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Bureaucracy and Public Policy Implementation in the Nigerian Public Service: Some Salient Issues

EDINO, Ojonimi Ferdinand,
Department of Public Administration, University of Calabar,
Calabar, Nigeria
ojonimiedino@unical.edu.ng,

BISONG, Daniel Bisong,
Department of Public Administration, University of Calabar,
Calabar, Nigeria
bisongdanielbisong@gmail.com

INAKEFE, Gabriel Inakefe
Department of Public Administration and Local Government
Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria
Email**:** gabriel.inakefe.pg87297@unn.edu.ng
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8340-0445.

Abstract
In every public organization, the bureaucrats are the men and women, employed on the basis of merit and competence; saddled with the responsibilities of not only playing advisory role to the elected politicians but having the statutory mandate to implement policies formulated by the political class. Some salient issues are associated with the recruitment process and performance of bureaucrats. The overall objective of this study therefore, is to investigate the fundamental issues militating against effective and efficient bureaucratization in the Nigerian public service. The study relies on secondary data to achieve its objective. Leveraging on the documentary research methodology, the study reveal among others, that politicization of appointment, political interference, and conflict between the political and administrative class, incompetence and lack of political will largely account for the poor performance and service delivery of the Nigerian bureaucracy. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others that recruitment into the public bureaucracy should be based on merits through practical examination rather than political patronage and connections. Political interference in purely bureaucratic affairs should be discouraged and offenders should be sanctioned.
Key word*s: Bureaucracy; Public Policy; Implementation; Public Service; Issues*

Introduction
One of the most popular concepts that have dominated the social sciences is bureaucracy as the action part of organization, especially government. It is considered as the action part of government not only because of its advisory role to the elected politicians but also because it is involved in public policy formulation and implementation. The world over, the public service has two major categories of workers- the politicians and the fulltime career civil servants, otherwise referred to as bureaucrats. These classes go with the tag career executives and political executives. While the politicians are representatives of the electorate (public) birthed by the democratic process of election, the bureaucrats on the other hand, are fulltime employees of government, employed and

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engaged on the basis of qualification and competence. Thus, as elected representatives of the public, and members of different political parties with different agendas and party manifestoes, the job of the political office holders therefore, is to fulfill their promises through policy formulation. In the light of this, Okoli (2003: 8) asserts, "At the level of policy formulation, the civil servant is the principal, but not the sole Architect of the policy of Government." Supporting this assertion, Sharma and Sadana (2008) submit that politics is concerned with the laying down of policies, that is, prescribing what shall be done, and the task of administration is to carry out these policies as economically and efficiently as possible.

Apparently, plans and programmes drawn by political officials would require the contribution and commitment of career officials (bureaucrats) for successful implementation. Thus, the political officials must take into confidence the top echelons of the civil service that provide valuable continuity and informed advice on policy options which politicians cannot afford to ignore. The crux of the matter however, is how competent and efficient are the Nigerian public bureaucrats in terms of performance and service delivery? What are the salient issues affecting the performance of the Nigerian public bureaucrats in terms of policy formulation and implementation? These and other related questions are what this paper aims to investigate and proffer workable recommendations for improvement in the Nigerian public service.

Methodology

Research Design
In order to effectively carry out the study to achieve its objective, the documentary research design is employed and utilized. Documentary research design involves the use of existing data (secondary data) to investigate, explain and understand a phenomenon or subject under investigation.

Method of Data Collection
The study relies on secondary data (e.g., textbooks, journals, internet materials, etc.) to attain the study's objectives.

Method of Data Analysis
Being a qualitative research, descriptive evaluation and qualitative analysis is used to analyze the data collected. This involves text narration and word based analysis to meet the study's aims.

Theoretical Framework
The framework of analysis for this work is the elite theory. Elite theory describes essentially a situation where the affairs of a society are under the control of a small subset of its members (Maloy, 2015). The theory convey the essential idea that power within a state is concentrated with a unified class known as the elite who exercise such power over the diverse non-elites who are powerless (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elite-theory). The theory draws heavily from the fields of political science and sociology through the writings of Wilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels, Wright Mills, Floyd Hunter, James Burnham, Thomas Dye, etc. who construed the idea of elitism within two dormant classes- governing elites and non-governing elites, and political class and non-political class who exercise dominance over power and decision making (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elite-theory)..

