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THE ROLE OF PUBLIC BUREAUCRATS IN SUSTAINING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines the influence of public servants in ensuring quality service delivery and governance in Nigeria. It reviewed studies on the transformation and role of government bureaucrats' in reforming civil service in line with the global best practice of performance-based and quality service delivery, specifically in Nigeria. The bureaucrats are famous in policy making and policy implementation in any regime. In other words, they are the engine room of the government. They ensure the government operate a transparent and performance-based budget and restructure civil servants to be efficient and productive in the discharge of their duties. This study used a secondary source of data with a document analysis method. The relevant literature on the subject matter was synthesized and reviewed to conclude the scholarly conclusion on ensuring transparency, accountability, and good governance in public bureaucracies in Nigeria. The findings reveal an inherent drawback on public bureaucrats, politicians, and the Nigerian system itself. The study recommends the holistic restructuring of public service specifically through job design and specification, training and retraining, social welfare provision, transfer, and employee placement.

Keywords: Public Bureaucrats, Quality Service, Good Governance, Employees, Nigeria.

Introduction

This paper examines the impact of public servants in safeguarding good governance and ensuring quality service delivery in Nigeria. It reviews past literature on the transformation and role of government bureaucrats' in reforming civil service, in line with the global best practice of performance-based and quality service delivery, in developing countries specifically in Nigeria. The bureaucrats are famous in policy making and policy implementation in any regime. In other words, they are the engine room of the government. They help and ensure the government operate a transparent and performance-based budget, and restructure civil servants to be efficient and productive in the discharge of their duties (Young, 2003).

The growth of social security, decentralised service delivery, and related services has shown that quality

service delivery has become a core pillar in the global development agenda over the last 30 years. As a result, comprehending the organization in charge of quality service delivery is becoming increasingly necessary for understanding the bureaucracy. By conceiving of bureaucrats as political agents whose activities have political consequences, a renewed emphasis on bureaucracy and service delivery will demonstrate how political science is important for development policy making (Gailmard & Patty, 2012).

Public service targeted at the people's welfare, therefore the public bureaucracy can make a significant contribution to the ministry because the sense of public service and public affairs is inextricably connected to all aspects of state administration. Public goods and services, on the other hand, can be handled efficiently and effectively. Thus, the bureaucracy is responsible for the repercussions of such management. Furthermore, the government's

strategic position is to maintain and assist the public bureaucracy in carrying out its duties and functions (Hupe & Hill, 2007).

One of the fundamental features of the Weber's ideal bureaucracy is that bureaucrats should be politically impartial. That is, bureaucrats are only required to enforce decisions made by the executive branch of government, rather than participate in the policy-making process except advisory role. This means that elected political executives or designated cabinet ministers are required to make legislation, while bureaucrats are expected to carry out the policies devised by the executive (Olsen, 2008).

In the policy-making process, top bureaucrats could better serve as advisors to policymakers or political office holders. This arrangement has a major impact on the delivery of efficient and effective government services to the public (Fatile, Olojede, & Adejuwon, 2015).

The bureaucracy faces a significant challenge in terms of carrying out its roles and obligations efficiently and effectively. And currently, people see the bureaucracy as a very complicated service mechanism with a lot of structure but little work, a lot of corruption, collusion, and nepotism, and a lack of basic operational standards. These bureaucratic problems have emerged as a major roadblock in the implementation of bureaucratic reform. Thus, the reform is necessary to produce functional bureaucrats that could be transparent, efficient, and productive in discharge of their functions and the realization of the goal of organization.

The reasons for the reform have been revealed as follows: (i) recognising a new approach to carrying out a public service function that is more managerial rather than administrative, (ii) as a reaction to the size of the government's handling and scope of duty, (iii) changes in theory and economic concerns, and (iv) changes in the private sector's position in public service implementation (Akib & Ihsan, 2017).

The structure of the paper are as follows: Introduction, discuss the background of the study, the concept of good governance and quality service delivery, the role of bureaucrats in sustaining good governance in Nigeria, and conclusion.

The core objective of this study is to examine the influence of public servants in ensuring quality service delivery and governance in Nigeria.

Good Governance and Quality Service Delivery

Governance is characterised as a collection of values, policies, and institutions that allow society to manage economic, political, and social processes at various levels through engagement between the government, civil society, and the private sector (Castells, 2008).

Good governance is the mechanism through which public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources, and ensure the realisation of human rights. Good governance is achieved in a manner that is largely free of corruption and abuse, as well as with due respect for the rule of law. In the sense of governance, public service delivery is the product of the intentions, judgments, and actions of government and its agencies, as well as the actions and decisions of government employees (Vedung, 2017).

The service distribution when provided to people in the form of basic services such as education, health, water and sanitation, such service delivery has a direct effect on human development (Mcloughlin, 2015)

Public service delivery is generally construed to refer to the provision of public goods or social services to those who need them specifically public, such as education, health, water, energy, and other services (Post, Bronsoler, & Salman, 2017).

Governance and the quality of public services can influence a country's economic development in several ways. The aim of public service in emerging nations especially Nigeria is to provide free or subsidised services, as well as to provide social security to the poor and to reduce poverty. As a result, the standard of governance has a direct impact on economic development.

