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12. Professionalism and Civil Service Reforms in Nigeria: An Appraisal

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Introduction

The public service reflects the state of the nation and no nation has been able to advance beyond its public service. The public service is fundamental to good governance. It is an integral part of democracy because it serves as the neutral administrative structure, which carries out the decisions of elected representatives of the people. The public service is the backbone of the state in implementing any strategy for economic growth of a nation. It provides the programmes and services that function as safety net for the most vulnerable segments of a society (UN, 2000:36). The public service in most developing countries is central to economic and socio-political development because of the relative weakness of the private sector. However, there is increasing evidence pointing to the deterioration of the public service's performance in Africa.

The significance of improved public service professional capacity has therefore long been recognized in both academic and applied organizational settings. Yet the question of how to shape the future of a more professional public service remains highly topical, particularly in environments that are characterized by wide-scale social and economic development as well as by organizational change.

There is a need for new capacities within the public service to exploit new opportunities and to ensure that all civil service functions are carried out to the highest professional standards. The skills needed in the public service, both now and in the future – in policy development and analysis, in management of organizations and in public services delivery – put greater demands on public servants and call for more professionalism

in public management. Furthermore, modern management and new approaches to leadership are required in order to foster integrity, accountability and motivation in the public service and to drive innovation and secure coherence and coordination among policies and various interests. The changing environment and the changing expectations of public servants have ensured that enhancing professionalisation of public sector leaders, in particular senior civil service has become a major part of public human resource efforts in numerous countries (Jane, 2008;2).

Following the independence of many African states from colonial rule, attempts have been made at reforming the public service in order to improve their socio-political and economic performances. Studies have shown that some newly independent states were able to provide quality services to the populace immediately after the post-independence years, particularly in the period from 1960-1970. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Nigerian Civil Service was regarded as one of the best in the commonwealth, and up till the mid 1980s (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2006:13). Unfortunately, by the mid 1980s, the Nigerian Civil Service was far from being ideal. It was tradition-bound, somewhat ponderous and showing signs of deterioration and several undesirable characteristics of which the following were the most prominent; over-centralization, incessant conflicts between cadres, little emphasis on results and concrete performance, counter productive, separation of authority from responsibility at the topmost hierarchy, dangerously low staff morale and productivity, inappropriate staff development practices. Indeed, at that point in time the civil service was displaying a patent inability to cope effectively with the challenges of a modern, complex and development hungry society (Adeogoroye, 2006:7).

The role of the public service in the development of Nigeria is now more important than ever before. On the threshold of a new millennium, the economic, social, technological, and institutional challenges that face Nigeria need to be addressed and overcome. This chapter stresses the need for a new

management orientation in the Nigerian Public Service as a means of creating a new breed of public managers who can cope with the challenges of the information and knowledge age and the task of consolidating Nigeria's democratization process. Accordingly, its primary focus is on appraising professionalisation and civil service reforms in Nigeria. This chapter discusses components of professionalisation as they have appeared in the process of public service development, as well as benefits of professionalizing public management in Nigeria. It noted that improving professional capacity of the civil servants has been a key element of public service development and reform agenda in Nigeria.

The crisis of governance over the past decades in Nigeria has been associated with the collapse of ethical and professional standards in the public service. As viewed by Adeogoroye (2005:1) for example, the inability to maintain professional and ethical standards in the armed forces resulted in various military coups which adversely affected every stratum of the Nigerian Society. It accounted for the near collapse of the educational system, the increased wave of crime, the decadence in the health sector and the pervasive culture of greed, indiscipline and corruption in the public service.

In Nigeria, the society looks up to the public service to implement development goals and administer government policies on a day-to-day basis, and to play significant roles in formulating development strategies, policies and programmes in such a way that will stimulate accelerated social and economic changes. Yet, these desires remain unfulfilled.

Nigerian bureaucracy has played an unimpressive role in planning for national development. As a result of gross inefficiency, public administrators made only insignificant impact on economic development plans enunciated since independence; public administrators failed to provide the necessary link between the ministries executing development plans (Olaleye, 2004:169). This shows that there is a growing consensus that the bureaucracy have failed to develop the capacity to serve as agents of development due to incompetency on the part of the public servants.

