as the Governor-General. The Nigerian Secretariat was in full control over the colonial Secretariats under Lieutenants-Governor in the two Protectorates. The two Secretariats were not autonomous but took directives from the Nigerian Secretariat. It was only the Nigerian Secretariat that the Home Office in Great Britain dealt with. This Secretariat in turn passed down the directives through the Governor, Residents, District Officers and other British Administrative officials finally to the traditional Rulers and Chiefs who represented the last link of the people with the Administration and constituted the pivot of colonial rule up to 1946 (Okunade, 1993:19).

The Indirect Rule System, as the pivot of colonial rule up to 1946, "was introduced by Lord Lugard in recognition of the effectiveness of the pre-colonial administrative system of the Emirates he met in Northern Nigeria. Indirect rule system was eventually adopted to reduce the cost of administering Nigeria as part of the overall British colonial policy of allowing the colonies to pay for the cost of their administration. The system also adopted especially in the Northern part of the country in a way not to destabilize the highly developed Islamic tradition and hierarchical administrative structure. The system of indirect rule was later introduced in the Western and Southern Nigeria in 1916 and later 1920s respectively" (Okunade, 1993:30). Indirect Rule system was fully successful in the North as the system was based on the existence of a well-organized hierarchical administration system found in the pre-colonial administration. It was partly successful in the West because it was thought that the West also had a centralized administrative system while the various Kings and chiefs in the different kingdoms ruled with the consent of the people as represented by their chiefs. Thus, it can be said that while the system of rule in pre-colonial era in the North approximated an absolute or autocratic monarch, that of the West can be likened to a constitutional monarch. In the East, the introduction of Indirect Rule system was a total failure precisely because the pre-colonial administration system in the East (at least the commonest form) was highly segmented and republican in nature without the existence of chiefs or a centralized or hierarchical authority. Thus, an attempt to create artificial chiefs through the "warrant chiefs" was resisted as it was alien to the

people. Indirect Rule system flourished for most part of British colonial administration. It was not “until after the 1946 Richards Constitution and the subsequent constitutional changes in Nigeria which ushered in participatory democracy, representative government and involvement of Nigerian (the educated elite) in their own affairs” (Okunade, 1993:31) that the system was terminated. The next stage in the development of the Nigerian public service was marked by two efforts. First, was an attempt to increase the strength of Nigerians in the Senior Civil Service known as “Nigerianisation” (Akinsanya, 1973:31). The Foot Commission which was established made far-reaching recommendations on how to gradually replace outgoing expatriates with trained and competent Nigerians. The second effort resulted from the breaking of the erstwhile unitary public service into four public services which emerged from the 1951 Macpherson Constitution which introduced quasi-federalism and its consolidation in a formal federal system with the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution (Okunade, 1993:31).

Nigerianisation and regionalization later came to have affected each other. In the East and the West, Nigerianisation was specially and rigorously pursued. However, the North, due to fear of domination of its public service by the Eastern and Western Nigerians favoured ‘Northernisation’ policy which was carried out in a way that subjected the appointment of any non-expatriate/non-Northerner to contract appointment and also, placed priority on recruitment of Northerners. Thus, one observer noted that “the process of Nigerianisation witnessed various degrees of successes in different regions so that by 1962 the Western Region, which was the obviously the most successful, had achieved 89.3 percent Nigerianisation” (Kirk-Green, 1965: 213-248). As independence drew near, further changes were made in the structure of the administration to place it on a similar footing with the British Civil Service. This resulted in the further breakdown of the three classes: General Service, Specialist and Department Classes. Prior to the period, the civil service has been organized along functional lines with the most senior officer serving as Director. With the integration of Departments with Ministries, the Ministry had a Minister as the political head and generalist administrators as administrative heads who then subordinated the professionals who had hitherto headed their Departments (Okunade, 1993:32-33). The integration of Departments with Ministries had the effect of allowing for effective co-ordination and harmonization. Ultimately, the activities of the Civil Service resulted in efficiency and accountability. At independence, the Nigerian Public Service was modeled after the British Home Service with its Weberian characteristics of values of permanence, anonymity, political neutrality and competence (Akinsanya, 2002:213-248). Also, with independence, renewed efforts were placed on Nigerianisation to replace the British civil servants who were then withdrawing their services from the Nigerian Services with highly trained Nigerians. Thus, government came out with a White Paper with proposals on how to accelerate the pace of Nigerianisation. These included training of Nigerians at all levels, increase placement in secondary schools, provision of scholarships for higher education and training of several serving officers.

However, the rapid expansion of scope of governmental activities and pressures for competitive modernisation created by the various crises immediately after independence stressed the public service almost to its breaking point. The crisis in Western Nigeria created the problem of loyalty in the civil service. The problems later extended with the 1963 Census and 1964-1965 Crises which while challenging the already-stretched capacity of the public service to respond to rapid changes eventually resulted in the January 15, 1966 military **coup** which created an entirely different atmosphere for the working of public servants.