Tenets of the Theory
The elite theory is based on the following assumptions:
1. Every human society is divided into two groups- the few who have power and the majority who do not.
2. Elites are drawn disproportionately from the upper socioeconomic strata of society.
3. The movement of non-elite to elite position must be slow in order to maintain stability and avoid revolution.
4. Elites share consensus on behalf of the basic values of the social system and the preservation of the system.
5. Public policy does not reflect the demands of the masses but rather, the prevailing values of the elite (Okoro, 2005 p.66-67). Against this backdrop, elite theory implies that the masses are so misinformed and apathetic about public policy. The elite actually shape mass opinion on policy matters more than masses shape elite opinion. By implication therefore, public policies turn out to be the preferences of the elites rather than the masses.

Application of the Theory to the Study
Elite theory from its basic assumptions and tenets acknowledges the fact that a class of individuals described as elites who have significant control over the political over areas of resource acquisition and appropriation. The adoption of this theory for the study furthers the investigation by granting it the empirical roots to investigate the roles politicians and bureaucrats play in public policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria.

Conceptual Underpinning: **Bureaucracy, public policy formulation and implementation**
The term bureaucracy is believed to have its origin as a reference to a cloth covering the desks of French government officials in the 18th century. Early usage of bureaucracy referred to an official workplaces (bureau) in which individual activities were routinely determined by explicit rules and regulations (Dudley 2003:126). According to Okoli (2003:1), the height of research on bureaucracy seemed to have been reached with the monumental work of Marx Weber, a German Sociologist of the organizational revolution. Okoli maintains that Weber's main concern was with the rationalization of authority into an impersonal and bureaucratized institutions or organizations. Hence, the distinguishing characteristics of bureaucracy are, among others, a rigid distinction between the office and its incumbent, a well-defined hierarchical distribution of authority; the horizontal division of labour according to differentiated functions and technical skills, recruitment based on merit and strict adherence to an impersonal body of rules.

In line with the norms of bureaucracy therefore, organizations are designed on the basis of knowledge. The higher officers direct the lower ones on the basis of knowledge and experience gathered over time. It is on this note that Weber insists that recruitment and appointments to positions and offices must be made on the basis of qualifications and professional competencies ascertained, through written examinations. In the light of this, Okafor (2005:67) sees bureaucracy as the apparatus of government designed to implement the decisions of political leaders. James Q. Wilson referred in Dudley (2003) furthers one's understanding of the differences in private and public bureaucracies, particularly, pointing out the importance of the political dimension in which bureaucracies operate.

First is the theme of bureaucratic politics, where bureaucrats are seen as important actors in policy decisions. Second is that of the control of the political system over bureaucratic choices and performance; and third is that of the relationship between bureaucracy and democracy, particularly in terms of being representative and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the public.

Apparently therefore, most of the decisions made in public bureaucracies reflect the preferences of elected officials, interest groups and even private individuals, which is the hub of this study. Karl Marx in numerous of his writings does not rate bureaucracy high. He sees bureaucracy as an agency that furthers the interests of dominant class. He sees it as been incapable of protecting the interest of the peripheral class who constitute the overwhelming majority in society.

Actors in Public Policy formulation and implementation
There are individuals, groups and institutions that are involved or active in public policy making. While some of these actors are government officials, others are non-governmental actors. For example, the legislators, the executive members, the bureaucrats and the judiciary (judges) are governmental actors, while the non-governmental actors include political parties, interest groups and the citizens. Against this backdrop, Ikelegbe (1996:90) identified an array of officials who are involved in policy making process which include:
1. The Legislature;
2. The Executive;
3. The Judiciary;
4. Bureaucrats; and
5. Non-governmental Organizations.

1. **The legislature:** The legislature is the major area in many political systems in which demands made on the political process by various individuals, communities, groups and institutions are identified, communicated, discussed, reconciled, compromised, mediated and sometimes concretized into policies.
2. **The executive:** The executive here refers specifically to the chief executives (President, Governor and Chairman) and their appointees such as ministers, special advisers/assistants and heads of commissions and parastatals including Vice Chancellors of federal universities. On this note, Johnson (1998 p 43) submits that the political executive participate in decision making in the following ways:
a. Bills could be initiated by the presidency or from a particular ministry,
b. The President is given the constitutional power of signing bills properly passed by the National Assembly into laws, and
c. The political executives can mandate any appropriate quarters to implement any policy option adopted for implementation. It could equally implement some policies without involving other agencies".
3. **The judiciary:** The judiciary refers to the body of Judges and courts of competent jurisdiction that interpret the constitution and the law and adjudicate conflicts and crisis between the various institutions of government, individuals and groups. The Judiciary also has the power of judicial review through which they could examine and determine the constitutionality of legislative, executive and bureaucratic actions and policies. Through this medium, the judiciary ensures that every governmental action conforms to the intent and letter of the laws. The judiciary is a moderator, an umpire and mediator of conflicts and judge of propriety in the policy process (Ikelegbe, 1996).
4. **The bureaucrats:** the public service has in its structure, experts in different fields of endeavor, men and women possessing skills and proficiencies. They have accumulated enormous administrative, technical, professional, managerial experience and competence in the business of government. According to Johnson (1998:4), bureaucrats can be involved in policy making process in any or a combination of the following:

1. They can be called upon to assist in the collection of data (facts) and information about policy proposals;
2. They assist in the preparation of the drafts of policy proposals. That is, they help to define policy before the legislative stage is reached.
3. They assist in drafting the law which is designed to carry out the designed programme. However, this is often strictly in compliance with the guidelines on the adopted policy proposal by the formulators.
4. They assist in the evaluation of the success of any policy implemented and recommend ways on how to improve upon the quality.
5. **Nongovernmental Actors**

These are interest groups such as political parties, pressure groups including labour unions and individuals who influence government policies either to the advantage of a member or the group as a whole. Experience has shown that any time a policy is to be formulated by the political executives or any of the actors; an interest group will lobby to ensure that such a policy does not negate its interest.

A case in point is ASUU, Academic Staff Union of Universities- a trade union versus Federal Government of Nigeria over the enrollment of academic staff into the government policy of Integrated Personnel Payroll Information System (IPPIS). ASUU's position has been that this particular policy has not adequately captured the peculiarities in the university pay system; hence, its members are disallowed to enroll pending when the Federal Government is ready to accept ASUU's conditions and its alternative system of payment- University Transparency and Accountability Solution (UTAS). Meanwhile, the Federal Government insists that all the academic staff of Federal institutions must enroll. This is a clear fight of an interest group trying to influence a government policy.

Salient issues affecting policy implementation
In the Nigerian public service, the bureaucracy is hampered by several constrains that impede public policy implementation.
They include but not limited to the following:
1. The issue of politicization of the bureaucracy;
2. Lack of Political will to commit resources to policy implementation;
3. Corruption;
4. Political interference; and
5. Conflict between politicians and bureaucrats.

The issue of politicization of the bureaucracy
Roger in Onah (2003:206) conceives politicization as "a process by which politicians control bureaucracy by means of manipulating recruitment, education, training and promotions to imbue bureaucracies with overt explicit commitments to the political goals of government of the day".
Buttressing Roger's definition of politicization, Onah (2003:209) submits that:

"... observation in recent survey is that at appointments, be it grade level 07 and above or grade level 01-06, members of the commission (politicians) present their own list, the local government Chairman and his group present their own list, then the Governor's sacrosanct list. The process of recruitment, selection and appointment are consummated by marrying the lists and publishing same".

Whereas, going by the principles of Weberian bureaucracy and the Nigeria Public Service Rule, appointment into the Local Government system and the public bureaucracy generally ought to be based on merit rather than political and other considerations (Edino, Paul & Haruna, 2014:47). The

consequences are many. First, the bureaucrats (at whatever level of the organization) whose employment was manipulated by a godfather, owes his loyalty to his "helper" - the godfather. Consequently, there is no strict adherence to established rules and regulations. Bureaucrats tend to bend the rules in most instances for personal aggrandizement. Secondly, this generates poor performance of the public service and in service delivery generally. In the light of this, Yayale (2004 p. 13) laments:

> "An objective assessment of our public institutions shows that they are mostly far from meeting...expectations.....We know the experiences of contractors and other members of the public who visit government ministries either for transactions or mere information. The attitude and services of the Police receive daily commentaries. The standard of construction and pattern of maintenance of our roads are known. What about the hassles parents go through in securing admission for their children in schools and the unstable calendars of our higher institutions of learning? Should we be remanded of the services of NEPA in the supply of electricity and its billing system? "

Obviously, the consequences of politicizing the bureaucracy are enormous.

