

Democracy and the Public Service Reforms of 1999-2007: The Motivation of Federal Government Staff in Nigeria

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Abstract

This article examines the Public Service Reforms of 1999-2007 within the context of our democracy and the extent to which it has motivated the Nigeria public service. Adopting Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, this article examines the impact of contributory pension reforms, monetization, servicom and remuneration on staff motivation. Using quantitative and qualitative data, it argues that the reforms have not been able to motivate federal staff and that the pre-public service reforms could not reflect the political and institutional environment of a democratic political system, neither does it have a motivating influence on federal government staff. The article concludes that previous reforms since 1960 have not impacted positively on the performance and workings of federal government staff. Recommendations made involve a further review of staff incentives and a welfare package to absorb the inflationary trend. Moreover, motivating staff still needs to be sensitized and allowed maximum participation in the future reform process, strengthening the professional class with a new spirit of awareness and commitment, encourage popular participation by stakeholders and encourage additional training.

Keywords: Democracy, Reforms, Motivations, Public Service, Nigeria.

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Introduction

In any type of organization, implementing a change or reform often suffers a dismal fate, notably because of resistance by the change agents themselves (Gilley et al., 2009). This is especially the case in democratic countries, where lessons from several decades of governance and public sector reforms show that a high degree of failure may often be explained by their focus on technology enhancement and reform content - without paying sufficient attention to the approach of changing behavior and individual incentives for reform (Schacter, 2000; Easterly, 2001; Polidano, 2001; IEG, 2008a). The public service by its quality, knowledge, experience and understanding of public affairs is to support democracy to devise an effectual policy and have a great responsibility to implement it for the welfare of the society and the advancement of supportable economic and social development. Reforms have little chance of being successfully sustained if those who manage them do not have appropriate incentives at the crucial stages of implementation (Drazen, 2000). Beyond their role in sustaining reforms, civil servants' 'motivation and incentives are now consistently acknowledged as critical factors in determining performance in the public sector, and enabling capacity Building (Wai, 1995; IEG, 2008b; UNDP, 2006, 2009).

At independence in 1960, Nigerian bureaucrats who occupied leadership positions acquired wealth for self-aggrandizement and instead of working to improve a lot of the country, they became colonial masters in a "black man's skin". These and other factors necessitated the clamor for reforms in the Nigeria Public Service (Anazodo, 2009). After independence, the Nigerian government carried out a series of reforms among which are the Adebo Commission (1971), Udoji Public Service Review Commission of 1974, the Dotun Philips Civil Service Reform of 1988, the Allison Ayida Committee on Civil Service of 1995. However, the challenges faced by these reforms are incorrect incentives (low salaries), poor staff morale and a decline in work ethic, resulting in

lack of staff motivation. This has greatly undermined reform sustenance.

It is against this backdrop that this article examines Public Service reforms between 1999 and 2007, to find out if the reform in the service raises the quality of service to citizens, making policy decisions effective within practical systems of responsibility and citizen participation and motivating civil servants for better performance, using indicators like the contributory pension reforms, monetization, servicom and remuneration.

Conceptual Clarification

Democracy is professed as a government in which utmost power is conferred on the people or power is exercised directly by the people, in large societies through their elected representatives. In the words of President Abraham Lincoln, democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people (Epstein, 2011). It must be noted however that no detailed definition of democracy will be adopted further in this article. Our focus is on how to reconcile public service reform and democracy and how government decisions to reform have tremendously favored the society and also motivate staff of the federal government. Reform, in simple terms, implies the readjustment or repositioning of an organization in order for it to be able to effectively and efficiently meet the dynamism and the challenges of its universe of operation. It often requires a trajectory of moving from a present but unfavourable state through a series of strategic and institutional stages of change towards a future state marked by efficient and effective improvements leading to better performance (ECA,2009:4).

Motivation has several meanings. Munford (1972: 74) refers to it as- the psychological contract. By this, he meant the willingness of an employer to provide situations which cater for an individual's psychological needs in exchange for a commitment by the employee to his work and the firm's interest-a condition that

is often referred to as motivation. Motivation can be at different levels-the individual, the organizational and the societal.

Public service refers to all organizations that exist as part of government's machinery for implementing policies and programmes as well as for delivering services to meet the needs of citizens. Public service encompasses the civil service and the police and other security agencies: the armed forces, the national or state assembly services, the judiciary, parastatals, agencies and companies in which government owns controlling shares (BPSR,2007 1-2). It should also be noted that the basic role of the public servant is to initiate and participate in all the processes leading to the development of policy and ensure that the policy is agreed by government and is faithfully and honestly implemented. Public service is the most recognized institution affecting the lives of the citizens of a state. Its influence is insistent in the democratic world where most states perform extensive functions in providing social services and regulating the economic lives of their citizens.

