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**MANAGING EXCESSES IN NIGERIAN CIVIL SERVICE  
DELIVERY: AN APPRAISAL OF EFFECTIVENESS AND  
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**Abstract**

In an effort to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery, public policy regulatory mechanisms are utilised in ensuring control of civil servants and promote accountability in service delivery. This paper presents an overview of civil service in Nigeria, appraisal of the mechanisms of control and the effectiveness of the civil service system. The paper utilized documentary analysis to unveil that civil service delivery is ineffective and inefficient in Nigeria, and the public policy regulatory mechanisms established to ensure control and accountability have been failing due to incessant corruption across the governmental units. It therefore concludes that corruption must be drastically minimized if efficiency and effectiveness in the civil service must be attained. The study therefore recommended for strict anti-corruption mechanisms that can deter corruption in the civil service system, in addition to improved capacity for civil servants and minimal political interference.

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**Keywords:** Civil Service, Public Policy, Effectiveness, Accountability and Control

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**Introduction**

Across the world, civil service systems exist to deliver certain services to the public. These systems have over the years been assessed as effective or ineffective, and reasons for such conditions have been established. British civil service for

instance has been adjudged as the world's best due to its prowess in regulation, tax administration, policy making, human resources management, digital services and capabilities of workers. On the contrary, Hope (2014) observed that in Kenya, high level of corruption culture affects civil

service delivery. It has become so institutionalised that the existing framework has no will or capacity to end it. The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of civil service is therefore influenced by certain factors depending on the context.

Commonly, civil service regulatory mechanisms exist, as laid down rules in forms of policies, functions or laws that guide the business of government in the areas of budgetary control, personnel management, public accounts and other decision making processes. These assists in checkmating excesses in civil service system. They are also used in ensuring the subservience of public workers and keeping them to account. The mechanisms are designed to reduce the corrupt tendencies, abuse of office and mismanagement of resources.

Policy regulation is therefore about being accountable and ensuring control in service delivery. Accountability here is being liable to account, which denotes specific procedures and methods that assist in regulating the responsibilities of civil servants. It also provides control, which serves as the process of ensuring that actions are taken in a planned way and taking corrective measures to make civil servants conform to decisions (Manithaneyam, 2010). Therefore, in order to ensure effective and efficient supervision

of the roles and responsibilities of civil servants, such mechanisms are devised through administrative, financial, legislative or judicial instruments such as agencies that checkmate corruption, embodiment of rules, supervisory committees, personnel management boards or Constitutions.

This paper presents an overview of civil service, identified the specific public policy regulatory mechanisms used in controlling and keeping civil servants accountable, and examined the effectiveness of the system in the delivery of services in Nigerian context. It also discussed the effectiveness of the policy regulatory instruments thereby understanding its strength and weaknesses.

### **Civil Service**

Yamma (2017) citing Nwosu (1977) defined civil service as a term used to cover those public servants who are direct employees of the federal and state governments, other than the police, armed forces personnel, judicial personnel and teachers. Its usage excludes also employees of statutory corporations and boards. In a similar perspective, civil service includes all government departments, except Navy, Army and Air Force whose salaries and allowances are paid from money voted by the legislature. They comprise all the workers in the various ministries or departments apart from those who hold

political appointments. They are also regarded as career bureaucrats working mainly in the public sector as career professionals not political appointees.

The administrative structure employed in civil capacity to fulfil policies and programmes of government is referred to as civil service, established and viewed in terms of structure, including ministries and departments. The human occupants of such structures consists of ministers, permanent secretaries, (Yamma, 2017) lower clerical staff and higher administrative staff. The clerical staff are supervised directly by the higher administrative staff. Uduma (2003) presents some functions of civil service as follows:

- i. Policy implementation through ministries and extra-ministerial departments, bureaucrats and professionals who work in them;
- ii. Planning and projection of new ideas towards the achievement of governmental goals and objectives. The administration organises human and material resources to effect government policy decisions which concretize into improved infrastructure, good education and other social services for the people;
- iii. Manages public finances through the collection of approved public revenue, safe keeping of the funds

collected, budgeting, accountability and auditory of all government accounts;

- iv. Continuity of government machinery as the staff in this system are permanent in their respective offices, until their retirement age or time. They play stabilization role even when military is in power, as civil service is maintained in the running of government;
- v. Policy and programmes initiation of elected officers of both legislative and executive arms of government, to formulate and make for the civil populace. These laws are later left for the civil service for proper implementation;
- vi. Serve as advisers of government on public policies by virtue of their experience of long service and specialization in the administration of the government; and
- vii. Fostering industrial growth, monitoring and regulating the activities of all businesses and industries, providing social services and managing the affairs of public utilities, managing and evaluating education systems and programmes, improving agriculture, generating and managing federal or state government finances.

