

AN ANALYSIS OF THE 1988 CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS IN NIGERIA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CIVIL/PUBLIC SERVICE.

¹Ocheja, J. O , ²Ejigbo, A. ³Kirfi, M.M, ³Aririguzo, Z.I and ⁴Ochelonu, P.A

¹*Department of Animal Science, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State , Nigeria.*

²*Department of Public Administration, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Nigeria.*

³*Department of Public Administration, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State , Nigeria*

⁴*Department of Political Science, Federal University of Kashere , Gombe State, Nigeria*

(Ocheja, J.O : Josiahocheja@yahoo.co.uk)

ABSTRACT

The article took a cursory look at the 1988 civil service reforms in Nigeria, the objectives, key highlights, the positive sides and the damage it did to the Nigeria civil service were analyzed. The reform came into being by the promulgation of decree No 43 of 1988; implementation commenced in April 1988. Adamu Fika, the then head of civil service of the federation and indeed many of the permanent secretaries at that time were opposed to many aspects of the reform. Adamu Fika who was a member of the implementation committee, wrote a minority report to the president, but the federal military government was bent on implementing the reform, Adam Fika had to resign and retire from the civil service. The position of head of civil service was abolished, the position of permanent secretary was redesignated as Director General and became a political appointment. The civil service commission was stripped of many of its functions and given to the ministries. Ministries were to have a uniform structure of eight (8) departments. It was concluded that the reform did more damage than good to civil service as the civil service became more corrupt and highly politicized , seniority, dedication to duty , hard work, merit etc were eroded. A largely home grown civil service reform was recommended, in which the commission members and implementation committee members should be experts/ insiders and cutting across many strata of public service

Key words: Civil Service, Administrative, Reforms, Permanent Secretary, Career.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of modern states, the civil service evolved as the bedrock of the executive arm of government. Its main task came to be the implementation of the policies decided by the executive. In accomplishing this task, the civil service has found itself involved in the formulation of policy and advising generally on policies. The civil service is also responsible for the management of the machinery of government and carrying out the day to day duties that public administration demands. Therefore as it stands today no government activity can go on without the civil service (Omale 2005; Bagaji 2002; Omale,1996)

The civil service has been described as the engine room of government, by many writers (Omale, 2005) and government officials, one of such was Alhaji Ibrahim Idris in his inauguration speech as Governor of Kogi state in the year 2003. Obiagbaoso (1985) defined the civil service as the body of permanent officials whose duties is to assist the political executive in formulating government policies and implementing them.

The organization and *modus operandi* of the civil service vary from country to country, but there are certain features which are common to it, they include: Recruitment, permanence, Neutrality, Anonymity etc (Bagaji 2002). The civil servant should be seen but not heard, (Ocheja, 2005). Since the colonial era successive government in Nigeria had instituted various public/civil service reforms panels/commissions, such as the Gorsuch commission (1954), Morgan salary and wages commission (1963), The Udoji public service Review Commission (1974), The Ayida Review panel on the civil service (1994). The 1988 civil service reforms came into being vide decree No 43 of 1988 and implementation commenced in April 1988. News watch magazine of 25th April 1988 described the reform as sweeping.

The reform was modeled after Prof. Dotun Philips Publications and it was largely an American System, designed to fall in line with the presidential system of government.

Rear Admiral Patrick Koshoni was the chairman of the implementation panel, Adamu Fika, the then head of the civil service of the federal was a member, Olu Falae, the secretary to the Federal Military Government was a member, as well as Prof. Doton Philips and others.

Adamu Fika (and indeed many serving permanent secretaries at that time) were not in agreement to many aspects of the reforms, he wrote a minority report to the president warning of the consequences of implementing the reform, especially in the areas of heightening corruption and increased politicization of the civil service. In the imbroglios that ensued he had to resign and retire from the federal civil service. It is no longer news that a few years after, Adamu Fika was vindicated, the civil service became more highly corrupt and highly politicized. This necessitated the setting up of the Allison Ayida review panel of 1994 whose report was submitted in 1996 and implementation commenced in 1997.