Also, in order to enhance the quality of personnel at both federal and state level, different recruiting bodies – public service commissions, committees, commissions and boards were set up. It is interesting to point out that these commissions/bodies are characterized today with element of goal displacement, for rather than employing people of sound qualification, proven integrity, they sacrifice merit for mediocrity (Bamgbose, 1993:37). Faulty recruitment of employees has therefore worsened the problem of professionalism in the civil service. The civil service has suffered brain drain as a result of the economic recession being faced by the country. Many of the able men and women prefer to work outside the country. Aside, the private sector often attract the best qualified and most skilled manpower because they pay more than the state (Ogbuagu, 1987).

Okafor (2005:67) therefore categorized the structural problems besetting the civil service in Nigeria into four, namely: personnel regulations, personal qualifications, organizational structure, and work environment. Each plays its roles in diminishing the administrative capacity in public bureaucracy. For instance, the personnel regulations for entry into the public service as well as procedure for promotion and dismissal affects the attainment of professionalism in the public service. The public service in Nigeria as observed by Nnoli (1980) stipulates a long list of requirements for entry including federal character and quota system. Whereas, positions are supposed to be filled on the basis of merit if professionalism is to be achieved. However, political, family, ethnic, and religious factors are important considerations in achieving bureaucratic appointment (Yesufu, 1992). The performance of the public service in Nigeria has remained very dismal, inefficient and ineffective.

Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse

Public service deal with those involved in the formulation and implementation of government policies. It refers to the arm of government whose primary responsibility or duty is the implementation of government policies in conformity with

constituted rules and procedures. The public service includes the political appointee, judicial officers, police, army, employees of public corporation and the civil service (Osuofia, 2006:108). While civil service is a body of public organizations made up of ministries and local government councils, responsible for planning and implementing government policies and programmes. The employees who work in these public organizations are referred to as civil servants (Eneanya, 2009:72).

The public service in the Nigerian context embraces the civil service machinery of the three tiers of government, namely; the federal, state and local governments and the staff and management of statutory corporations and government owned companies (Longe, 1986:23). According to the 1999 constitution section 318, sub-section 1, civil service is;

Service of the federation in a civil capacity as staff of the office of the President, the Vice-President, ministry or department of the Government of the federation assigned with the responsibility for any business of the Government of the federation.

This definition of the federal civil service is clearly spelt out in sections 169, 170 and 171, and by the provisions establishing the powers of the Federal Civil Service Commission in section 10 of the Third Schedule of the Constitution. This section states that the Federal Civil Service Commission shall have power to appoint persons to offices in the federal civil service; and to dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding such offices (Olaopa, 2008:37). The civil service therefore is an integral part of the public service.

Civil service reforms are attempts to correct the problems and strengthen civil service capacity through professionalism accountability and transparency. Nigeria has been involved in a series of civil service reforms for the improvement of government performance (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka, 2006:40). The reform of the public service therefore becomes the ultimate strategy for repositioning the service for the realization of its vision. It was therefore evident that the Nigerian public service like many others in Africa needed radical changes.

Professionalism is not a straightforward concept to define. As a number of commentators have noted, the word "profession" is, today, almost synonymous with occupation: the term professional is now applied to a wide range of such individuals as footballers and cricketers. In tackling this problem, Downie (1990) has written extensively on this subject. Seeking to identify the essential nature of professions by examining what existing professions do, he has developed six characteristics of professionals summarised as follows:

