FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE REFORM IN NIGERIA: THE CASE OF DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

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ABSTRACT

Civil Service as a government institution plays important role in ensuring that government policies result in tangible services for the population. In fact, without the body of professional civil servants, national government cannot operate effectively and efficiently. In Nigeria, the Federal Civil Service has been enmeshed in myriads of problems: weak governance structure, red-tapism, weak accountability, low professional standards, waste and corruption, poor productivity, and lack of control, redundancy and over-bloated staff structure, ever since the country’s independence from Britain in 1960. To have a result-oriented and modern civil service, successive governments in Nigeria have introduced reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service. Still, the service remains inefficient and suffers from obsolescence, lethargy and a lack of enthusiasm in carrying out government policies. This paper argues that these reforms failed because
there is lack of democratic practices in the administration of civil service, and the government reform exercise did nothing to address it. This paper makes case for democratic centralism in order to resolve the persistent deterioration in the quality of governance, bureaucratic bottleneck and problems of ineffectiveness, accountability and productivity currently plaguing Federal civil service in Nigeria. Such a case rests on democratizing the decision-making processes and administrative structure of the civil service. Having outlined how model of democratic centralism should be implemented in the context of ongoing Federal Civil Service reform, the paper concludes that reforming Nigerian Civil Service in line with the principle of democratic centralism will help to build institutional capability that will improve institutional structures and processes, enhance the ability of Nigerian public institutions to perform specific activities so as to achieve its goals in a sustainable way, and provide strong institutions that devoid of corruption, and adhere to rule of law, peoples’ aspirations, and societal expectations.

Key Words: Civil Service, Reform, Democratic Centralism, Nigeria and Institutions

INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of the modern state, the civil service in post-colonial African countries evolved not only to formulate policies but also to effectively implement them. In this regard, the civil service is an institution saddle with the responsibility of designing, formulating and implementing public policy, and discharge government functions and development programmes in an effective and efficient way. In many African countries especially Nigeria, development efforts and government policies are threatened by the incompetency and ineffectiveness of the civil service. As a result of this, successive

1 The term ‘civil service’ in this paper refers to the service within government ministries and departments charged with the responsibility of implementing public policies. As Ezeani (2005) pointed out civil service comprises all employees working in the public service including those in parastatals, police force and armed forces. In this case, all civil servants are public servants.
governments in Nigeria (from post-independence era to the contemporary times), have embarked on articulated patterns of reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness in the civil service. Still, the service remains inefficient and incapable of reforming itself (Salisu, 2001:1) and bedevilling by weak governance structure, red-tapism, weak accountability, low professional standards, waste and corruption, poor productivity, and lack of control, redundancy and over-bloated staff structure.

However, what has been done so far in terms of Civil Service reforms are no more than addressing the symptom rather than the cause of the rot—as the current quest to reform the general staff audit and payroll clean up; Ministries, Departments and Agencies/Parastatal changes based on restructuring; and cross-cutting Service-wide changes, Monetization of Fringe Benefits, Pay Reform, Review and Update of Public Service Rules and Financial Regulations without delving into the governance and democratisation of administrative structure will be futile and unsustainable at best. This paper posits that these reforms failed because there is lack of democratic practices in the administration of civil service, and the government reform exercise did nothing to address it. The paper therefore argues that the gains of ongoing civil service reform will be defeated if effort is not made at democratizing the decision-making processes and administrative structure of the civil service. It however proposes democratic centralism as the best strategy and approach to resolve the persistent deterioration in the quality of governance, bureaucratic bottleneck and problems of ineffectiveness, accountability and productivity currently plaguing civil service in Nigeria.

The paper is organised into eight sections. It traces the origin of Nigerian civil service in section two; reviewing the challenges and reforms of civil service in Nigeria in section three and four; critically appraising previous reforms in section five; addressing and introducing the concept of democratic centralism in section six; applying democratic centralism in relations to the context of ongoing civil service reform in section seven; discussing the
implication of democratic centralism to the administration of civil service in section eight. I conclude in section nine.