PUBLIC SERVICE 1966-1979

The January 15, 1966 **coup d'état** swept off the politicians and the parliamentary system of government operated by them. In their place, Major-General John T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi assumed power as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The Ironsi Administration attempted to replace the Nigerian federal structure with a unitary system but this attempt eventually led to dissatisfaction among some groups especially in the North, resulting in the July 1966 **coup** which led to the emergence of General Yakubu Gowon as the Head of State who reversed the unitarist tendencies in a federal framework at least in principle (Akinsanya, 2002:213-248).

Military rule represented an unusual terrain for public servants, particularly as the military leaders themselves acknowledged the fact that they were ignorant of politics and administration at the time. Hence, the military had to depend on the public service initially for everything they needed to do in government. In any event, the higher military and civil servants have similar hierarchical organisations which permit a close relationship between the military and the public service. Thus, it has been observed that during the first military regime

a close relationship existed between the civil service and the military formation ... and that indeed decisions and policies were made by the civil service which should act in advisory capacity to the political executives (Olugbemi, 1979).

Olugbemi maintained that civil servants should be held responsible for government decisions, actions and inactions during the period while Adamolekun noted that the civil service under the military became an irresponsible, inefficient and yet powerful organization (Adamolekun, 1986:30). While extending the foregoing perception of the civil service of the period further, Okunade has argued that:

It is more credible to state that the civil servants if at all they were a group of opportunists during that period succeeded in exploiting the group because of the ignorance and the character of the earliest military rulers ... (Okunade, 1993: 40-41).¹⁶

In contrast to the various views expressed about public servants of the period, Okunade argued that they could not be held liable for government decisions, arguing that neither the structure, nor the powers and functions of the civil service changed under the military rule (Okunade, 1993: 41).

However, various political developments during the period which accounted for increasing prominence of the public servants in the administration of the country include the absence of political heads of the Ministries, namely, Ministers. Even when political heads were eventually appointed they lacked the influence and the mandate exercised by them during a civilian dispensation. Their position was not helped with the suspension of the Constitution. So their influence decreases because there were no political institutions which could be used as a basis for influence peddling. Thus, the loss of political power became the gains of civil servants whose influence increases tremendously. Additionally, the absence of political activities made it difficult for peoples' views and opinions about governance to be aggregated and articulated. Hence, there was no way to limit the influence of the civil servants. More significant, are the involvement of civil servants in the management of various public enterprises as a result of the absence of politicians to serve as Chairmen and/or members of boards and the magnitude of tasks faced by the military leaders of not only ensuring the unity of the country as a result of a civil war which they themselves created but also economic development challenges of

the period. Finally, the duty of managing the various political crises of the period especially the various negotiations before the outbreak of civil war in 1967 fell squarely on the top cadres of the public services. On July 29, 1975, the regime of General Gowon was overthrown in a **coup d'état** led by General Murtala Mohammed who saw a reversal of the fortunes of the public services. The civil service was accused of losing all the fine principles of public service: anonymity, neutrality, non-partisanship and permanency in the process of its entanglement with military leadership. Thus, the Mohammed Administration responded by purging the public service, an action which saw some 10,000 public servants losing their jobs for reasons ranging from divided loyalty to declining productivity. This action not only led to loss of morale and insecurity of tenure; it also negates the civil service principle of permanency. The regime also appointed a Public Complaints Commission to check the activities of civil servants.

As part of a programme of sanitizing and improving service delivery, a Public Service Review Commission was set up immediately after the Adebo Report of 1970 on September 13, 1972 with the following terms of reference:

1. examine the organization, structure and management of the Public Services and recommend reforms where suitable;
2. investigate and evaluate the methods of recruitment and conditions of employment and the staff development programmes of the public services and recommend such changes as may be necessary;
3. examine all legislations relating to persons as well as the various superannuation schemes in the public services and in the private sector and suggest such changes as may be appropriate with a view to facilitating mobility within the public service on the one hand and private sector on the other, while at the same time providing for the retention in the public services of qualified and efficient personnel;
4. undertake with aid of appropriate grading teams the regrading of all posts in the public services, establish scales of salaries corresponding to such grades and as a result of job evaluation of posts, recommend salary scales to be applicable to each post in the services;
5. enquire into and make recommendations on any other matters which in the opinion of the Commission, appear to be relevant to the foregoing and therefore ought, in the public interest, to be enquired into.