Lack of Political will to commit resources to policy implementation
Experience has shown that politicians often have their ideology, agenda and manifestoes which culminate in promises to the electorate. Experience has also revealed that one thing is to promise the masses, another thing is to fulfill promises by committing resources to service delivery. Unfortunately, in most cases, the bureaucracy is handicapped by lack of fiscal and material resources not made available with the implication been that such policies will not be effectively implemented (Onyekwelu, Okpalibekwe & Dike, 2015). In like manner, Uno (2015:96) laments that most policies in Nigeria have failed due to lack of accountability on the part of political leadership and public servants alike. Similarly, in a town hall meeting organized by the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Commission (ICPC) in conjunction with the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the ICPC zonal commissioner in charge of Anambara, Enugu and Ebonyi states, Mr Amodu Sule noted that "the rate at which constituency projects fail was alarming". Sule pointed out that "constituency projects are selected by legislators and provided for in the budgets of government ministries and agencies for execution, whereas, there are other projects that are developed and implemented directly by the executive arm of government" (Okafor, 2020). This implies a foul play on the part of the politicians and the bureaucrats a like.

Corruption
One of the major issues that have hindered and continues to hinder policy implementation in Nigeria is corruption. As Uno and Bassey, (2015:31) have noted:

> *"Resources meant to translate policy objectives to concrete realities are diverted within the implementation process. In very many cases, payments are made for jobs not executed and public officers frequently collect so much money from contractors, thus leading to abandonment of projects or shabby implementation of public programmes".*

With specific reference to poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria, various administrations had formulated different policies and programmes which all aimed at alleviating poverty. However, Onah, (2006:87) also notes that:

> *"Several studies on the various poverty alleviation programmes show that the programmes ended up benefiting the rich and not the poor... The funds were made available to the elite and not the poor. The elite who had access to the funds diverted*

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the funds to other sectors rather than agriculture. At the end, poverty was not alleviated, the poor increased in number and the agricultural sector faced a severe setback".

Thus, corruption by political office holders and bureaucrats in Nigeria has stigmatized the image of government, weakened its credibility and reduced the effectiveness of the department programmes (Ikoiwak in Sharma and Sadana, 2010 p 766).

Political interference
This connotes a situation where bureaucratic decisions are influenced, maneuvered and in most cases altered by the politicians for political advantage. Illustrating the scenario, Rogger (2014:7) noted that "once a project in a particular politician's constituency has been delegated to an organization, the politicians must choose whether to interact with the bureaucrats there and provide them with informal incentives". Rogger pointed out that "the formal incentive structure in the civil service is rigidly defined by the public service rules. Consequently, varying the formal contracting structure for a specific constituency is difficult if not impossible. Rogger concludes that if a politician wants to motivate a bureaucrat on a particular project in her constituency, she would have to provide these incentives informally. This requires interaction between politicians and bureaucrats. Thus, politicians can then offer an incentive contract made up of both elicit transfers and coercion.

Conflict between politicians and bureaucrats
Undoubtedly, both the politicians and the bureaucrats are involved in public policy formulation and implementation. The top bureaucrats mainly guide the politicians by offering them expert advice on the basis of their experience, expertise and in most cases, laid down rules and procedures. However, experience has shown that most of the politicians have no regard for rules and procedures. Ikwem (2014:3) puts the scenario in a clearer perspective when she posits that "while some political bosses may see civil servants as ultra conservative, too slow, lacking in initiative, corrupt and even label them as evil servants, the bureaucrat sees political appointees as a bunch of short timers who show no respect for laid down rules, regulations and procedures in their inordinate pursuit of political and selfish goals". In same vein, the question of who is really "in charge" - the politician or the bureaucrat remains conflictual. While the politician claims to have the political power (people's mandate) the bureaucrat on the other hand claims to have the knowledge, experience and the expertise for getting things done.

Conclusion and Recommendations
The Nigerian public/civil service is replete with a myriad of challenges and problems that obstruct the processes of public policy formulation and implementation. Chief among these include corruption, politicization of bureaucracy, conflict between politicians and bureaucrats in shaping and determining the end of public policy goals and lack of political will to commit resources to bring into reality public policy goals. These factors amongst others are responsible for failed public policy implementation in the public sector.

Moving forward and transcending these challenges, the following recommendations may help;
1. Appropriate demarcation of the roles and functions of bureaucrats and politicians;
2. Reorientation of the political class to see the need to gainfully commit resources to achieve public policy goals;
3. Reinforcement of public sector rules that bother on accountability and transparency;

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4. Creation of a system of checks and balance between the career bureaucrats and political executives; and
5. Minimization of undue political interference in administrative processes.

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