

## Labour Unions and the Transformation of the Nigerian Civil Service: A Discourse

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### Abstract

Since the political amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, labour unions have played increasingly powerful role in the formulation, shaping and implementation of public programmes. Trade union movements though primarily worker-centric have assumed a centre stage at fine-tuning the major policies of the government to the benefit of the poor masses. This they have been doing through the instrumentalities of industrial relations like peaceful demonstrations and strike actions. The Imodu led general strike of 1945, Kokori led NUPENG anti-June 12 election annulment strike of 1994, incessant ASUU strikes in Nigeria, Omar and Esele led anti-fuel subsidy removal general strike of 2012 are examples of protests against government policies by labour union movements in Nigeria. Following the history of labour crises and agitations in Nigeria, it is imperative to draw the attention of labour unions to the need to make efforts in curbing the persistent poverty of public service delivery which has culminated into the failure of various administrations in Nigeria. Labour unions have been doing their best which is not enough. This paper therefore utilizes secondary data to discuss factors that have hindered the involvement of labour unions in the transformation of the Nigerian public administrative system. It also examines the decadence that engulfs the civil service and why its reform has proved very difficult. The paper recommended among others that trade unions in Nigeria cannot perform this herculean task unless it transforms itself, making discipline as a watchword and design Nigerian peculiar theories to reform.

**Key Words:** *Labour Unions, Civil Service, Transformation, Public Programmes*

### Introduction

It is true that as representatives of the workers, it is your duty to strive to improve the working conditions and living standards of your members. That also is the aim of your government. But your duty does not end there. Those of you who have been entrusted with the leadership of the trade union movement have another equally important obligation. You should educate your members to appreciate their economic, social and civic responsibilities towards the state and the community.... You and your employers have contributed in no small measure to the remarkable progress which this country has made in recent years, but this progress is yet a beginning.

-Balewa (1960), in Ananaba (1969:258).

Drawing an analogy from the view of Thomas (1999:7), this statement conveys a range of hypotheses regarding the strength and potential of trade unions required to play a major role in the process of development and socio-economic restructuring while adding



a normative flavour to the extent that they should certainly play such roles with determination. Ordinarily, the role of labour unions is to primarily serve the interest of the workers who are members of the union. Even though this function is confined and partly compulsory in so many situations, the contemporary trade union movements must be seen to possess a large scope of coverage, for much is expected of them. This may reflect a change of attitude or perception among labour leaders but it may also signify a general consciousness that the movement has much more to offer the society at large. Zulpilip (1992:1) agrees to what Balewa (1960) views in Ananaba (1969:258) above to the intent that, trade union as a movement is no longer a mere vehicle to unite workers and champion their rights only. The situation in modern society has changed and any progressive trade union movements have wider roles to play. Zulpilip stated further that, nowhere is this change and enhancement of role better illustrated than in developing countries. In the context of developing nations, the trade union movement is not a passive bystander but rather an active participant in national development process (Zulpilip 1992:1). Labour union movements have the wherewithal to tune the status rate, quality, extent and trend of any nation's development.

Labour union movements have been in the struggle for a better society and anti-development menace including corruption that has rocked and weakened the efficacy of the civil/public service in Nigeria. Jonathan (2013) on a Labour Day rally, in Usman (2013:1) emphatically pointed out that:

The Nigerian worker is not only an important part of our (the nation's) history but the pivot of past, our present and our future... Historically, development of Nigeria as a nation is closely linked to the history of trade union movement. The recognition of the Nigerian Civil Service Union by the British colonial government as the first trade union in the nation in 1912 set the pace for workers' rights awareness and the bravery and principle of agitation that manifested in the Aba women's riot of 1929, coal miners' strike of 1949 and several other workers legitimate demands for economic justice. As Nigerians organised rallying points for mass interest, these movements strengthened the nationalistic struggle for independence and provided the bedrock for a national labour platform as today represented by the Nigerian Labour Congress. Who can forget the dedication of all the teachers unions, the perseverance of the Association of Civil Servants, the picket lines of the National Union of Road Transport Workers or the resilience of the Textiles Workers Union and indeed the solidarity and sacrifice of so many others which has enabled the hope we have today as a nation.