The Udoji Commission submitted its Report in September 1974 which contained far-reaching recommendations which if they had been well implemented would have led to fundamental restructuring of the service to make it result-oriented.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UDOJI COMMISSION

Because of the need to make the Nigerian civil servants positively oriented in their work and attitudes toward the service, the Commission recommended that civil servants should subscribe to a Code of Ethics. However, the Commission's Code of Ethics was not accepted by the Government. Rather, the Government enunciated its own Code of Ethics, because the mere existence of Code of Conduct **per se** could not result in a positive orientation. A new style public service capable of meeting the challenges of development prompted the Commission to recommend the adoption of the results-oriented Management such as Project Management, Management by Objectives, and Programme and Performance Budgeting System (PPBS). While the values of all these principles in large-scale management cannot be questioned their whole-scale adoption by the public service may be problematic. This realization may explain their being jettisoned by the civil servants that are expected to make use of them in spite of government acceptance of this

recommendation. On Manpower development which includes manpower planning and training, the Commission recommended a professionalized civil service through training and retraining. However, much emphasis was not placed in the implementation that the public service is still much handicapped in terms of staff development and professionalization (Ola, 1997:503). The Commission recommended the replacement of the class structure recommended by the 1955 Gorsuch Commission. It recommended a unified salary grading structure for the entire public service except the military. It must be noted that government acceptance of this recommendation especially the salary component generated more controversies than any other part of the Commission's recommendations. The federal government accepted the recommendation on the integration of all the senior management posts which should be accessible to all the civil servants in the upper echelons of the service, whether generalist administrators or professionals. Due to some issues connected with the implementation of the various recommendations of the Commission, a Public Service Review Panel was established to settle various petitions or complaints against the Commission's Report and a Government White Paper on it. The Report of the Review was greeted with the same reactions as that of the Commission and emphasis was placed only on salary structure. Eventually, the Commission's Report and the Report of the Public Service Review Panel could not have the desired results.

PUBLIC SERVICE DURING THE SECOND REPUBLIC 1979-1983

The Second Republic witnessed some changes in the Nigerian Public Service partly set into motion by the departing Murtala/Obasanjo Administration as contained in the 1979 Constitution and partly by the civilian politicians and their partners in the public service that operated the Constitution. Some main changes to the Nigerian public service as a result of the introduction of the Presidential system of government at the Federal, State and Local Government levels made the President, Governors and Council Chairmen the Chief Executives (Gboyega, 1987). Also, there was a formal recognition of the 'quota' system in respect of recruitment into the Public Service as enunciated in Section 14 Sub-Sections 3 and 4 of the Constitution as the "distinctive desire of the peoples of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigerian a sense of belonging to the nation." However, in operation, it has been asserted that the federal character principle tended more to differentiate than to integrate (Ayoade, 1998:108; Abegunrin, O. and Akomolafe, O. 2006:31-46). Momoh has asserted that the federal character principle may "well impede rather than accelerate the process of national integration" (Adejumobi, S and Momoh, A. 1996). Lastly, on changes introduced into the public service, the Code of Ethics recommended by the Udoji Review Commission was adapted in a Government 'Code of Conduct' to "which a person must observe and conform." This was to operate in conjunction with the Code of Conduct Bureau and a Code of Conduct Tribunal established to "regulate behaviour of public officials and check abuses in the exercise of State power on the part of public officers" (Okosun, 1997). Also, in terms of appointment of the upper echelons of the public service, certain innovations were introduced. For instance, in the appointment of Permanent Secretaries, provision was made for their appointment from within or outside the civil service and their tenures as Permanent Secretaries expire with the appointing government. Thus, it has been observed that the issue of the politicization of the civil service dated to this period. However, in the case of the Head of the Civil Service, this appointment was limited only to serving civil servants. In spite of all these changes, the public service failed to serve as agents of development for the country as a result of many vices associated with the Second Republic. These include greed, corruption, and indiscipline, implementation of federal character principle and lack of accountability by both politicians and bureaucrats.

PUBLIC SERVICE 1983-1999

A military **coup** on December 31, 1983 terminated the second democratic experiment in Nigeria. General Mohammed Buhari who led the military administration that took over the reins of power was dissatisfied with the various developments identified earlier as afflicting the public service in the Second Republic and therefore was committed to a general overhaul of the service. The regime embarked upon a purge of the service involving the retirement or dismissal of corrupt officials and other officials adjudged guilty of one misdemeanour or other. The regime also launched a programme of War Against Indiscipline, (WAI) with the objective of instilling in the minds of Nigerians the noble ideals of national consciousness, mobilize their mind and gear them to a sense of nationhood, patriotism and above all, discipline. Also, to ensure public accountability, the regime undertook of a probe of public officers at all levels of government and meted out severe punishments on culprits without allowing for due process. Also, Special Military Tribunals on Recovery of Public Property and the Federal Military Government (Supremacy and Enforcement of Powers) Decrees gave unlimited power to the military government to deal with politicians and public servants (Okunade, 1993:68). More significant, the regime appointed the Dotun Philips Study Team with terms of reference that covered a wide range of issues in the Nigerian Public Services. However, the Team was yet to submit its Report when the regime was overthrown in a palace **coup d'état** led by General Ibrahim Babangida on August 27, 1985.