Nigerian Civil Service has its origins in organisations established by the British colonial times. Nigeria gained full independence in October 1960 under a Constitution that provided for a parliamentary government and a substantial measure of self-government for the country's three regions. Since then, various panels have studied and made recommendations for reforming of the Civil Service. A major change occurred with the adoption in 1979 of a Constitution modelled on that of the United States of America (FGN, 2009). The Civil Service has been undergoing gradual and systematic reforms and restructuring. It is mainly organized around the ministries, headed by a minister appointed by the President of Nigeria. It consists of employees in Nigerian government agencies other than the military. Most employees here are career civil servants in the Nigerian ministries, progressing based on qualifications and seniority (Pindiga, 2009).

### **Public Policy Regulatory Mechanisms of Civil Service in Nigeria**

In order to ensure accountability and control in Nigerian civil service, a number of mechanisms have been recognized by law. It takes several forms through the use of several instruments including Ombudsman, Mass/New Media, Civil

Service Commission, Civil Service Rules, Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly, Nigerian Police Force, Freedom of Information (FoI), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), Courts of Law, Forensic Auditing, Budgeting and National Orientation Agency (NOA). Some of these are discussed viz;

- i) **Ombudsman:** In Nigeria, this is popularly called “Public Complaints Commission”. It is a body vested with the power to investigate administrative abuses and injustices perpetrated by public servants against members of public in the cause of their duties. Other objectives of the Commission as identified by Mbaya (2009) include - preventing bureaucratic abuse, vindicating public officials when unjustly accused, introducing administrative reform and to right individuals’ wrongs. This body can therefore be used to check against abuse of power.
- ii) **Constitution:** This is a set of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which state or other organisation is governed. In Nigeria, these

principles are written down into a single document. This document serves as an instrument or tool for controlling the excesses of civil and public servants. The Constitution also provides legal backing to all the other established institutions that aid accountability and control.

- iii) **Courts of Law:** This is a judicial control where courts try civil servants who are involved in civil and criminal cases. The courts might compel a civil servant to perform his duties for which he is paid or prevent a civil servant from wrongful acts. Though civil servants are relatively permanent, they can be dismissed for inefficiency, unproductivity, dishonesty, etc.
- iv) **Civil Service Commission:** This body is vested with the powers to recruit, promote, transfer, discipline, dismiss, civil servants according to laid down rules. The Commission is empowered to retire civil servants for misconduct or when they reach retirement age. The Commission may even dismiss a civil servant for gross abuse of official duties. This way, adequate control and accountability can be ensured.

- v) **Civil Service Rules:** This is the body of rules referred to as the General Order (GO) and Financial Instructions (FI), now known as Civil Service Rules, by which civil servants are bound. It outlines the rules and regulations governing condition of service, duties and discipline of civil servants (Eneanya, 2014).
- vi) **Public Accounts Committee (PAC):** This refers to a committee in the legislature that must study public audit, invite ministers, permanent secretaries or other ministry officials to committee for questioning and issue a report of their findings subsequent to a government budget audit. It is established in Nigeria to ensure legislative oversight of the use of public funds. Through their actions, public servants can account for their actions and in-actions.
- vii) **Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC):** EFCC is a Nigerian law enforcement agency that investigates financial crimes such as advance fee fraud (419), and money laundering. Its mission is to rid Nigeria of economic and financial crimes and to effectively coordinate the domestic effort of the global fight against money

laundering and terrorists funding (EFCC, 2017). Public servants are held accountable for graft and other economic and financial related corrupt practices by this agency as they have the power to investigate any person, corporate body or organisation.

viii) **Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences**

**Commission (ICPC):** This is another corruption fighting agency established with the mandate of receiving and investigating reports of corruption in appropriate cases prosecute the offenders to examine, review and enforce the correction of corruption prone systems and procedures of public life, and to educate and enlighten the public on and against corruption and related offences with a view to enlisting and fostering public support for the fighting against corruption. This way, public servants can be reported by concerned or aggrieved individuals for proper investigation and prosecution.

ix) **Nigerian Police Force (NPF):** NPF is the principal law enforcement agency in Nigeria under the federal government with exclusive jurisdictions throughout the country and command offices across all the

36 states. They are charged with the protection of lives and properties, maintenance of law and order, preservation of peace amongst other internal security related duties. Basically, NPF receive public complaints and can be invited in some situations for immediate intervention in disagreements and public cries. This can serve as another control mechanism to civil servants and public servants at large.

x) **Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB):**

This is the pioneer anti-corruption agency set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria. It has the primary responsibility of checking corruption in the Nigerian Public Service (CCB, 2017). The bureau is given the mandate to establish and maintain a high standard of public morality in the conduct of government business and to ensure that the actions and behaviour of public officers conform to the highest standard of public morality and accountability.

xi) **Service Compact (SERVICOM):**

this initiative is established in 2004 by the Nigerian Federal Government in its effort to promote efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery across

ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). The charter will also ensure customer satisfaction and manage performance expectation gap between citizens and governments as it gives people the right to demand for improved services in line with MDA's service charter. This mechanism is therefore established to fight failures in public service delivery.