Trade unions have made remarkable input in this direction most precisely in the developed and advanced economies during the last century. In an explicit terms, Thomas (1997:7) sees the input to range from first the creation of welfare states of welfare mechanisms and safety nets, and to more recently the process of reshaping of public social agenda which provided ample evidence of the wider societal roles which trade unions have played in the sizeable number of industrialized countries over a long time span. The role that labour unions play cannot be overemphasized hence, the call for its involvement in the reform process of the civil service in Nigeria. In the California's Human Resources Modernization (2008:1) Project Report, civil service reform has been on the agenda of national and state politicians of both major political parties since 1970's.

According to the World Bank (2000:23), among the contents of the institutional reform project, the civil service reform is the most critical one that attempts to de-politicize the public administration by introducing a system of merit-based personnel management. The quest for the involvement of workers union in the transformation of the Nigerian Civil Service begins from the belief that there cannot be any meaningful public programmes implementation without progressive-minded civil servants. Ochuma (2011:35) posits that, Nigerian public administrative reform calls for the full attention of all stakeholders in the assignment of harnessing its talent potentials through political and administrative collective action. Therefore, Philips (1988), in Ogunyomi (2013) indicates the objectives of civil service reform to include: enhancement of professionalism, decentralization and delegation of functions; institution of checks and balances; promotion of general modernization; enhancing the combination of responsibility with authority; aligning the civil service with spirit of Executive Presidentialism, and enhancement of efficiency, effectiveness and speed of operations.

Objectively, this paper is targeted at achieving the following fundamentals: the hindrances to the important roles of labour unions in the call for its involvement in the transformation of Nigerian civil service; a description of the present Nigerian public administration; and reawakening of the labour union movements to the civil service sectorial transformation.

### **Labour Union and the Transformation Exercise in Nigeria: Achievements and Hindrances**

Nchuchume and Ajulor (2013:2) state that the struggles of many African countries cannot be complete without mentioning the role of African trade unions and civil servants. In the submission of International Institute for Labour Studies (1998:9), in Thomas (1999:1) it was noted that:

The labour movement has a major role to play in sustainable development. Trade unions as a large organized group in civil society can bring a unique contribution to the development community. They are directly involved with economic systems of production and distribution; they can influence the course and content of employment and social and economic policies; they are representative and accountable; and they have considerable experience in organizing the more vulnerable sections of society; and they have the experience of standing required to access national legal systems and public facilities. They can contribute through their long standing relationships with such development institutions as: consumer co-operatives, housing societies, health funds and social security organizations.

Labour unions as organized group of employees in any nation play several roles in the transformation of any sector of the economy and as contributor to dynamic an equitable growth. Supportively, Beckman (2002:86) says despite labour unions limitations in terms of internal structure, leadership and effective reach, they constitute one of the few institutions capable of representing the large popular strata. Beckman stated further that, unions are keenly conscious of the need to respond to the changes in the world economy, technological developments, shifts in global production and markets, the trans-nationalization of enterprises, the accelerated mobility of financial flows, and changes in state policies and regulatory capacities. In the same view, Anoneuvo (2013:3) aligned to



the fact that, trade union as a membership based organizations are mandated to represent its members, protect their rights and interests and provide services from field of education to social security. Furthermore, it is based on the power of the collective and solidarity whose sphere of engagements range from the workplace to the industry and to the society. Labour union is a power agent of change and transformation.

In Nigeria, the socio-political and economic transitional development cannot in the past five decades be separated from the commitment of labour union movements. This assertion can be buttressed by the stand of Aremu (2011:1) that, the relatively peaceful road to freedom, notwithstanding the long struggle to the independence of Nigeria in 1960 was also characterized by mass resistance, mass strikes and protests, enormous sacrifices largely by Nigerian workers, their trade unions and labour movements. In the same way, Okolie (2013:13) says, the interest of unions (in Nigeria) was to promote national development and as a professional workers organization, the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) was formed partly to carry out the regulatory functions of the teaching profession and to be a watch dog of the government. Education policy and the same apply to the Nigerian Medical Association which in addition helps to promote the economic well being of the members and a healthy nation. It is worthy to note that the use of unionism in the pre-independence Nigeria was targeted at an agitation to rid the economy of bad leadership. Therefore, trade unionism and nationalism provided the basis for group collectivism in satisfying this particular objective. In not putting into doubt the possibilities and power of the Nigerian labour union movements to achieving the call to play active roles in the transformation of Nigerian civil service, a flashback to the roles that trade union movement has played in the developed economies of Western Europe stands tall. Highlighting on this, Thomas (1999:2) provides that:

...labour movement has continued to acquire a high degree of legitimacy in addressing issues of the wider social agenda. One may also mention the role of the labour movement in the transformation and restructuring that was called for in Western Europe after the Second World War. Similarly, more recent examples can be given of the role which trade unions have played in restructuring the economy, such as the need for wage restraints in the 1980s when global competitive forces had a huge impact on the reshaping of Western European economic structures as well as on major characteristics of labour market.

In the same development, the Nigerian labour union movements through the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) has with its oversight function played very important roles in influencing government policies and programmes. Aremu (2011:2) concisely puts that:

The trade union has served as backbone for the first developmental effort of the newly independent Nigeria during the First and Second Republics. Nigeria recorded dramatic growth rate in the first decade after independence which averaged 12 percent and made it one of the fast growing economy surpassing then Malaysia, India and even china. This growth rate in non-oil sector especially in agriculture and nascent emerging manufacturing sector must be attributed to the productivity, patriotism and diligence of the country's first generation workforce. During the civil war of late 60s, labour movement was unifying force for national unity. Trade union movement remains today a formidable Pan-Nigerian organization that unites all Nigerian workers for a

common purpose regardless of their states and status. Significantly labour championed the struggle against military dictatorship with enormous sacrifices...

However, the recent developments within the labour movement indeed the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) gives one cause for concern especially when viewed against the backdrop of the NLC's slogan (Komolafe, 2013:54). In outlining the aims and objectives of Nigerian Labour Congress, Omar and Uyot (2013:2) gives that one of the fundamental aims and objectives of the congress is to continually strive to influence public corporate policies and legislation on all issues at all levels, in the interest of workers, disadvantaged social groups and trade unions. It is often painful to note that labour union movements have not organised mass protest and strike against the salient 'man made' weaknesses of Nigerian civil service which continues to cripple the delivering of efficient public services. In the assertion of Shepherd (2003:2), there is a consensus in the international development community on the need for civil service reform in developing countries basically that, civil services of the more advanced countries enjoy merit selection, insulation from undue political influence, and to the extent possible arrangements, promote the productivity of civil servants. The situation is contrary to what is presently obtainable in Nigeria with a large, corrupt, unaccountable, perpetual and frequent transfer of officers, incompetency, politicized, lack of professionalism, etc. civil service.

In same development, organised labour has not been able to achieve much in the restructuring of the civil service due to what Akinwale (2011:13) refers to continuous marginalization in the process of formulation and implementation of policies - a major factor that has made industrial conflicts uncontrollable in Nigeria. In consideration of the view of Thomas (1999:2) and other scholars, trade unions are not performing to expectation in Nigeria because of the following identifiable factors:

Lack of potential strength development- It has been noticed that Nigerian labour movement has not had the opportunity to develop its potential strength due to the structural characteristics of development patterns. Labour unions only exist within the government ministries and parastatals. Idakwoji (2012) opines that, this has often made unions as appendage of government and party of the day. This causes much anxiety. Massive privatization and commercialization of major public enterprises like Nigerian Railway Corporation, Nigerian Telecommunications, National Electric Power Authority, etc has gone a long way to cause serious erosion of the labour movement.

Unemployment and underemployment which is high is also another factor. To this end, Laidi (2011) in Oyedele (2013:6) says, 40000 of National Union of Civil Engineering Construction, Furniture Workers have been thrown into the market in the past two years because of abandoned projects. Politics of personality in an absence of issue has formed one of the cog in the wheel of achievement of union becoming a critical institution in civil service reform. Bonafide trade unions have ceased to exist in many countries, and have been replaced by outfits created or sponsored by governments, politicians or military leaders (Ananaba, 1979:122). This situation is much prevalent among the unions that are States and Local governments based. Examples are Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Medical & Health Workers Union of Nigeria (MHWUN), Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), National Association of Market Women, etc.