The Babangida Administration accused its predecessor of being insensitive to the feelings of the people while at the same time neglecting the views and contributions of other members of the then Supreme Military Council. Thus, as a way of demonstrating the distinctiveness of the regime from the previous regime in which General Babangida and others played prominent roles, the Babangida Administration repealed some obnoxious Decrees promulgated by the Buhari regime while some Decrees such as Decree No. 2 of 1984 were amended. The regime also introduced for the first time in the history of military administrations in Nigeria the title of "President" instead of "Head of State." The President thus became the Chairman of the highest decision making body in the military government which was also renamed the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) instead of the SMC. The Administration introduced many reforms in the Nigerian Public Service and entire public administration. The precursor of such reforms however is the political and economic programmes of the Administration. The Administration introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme, a programme that was designed to bring about a structural transformation of the country's economy through the adoption and application of various market economy reforms. Such reforms include devaluation of currency, deregulation of salaries and wages, reduction in public expenditure, removal of subsidies and privatization and commercialization of public enterprises (Okosun, 1997, Olukoshi, 1996). The regime also embarked upon a prolonged and elaborated transition to civil rule programme with so many changes and adjustments to its structures and processes including even the terminal date of transfer of power to the politicians that it was dubbed 'transition without end,' (Diamond, Kirk-Green and Oyediran, 1996). It was small wonder then that it eventually annulled the results of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election, adjudged to be free and fair in the history of elections in Nigeria since 1922.

As a means of implementing its programmes, the Babangida Administration felt the urgent need to reform the public service to cope with the scope of the changes inherent in its programmes. However, as an immediate response to some of the felt-need for a development-oriented service, the Administration established a wide array of extra-ministerial agencies including the Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self-Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), Centre

for Democratic Studies (CDS) and the National Council on Inter-Governmental Relations. The Dotun Philips Study Team established by the Buhari regime made far-reaching recommendations which formed the kernel of the Civil Service Re-Organization Decree, Decree No. 43 of 1988 promulgated by the Babangida Administration. The Minister became the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer, replacing the Permanent Secretary, re-designated Director-General who retained his position at the pleasure of the appointing government and will retire with it except if reappointed by the incoming Administration. The Study Team recommended that Specialist or Generalist Administrator will make his career entirely in the Ministry/Department of his choice. The Civil Service was restructured into Common/Service Departments:

1. Personnel Management
2. Finance and Supplies
3. Planning, Research and Statistics

In addition, each Ministry was to have not less than five “operations departments.” The recruitment of civil service personnel at Grade Levels 01-06 was to be done by each Ministry while the Civil Service Commission had responsibility for those in Grade Levels 07 and above. Each Ministry is in charge of the discipline of staff. Other components of the reforms include Annual Performance Evaluation, Personnel Management and Financial Checks and Balances.

In spite of the reform measures, the Dotun Phillips reforms have been criticized as defective as the Study Team left unresolved some of the problems of the civil service, (Okunade, 1993: 128) some of which were a result of complications or dysfunctions in the implementation, given the fact that the civil service remains part and parcel of the larger Nigerian society. Therefore, Obasi noted: “On the whole, Babangida’s civil service reform of 1988 (following the pattern of political reforms) is defective on one fundamental ground. It is a liberal package which offers superficial solutions to fundamental problems that require radical attention” (cited in Okunade, 1993:122). While interested in restructuring the service, the Babangida Administration created more problems for the service because the reforms offended the **spirit** and **letter** of the 1963 Constitution as amended by Decree 17 of 1974 relating to the role of civil servants in a Government Department. It stated that “where any Minister of the Federation has been charged with the responsibility for any department of government, he shall be under the supervision of a Permanent Secretary, whose office shall be an office in the Public Service of the Federation.” But the 1988 Civil Service Reforms stated otherwise as the reforms sought to make Ministers the ‘Alpha and Omega’ in their respective ministries by relegating the civil servants, represented by the Permanent Secretaries, to the background. First, the reforms of 1988 were introduced in an atmosphere of controversy, doubt and suspicion as they gave the Ministers total control over the staff and the finances of their Ministries or departments. The civil servants were no longer considered part of the system during the formulation and execution of public policy. A new and parallel organ was established to implement every new policy announced by the government. This destroyed the healthy relationship between the civil servants and Ministers built over the years and also truncated the notion of shared responsibility between the Permanent Secretary and the Minister in the conduct of government business (Akinsanya, 1989:16-40; 2002:253-272). The Office of Head of Civil Service of the Federation was abolished to pave way for political appointees who merely danced to the dictates of those who appointed them. Consequently, all the ills associated with the patronage system became evident as demonstrated in excessive corruption, discipline, gross inefficiency, instability and collapse of accountability and equity. This eventually led to the total collapse of the machinery of government and mismanagement on an unprecedented scale. Thus, an attempt to find a solution to some of these problems ostensibly informed some changes made by the Abacha Administration.