Public sector reforms, on the other hand, usually include a range of reform measures dealing with core government functions, such as civil service reform, financial and fiscal reform, decentralization, enhancing accountability, legal and judicial reform and improving corporate regulatory frameworks (ADB,1995:139).

Factors that Necessitated Reforms

Reforms involve installing more appropriate structures and conditions of service to issues of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the service and lately ensuring service delivery improvement (Ayeni, 2008: 16). While public service reforms are usually undertaken by the government, it is in order to improve the capacity of its Institutions towards the achievement or realization of national development.

The public sector in most democratic countries signals the worst tendencies of the -dead hand of bureaucracy - corrupted, inefficient, poor services, cumbersome red tape -due to -the

accumulation of excessive power, lack of accountability and representation, indifference towards public needs and demands official secrecy and inaccessibility and the role in depoliticizing the public sphere (ECA, 2009: 13). This has led to a constantly declining level of efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public good to citizens. The assessment of the bureaucratic nature of the public sector in Africa coincided with the growing call, at the global level, for a redefinition of the state in the light of their functioning capacity to meet the growing needs of the citizens within a democratic dispensation. These are the issues that gave birth to the idea of the reform of the public sector. In Nigeria, several administrations instituted reviews and reforms to reinvigorate the public service some of which predated the country's independence. Nigeria's democratic efforts and government policies are threatened by the incompetency and ineffectiveness of the public service. It had begun to exhibit signs of progressive decay as a result of the oil boom era, over-centralization, growing conflict between cadres and hierarchy, low staff morale and productivity. As a result of these, governments from the post-independence era to the contemporary times embarked on a series of reforms aimed at improving public service. But still, the service remains inefficient and incapable of reforming itself (Salisu, 2001:1).

Theoretical Postulation

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory may be very helpful as the theoretical drive of this article. Maslow in his famous article of 1943 argues that we have five innate needs. These are physiological needs, the safety needs, affiliation or social needs, esteem needs and self-actualizing needs. Sarpu (2013) says that public service reforms motivate civil servants. Maslow (1954) identifies five major theoretical issues to be addressed. First, the Human being is an organism which drives into action to satisfy its needs. Secondly, a sound theory of motivation centers on the basic goals of a human being; third, human behaviour is a

steps of the hierarchy from security and safety needs to Affiliation or Acceptance needs.

Reform Initiatives from 1960-1999

Five reform initiatives were introduced in the post-independence period. These are: the Morgan Commission (1963) attended to the general demand for wage increase consequent on the Mbanefo wage award of 1959 and proposed a minimum wage on a geographical basis. The Elwood Grading Team (1966) tackled the anomalies arising from the grading of posts and proposed uniform salaries for civil service officers performing identical tasks. The Adebo Commission of 1971, set up to inquire into the issue of wage and salary, however, deeper managerial challenge pushed its terms of reference beyond wages and salary to the issues of organization and structure (Olaopa, 2009A: 134). The Udoji Commission of 1974 diagnosed the central problem of the Nigerian Public Service as that of the inability to respond to serious changes. It introduced modern methods of managing complex organizations. The Federal Government undermined the Udoji Report by neglecting its series of recommendations. The wage and compensation issue that surfaced in the pre-1954 reforms again reared its head in the immediate post-independence period and connected all the commissions set up at that time.

The Dotun Philips Study Group in 1985 (Ayeni, 2008: 60) specifically assessed the effectiveness of the public service, which eventually led to recommendations about a reduction in personnel and fundamentally the enthronement of professionalism. On the basis of the Phillips Report, the Babangida regime produced the 1988 Civil Service Reforms through Decree No. 43 of 1988 to establish a virile, dynamic and result-oriented Public Service. The 1988 reform emphasized the need for specialization, regular training and retraining (Dobie, 2003: 84). Because some of the commission's recommendations were turned down and the implementation of the accepted ones did not achieve the intended

goal, the Civil Service continued to perform poorly. Inadequate knowledge about the provision of the reform, the absence of strong commitment on the part of implementing of the reform coupled with inadequate fund and wrong deployment of officers to duties characterized the provisions of the reform (FGN, Civil Service Handbook).

Staff Motivation before the 1999-2007 Reforms

These reforms starting from the Morgan Commission of 1963 to the Allision Ayida Panel of 1994, tried quite a lot at improving Public Service in Nigeria. But the future of Nigeria civil servants was never discussed nor put into consideration. It was obvious that a result-oriented Public Service had not emerged in Nigeria. Its quality was severely hampered by cultural, structural, institutional and other management defects. By 1975, public service was already in a deep conflict that had both systemic and political dimensions. With respect to that, for instance, the dynamics of manpower utilization, which relied on manpower planning, forecasting, budgeting and control, gradually broke down. The level of staff motivation during this period was at zero percent.