The Ayida panel report was a mixture of the 1988 reforms and the old system with some modifications. But the damage had already been done. A cursory look at the 1988 reform will provide a better understanding of the reform, its objectives, its advantages and the damage it did to the civil service. The article therefore analyzed the 1988 reform as well as the damage it did to the civil service with a view to making recommendations that will lead to a more virile, more efficient, more productive, less corrupt and less politicized civil service.

2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literature, data and information on the 1988 civil service reforms were sourced from books, journals, magazines, official documents etc they were collated, analyzed and discussed.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Past Public/Civil Service Reforms

The Nigerian civil service has been grappling with many problems like corruption, politicization, inefficiency, poor remuneration, avarice, nepotism, intra service conflicts such as the conflict between the Professional Cadre and Administrative Cadre officers. The politicization of the civil service was well documented by Adamolekun (1986) in his book politics and administration in Nigeria. The conflict between the Administrator and the Professional expert in the Nigerian public service was so serious that the Udoji reform commission of 1974 opined that “the relationship is one of acrimony and antagonism in a conflict, rather than partnership in an enterprise, with the resultant lack of team work necessary in modern management.” Anthony (1965) also reported similar conflicts in the British civil and public service.

Adebayo (1978) reported that the solutions proffered by the Udoji public service review commission were not satisfactory. The Udoji commission however addressed the problem of poor remuneration, but this problem kept reoccurring due to inflation. The above are pointers to the fact that the Nigerian Civil Service is constantly in dire need of reforms, consequently we have witnessed many reforms in the past such as the Hunt Commission 1934, Gorsuch Committee (1954), Mbanefo Commission (1959) Morgan Salaries and Wages Commission (1963) Udoji Public Service Review Commission (1974), The Ayida Review Panel (1994) just to mention but a few. The 1988 reform was far reaching and touched on many facets of the Nigerian Civil Service.

3.2 The 1988 Civil Service Reforms in Nigeria

The main objective of the 1988 reform was to make the civil service virile, dynamic and result oriented, but other objectives were enhanced professionalism, alignment with the presidential system of government, decentralization and delegation, combination of authority with responsibility, enhanced accountability, enhanced checks and balances, general modernization and enhanced effectiveness, efficiency and speed of operation. The then head of civil service, the permanent secretaries and some others felt it was a way of reducing the powers of the bureaucracy/civil service especially those of the permanent secretaries and other top civil servants which the military government felt were too powerful.

The position of Head of the civil service was abolished. The position of permanent secretary was redesignated Director General, and became a political appointment such that even non career civil servants were appointed and they had to leave with the government that appointed them, permanent Secretaries (now Directors General) were no longer chief accounting officers of ministries, the role was given to ministers/commissioners. This made the ministers/commissioners more powerful, with much more work to do and a leeway to be more corrupt. The ministers/commissioners were not regular in the office to carry out the new roles given to them, this led to lower output.

The civil service commission was stripped of some of its functions and given to the

ministries , the title of Director General was also used for heads of parastatals or Agencies ,this resulted in confusion and conflict between the Directors-General of ministries and those of parastatals and agencies, there were even superiority conflicts. The civil service commission could only recruit officers on GL 7-10 below and above GL 7-10 was to be done by the ministries,it was also stripped of its power of appointments, promotion, discipline, and only left with rules ,regulations and interpretation such that the civil service commission only set the rules and played the role of observer during promotion exercises. All the positions/ranks were redesignated, the ministries were to have a unified structure, ie eight(8) departments , so some departments were merged and others were split into two, for instance the department of Administration and Finance was split into two departments, personal management and finance and supplies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then had thirty six departments and had difficulty in merging them into eight departments. The pool system was abolished and each officer was expected to build his/her career in a particular ministry. The 1988 reform concentrated too many function in the hands of the ministers/commissioners, this impaired efficiency and output, financial accountability was weak, since the internal audit was under the minister/commissioner who appointed, promoted and disciplined staff , there was continuity problem, a change in government will lead to the exit of the minister/commissioner and the Director General.