### **Effectiveness of Civil Service and the Policy Regulatory Mechanisms in Nigeria**

The International Growth Centre (IGC)'s survey of civil servants in Nigeria revealed high level of corruption, misaligned incentives and capacity issues, which hinders effective service delivery. The report also indicated that half of the projects and programmes budgeted for by the country's National Assembly were never initiated, and another fifth are not completed (Roger, 2012). This indicated ineffectiveness of the policy regulatory frameworks that were supposed to ensure control and accountability in the delivery of service among civil servants.

Bayo (2012) citing Easterly (2002) notes that inadequate evaluation, unmeasurable objectives, poor personnel management, disorganisation, over-centralisation and

inadequate facilities. These led to many civil service organisations to define their output as money disbursed rather than service delivered, produce a lot of low-return observable outputs and few high-return less observable activities like post evaluation, spin control, engagement in obfuscation, official amnesia exhibiting little learning from the past, and putting enormous demands on scarce administrative and technical skills (Bayo, 2012).

The Nigerian civil service has been excessively politicised to the extent that civil servants openly and actively participate in politics. Some of them serve as unofficial spokespersons of a political party or political office holders on social media, at events and public places with the hope of getting a better office in the long run, contracts and other gains. In addition, there is high level of government intervention in the activities and decisions of civil servants which leads to ineffectiveness in service delivery. Specifically, it affects the hiring and firing systems, increases favouritism, reduces professionalism and meritocracy and removes hope in the minds of public on the premise that the system can serve equitably. There are other negativities as late coming to work or total absenteeism, idleness and poor workmanship which becomes the new

normal in the system and constantly reduce the effectiveness and efficiency.

Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offenses Commission (ICPC) as anti-corruption body in Nigeria can only prosecute by proxies and receives petitions informally that passes many stages, until it gets through other related bodies or the law courts for trial, if a case had been established. There is therefore a cumbersome journey before a corrupt person is prosecuted. Moreover, there are many petitions by it and against it which slows its operation. The allegation of 2003 that senate screening committee demanded 54 million bribe seems closed as ICPC remained silent about it, without any prosecution made. On the positive part, the Commission had arrested and interrogated some top office holders for looting public treasury such as Abacha loot in Nigeria and abroad, the Saki East Local Government Area Chairman, Mr Oguntola between 2004 to 2006, ₦227 million case involving 5 states as Ekiti, Ondo, Kano, Sokoto and Akwa Ibom's government officials (Folarin, 2009) and recovery of 40 cars from retired Directors and Assistant Directors of Federal Ministry of Water Resources by ICPC, on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2017 (Obi, 2017).

The Economic and Financial Commission (EFCC), in principle and practice, appears

more effective than Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offenses Commission (ICPC) because it has the power to prosecute and penalise. Similar to ICPC, it has many pending cases. They have over the years succeeded in prosecuting a number of persons such as recovering ₦640 Billion and over 500 people in money laundering cases, Tafa Balogun (former Inspector General of Police) for using his office to embezzle 128 Million Dollars, uncovered ₦50 Million scandal involving Professor Fabian Osuji and arrested Dr. (Mrs.) Imaobong Akon Esu-Nte, an officer with the Federal Ministry of Finance over corruption allegations, abuse of office and money laundering in May, 2016 (Anu, 2016). The Commission has been accused on several counts such as the accusations of bribery in the National Assembly when former President Olusegun Obasanjo's plan to extend his tenure through Constitutional amendment. Folarin (2009) added that due to its close affinities to the Presidency, the Commission have problem prosecuting corrupt serving public officials and those who appear to be in good books with the Presidency. This is indeed a major setback.

In Nigeria, Public Accounts Committee (PAC), a committee in the legislature exist with the primary mandate of ensuring legislative oversight of the use of public

funds. Through their actions, public servants can account for their actions and in-actions. However, instead of such committee to check the significant financial indiscipline and wastages of national resources, it adds up to the existing ones. By law, they can engage in public audit, invite ministers, permanent secretaries or other ministry officials for questioning and issue a report of their findings subsequent to a government budget audit. Conversely, the committee members liaise with various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to embezzle resources.