1. The professional has skills or expertise proceeding from a broad knowledge base.
2. The professional provides a service based on a special relationship with those whom he or she serves. This relationship involves a special attitude of beneficence tempered with integrity. This includes fairness, honesty and a bond based on legal and ethical rights and duties authorised by the professional institution and legalised by public esteem.
3. To the extent that the public recognises the authority of the professional, he or she has the social function of speaking out on broad matters of public policy and justice, going beyond duties to specific clients.
4. In order to discharge these functions, professionals must be independent of the influence of the state or commerce.
5. The professional should be educated rather than trained. This means having a wide cognitive perspective, seeing the place of his or her skills within that perspective and continuing to develop this knowledge and skills within a framework of values.
6. A professional should have legitimised authority. If a profession is to have credibility in the eyes of the general public, it must be widely recognised as independent, disciplined by its professional association, actively expanding its knowledge base and concerned with the education of its members. If it is widely recognised as satisfying these conditions, then it will possess moral as well as legal legitimacy, and its pronouncements will be listened to with respect.

There are other views about what characterises a professional. Although Professor Downie recognised that professionals should be "independent of the state or commerce", Freidson (1988), an American commentator on professionalism, goes further. He identifies autonomy as the characteristic central to professionalism, in that a profession is given the right to control its own work by determining who can do the work and how the work should be done. From this characteristic flows self-regulation. In the context of the medical profession in the UK, this means the authority delegated by the state to the profession to determine standards of conduct, practice and training, and to regulate entry to the profession and continuing practice within it on the basis of these standards (Morell, 2003).

Professionalism therefore resides in how skillfully and how well a public service employee perform his/her functions and duties and that it also manifests in the employee's performance and in their knowledge to refine the skills that are necessary for carrying out tasks and enhancing his or her output and productivity (Adegoroye, 2005:7).

The most contentious issue in contemporary discourse of the civil service professionalism concerns the issue of whether civil servants should be generalist-intellectual or specialist-professional. This in turn raises the issue of the extent to which department experts with permanent tenures could claim specialization in all the problems of policy in their ministries even where their departments are fully professionalised (Olaopa, 2008:40). Whatever professionalism connotes in terms of core expertise in policy advice, the civil servant's advice to ministers must be based upon experiences and knowledge acquired as an acknowledged expert in his or her policy area.

Public choice theory and agency theory are the two main sources of inspiration for this chapter, both of which political leaders embraced as a set of ideas that would lead to major institutional change in the public sector. Public choice theory, variously referred to as social choice theory, rational choice theory and the economics of politics, has had immense impact on public policy and public administration during the past

three decades (Olaopa, 2008:45). The central tenet of the public choice approach is that all human behaviour is dominated by self-interest. Individuals, in other words, are rational utility maximisers. Public choice theory is therefore an attempt to understand non-economic activity using the language and analytical tools of economics. The public choice theory applies the assumption of self-interest rationality to both bureaucrats and politicians. Just as business seeks to maximize profits, bureaucrats are assumed to maximize their departmental budgets, and politicians to maximize their chances of re-election (Borins, 2000:4). The theory predicts that bureaucrats will expand their empires and politicians will use the public purse to confer benefits on interest groups, with the consequence that the public sector will grow at the expense of the private sector (Bonston *et al*, 1996:17).

Agency theory analyzes social and political relationship as a series of negotiated contracts between principals and agents. The nature of these contracts depends on both the information available to principals and agents and their bargaining skills. In the case of politicians (as principals) and public servants (as agents), it was felt that the public servants had exploited their informational advantage (Bonston, *et al*, 1996:19-20). Initially, agency theory was applied primarily to the problems arising from the separation of ownership and control in firms, especially the difficulty of ensuring that managers act in the interest of their shareholders. However, it was soon recognized that agency problems of this nature are the central feature of social, economic and political life (Olaopa, 2008:50). He stated further that agency theory, like public choice theory, assumes that individuals are rational self-interested utility maximisers. Politicians in Nigeria therefore wanted to reshape their relationship with public servants in a way that would offset their advantage.

Historiography of Public Service Reforms in Nigeria

The Nigeria public service evolved from the colonial service, which was established by the British authorities as the administrative machinery for governing Nigeria. That is, the

present public service in Nigeria is a child of British colonial administration and like its parent, it is elitist (Oyediran, 2007:68). According to Adamolekan (1989:41), the formal establishment of a truly Nigerian civil service was in 1954. Until then, the country was governed by officers in an administrative entity, which constituted an integral part of the majesty's colonial service (a community referred to as "the colonial service"). In 1948, the Nigeria component of the colonial service was formally constituted into a distinct unit and its management was entrusted to a civil service commissioner in the central secretariat in Lagos (Olaopa, 2008:130).

