

BASIC CONCEPTS AND PRICIPLES OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL/PUBLIC SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

The paper reviewed the basic concepts and principles of the civil /public service and further discussed the extent to which these principles and concepts are adhered to by government and civil/public servants.. Literature materials were sourced from Journals, Conference proceeding, bulletins, government documents etc, they were thereafter reviewed and discussed. Basic principles and concepts such as neutrality, anonymity, service delivery, accountability, merit, loyalty, hierarchical system, Performance, impartiality, public interest etc were highlighted. The review also tried to assess the levels of adherence or other wise to each of these principles and concepts. It was concluded that the Nigerian civil/public service were founded on the above principles and concepts, but the levels of adherence is very low. Consequently the civil service is corrupt and inefficient. It was recommended that the government should create an enabling environment for adherence to these concepts and principles. Civil/public service guiding documents such as the civil/ public service rules, financial instruction and others should be strengthened and escalated. Constant reorientation programmes to positively change the thinking, perception , attitudes and behavior of civil servants should be put in place

Keywords: Accountability, Civil Service , Concept, Public Service, Principles , Service Delivery

1.0

INTRODUCTION

The civil service is the body of government officials who are employed in the civil occupation that are neither political nor judicial. In most countries the term refers to employees selected and promoted on the basis of merit and seniority system which may include examination (Encyclopedia Britannica)

The Nigerian Civil Service is a vital institution responsible for implementing government policies and programs. Understanding its basic concepts is essential for effective governance and administration..(Adebayo, 2014)

The Public service is a vital institution that plays a crucial role in implementing government policies and programs. Understanding the basic concepts of public service is essential for effective governance and administration. (King and Silver, 2013)

Public service is founded on a set of basic concepts that promote accountability, impartiality, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, participation, and transparency. Understanding these concepts is essential for public servants, policymakers, and citizens to ensure that public service delivers on its mandate to serve the public interest.(King and Silver, 2013)

According to Ekpo (2013) The Nigerian Civil Service is founded on a set of basic concepts that promote effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. Understanding these concepts is essential for civil servants, policymakers, and the public, to ensure that the service delivers on its mandate to implement government policies and programs.

Superb as these concepts and principles appear on paper ,they are not adhered to by the government and civil/public servants , thus culminating in an inefficient and corrupt civil service (Ocheja *et al* 2023 ; Ejigbo *et al* 2023; Adejoh *et al* 2023)

The civil service is plagued by inefficiency , corruption, nepotism, tribalism, religious sentiments and will there for require a major fundamental reform.(Ocheja, *et al*, 2024 ; Ejigbo *et al* 2023) The numerous reforms over the decades have failed to solve these problems Ejigbo *et al*, 2023 , Ocheja *et al* 2023; Ake and Olowojola, 2016) This review highlights the basic principles and concept upon which the civil service is founded and attempts to assess the levels of adherence by government and the civil/public servants, with a view to proffering solutions, bearing in mind that the non adherence to these concepts and principles are partly responsible for the inefficiency and corruption in the civil service

2.0

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Principles and Concepts of the Nigerian Civil Service

Merit System

The Nigerian Civil Service operates on a merit system, where appointments and promotions are based on individual merit, rather than nepotism or favoritism (Adeyemo, 2009). This ensures that the most qualified candidates are selected for positions, promoting efficiency and effectiveness in the service.

Anonymity

Civil servants are expected to remain anonymous, avoiding public recognition or credit for their work (Olowu, 2009). This principle ensures that civil servants focus on serving the government and the public, rather than seeking personal aggrandizement. According to Ocheja (2005) civil servants should be seen but not heard

Neutrality

The civil service is expected to remain neutral, avoiding political bias or affiliation (Adamolekun, 2002). This ensures that civil servants implement government policies impartially, without favoring any political party or interest group.

Accountability

Civil servants are accountable for their actions and decisions, ensuring transparency and responsibility (Ojo, 2013). This principle promotes good governance and ensures that civil servants are answerable to the public and the government.

Hierarchical Structure

The Nigerian Civil Service operates on a hierarchical structure, with clear lines of authority and communication (Ekpo, 2017). This ensures that decisions are made and implemented efficiently, with clear accountability and responsibility.

Generalist Career

Civil servants are expected to be generalists, possessing a broad range of skills and knowledge (Adebayo, 2014). This enables them to adapt to different roles and responsibilities, promoting flexibility and versatility in the service.

Permanence

Civil servants enjoy job security, with permanent appointments and pensionable positions (Olowu, 2009). This ensures that civil servants can focus on their work, without fear of arbitrary dismissal or termination.