Successful public-sector implementation is expected to have a direct impact on development by reducing poverty. The aim of public service provision is often to reduce inequitable resource allocation and address historical inequities including segregation and gender inequity.

Thus, targeted public service delivery has the potential to minimise economic disparities that have been increasing in rapidly growing economies like China

and India in recent years (Cotlear, et al., 2015; Chaudhuri & Ravallion, 2006). Furthermore, in emerging nations, the civil service has been portrayed as corrupt, inefficient, and a major economic drain. Researchers and policymakers have long been concerned about this. Despite all the steps in place to stop the output failure, it seems that the service has resisted all attempts to address the inefficiency and low productivity (Elijah, 2007).

In developing countries specifically Nigeria, a governance gap exists because of high level of corruption in the delivery of public services. There is the incidence of corruption in the distribution of public services, such as financial leakages, theft, and graft, may have severe repercussions for economic development. Firstly, public bribery increases the government's economic burden by inflating the costs of government services. Secondly, public officials' attempts to conceal graft and leakages will reduce the effectiveness of government programmes (Afridi, 2017). Such challenges can be tackled by implementing a holistic public service reform agenda to produce a transparent and result oriented bureaucrats that could ensure quality service delivery.

Methodology

This study used a secondary source of data with a document analysis method - A systematic method for analysing or assessing printed and electronic documents. The past literature was reviewed such as journal articles, conference proceedings, book chapters and textbooks, discussion paper, government reports, among others. The relevant literature on the subject matter was synthesized and reviewed and included in the study to conclude the scholarly supposition on ensuring transparency, accountability, and good governance in public bureaucracies in Nigeria. While the Irrelevant literatures were excluded and jettisoned in line with exclusion criteria of systematic literature review.

The Role of Public Bureaucrats in Sustaining good governance in Nigeria

More recent public service delivery research has focused on bureaucratic characteristics and more broadly, government efficiency—defined as the quality of institutions governing regime choice and replacement, the capacity to formulate and execute

sound policy, and the protection of institutions that govern economic and social interactions (Pepinsky, Pierskalla, & Sacks, 2017)

Under very specific circumstances, explicit monetary compensation and punishment systems for civil servants can minimise absenteeism, increase effort, and restrict corruption. Since many public service activities are multidimensional, designing efficient reward package and management processes is difficult.

Rasul, Rogger and Litvine (2016) found that increased autonomy correlates with higher bureaucrat productivity, while increased supervision correlates with lower bureaucrat performance in a comprehensive analysis of Nigeria's civil service. They indicate that supervisors' lack of performance in active management is due to inadequate reward targeting and multitasking issues. Rotation may also be used to restrict informal relations between bureaucrats and their clients, thereby reducing corruption, raising civil servants' reliance on the bureaucracy, and aligning civil servants' interests with their principals'.

It implies that public-spirited bureaucratic agents want to provide services and don't need to be held accountable by formalised supervision and reward schemes. Implementing monetary incentives that go against established organisational norms could demoralise current civil servants and discourage intrinsically motivated people from joining the government in the first place (Navot, Reingewertz, & Cohen, 2016). Corrupt bureaucracies can also attract bureaucrats who are mainly involved in rent-seeking opportunities, according to studies on corruption.

Rasul and Rogger (2016) conducted a study in Nigeria that linked the completion rate of over 4700 small infrastructure projects initiated by the Federal Civil Service to executing agencies' management practises. They discovered that 38% of projects were never begun and that 55% of projects were still unfinished. The authors suggest that small differences in bureaucrats' management practises, such as allowing senior staff more control, can have a potentially significant positive effect on the completion of public projects. This illustrates how bureaucratic procedures can have a great effect on the performance of government spending.

Adejuwon (2012) explores the problem of transparency and good governance in Nigeria,

demonstrating that improving service quality in the public sector is the critical point in achieving sustainable development in the country. Since both the government and public servants have paid lip service to the critical problem of effective and reliable service delivery for far long, the public service has come to be despised by the public.

The author believes that better service delivery would boost both the efficiency and reputation of the public sector, as well as rekindle citizens' interest and confidence in doing business with public servants. It implies that, in order to restore sanity to the Nigerian Public Service, all unprofessional practises such as ethnic prejudice and nepotism in recruitment and promotions, a lack of job security, and the appointment of non-career public servants to key positions in the public service must be eliminated. Good governance is calculated by the quality and quantity of citizen-centric and people-driven services, as government is constituted to represent the people and ensure the public good (Offu, Ukeje, & Offu, 2018).

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Conclusion

This study concludes that the bureaucratic reform is needed on ensuring transparency, accountability, and good governance in public bureaucracies in Nigeria. The findings reveal an inherent drawback on public bureaucrats, politicians, and the Nigerian system itself. The article recommends the holistic restructuring of public service specifically through job design and specification, training and retraining, social welfare provision, transfer, and employee placement, functional and efficient anti-corruption agencies. This measure will bring development and boost the good image of Nigeria in the international arena. The Nigerian government need to reduce public spending specifically recurrent expenditure by transforming bureaucracies to ensure quality service delivery. There is need to bridge the inequality gap by blocking financial leakages and provide genuine social services to the public and alleviate poverty. There is need to launch a national campaign for rebranding the nation and instilling patriotism to the bureaucrats and public. Implementing these measures could ensure good governance and quality service delivery in Nigeria.

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