A second important field where reforms have consistently failed was their lack of attention to citizens' incentives, most especially civil servant pay and conditions, incentives are a critical factor for the success of reforms. Quite often, the optimal remuneration schemes are not commensurate with the input. While up to 1966 officers deployment to posts was based on the possession of requisite qualifications, skills and training, job classification, grading and posting gradually became susceptible to easy adjustments through politically motivated policies that managed interclass contests for power and rewards (Olaopa, 2009A: 202). Public service showed itself incapable of fulfilling the dream of development that the nationalists promised the Nigerian masses at independence. There is a significant disconnect between wages in the Nigerian Civil Service and the motivation of staff.

The Public Service Reforms of 1999-2007

The 1999 Reform was undertaken by President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, with the establishment of the Bureau for Public Service Reform (BPSR), among other things, to streamline and set a minimum standard in terms of staff strength and remuneration for the public service and facilitate a process of payment reform that will provide incentives for quality staff to come into the service and stay there. There are a lot of reform policies. However, the focus of this article is the monetization of fringe benefits, contributory pension reform, remuneration (pay) reform and Servicom.

Monetization is the process of converting or establishing something into legal tender. It may also refer to selling a possession, charging for something used to be free or making money on goods and services that was previously unprofitable (Nnebe 2006: 265). These benefits-in-kind include highly subsidized residential accommodation, transport facilities, chauffeur-driven motor vehicles (for the senior echelon of the service), free medical service and highly subsidized utilities, such as electricity, potable water and telephone. Thus, among other benefits, the government believed, monetization would help prepare public servants for life after retirement by preventing a sharp drop in their standard of living following their retirement compared to when they were in active service. It would also encourage public servants to be more flexible in the use of their resources, choosing whether to live in their own or rented houses, for example (Public service Reforms and National Transformation, 2006:54).

The pension reform in like manner is to address and eliminate the problems associated with pension schemes. The new pension scheme is contributory and fully funded. The new scheme, therefore, applies only to the workers from 2008. While 7.5% of every worker's salary is deducted as his/her contribution to the pension with their employers remitting 7.5%, totalling 15%, only 2.5% is deducted from armed forces workers while their employer,

government, remits 12.5 %, totalling 15%. Again, judiciary workers under Section 8 (2) of the 2004 Pension Reform are exempted from the new scheme entirely. This whole scheme is being regulated and supervised by the National Pension Commission (PenCom). The Commission will ensure that the payment and remittance of contributions are made and the beneficiaries of retirement savings are paid when due (Public service Reforms and National Transformation, 2006:56-57).

The Executive Council of the Federation approved the implementation of the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) to all MDAs in February 2006. What was done was to do a payroll clean up, then Pay Reform, Review and an Update of Public Service staff salary.

Service Compact with all Nigerians or Servicom (2006) is an initiative that focuses on enhancing public service efficacy. SERVICOM has been enjoined to improve strategies to serve Nigerians better and ensure continuity-the policy of service processes and attitudes of the civil and public services in the country. Collins Servicom (2006) defines SERVICOM as promoting qualitative service delivery. It must be observed, however, that Servicom was simply a response to government perception of the civil service as corrupt, inefficient and in need of reform. It is not a motivating factor.

The Obasanjo renewal programme was, first, designed to deal with the existing problem of reform; second, it was a comprehensive programme, as reflected in its being situated within an overall strategic plan of societal transformation aimed at addressing the crisis of state and governance in Nigeria; third, it was home grown despite being informed by the current global trends like the NPM; fourth, its approach to reform is top-down through the creation of the BPSR -(*The Obasanjo Reforms*, 24).

Staff Motivation after the 1999-2007 Reforms

Analysed are the views of respondents (civil servants) generated from the Questionnaires and interviews conducted on the Obasanjo

1999-2007 public service reform. Surveys of 7,637 federal civil servants in 6 states from two federal ministries stratified into senior, intermediate and junior staff cadre showed an average satisfaction with some of the reforms components. Asked if the monetization policy of the 1999-2007 civil service reforms has been able to motivate them, 62 percent of the respondents agree -monetization has a positive impact on civil servant performance. Hence, it motivates. About 86 percent were dissatisfied with Servicom and government introduction of Servicom is seen as a check on the excesses of civil servants. To them, it is a tool for witch-hunting civil servants. 61 percent believed that the contributory pension scheme is an improvement on the old unfunded pension scheme; as such, it is the best that has happened to retirees because it is less cumbersome.