3.3 Impact of the 1988 Civil Service Reforms on the Nigerian Civil Service

The reform did more harm than good to the civil service

1. On the positive side , it created more career space for officers to rise to the rank of Director (GL 16 and 17 as the case may be)
2. It also helped in reducing the conflict between the administrative and professional cadre officers.
3. There was also elongation of the steps on grade levels

On the other hand the civil service became more corrupt, highly politicized and more inefficient. It also promoted nepotism and tribalism. Merit, hard work, seniority, dedication to duty and honesty were eroded. Having the two top chief executives of a ministry as political appointees was damaging as it encouraged corruption. The minister and Director General could by pass a Director and work directly with a Deputy or even an Assistant Director, this can be demoralizing, this is even worse in the states. There was a case in one of the North central states of Nigeria , in the mid 90s where the Director General of a Ministry engineered the posting of the Director and Deputy Director of Finance and Supplies to other Ministries/Departments and started working with the Chief Finance officer on GL 13, the Director General gave him the official car of the Director of Finance and Finance, and even prevented the posting of another Director /Deputy/ Assistant Director of Finance and Supplies to his ministry , this remained so for many months It was in realization of the above that the Allison Ayida Renew Panel was set up in 1994 to review the 1988 reform. Its recommendations were largely a blend of the old and 1988 styles but the damage had already been done and it seems to be irredeemable except something drastic is done

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMEDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

The 1988 Civil Service reforms did more damage than good to the civil service, the civil service become more corrupt and highly politicized, its implementation was too hasty and government did not listen to the outcry of inside/experts who cautioned against the implementation of some aspects of the reform. It was largely modeled after the American system, which given our own peculiarities and environment will not work well.

4.2 Recommendations

1 Another Civil Service reform should be put in place to address the areas of corruption and politicization of the Civil Service as well as welfare, inefficiency training and emoluments.

2 Future civil service reforms should not be copied or modeled after that of any western country but should be home grown.

3. Future reform panels and implementation committees should be made up of experts/insiders cutting across many sectors and strata of the public service

REFERENCES

- Adebayo, A** (1978) The problem of the Administrator and the Professional Expert in the Public Service of Nigeria. *The Quaterly Journal of Administration*, Faculty of Administration, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) Ile-Ife, July 1978 edition. Pp.3 - 6
- Anthony, S** (1965) *The Anatomy of British Civil Service*. Macdonalds and Evans Ltd 1965. London. PP 23-25
- Adamolekun, L** (1986) *Politics and Administration in Nigeria*. Spectrum Books Ltd/Hatchinson & Co U.K 1st edition. Pp 27-25
- Bagaji, A.S.Y** (2002) *Substance of Public Administration in Nigeria*. University Press, Ibadan, 1st edition. Pp. 25-78
- News Watch Magazine**, Volume 7, No 17, 25th April 1988.
- Ocheja, D.H** (2005) Executive Techniques, A paper presented at a Training for Local Government Council Chairmen in Kogi State, Organised by the Local Government Service Commission, Lokoja, April 2005. Pp.5 – 9
- Omale, I** (2005) *Theory and Practice of Public Administration*, Timaza Press, Zaria, Zaria, Nigeria. P. 16- 19.
- Omale, I** (1996) *Probes in The Nigerian Bureaucracy :A Case Study of Administrative Behaviour*. Tamaza Press, Zaria, Nigeria Pp 5 -8
- Udoji, J** (1974) Report of the Public Service Review Commission in Nigeria, Mini Report, Para 112, Federal Ministry of Information, Printing Division, Lagos.
- White Paper Report** of the Ayida Review Panel. 1997. Pp. 3 - 17