At independence, many Nigerians filled the positions left behind by the British who joined the army during the war even though there was still shortage of candidates, particularly in the professionals and technical field. Following these developments, a number of reforms have been introduced to bring about a positive change in the service and these reforms have tremendously witnessed the evolution of the federal civil service in Nigeria (Eruanga, 2000:77).

The search for a more responsive and effective public service led to the setting up of different commissions at various periods. But technically viewed, some of them could only be regarded as re-organisations, because they concentrated mainly on the review of salaries and wages and conditions of service rather than structural and behavioural changes. Civil service reforms are attempts to correct problems and strengthen civil service capacity through professionalism, accountability and transparency. Nigeria has undertaken series of civil service reforms for the improvement of government performance. Since the creation of Nigeria, several reforms have taken place. In the view of Balogun (2003), many countries in Sub-Sahara Africa have been involved in three major reform programmes; the first being the broad re-evaluation of the civil service' organization structure, management practice, and incentive system and this was embarked upon during the sixties and seventies through to the eighties with the execution of structural adjustment programmes. The third was the implementation of a mixture of "home grown" institutional

reforms during the late 1980's. Eneanya (2009:81) categorized reforms in Nigerian public service into three, namely: pre-Udoji, Udoji and post-Udoji.

There is no doubt that much has been written about civil service reforms in Nigeria, however, this chapter shall examine the pre-Udoji, Udoji and post-Udoji reforms as they relate to professionalisation of civil service in Nigeria. Before the Udoji commission, the following commissions were set up to review the civil service structure. The first was Tudor Davis commission of 1945; it was primarily concerned with the review of wages and general conditions of service. The Harragin commission of 1946 established a two-service structure. He made some structural changes by introducing "senior service" and "junior service". Then came the Foot commission of 1948, which was to ensure the appointment of Nigerians to posts in the government senior service as far as suitable candidates with necessary qualifications with special reference to scholarship and training schemes. The commission made a wide range of recommendations which led the British administration to appoint some qualified Nigerians including Simeon Adebo, Jerome Udoji, Osakwe, Atta and many others into the administrative service (Eruaga, 2006:78).

The Gorsuch commission of 1958 reviewed the two-service structure and recommended that the service be structured into five main grades. The Mbanefo commission of 1959 reviewed the basic rates of salaries and wages payable to holders of posts in the federal public service as well as the public service of the Northern and Eastern Region and Southern Cameroon. The commission recommended basic rates payable to various grades of staff and officers employed in the different regimes of the federation and Lagos (Olaopa, 2008:82). While the preoccupation of the Newns commission of 1959 was the integration of departments into ministries in preparation for Nigeria's independence to enable ministries have portfolio. It proposed the role and function of the permanent secretaries as well as the administrative machinery for control of government expenditure and establishment matters.

The Morgan commission of 1963 introduced for the first time a minimum wage in the country on the basis of geographical location. While Elwood Grading Team of 1964 was to determine appropriate grading and achieving uniformity in the salaries of officials performing identical duties. The Simeon Adebo commission of 1971 reviewed the wages and salaries and suggested the review of the structure of the civil service and the setting up of a Public Service Review Commission to examine the different facets of the civil service. It is important to note that the main contributions of the pre-Udoji reforms were improvements in salaries and wages, reform of grading structure, and strengthening of management responsibility.

