

Civil Service Reforms in Nigeria: Re-Thinking the Process of Articulation and Application

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Abstract—This paper examined plethora of civil service reforms in Nigeria focusing on their process of articulation and application since colonial period. It established similarities between the pattern of articulation and application of civil service reforms in Nigeria. The process of articulation and application of civil service reforms in Nigeria had always been initiated and dominated by the employer or their representatives. This development is fingered to be significantly responsible for the increasing labour unrest and poor out put. This paper adopted comparative and analytic approaches. In the end the paper recommended for democratization of the process of articulation and application of civil service reforms in Nigeria.

Keywords— Articulation, Application, Civil Service and Reform.

I. INTRODUCTION

ARTICULATION and application of civil service reforms in Nigeria has been trailed with chequered history. It has passed through the period of colonial, civilian and military regimes. Reforms in the Nigeria public sector have been of interest to many scholars some of which are Adebayo (2004:212), Civil Service Handbook (1997:23), Aminu & Adebayo (2013). This development has indeed piqued scholars and pundits of civil service in the country over the years. Some of the reforms include: Harragin 1945, Foot 1948, Philipson-Adebo 1952, Gorsuch 1954 and Mbanefo 1959 (Abba 2007:286-289 and Obi & Obikezie 2004:148). Others include Morgan 1963 and Elwood 1966, Philips 1985, Koshoni and Decree 43 of 1988, Ayida 1994 and Obasanjo reform renewal programmes 1999-2007 and many others (Olaopa 2008:141-196 and Oweh 2013). Between 1999 and 2013; most of the reforms trickled in peace-meal not without criticisms and political gimmicks (Finer, (1941) in L. Adamolekun, 1993:27 Eme & Ugwu, 2011 and Elekwa, 2011).

The colonial period in civil service reforms was dominated by struggle for Nigerianization. Debie (2004) and Adamolekun (1993) described the period of military in the civil service reforms in Nigeria as being characterized by ineffectiveness, fear and low morale. The era of civilian regime was characterized by ethnicism and wrong application of the principle of federal character. In the views of Diamond (1983) and Ihonvbere (1994) the period was characterized by

corruption, arrogance, ethnic oriented class of civil servants and political decay. El-Rufia (2011), Bayo (2012), Oloja (2013) and Egwu (2013) aptly noted that reforms in the recent times have shifted to massive privatization and commercialization and peace meal reform. There are cases of non transparency in the process of articulation and implementation of civil service reform as well as lack of wider consultation (Mabogunje 2003 and Oweh 2013).

There are weaknesses as well as strength across the different reform strategies from colonial to post independence. However there are some existing uniformities connecting all the reform initiatives. The reforms adopted a uniform pattern of top-down approach. This could be explained within the framework of webarian bureaucracy. The second similarity is there environment of articulation and implementation which though

may vary in terms of colonial, military or civilian but very much related due to political gimmicks and existence of institutions. Kenneth and Bohte (2005) noted that the relationship adopted in all the reforms did not provide equal opportunity for all the workers in the public institutions.

This paper is divided into two sections; first it discussed the current pattern of reform articulation and implementation. The second section discussed options on what should be done to ensure that reforms achieve the set objectives as well as improve output capacity of civil servants in Nigeria.

II. CURRENT PATTERN OF REFORM ARTICULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

In reality, reforms in Nigeria since 1945 had adopted almost the same pattern of articulation; adhoc committee and legislative passage. Application is generally deepened in strict bureaucratic principles. There are however instances when articulation of reform policies follows bureaucratic pattern. For over seven decades (1934-2013) these patterns remain unchanged, even when it is evidently clear that reforms midwifed by this approach have demonstrated large scale of inability and incapacitation to positively steer a desirable economic vehicle.

From 1999 to 2013, there has been combination of adhoc arrangement and legislative processes in reform articulation. There are cases where the reform policy follows legislative procedure. The very first reform with legal status in Nigeria was enshrined in Decree No 43 of April 1st, 1988 under Gen.

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I.B Babangida. From 1999, some of the policies were presented as executive or private bill and it follows the procedure of legislative rule.

Essentially, reform articulation and implementation lies within the discretion of the minister on the advice of the permanent secretary. Duties and responsibilities between the minister and the permanent secretary are strictly rooted in bureaucratic principles and are thus practical. The current pattern of reform policy articulation and implementation is faulty due to rigid application of bureaucratic principles.

III. WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The paper offers democratization of reform articulation and implementation as the option for ensuring that the contents and objectives of the reform initiatives are achieved within recorded time. The submission anchors on the need to democratically increase the use of collaborative arrangement across the public service. There is also the need to re-think attitudinal change campaign. Boyle (2013:20) aptly suggested value based leadership which requires that articulation of public service values and the communication of goals and objectives should be consistent with those values and the leaders have to model the behaviours. Implication of the submission supports the idea of ensuring that the processes of articulation and implementation of civil service reform be rooted in acceptable value and ethic.

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