Impartiality

Civil servants are expected to remain impartial, avoiding conflicts of interest and ensuring fairness (Adamolekun, 2002). This principle promotes justice and equity in the implementation of government policies and programs.

2.2 Principles and Concept of the Nigerian Public Service

. Public Interest

Public service is guided by the principle of public interest, which prioritizes the well-being and needs of the general public (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

Accountability

Public servants are accountable for their actions and decisions, ensuring transparency and responsibility (Bovens, 2007).

Impartiality

Public servants must remain impartial, avoiding conflicts of interest and ensuring fairness (Horton, 2006).

Efficiency

Public service aims to deliver services efficiently, using resources effectively and minimizing waste (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

Effectiveness

Public service strives to achieve its intended goals and outcomes, ensuring that programs and services are effective (Bouckaert & Halligan, 2008).

Equity

Public service seeks to promote equity, ensuring that services are accessible and fair for all citizens (Fredrickson, 1997).

Participation

Public service encourages citizen participation, involving the public in decision-making and service delivery (King & Strivers, 2013).

Transparency

Public service operates transparently, providing clear information and explanations for its actions and decisions (Piotrowski, 2007).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Literature materials were sourced from Journals, Conference proceeding, bulletins , government documents etc, they were thereafter reviewed and discussed. Basic principles and concepts such as neutrality, anonymity, service delivery , accountability, merit , loyalty, hierarchical system, Performance, impartiality, public interest etc were highlighted. The review also tried to assess the levels of adherence or other wise to each of these principles and concepts.

4.0 DISCUSSION AND REVIEW

According to (Ejigbo *et al* , 2023) the Nigerian civil service is bedeviled with Inefficiency and corruption , this view was also supported by the reports of(Ocheja *et al* , 2023)

Ocheja *et al* (2024) reported nepotism, favouratism, tribalism, religious sentiments , in the civil service and advocated a merit based system.

Ake and Olowojola,(2016) , Adamolekun, (2002) reported lack of merit and political interference in the civil service. Disturbing also is the use of executive fiat to appoint people (Politicians , party stalwarts, business people etc) into positions that are exclusive preserves of career civil servants

thus violating laid down rules and hence promoting corruption, inefficiency and poor service delivery (Ocheja, 2024).

The principle of tenure and permanence has been violated, as seen in the mass purge of 1975/76 by the Murtala regime, retrenchment exercises by many state governments, arbitrary sacking/dismissal of civil servants of in many states, the universities are not spared as witnessed at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1996, University of Ilorin in 2001, Kogi state University in 2017 and in many other universities and higher institutions, and leaving them to languish in courts for many years, due to an inefficient, inhuman and corrupt Judicial system in Nigeria.

According to Ocheja *et al* (2024) some analysts believe that the mass purge in the civil/public service by the Murtala regime in 1975/76 contributed to increasing corruption in the civil/public service, because the principle of tenure and permanence were eroded.

The issue of loyalty is a contentious issue in which civil/public servants may decide to be loyal to the society, by doing what is right and just or being loyal to chief executive at various levels whose actions could destroy the system. In the opinion of the authors loyalty to the society should be paramount

Appointments, promotions, postings should be guided by the principles of merit, competence and performance, but this is not the case to a very large extent in the federal, states and local government civil services.

The poor remuneration in the civil service also contributed to the inefficiency and corruption in the civil/public service, thus Ocheja *et al* (2024) recommended the payment of a living wage to civil servants without further delay. Absenteeism, truancy, divided attention are fall outs of poor wage system, in which the salaries are small and are not in line with current economic realities, late payment of salaries and salary back logs of between 2 to 48 months are common place in many states and local governments. There is also the issue of ghost workers which is now a hydra headed problem, arbitrary screenings have led to the dropping of the names of genuine staff from the pay roll, this has led to the death of many civil servants, some were done to settle scores.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The public service is founded on a set of basic concepts and principles that promote accountability, impartiality, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, participation, and transparency. Understanding these concepts is essential for public servants, policymakers, and citizens to ensure that public service delivers on its mandate to serve the public interest.

The Nigerian Civil Service is founded on a set of basic concepts that promote effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. Understanding these concepts is essential for civil servants, policymakers, and the public, to ensure that the service delivers on its mandate to implement government policies and programs.

Many of these principles and concepts are being violated on daily basis by both government and civil/public servants thus leading to a corrupt and inefficient civil service

5.2 Recommendations

The government should create an enabling environment for a better understanding and adherence to the principles and concepts of the civil/public service

Strict adherence to civil /public service rules , financial instruction and other guiding documents by government and civil/public servants is imperative

Constant reorientation programmes to positively change the thinking, perception , attitudes and behavior of civil servants should be put in place

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