By contrast, the Udoji commission introduced a number of key innovations in the civil service (Otobo, 2002:298). The Udoji commission which was set up on 13 September, 1972, defined its responsibility as one of defining the public service's expanding functions; and responsibilities and the requirements "for it to become a more effective tool to achieve results in (its) newer, more demanding roles as agents for development" (Olaopa, 2008:145). The Udoji commission was the first to recommend the professionalisation of the public service, in order to enhance competence and performance of the public servants. A particular area of interest was the administrative professionalism of the management cadre. Accordingly, these officers would possess requisite skills and knowledge, and can function effectively in applying skills and knowledge to establish goals and achieve results. The professional civil servant is a specialist in a particular field (Oyelaran-Olayinka, 2006:170). It is no wonder then that after the 1974 Udoji commission that was set up to put the Nigerian public service back on course of productivity and efficiency, the service was near total collapse. The federal government had to institute Dotun Philips commission to review the public service. Justification for the reform includes a further need to strengthen the civil service capacity through professionalism, accountability and transparency.

The Dotun Philips reform (1985) was designed to enhance professionalism, decentralization, delegation, enhance accountability, checks and balances, general modernization, enhance effectiveness and efficiency and speed of operation (Eneaya, 2009:87). The reform also emphasized such issues as performance productivity related pay, review of performance appraisal of staff, revalidation of the information management system, professionalism and administrative class. It is important to note that these were some of the issues also dealt with by the Udoji reform (1974) but which lacked adequate implementation and enforcement.

The Ayida panel of 1994 was constituted to examine the civil service and with a view to discovering factors inhibiting its effectiveness and efficiency and various factors that had led to low morale in the service. The Ayida panel did what the government dictated by re-inventing the pre-1988 system. It did this without tackling the belief of new thinking on public sector management reform as an attempt to refurbish a system that had clearly become dysfunctional (Olaopa, 2008:150).

In sum, civil as well as public service reform in Nigeria has sought to improve the performance of the administrative system through managerial reforms. The pattern of diffusion has been largely hierarchical with reform ideas coming from the top rather than the society. Even when inputs have been made by members of the civil society as to what should constitute the substance of reforms; the political regimes have found it easy to alter these at the level of implementation (Olowu, *et al*, 1997). We can therefore conclude this section that reforms are vital component in the growth and development of the civil service and that the various reforms that have characterized the civil service were aimed at improving the civil service.

Professionalisation of Public Service

The strategy of professionalization is pertinent in order to cope with complex functions of modern government as professionals have important roles to play in the successful operation of things. Professionalism in the public service is an overarching

value that determines how its activities will be carried out. It encompasses all other values that guide the public service such as loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness, impartiality, and other values that may be specific to individual countries. The word "professionalisation" is derived from the word "profession". The definition in the study of professions is diverse. Yet there are some common elements in trying to characterize the meaning of a profession. The first characteristic according to Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) is linked to specialized knowledge and expertise. All members of a profession are expected to have a certain degree of theoretically and empirically based knowledge acquired through education or training at acknowledged institutions. Standards of education and entrance into profession are often set.

Professionalisation is of course a question of training of managers and staff, but this is not all. It is of course also a question of introducing regulations defining duties accountabilities and corresponding rights of staff as in a civil service law; but that is not enough. It is also a question of improved personnel management and management standards, but it involves much more besides.

It is thus a question of establishing an administrative context in "which officials can carry out their duties in a professional, impartial, transparent and controllable way" (Staffan, 2009:16). Professionalisation is therefore not only about the quality of staff and their status. It is very much about:

- i) the quality of substantive law, providing the substantive framework for decision-making, i.e. the "tool" for the officials and the source of information and prediction for the public.
- ii) the quality of procedural legislation, providing procedures for administrative decision-making, for coordination and for balancing of powers, for officials' relations and communication with the public, and providing opportunities for concerned physical or legal persons to have a say or to appeal.

- iii) the quality of financial and administrative accountability and control mechanisms, providing for transparency, checks of financial and administrative decision-making and including means for correction, prosecution and redress (Staffan, 2009:18).

Professionalisation is a much wider task than implementing civil service laws and introducing personnel management improvements. If the administrative text within which officials are working is not also improved, they might still have to make arbitrary decisions, with insufficient communication with the public and insufficient coordination with other institutions, even in a situation where they have been selected on merit and are subject to systematic training.