The judiciary as an arm of government can play significant role in the impartial law interpretation, conflict resolution and hope for the depressed. However, the high level of corruption in all sectors of Nigeria obviously explains what one should expect out of a judiciary. Nigerian judiciary is widely considered as a corrupt institution to the extent that officials request for bribes to win cases, move them faster or obtain bail. This is in addition to high level of legal cost which deter citizens from gaining access to justice. This has undoubtedly affect the control courts of law would have had on civil service system in the country. With a functional and effective law courts, accountability can be enforced through legal instruments and adjudication.

Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is an official body, established by law and is responsible for the protection of lives and properties of citizens. It is an internal security mechanism that carries out arrest of culprits and arraign them before a court of law, when needed. Unfortunately, the institutions is attributed to corruption, and regarded as the most corrupt by many citizens and civil society groups. One easily detect anomalies, unprofessionalism and inadequate expertise in their arrest processes, extrajudicial killings, management of cases and other operations, despite its position as the major security provider. A study by Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project [SERAP] (2018) identified the NPF as the most corrupt public institution in Nigeria, followed by Power Sector, Judiciary, Education and Health ministries. The report unveils 63% probability that citizens would be asked to pay bribe each time they interacted with the Police, and the bribe is paid in 54% of such interactions (SERAP, 2018). Therefore, the Police loses its position as an instrument of ensuring control and accountability in the civil service system of Nigeria.

Service Compact (SERVICOM) is another public policy regulatory mechanism established in 2004 with the mandate of fighting failures in public service delivery

across all MDAs. However, after 16 years of its establishment, recurring poor services still exist, such as inaccessible and poor quality services, poor public confidence, dissatisfaction among customers, poor auditory systems, confusing institutional arrangements, bribery dealings, favouritism to ethnoreligious circles and loyalists, and waste of resources. Not a reasonable success has been recorded in changing the public service anomalies, as inefficiencies and ineffectiveness are still prevalent in the system. Though Emejulu, Muo and Chukwuemeka (2014) are of the opinion that the structural and attitudinal changes introduced by SERVICOM brought significant improvements in the performance of service units in Nnamdi Azikwe University Teaching Hospital. However, this is not enough to justify improvements as core civil service sectors like ministries and departments in federal and state governments have less or nothing to show.

Although Freedom of Information (FoI) Act exist as a law in Nigeria since 2011, Lear (2014) observed that only two states (Ekiti and Lagos) have adopted it at the same level from 7-14 days, though more states are expected to adopt it and come up with their own version. The passing of the law would have been a victory for Nigerians all over the world the freely say

their opinions as Olodo (2014) asserts. However, it is yet to be pronounced in full force.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is based on Max Webber's Bureaucratic Theory. Bureaucracy according to Webber constitutes the most efficient and rational way in which human activity can be organised, and that it is indispensable to the modern world. Bureaucratic theory serves as basis for rational and systemic shaping of organisations, and its designed to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery. It is related to the structure and administrative processes of organisations, which Webber believed can be used in attaining effectiveness and efficiency. Such organisations have hierarchy in authority, rules and regulations guiding operations, trained personnel as manpower, work divided based on specialization, consideration of meritocracy in recruitments and promotions, impersonality in the application of rules.

The adoption of bureaucracy is therefore calling for highly formalised, structured and impersonal organisations, with defined responsibilities, rules and hierarchy of authority in the attainment of effective service delivery. The civil service system in Nigeria is established by law, and has documented rules, responsibilities,

hierarchy of authority and formal structure. However, the rules, regulations and hierarchical structure are not respected in operation. This testifies to the incessant corrupt practices in the system. Additionally, meritocracy is not observed in most recruitments and promotions, which gives room for unqualified staff to assume office. This is as a result of favouritism and nepotism among the recruitment officers or senior civil servants, and some politicians who want their loyalists to get employed. These diminishes the integrity and effectiveness of the system.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

While civil service is meant to serve in an objective, professional, neutral and as non-partisan, the Nigerian civil service systems lacks these attributes. The policy regulatory mechanisms established to ensure control and accountability for effective service delivery have also failed due to a common cancer “corruption”, in addition to political interference, inadequate capabilities and motivation systems, which allows the civil service system in an ineffective and unaccountable manner. Therefore, for Nigeria to achieve effectiveness in its civil service system, these anomalies must be addressed frontally. Not just through policy regulatory frameworks, but also through advocacy and campaigns by all

stakeholders, including civil society organisations, traditional and religious institutions. While judiciary is supposed to adjudicate, at times civil society groups must track wrong-doings and present them to appropriate authorities for punishment. Furthermore, the welfare packages of civil servants must also be improved because Nigerian civil servants are poorly paid especially at state and local government levels despite the institutionalization of ₦30,000 minimum wage policy, as most governments ignore the law in practice.

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