Tripartite federal structure- The gap this factor has created in Nigerian labour union movement is much to be desired. Borrowing a leaf from the politicians, employees of the States and Local governments and the agencies they created think of their interests in terms of States and their Local governments and not of the nation as a whole. This has charted the spirit of oneness/comradeship among unions- see the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in the State owned Universities, Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) in the State general hospitals, etc.

In many cases, Akinwale (2011:13) submits that, the Nigerian government and labour unions have been at loggerhead in pursuit of diametrically opposing goal. Notwithstanding, trade union plays a crucial role in any nation's transformation programme. This is evident in the Academic Staff Union of Universities' perpetual struggle and several industrial actions calling on the attention of successive governments to the overhauling of the entire educational system so as to enable Nigerian universities to be among their equals in the globe. Ingwe et al (2012:39) explains that, one of the achievements of ASUU 's industrial actions of the 1990s was the establishment of the Educational Trust Fund (ETF) aimed to generate funds from private sectors and government contributions towards funding projects in the education system.

As can be noted above, the inherent problem that affect the performance of labour union is not far-fetched from what Bernard (2011) opines that, given the electoral impact and political veto points, government may seek to overcome reform blockage in political decision making and implementation by seeking social consensus with trade unions. However, the onus lies in the labour unions to succumb to the pressure of the government to subvert public interest.

### **Nigerian Civil Service: An Institution in Decay**

In recent times, the most castigating institution in government has been the civil service. Hardly a day passes that one does not read articles on comments in the press attributing all the ills of the nation to the civil service... Faults are laid at the doors of the civil service. Whether the accusations are true or not, the mere fact that the public regard the civil service as an institution capable by itself of causing the failure of successive governments and regarding the social and economic progress of the nation is enough justification to take a hard look at the civil service as we embark on the threshold of another milieu (and national transformation).

(Adebayo 2000:122)

In the documentation of Ademolekun (2011:8), there is strong evidence in the development literature on the crucial importance of the civil service role in a government ability to deliver services to its citizen's in most countries worldwide. Ademolekun stated further that the most notable example in Nigeria is the huge contributions made by the Western Nigerian Civil Service to the outstanding development performance of the regional government between the mid-1950s and early 1960s which recorded concrete results in the political, economic and social spheres including the most widely acclaimed achievement of the implementation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme. Therefore, the yearning of citizens particularly in the developing country is the powerful decisive political will in the implementation of public programmes. This is basically due to the absence of the needed development compared to the developed



countries of the world. This assertion is supported by the UNDP (2007:2:1) statement which says, more than ever, citizens are calling for state institutions that are democratic, efficient in the use of public funds, effective in delivering public goods while in the meantime remain strong players in the increasingly competitive global systems.

Ademolekun (2011:8) subscribes to the resolution of the UN Generally Assembly (57:277) on Public Administration and Development which states that, the significance of an efficient, accountable, effective and transparent public administration, at both the national and international level is underlined as vital to the realization of internationally agreed goals, including the MDGs; that Nigeria president cannot deliver with the present weak implementation capacity of the federal civil service that successive administrations have complained about since 1999.

Sekwat (2013:1) agrees to the fact that, the civil service plays a vital role in the formulation, implementation, evaluation and renew of government policies and programmes to an extent that, its reform provides an enabling environment for civil servants to perform their duties in an unfettered manner, fair treatment of personnel, and establishment of a demographically representative apparatus. In addition, Corkery (1995) in Sekwat (2013:1) sees the main purpose of civil service reform to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the service and thereby increasing its capacity to promote economic and social development to meet the needs and aspirations of all citizens. The call of this paper on the labour unions in Nigeria to rise up the challenges of transforming the civil service is as a result of the words which Adebayo (2000:22) adopts to describe the Nigerian civil service as being long outmoded and grossly inadequate to perform the functions of managing an economy aspiring towards modernization. This according to the Wikipedia the Free Encyclopaedia (2013), the history of Nigerian civil service as having its origin in organizations established by the British colonial government model which has long been transformed. Ademolekun & Gbayega (1979), in Biobele (2007:144) proves that prior to 1988 reforms, the civil service in Nigeria was organised to British traditions, apolitical, bureaucratic and conservative, which made the structure and ossified. As a result of ugly these developments, the suffering of public projects implementation in Nigeria is on a high magnitude as given in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Proposed Funding for Completing Abandoned Projects in Federal Universities in Nigeria (In Naira)**