A professional or merit based public service has a long history, including examinations to qualify for public offices. The rationale behind professionalism is that public servants should be neutral, impartial, fair, competent and serve the public interest in carrying out their duties. They should be top people who are fairly compensated and adequately trained to perform their work. In order to carry out government business in the complex era of globalization, there are some core functions, which are crucial to public administration. Public servants should be seen in many capacities which can be grouped into three functions; policy advice, public management and performance monitoring and evaluation (UN, 2000:14). Public servants are indispensable in providing policy advice, as they often have more experience within a sector and are closer to the day-to-day implementation of policies. To upgrade the core capacities of this group of policy advisors, professionalization of policy planning is recommended (Yehezkel, 1997). Adegroye (2005:5) summarized it thus:

Professionalism resides in how skillful and how well a public service employee performs his/her functions and duties and that it also manifest itself in the public service employee's behaviour at work and in his/her knowledge, refine the skills that are necessary for carrying out his/her tasks and enhancing his/her output and productivity.

Much of the government is now in the hands of professionals. Public programmes are staffed and run by administrative professionals as well as by professional administrators. On the one hand, with the social, organisational and technological developments, the importance of administrative professionals has increased (Randma, 2001). The public service has become so complicated that it is difficult to be competent in several areas. Therefore, complex agencies employ specialists who carry out the substantive work, like doctors in health departments or agronomists in agricultural departments. There are also officials specialised in areas related to the work of agencies, such as economists, sociologists or legal advisers. In addition, professionals working in finance, public relations, and human resources can be found in almost any agency. Despite the rising importance of specialists, it has been found that in an increasingly specialised public service each profession tends to act in line with its narrow professional approach, and may lose sight of its duty to serve the public interest (Mosher, 1982).

Within the context of this chapter, public service professionalism is seen as the overall value that encompasses all other values that guide the public service. They include loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness, impartiality, and other values that may be specific to the public service. Public service professionalism embraces the notion that those people who join public service need to be inculcated with shared values and trained in basic skills to professionally carry out their official duties. Complementary to this process is a need to set up management structures to ensure that a public service ethos and competence is achieved (World Bank, 1997).

Public service professionalism is underpinned by the unique set of values upheld by its members. However, due to the multiplicity and complexity of changes which are currently taking place around the globe, "possibly never before has civilization required such high quality leadership and effective governance" (Gerald, 1997:2). There are a number of values and principles to be considered in reflecting upon public service

professionalism; these are, providing public benefits, enforcing the rule of law, ensuring public responsibility and accountability, setting an example, improving professional performance, and promoting democracy. Being professional means more than just employing professionals or paying lip service to professional values. It requires a thorough understanding of professionalism and strict adherence to public norms of model behaviour. Public servants need to apply their professional expertise and judgement to developing sensible, useful and truthful measures of performance to advance public purposes. More importantly, a culture of professionalism needs to be nurtured through the recognition of good work and correction of poor performance.

An Appraisal of Professionalism and Public Service Reform Agenda in Nigeria

With the advent of the modern state, by and large, the role of the public service and a need for its neutrality, impartiality, integrity and competence is widely acknowledged. To promote professionalism in the public service, the merit principle needs to provide the foundation for all human resources management actions – from recruitment and selections for promotions to fair remuneration and disciplinary procedures. Moreover, many countries are trying to promote cultural changes among their public servants by turning from the notion of being a faceless bureaucrat, following orders, to adopting a more entrepreneurial, pro-active, service-oriented attitude and involving the users of public services (Turkia, 1998:13).

If we are to avoid the failures experienced by previous attempts at reform, it is necessary, however, to incorporate historic, economic and socio-cultural data that are characteristics of the African continent.