Majority of the staff surveyed (73 percent) showed widespread satisfaction with the increase in remuneration (pay) reform in tune with the Abraham Maslow hierarchy of needs theory. Our findings revealed that government did well by increasing staff pay. If salaries are increased, one is motivated and geared-up to put in more effort into the service. The argument that adequate pay is crucial for sustaining the motivation, performance and integrity of civil servants has been widely accepted and documented (Kiragu et al, 2004: 109). However, it is the general belief that the reform could not effectively fight inflation in a democratic society. It is revealed that the 1999-2007 reform has motivated civil servants to a greater extent, for example, in the monetization of fringe benefits. The occupiers of property and the users of government vehicles were given the option of purchasing them. While with the contributory pension, the payment of retirees was paid immediately after retirement. Unlike the previous reforms where retirees queued up endlessly waiting for their retirement benefits to be paid.

Ugwu-Oloto (2007: 56) says at no time in Nigeria's history has the nation witnessed fundamental changes in the key facets of our national life on such a scale as the time of President Olusegun

Obasanjo reforms. This is not to say reform in Nigeria has reached its final destination. Much still needs to be done.

Reconciling Democracy and the Public Service Reform of 1999-2007

If our democracy is to remain vibrant, then we must reconcile it and the Public Service Reform of 1999-2007. We must be attentive to the tensions between it and public service reform, which resides increasingly in the citizen and offers some ideas for strengthening the vibrancy of democracy. We must take cognizance of the Dahl famous questions about the criteria for a democratic structure. Dahl identifies five-standard criteria for a democratic process. They are Effective Participation, Voting Equality, Enlightening Understanding, Control of the agenda and Inclusion of the adults (Dahl, 1989).

Effective participation: How effective are civil servants and the citizen's participation in making their views known before the implementation of the reform policy?

Voting equality: How effective and equal are citizens' opportunity to votes and the votes counted as being equal to support the reform?

Enlightening understanding: How have citizens been enlightened or given an opportunity for learning about the relevance of the reform and alternative policies and their likely consequence?

Control of the agenda: How have citizens been opportune to control the reform or choose the matter of the agenda?

The *inclusion of adults:* What do the public service reforms do to citizens as either Clients or Stakeholders? If Dahl's model of criteria for a democratic process is used as a framework to evaluate

the processes used in public consultation and assess to democratic capacity, then the four indices of reforms discussed could make a difference in our ability to achieve the promise implied by the five criteria associated with our democracy. Examples include:

1. The Contributory Pension Reforms has consistently paid retirement benefits to all employees who retired under the scheme since 2007 without the characteristic bottlenecks experienced in the past.
2. Monetization is envisaged to improve productivity and efficiency in resource allocation.
3. Servicom has influenced positively the service delivery needed to address threats to civil service provisions and accountability; it is part of a government social contract to the citizen. However, the continuity calls for the question.
4. Remuneration has a dual advantage to the government and to individuals. To the government, to reduce capital cost, maintenance and running cost, includes efficiency in resources allocation, equity in the provision of the amenities; it will also promote the observance of maintenance culture and discipline in the use of public utilities. If well implemented, it will encourage public servants to own personal houses.

The Public Service Reforms are needed to enhance accountability and citizen protection. It is quite obvious that some parts of the reform have been effective and others have not. The reforms generally have been able to eradicate abuses and distortion in the existing system. An example is the ghost worker syndrome. It was observed that the Public Service Reform of 1999-2007 is much more diverse than the previous public service reforms of old.

This diversity was able to capture the welfare of the civil servant. There is deep commitment to making a difference in the service to the citizen through the introduction of Servicom Customer-Driven Government service. Viewing democracy from this perspective, it is largely normative, exhorting us about what the public service reform should be, but making a few connections between what "is now" and what ought to be.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has argued that the Public Service reform of 1999-2007 is essential in motivating civil servants. Four key indicators have been presented, namely, the monetization of fringe benefits, remuneration (pay) reform, the contributory pension scheme and servicom. The article has clearly shown that, although each of these reforms has been implemented, it is obvious that we have seen some changes that are worth articulating. However, very little has so far been achieved, more importantly, due to the socio-economic and democratic system in which the country is in today. If our democracy is to remain vibrant, then we must be sensitive to the tensions between it and the public service reform, which resides increasingly in stakeholders.

It is recommended that issues related to staff incentives, welfare and motivation still need to be addressed and given maximum priorities in the future reform process. Moreover, motivating staff still needs to be sensitized and then allowed maximum participation in the future reform process, strengthening the professional class with a new spirit of awareness and commitment to encourage popular participation by stakeholders and encourage additional training (educational).

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