S/NO	INSTITUTION	TOTAL (100%)	2003 (50%)	2004 (50%)
1	University of Ibadan	350.00	175.00	175.00
2	University of Nigeria	350.00	175.00	175.00
3	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	350.00	175.00	175.00
4	University of Lagos	350.00	175.00	175.00
5	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	350.00	175.00	175.00
6	University of Benin	350.00	175.00	175.00
7	University of Calabar	300.00	150.00	150.00
8	University of Ilorin	300.00	150.00	150.00
9	University of Jos	300.00	150.00	150.00
10	Bayero University, Kano	300.00	150.00	150.00
11	University of Port Harcourt	300.00	150.00	150.00
12	University of Maiduguri	300.00	150.00	150.00
13	Usman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto	300.00	150.00	150.00
14	University of Uyo	300.00	150.00	150.00
15	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	300.00	150.00	150.00
16	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	200.00	100.00	100.00
17	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	200.00	100.00	100.00
18	Federal University of Technology, Akure	200.00	100.00	100.00
19	Federal University of Technology, Yola	200.00	100.00	100.00
20	Federal University of Technology, Minna	200.00	100.00	100.00
21	University of Abuja	200.00	100.00	100.00
22	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	200.00	100.00	100.00
23	Michael Okpara University of Agric., Umudike	200.00	100.00	100.00
24	University of Agriculture, Makurdi	200.00	100.00	100.00
25	National Mathematical Center, Sheda	100.00	50.00	50.00
26	Nigeria French Language Village, Badagry	100.00	50.00	50.00
27	Nigeria Arabic Language Village, Ngala	100.00	50.00	50.00
28	National Institution for Nigerian Language, Aba	100.00	50.00	50.00
29	Division of Agricultural College, ABJ Zaria	100.00	50.00	50.00
30	National Universities Commission Secretariat	100.00	50.00	50.00

Source: NUC (2005) In Inibian & Okunnamiri (2007) cited by Ingwe et al (2012:39, 40)

Oyedele (2013:6) further pictures the rate of abandonment of public programmes in the following words that:

The life span of construction project in Nigeria is unpredictable. There are many abandon projects all over due to improper planning. Construction project suffer from capital flight, capital stagnation and capital sink". Capital flight occurs due to imported materials and imported technical inputs into capital projects. Capital sink occurs due to bad planning, wrong location of project and over design in construction. Inflated contracts sums and abandoned projects due to bad cash-flow are all parts of capital sink. Capital stagnation occurs where a project has a time over-flow more than necessary. There is also no succession plan in Nigeria leading to a lot of completed projects not utilized.



In a nutshell, civil service cannot distance itself from this ugly menace in Nigeria since it is the organ of the government that translates government policies into action and fulfillment. In agreement to this, Emma & Eme (2011:18) refers to the Civil Service as a branch of government which is grouped into the Executive without which governments cannot function. They are permanent staffers of the department of the government. In short terms, Ejiofor & Anagolu (1984), in Ogunyomi (2013:2), identifies the following as factors responsible for the negative attitude of the civil servants in discharging their duties: Lack of work ethics, Lack of values, Perpetration of ethnicity, conflict of interest, Educational problem, religious fanaticism, and leaking of official secret.

These somehow sum up what Anagode, Okoye & Chukwuemeka (2012:8) perceived that for decades, civil service has mainly served the interest of bureaucrats and engaged in the accumulation of public resources for private gain. Explicitly:

...the failing and defects of Nigerian Civil Service can be summarised as follows: over-cautiousness in its approached to problem solving, lack of creativity, skepticism towards new ideas, insularity and lack of sensitivity towards the public and the issue of the day. To these we must add failure arising out of a narrow and restricted conception of management an 'impoverished concept of management' too narrow to cope with the full range of problem with which managers of the public sector must deal. It fails to take account as well as questions of organizational design and the use of resources (Adebayo, 2000:123).

From the foregoing therefore, it can be reasoned that the Nigerian Civil Service is being faced with the challenge of: Continuous corruption and embezzlement of public fund.