Without an efficient, effective and well-motivated public service, the implementation of government policies and programmes that are aimed at improving the living conditions of the citizenry will be seriously impaired. Until recently, however, various initiatives on reforming and revitalizing the public service were not specifically linked to ensuring service

delivery improvement (Adegoroye, 2009:1). The Public Service Reform (PSR) is one of the major domains of the Federal Government's Reform Agenda in Nigeria to bring about professionalism in the service. The PSR mission is to build;

a public service that is performance and results oriented, customer-driven, investors-friendly, professional, technological sensitive, accountable, fostering partnerships with all stakeholders and committed to a continuous improvement in government business and the enhancement of overall national productivity.

The strategic approach of Public Service Reform Agenda is to allow each Ministry, Department or Agency to initiate and conduct its institutional reform based on its core mandate while the cross cutting reform issues, such as budget/financial management, common human resources management systems, procurement, policy management etc are handled centrally by appropriate agencies (BPSR, 2006:1).

Presently, the various approaches being undertaken to promote professionalism in the civil service according to Adegoroye (2005:6) are

- Rightsizing the service
- Restructuring of ministries
- Service wide capacity building
- Review of performance management system
- Review of public service rules and regulations, and
- Promotion of ethical conduct.

The current effort to reinvent core values in public administration underscores the notions of "doing the right things and doing it right". These are the marks of professionalism. Through reforms, many public services expend immense efforts trying to get officials to do the "right" things through systems, structures and monetary incentives (Maister, 1997). Professionalism has come to mean the pursuit of excellence and not just competence. To Maduabum (2006:67), professionalisation of the service entailed that all civil servants were expected to perform specialized or professional functions.

Conclusion

A professional public service operates on the basis of rules, regulations and procedures to ensure orderly conduct and uniform standards. Available evidence shows that the performance of the public service in virtually all tiers of government in Nigeria has remained very dismal, hence the present state of underdevelopment (Jike 2003; Adebayo, 2001). The Nigerian public service needs reforms to improve its performance and promote transparency and accountability. That is, if the civil services are to achieve the desired results in Nigeria, a far-reaching reform is needed. The reforms must start with the process of recruitment of professionals into bureaucracies.

The public servant in Nigeria is being asked to operate within an environment in which more services are being deregulated, delegated to the private sector, and devolved to the local level. On the other hand, they are asked to balance this state withdrawal from the economy with maintaining social cohesion and solidarity, particularly in such areas as health, education, and utilities. The public service needs to adapt to the impacts of globalization and economic liberalization in order to serve its country to achieve better economic performance through fostering investment and trade. Public servants need to redesign their organizational infrastructure for the management of enterprises through use of a strategic approach and cultivating new service provision modalities, investing in business networks, and assisting in fostering trust between small and medium enterprises. They can anticipate and plan for consequences of actions, which may adversely affect the national economy.

Public servants must be trained and retained to imbibe the spirit of professionalism, innovation, integrity, efficiency, prevent ill-use of resources and to do away with all forms of waste that have characterized public bureaucracies over the years. Also, government should muster enough political will to initiate reform programmes and carry them to a logical conclusion. The essence is to return professionalism, accountability and transparency to the civil service. Some past

reforms, however, led to politicization of the service and gradual erosion of the old public service ethics of meritocracy. Instead of enhancing the performance of the civil service they led to more ineffective formulation, co-ordination and implementation of government's policies. Any new reform must adopt a result-oriented approach, by drawing experience from earlier imported and homegrown reforms in terms of successes and failures. Subsequently, the political, administrative and civil society leadership must be committed to reforms and the contents of such reforms.

It could be concluded that there are elements of professionalized senior civil servants in Nigeria. But there is still some way to go. Professionalisation is a much wider task than implementing human resources management improvements. If the administrative context within which public servants are working is not improved and if there is no central authority to guide public service development, there might still be problems in achieving professionalisation.

Further studies on professionalisation of Nigerian public service could elaborate on the issues raised and look at information and trends over time to really analyze the process of professionalisation. Also, competitive recruitment exercise and looking into the area of professionalisation of public servants would be beneficial.

In conclusion, no nation whether old or new, developed or transitional could forge ahead without a highly trained civil service (Bamgbose, 1993:31). It then logically follows that for any governmental set up, for its performance and success, the civil service must be considered an indispensable entity

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