Because the Abacha Administration was under constant internal and external pressures to relinquish power to a democratically-elected government, the Administration could not embark on fundamental or wide-ranging reforms. However, two years into its Administration some powerful/top brass in the civil service sent a Memorandum to the Head of State, General Sanni Abacha asking the government to review some aspects of the Civil Service Reforms implemented by General Ibrahim Babangida. These include reversion of the position of Permanent Secretary as well as reforms relating to the position of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, the Ministers as the Chief Executive and Accounting Officers, functionaries of their various ministries, appointments of career civil servants and the role of the Civil Service Commission vis-à-vis the Civil Service. The Allison Ayida Review Panel considered these and other grievances against the 1988 Reforms. Thus, from the Memorandum that led to the establishment of the Panel, it seems obvious that the upper class of the civil service feel slighted and every attempt must be made at all costs to regain their lost statuses. As a result of the Report of the Panel, the Abacha Administration modified the provisions of Decree 43 of 1988. First, the post of the Director-General was scrapped and that of Permanent Secretary reintroduced. Second, the Permanent Secretary, it was decided, must be a career officer appointed on the advice of the Head of Service and recommendation of the Federal Civil Service Commission. Third, the Permanent Secretary became the Accounting Officer and Chief Adviser to the Minister/Commissioner. In case of any disagreement with the Minister, this view should be made known to the Head of Service. The Minister retained the position as the political Head and Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry. While he is no longer the Accounting Officer, he is responsible for general direction and control of the Ministry. The Office of Head of Service was reintroduced. The position of the Secretary to the Government still remained a political office to be occupied by an appointee of the government of the day. The occupant is to serve as a link between the Ministries and Head of State. The Administrative Head of Extra-Ministerial Departments and Commissions changed from Director-General to Secretary (Urakpa, 1999).

All the above changes notwithstanding, at the inception of democratic government in May 1999, the public service was still perceived in a negative light to the extent that it was described as being characterized by all manners of venality which include “outright laziness, lack of commitment and vision, debilitating nepotism and tribalism (an organization) where appointments were made without recourse to laid-down procedures; (where) relatives, friends and concubines of Chief Executive Officers were employed against the ban on employment and into positions they were sometimes not qualified for (as the Federal Civil Service Commission functioned only in name)” (Aiyede, 2003:86).

PUBLIC SERVICE DURING THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

The Fourth Republic commenced on May 29, 1999 with the swearing of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and State Governors in the thirty-six States of the Federation. Since the commencement of the Fourth Republic, the Obasanjo Administration had shown a commitment to the reforms of the public service taking place at different levels of the services such as stamping out corruption, promotion of ethics, integrity and professionalism. Various innovations that were put in place include the establishment of anti-corruption bodies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Due Process Unit in the Presidency. In terms of structural changes in the service, the Budget Office was separated from the Federal Ministry of Finance while the Department of Administration and Supplies was put in charge of awarding contracts and Department of Finance and Accounts was in charge of payment of contracts. This arrangement is to allow for transparency in the handling of activities of different departments of government.

Another major reform of the Obasanjo Administration was the monetization of benefits in the public service. The monetization of benefits of public servants involves converting all the fringe benefits accruable to public servants into cash. These benefits hitherto made available by government to public officers include the provision of free accommodation and its maintenance, furniture, transportation and chauffeur-driven vehicles, payments for utilities in the official residences/quarters, meal subsidy, domestic servants' allowance, leave grant and reimbursement of medical expenses.

The essence of monetization is to reduce the financial cost of governance. Although it has been argued that its introduction could increase the associated financial costs in 2004 (year of introduction) due to the fact that the inflows from the disposal of certain capital items would take some longer time to be realized, it is expected to lead to substantial financial savings in subsequent years thereby achieving its core objective of contributing to the reduction in the cost of governance. It would also assist in reducing the waste, if not the fraudulent practices of the past. As a policy, its implementation began with the employees in the Federal Ministries after a Circular from the National Salaries, Income and Wages Commission had given the necessary directive and the effective date put at October 1, 2003. Also it is meant to be extended to staff in the public service in 2004, namely, government employees working in parastatals, establishments, Commissions, Extra-Ministerial Departments and agencies. Also, it is argued that due to the general belief that government property is nobody's property; the practice is for such facilities not to be well maintained by their beneficiaries. The aim of the scheme, in other words, therefore, is to reduce wastage associated with careless spending of government money. For instance, extended family members are made to enjoy the benefits of medical attention meant for public officials; also public officials who lived in government quarters use electricity, water and other amenities without any form of control and restraint, among others (The Comet, 2004:5). And to implement the scheme, the Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission was empowered by the Federal Government to draw up the salaries and allowances of political office holders and public servants. The recommendation of this body formed the framework of salaries and allowances of political office holders at all levels of government – Federal, State and Local Governments. Table 1 shows the monetization of the fringe benefits of political office holders and public servants:

TABLE 1

Annual Basic Salaries of SGF/Ministers/Ministers of State/ Chairmen and Members of Federal Executive Bodies:

1.	SGF:	₦794,085.00
2.	Ministers:	₦794,085.00
3.	Ministers of State:	₦783,085.00
4.	Special Advisers to the President:	₦777,150.00
5.	Chairmen and Members of Federal Executive Bodies:	₦777,150.00

Monetized Fringe Benefits of Public Officers and Political Office Holders (1) – (5) Above

Accommodation – 100% of Annual Basic Salary (Housing Allowance)

Transport – 350% of Annual Basic Salary (Vehicle Advance)

Utility Allowance – 20% of Annual Basic Salary

Domestic Staff Allowance – 75% of Annual Basic Salary

Entertainment Allowance – 10% of Annual Basic Salary

Medical Care – Free

Furniture Allowance – 300% of Annual Basic Salary (Once in four years)

Special Assistant – to be provided from within the Civil Service (where applicable)

Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Fuelling Allowance – 30% of Annual Basic Salary

Leave Allowance – Once in a life time after full tenure of office with government.

Severance Gratuity – 300% of Annual Basic Salary. Once in a lifetime after full tenure of office with government

ALL OTHER PUBLIC AND POLITICAL OFFICE HOLDERS RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING ALLOWANCES

Accommodation – 100% of Annual Basic Salary (Vehicle Advance)

Transport – 350% of Annual Basic Salary (Housing Allowance)

Utility Allowance – 20% of Annual Basic Salary

Domestic Staff Allowance – 10% of Annual Basic Salary

Entertainment Allowance – 10% of Annual Basic Salary

Medical Care – Free

Furniture Allowance – 300% of Annual Basic Salary (Once in four years)

Allowance for Employment of Personal Assistant – 25% of Annual Basic Salary (where applicable)

Special Assistant – to be provided from within the Civil service (where applicable)

Motor Vehicle Maintenance and Fuelling Allowance – 30% of Annual Basic Salary

Leave Allowance – 10% of Annual Basic Salary, once in a life time after full tenure of office with government.

Severance Gratuity – 300% of Annual Basic Salary

Retirement Benefits – payable on the basis of approved Scheme of Service.

Mention must be made of severance benefits or allowance payable to political and public office holders, based on 300 percent of their annual basic salaries as shown in Table 2. These benefits are conceived as a means of compensating these officers who might have left their appointments to take up positions in the public realm. The argument of the Chairman of RMAFC is that Severance Allowance would act as a “bridge” for the politician. It is therefore expected that they should be taken care of after their terms of office. They will suffer, it is argued, though not convincing, if they are allowed to go back into the society without a reasonable guarantee of means of adjustment to normal life.

TABLE 2: Severance Benefits of Political and Public**Office Holders Based on 300 Percent of Their Annual Basic Salaries**

Designation	Annual Basic Salary (N)	Severance Allowance
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria	1,405,882.00	4,217.646
Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria	1,212,629.00	3,637.887
Secretary to Government of the Federation	794,085.00	2,382.255
Minister	732,032.00	2,349.096
Special Adviser to the President	777,150.00	2,331.450
Senate President	993,676.00	2,981.026
Deputy Senate President	923,667.00	2,981.026
Senators	923,667.00	2,771.001
Speaker of the House of Representatives	990,884.00	2,972.652
Deputy Speaker House of Representatives	877,989.00	2,633.967
Member of House of Representatives	794,084.00	2,382.255
Speaker, State House of Assembly	655,950.00	1,967.850
Deputy Speaker, State House of Assembly	578,393.00	1,604.670
Member of the State House of Assembly	534,890.00	1,604.0670
Councillors	380,038.00	1,140.114

Various reactions have trailed the introduction and implementation of the monetization policy. These range from arguments that the implementation should have given room for some adjustment period for civil servants before full implementation. In other words, it can take the form of payment of economic rent in the mean time while with time the government can sell such properties and allow the occupier to acquire them. Another problem observed is that selling government properties like houses and cars through bidding will lead to pricing them out of the reach of civil servants who ought to have been given consideration before other bidders. This actually happened in the unsuccessful bid by civil servants occupier of 1004 Flats and High Rise Apartments owned by the Federal Government in Lagos.

In spite of the foregoing problems, it should be noted that the monetization scheme possesses the inherent advantages of reducing the cost of governance especially in the long run and thus attests to some of the good side of deregulation efforts of the Obasanjo Administration. By leaving government quarters and living among the populace, it will engender

a better understanding of the problems and challenges facing the people and this will impact positively on policy formulation than the hitherto alienating posture of civil servants towards the public in the past. A major problem of the monetization policy is the introduction of severance payment to public officers which is likely to undermine all the gains that are supposed to have been made.

In fact, this is now the precarious situation that the country finds itself after over five years of implementation of the monetization policy. The already bad economic situation created by the problem of spending over seventy percent of recurrent expenditure of the country in maintaining public officers has continuously degenerated with the constant penchant of these officers to increase their remunerations without taking cognizance of public sensibilities and outcry against their fat pays.