Unprogressive mindedness and resistance to reforms, Arbitrarily large to the extent of having placement for political touts, Excessive political intrusion, and Lack of accountability among the civil servants which has led to non implementation of huge budgetary allocations in Nigeria.

A sense of the relative expenditure on the different areas is given by the table 3 below, which shows the 2008 budget for Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

**Table 3: BUDGET**

MDA (Ministry, Department or Agency)	Budget (Naira)
Agriculture & Water Resources	113,673,666.845
Auditor-General	2,477,433,789
Code of Conduct Bureau	1,126,777,207
Commerce and Industry	7,758,202,700
Culture & National Orientation	11,655,900,664
Defence	151,940,617,034
Education	210,444,818.579
Energy	139,783,534.336
Environmental, Housing and Urban Development	15,915,443,907
Federal Capital Territory	37,958,110,000
Federal Character Commission ( <a href="http://federalcharacter.gov.ng">http://federalcharacter.gov.ng</a> )	2,366,945,741
Federal Civil Service Commission	925,690.890
Health	138,179,657,132
Transportation	124,444,316,123
Finance	11,777,469,168
Foreign & Intergovernmental Affairs	40,873,686,687
Independent Corrupts Practices Commission	3,588,338,165
Independence National Electoral Commission	12,693,517,785
Information and Communication	18,183,376,503
Interior	266,371,519,798
Justice	12,695,948,416
Labour & Productivity	6,142,634,383
Mines and Steel Development	6,592,555,334
National Planning Commission	5,219,851,968
National Salaries, Income & Wages Commission	441,347,573
National Sports Commission	5,562,611,171
Office of the Head of the Civil Service	6,836,928,125
Police Service Commission	599,570,075
Public Complaints Commission	2,008,996,208
Revenue Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Allocation Commission	2,370,007,697
Science and Technology	16,306,271,658
Women Affairs	2,288,935,104
Youth Development	45,591,142,712

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian\\_Civil\\_Service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Civil_Service)

Note: As of January 2008, one Naira was worth about 0.0057 Euros or 0.0084 US Dollars [1] (<http://oando.com/currency/converter>)

Although Beckman (2000:93) projects that, in many instances, trade unions barely survive within a stagnant post-colonial order and may look as unlikely candidates for the role as agents for institutional reform aiming at poverty reduction in society at large; unable to defend a even a bare minimum of purchasing power for their own members, who depend on other official and unofficial sources of income for sheer survival. Baffoe (1979) in Ananaba (1979:123) contrary-wise says, during the struggle for political independence, the trade union movement became the only platform for the



colonial peoples in Africa to speak out on basic issues involving not only workers interest but more importantly human rights. In the same development Torres (2008), in Baccarol and Papadakis (2008: vii) highlight thus:

There is increasing interest regarding the involvement of non-government organizations in the provision of social services and other areas of public policy. It is sometimes argued that this kind of participatory governance would help improve service delivery, because private, not profit actors represent constituencies which are directly affected by the issue for which a policy solution is sought. Moreover, participation of such actors in public policy would strengthen...a stronger influence...in policy making, than...tripartite social dialogue.

Trade unions have a very good record in this respect, particularly in the industrialized countries covering the last century in, first the creation of welfare states of welfare mechanisms and safety nets, and more recently the process of reshaping of the public social agenda have provided ample evidence of the wider social roles which trade unions have played in a sizeable numbers of industrialized countries over a long time span (Thomas, 1999:2). Thomas illustrated also the distinct role that trade unions have played in enterprises restructuring, such as in the restructuring of the automobile industry in the United States, as proof of union strength and potential that are important from the broader perspective of a national social agenda in countries where Anglo-Saxon model of labour relations prevails.

This paper having considered the ability of labour unions in the transformation of the civil service; the attention of trade unions is being drawn to what Shepherd (2003:3) partly proposed to explain why civil service reform has proven difficult in developing countries (among which is Nigeria). These explications as advanced are presented below: The revolutionary political conditions – The emergence of new interests with the need and the power to promote a more efficient and honest public administration – have not been met. In Nigeria, ‘the spoil system’ is the characteristics of the civil service which provide the currency of political competition, others by the continuing vigour of traditional systems (a situation where kinship ties are important) which frustrate reform attempts. The large nature of Nigerian civil service has encouraged the emergence of strong groups capable of challenging all reform efforts. This prompted Idachaba (2005) to say, Nigeria will continue to dwell in her decayed system of public service if not until stakeholders realised the necessity of sacrifice to bearing in mind the fact that every reform has gainers and losers.

Public Administration is significantly large than in the past as a result of modern ideological approaches to development, as well as the local articulation of political demands. This factor has bloated the Nigeria Civil Service which in most cases is public welfare employment, whereby public jobs are provided to a large part of the population as a means of ensuring their political support and patronage (See table 2 below). This justify why it has been hard to reduce high levels of employment in Nigeria public sector. There is always an annual increase in recurrent expenditure above capital expenditure amidst which the country rests in underdevelopment and poverty (Ochuma 2011:34).

**Table 2: SIZE OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE 1966 – 1993**

YEAR	JUNIOR STAFF	SENIOR STAFF	TOTAL
1966	46, 676	8, 313	54, 989
1970	32, 736	12, 418	45, 154
1974	74, 198	24, 679	98, 877
1975	-	-	122, 086
1978	-	-	187, 677
1979	174, 042	21, 877	195, 919
1980	-	-	213, 802
1984	-	-	257, 103
1985	-	-	255, 156
1988	-	-	251, 657
1990	-	-	273, 392
1991	134, 762	47, 380	182, 142
1992	146, 819	47, 599	194, 418
1993	149, 052	49, 879	198, 931

Source: Olowu et al (1997), In Briggs (2007:146).

Based on these developments therefore, Nigeria labour union movements should bear in mind the New Public Management trend. They should see need to struggle for: The measurability of public sector service delivery. Accountability of civil servant over public policy formulation and implementation, and Independence of the civil service from political manipulation. To be able to discharging these responsibilities, Ananaba (1969:259) engages the trade union movement to under must reconstruct itself with a view to commanding the respect, the influence and resources, both human and material, without which these lofty aspirations would be mere day-dreaming. More than that, it must step from barking to biting stage.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

There is no gain-saying the fact that the Nigeria civil service has undergone several reforms dating from pre-independence to post independence period. Some of these reforms were the bye-product of several struggles by labour union movements targeted at bringing a decent work agenda for efficient service delivery. Examples are the Gorsuch Commission, 1954, Mbanefo Commission 1959 (pre-independence commissions) and the Morgan Commission 1963, Eliot Grading Panel 1966, Adebo Commission of 1970, Udoji Commission 1972, Williams and Williams Committee in 1975, 1988 civil service reform, Ayida Commission 1997 just to mention few. Being the organ of the government that is responsible to the people, it can be easily identified as a performer or failure. Labour union movements at various times have tried their best but that seems not to be enough. This paper therefore recommends that labour unions should:

Labour unions should first of all transform itself into agents of transformation. It is a popular slogan that one cannot give what he/she has not. The anticipated changes to be done in the civil service will be a mirage, if the labour unions are not changed. This can be done through constant membership skill development and value reorientation.



Embark on putting into practice the fundamentals of organizational discipline. It deals with the principles of self regulations during bargaining and social dialogue. This helps in overcoming the insinuation of being bought over during the process of agitations on matters of public interest. Politicians and bureaucrats usually manipulate the union executives by 'tokenism' and thereby retarding any reform exercise in Nigeria.

Properly maximise labour management relations' apparatus. This will enable labour unions to engage with the government in carrying out inspection in the case of ongoing transformation programmes. They should be able to set standard and rules through and during negotiation process.

Adoption of participative management in the operations of the Nigerian Civil Service: This entails the involvement of workers union principally in the policy formulation and implementation processes of the Nigerian Civil Service. It give opportunities for greater input in matters of policy making which for a long time has been hijacked by senior cadres of the civil service who have failed to give any chain of continuity in government projects and programmes.

Introduce and develop Nigerian theories to the civil service transformation which has defied previous commissions' reform strategies and recommendations. Areas like persistent spoil system vis-à-vis traditional system, offering of public jobs for political patronage and the existence of cabal should be handled by the approaches, if developed.

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