Table 3: Remuneration Package by Members of Three Tiers of Government in Nigeria

CATEGORY	SALARIES (₦)	ALLOWANCES (₦)	TOTAL (₦)
Federal Executive	8,604,590,680.00	89,742,899,133.00	98,347,489,813.00
Federal Judicial Officers	1,720,807,475.00	13,171,724,892.00	14,892,532,367.00
Federal Legislature	6,175,158,732.00	54,241,154,281.60	60,416,313,013.60
TOTAL: FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	16,500,556,887.00	157,155,778,306.60	173,656,335,193.60
State Executive	28,351,040,580.00	272,166,837,723.00	30,517,878,303.00
State Judicial officers	3,116,936,374.20	15,468,679,553.58	18,585,615,927.78
State Legislature	5,095,391,040.00	35,893,015,632.00	40,988,406,672.00
TOTAL: STATE GOVERNMENTS	36,563,367,994.20	323,528,532,908.58	360,091,900,902.78
Local Government Executive	16,021,970,280.00	234,018,162,378.00	250,040,132,658.00
Local Government Legislature	25,873,60,240.00	316,952,215,440.00	342,825,865,680.00
TOTAL: LOCAL GOVERNMENTS	41,895,620,520.00	550,970,377,818.00	592,865,998,338.00
GRAND TOTAL	94,959,545,401.20	1,031,654,689,033.18	1,126,614,234,434.38

The following should be noted that there are: Federal Executive Officers (472), Federal Legislature (464), State Executive (2,664), State Legislature (1,152), Local Government Executive (3096) Local Government Legislature (8,692), Federal and State Judiciary (934), and totaling 17,474 political/public office holders earning 1,126,614,434.38 per annum. Thus we have approximately 17,500 officials representing 0.014 percent (less than a quarter of a percent) of the Nigeria's estimated population of 140 million.

Sources: Affe, S.M. and Onuba, I "Salary Cut," **The Punch** (Lagos), February 13, 2009, p. 11; The Nation, "Pay Cut to Affect 16540 Political Office Holders," **The Nation** (Lagos), February 13, 2009, pp. 1-2

Table 4: Remuneration of Members of the Legislative Branch during the Fourth Republic in Nigeria 1999-2010

	NATIONAL ASSEMBLY		STATE ASSEMBLY
	Senate	House of Representatives	
SALARY (PER MONTH)*	2.48m*	1.98m**	1.98m*
VEHICLE ALLOWANCE	30% - 70%	30 - 75%	30% - 75%
ENTERTAINMENT ALLOWANCE	10% - 30%	10% - 30%	10% - 30%
UTILITY ALLOWANCE	20% - 30%	20% - 30%	20% - 30%
WARDROBE ALLOWANCE	25%	25%	25%
PERSONAL ASSISTANT ALLOWANCE	25%	25%	25%
DOMESTIC STAFF ALLOWANCE	75%	75%	75%
RECESS ALLOWANCE	10%	10%	10%
NEWSPAPERS ALLOWANCE	15%	15%	15%

* A Senator in 2008 earned N993,697 per month before a 100% increase

announced by the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission.

** A member of the House of Representatives and State House of Assembly in 2008 earned ₦794,084 per month before a 100% increase announced by the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission.

Source: Affe and Onuba, p. 11

It is instructive to note that if the political/public office holders have to be continually maintained with a third of the annual budget of the country as observed above, then in the not too distant future the economy of the country will lie totally prostrate under the weight of these jumbo pays and allowances.

Another reform of note in the fourth republic which started with the Obasanjo administration and has continued till date is the introduction of contributory pension scheme. The need for the pension reform came as a way of finding a lasting solution to the problem of pension payment in the public sector. The Pension Reform Act which gives legal backing to the contributory pension scheme is aimed at allowing for monthly deduction from workers' salaries from July 2004. The objective therefore is to involve public servants by contributing a percentage of their current earnings in salary to a Fund that will eventually become their pension at their retirement. For the protagonist of the new pension scheme the belief is that it will allow for consistency, reliability and availability of funds for pensioners as at when due.³¹ The major provisions of the pension reform include the following:

1. the employers and employees shall contribute to the scheme;
2. the scheme covers all public and private sector employees and all other private sector employees working in an organization consisting of 5 or more employees;
3. every member shall maintain a Retirement Savings Account with a Pension Fund Administrator of his choice, consisting of contribution and interest additions;
4. employee shall contribute 7.5 percent of his total emoluments whilst members of the military shall contribute 5 percent of total emoluments;
5. Pension Fund Administrators so established shall invest and carry out all the administrative functions of pension funds;
6. Custodians so established shall collect the contributions directly from members and invest in accordance with the instruction of the Pension Fund Administrator;
7. Risk Rating Companies so established shall carry out the function of rating investment instruments in which pension funds may be invested;
8. the National Pension Commission so established will regulate, supervise and ensure the effective administration of Pension matters in Nigeria;
9. Pension Transition Arrangement Department in the three tiers of government shall be established;
10. the Department shall pay gratuity and pensions to existing pensioners and all those exempted under the Act;
11. Pension Fund Administrators and Custodians shall be licensed by the National Pension Commission and must have a minimum paid up capital of N150 million and N500 million respectively;
12. They shall not be engaged in any business other than the management of pension funds and custody of pension funds assets;
13. private schemes with assets under N5.0 billion can continue but the assets must be held by a Custodian and all investments must be subjected to the approval of the Commission; and privates schemes with assets under N5.0 billion can only continue if administered by a Pension Fund Administrator.

Some advantages are expected to accrue from the new pension scheme over the existing schemes. First, the new scheme will make for certainty as government and the individual contribute to a Pension Fund. Second, money is saved as it would allow for a large pool of money to develop the economy. Third, the savings culture is enhanced and in terms of government policy, it would assist in mopping excess funds in the system, thereby checking inflation. Finally, it would allow people to concentrate on their jobs.

It is generally agreed among scholars as well as practitioners of public administration in Nigeria that the various problems bedeviling the pension system in the country led government to introduce a new scheme to take care some of these shortcomings. According to Fashina, “most government employers do not have specific line items in their budget for catering for the welfare of the pensioners. Governments always default on contributions to the various previous schemes. An example is the National Provident Fund (NPF), which existed in the 1960s and 1970s and was wound up for public servants after it lost N77 billion. Such scheme broke down for three main reasons; contribution by workers was duly and regularly deducted but not from employers; the money was sometimes embezzled by the very persons who were entrusted with the management. This makes it difficult for workers to have access to it when they are retired compulsorily or voluntarily from the service” (The Punch, 2004:3). However, laudable as are some of the provisions of

the scheme, certain dangers loom in the horizon. These include the capacity of the succeeding governments in the country to continue with the scheme, while the attempt by the Federal Government to merge the private sector pension scheme with the public sector under the new arrangement will make it too unwieldy and therefore difficult to manage. Lastly, there is a need to put in place for the Fund a management body that is above board, transparent and accountable to the people through the National Assembly.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE REFORM OF NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE

This section concludes the paper by examining the prospects for a sustainable reform of Nigerian Public Service. In doing this one must note that the major problem of the service remains corruption which has become hydra-headed during the military regime which was characterized by general lack of accountability. In fact, corruption had defied any known solution. The activities of ICPC, EFCC and other similar agencies are geared towards solving this problem. However, their activities still remain feeble and combined with lack of serious political will and commitment. Thus, their impacts are yet to be sufficiently felt. Specifically, any attempt at fighting corruption in the Nigerian public service must first address the corruption within the total fabric of the society, especially from the standpoint of the leaders, namely, the politicians or top-hierarchy of the bureaucracy including the military and the police. Hence, Aiyede has observed: “integrity in public service can only be fostered where top-level officers model ethical behaviour and require it from others in the organization” (Aiyede, 2003). Also, some of the problems that have been identified in the Nigeria Public Service will be solved when the Nigerian State is organized in such a way to engender the emergence of a popular, participatory and sustainable democratic government which will in turn engender a public service that is amenable to sustainable development of the country. Such a government will ensure that the State does not exist only for the elites. The government must also work to reverse the long period of alienation of the populace by quickly addressing the socio-economic interests of the people, which, frankly speaking, constitute the root cause of most of the problems of the public service. In addition, public service itself must be made to be people-oriented in terms of service delivery. Public servants must be made to jettison their old and alienating posture when relating to public clients and thereby understand their role as servants of the people. Some of the solutions to the problems of the Nigerian Public Service that have been put forward by various reforms in the past have been neglected or never implemented due to lack of political will or commitment by the government. Even where an Administration has a commitment, continuity by succeeding regimes has always proved difficult to achieve. Another problem is federal character which while legalizing ‘quota’ system or representative bureaucracy has thrived at the expense of merit. This partly explains the general ineffectiveness of the service. Apart from promoting mediocrity; it has also worked to engender feelings of marginalization for the groups that have been severely affected by the implementation of the programme. Thus, while commenting on the capability of federal character to retard the progress of some groups in the country, Momoh notes that

We do not have to make a poor man rich by making a rich man poor. The aim should be to make a poor man as rich as wealthy in our midst. Our politics of envy that seeks deliberately to retard the progress of those who are making sacrifices to obtain their level of development in order that the less developed can catch up will impede rather than accelerate the process of national integration and cohesion(1996)

Lastly, the various solutions to the problems of the Nigerian Public Service including those recommended can only be meaningful and have sustainable impacts if the views and aspirations of the Nigerian populace are sought and respected. Hence, there is a need to allow for some form of dialogue or the other in achieving this.

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