THE ORIGIN OF CIVIL SERVICE IN NIGERIA

The history of civil service can be traced to the history of colonialism and the development of capitalism in Nigeria in 19th century. Inevitably, the history of civil service in Nigeria can be attributed to the history of Modern Nigeria itself. Prior to the colonial rule, different ethnic groups and societies that make up today’s Nigeria, lived in clans and empires. In the north, there exist Islamic Sokoto caliphates (of Borgu, Sokoto, Kano and Kanuri); while in the West and East exist different empires and communities. The development of capitalism that came in the aftermath of industrial revolution in Western Europe imposed national limitations to its economic expansion later resorted to imperialism or imperialist quest for new colonies for trade and investment, and cheap source of raw material and mineral resources to feed its ever bourgeoning industries, as a way of strengthened it political and economic domination at home and oversea. The British colonial power through conquest forcefully integrated different ethnic communities and kingdoms under Lagos colony and established direct rule in 1861. Civil service was created in 1862 with the specific purpose: the survival of capitalism in colonial Nigeria, and the stability of colonial capitalist state structure. As a result, British government established different hierarchical positions of Governor, Chief Magistrate, Colonial Secretary and Senior Military Officers, Offices of Private Secretary to the Governor, Auditor for Public Accounts, Chief Clerk, and Collector of Customs. These public bureaucracies was established as the essential ingredient, livewire, and sine-quonon for the consolidation of pre-colonial state structure in Nigeria. Later, the Niger Coast protectorate was merged with the Lagos colony and became the Southern protectorate in 1900. With this a whole of Southern Nigeria was brought under the same

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2 See Background to the Nigerian Civil Service available at http://www.ohcsf.gov.ng/about_civil_service.html
civil service with its headquarter in Lagos. But in the Northern protectorates, the colonial power established the system of indirect rule where the traditional rulers serve as the link between the colonial civil service and the people. Under this arrangement, the emirs retained their caliphates title and positions, became the executors of British policy in their respective domain, but they were responsible to British district officers, who had final authority. With indirect rule, caliphate officials were transformed into salaried district heads and became, in effect, agents of the British authorities, responsible for peacekeeping and tax collection in their respective domain without any formal power to initiate development projects to improve socio-economic development (Ozigi and Ocho 1981:41; Tibenderana 1988:67). The balance of power rest squarely with the colonial official (governor-General) who has the power to fire any erring emir at will. Overall, the objective of the colonial civil service was for tax collection and maintenance of law and order in Nigeria (Ogundiya, 2007).

The Colonial rulers had contemplated effective capitalist system where railroad lines will be able to transport tin from Jos Plateau and northern-grown peanuts and cotton to ports on the Lagos coast. But the drawback faced by capitalist expansion in the northern protectorates was the lack of access to the sea, and that Northern Protectorate had a budget deficits. The Colonial official under the leadership of Fredrick Lugard wanted to use the budget surpluses in the Southern protectorates to offset this deficit (Barkan and Gboyega, 2001) and hoped that amalgamation of the two protectorates into a single entity would help to ameliorate this problem, and make effective colonial administration easier. Then, the construction of railway from the North to the South began. Because of the shortage of skilled personnel that will manage the emerging bureaucracies, the colonial power quickly realised that the need to develop the indigenous manpower so as to aid the effective functioning of the colonial rule. Therefore, western education was introduced, with more schools for the natives especially in Southern Nigeria were built to train them to
become railway workers, doctors, clerks, teachers, local administrators, etc. who are the embryo of the coming Nigeria intelligentsia and proletariat (working class). While in the North, colonial rule under Lord Lugard was reluctant to permit missionaries the opening of schools in Northern Nigeria, in order not to offend the Emirs on whom the country's administration relied. Though, few schools were permitted, but this colonial decision legitimatised complete feudalisation of Northern Nigeria where the emirs and the local ruling class entrenched Islamic education in order to prevent opposition to their misrule and domination.

By 1906, the British Government had extended its authority over most of Nigeria, and began to establish its instruments of Law and Order such as Departments of Judiciary, Police, Prisons, Public Works Department and the Departments of Customs, Ports and Telegraph\(^3\). The amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates into a single entity called Nigeria in 1914 helped put in place a centralised administration, with regional structure of civil service in the country. The real structure of the service as we now know it was put in place by Sir Hugh Clifford who succeeded Lord Lugard and was appointed Governor of Nigeria. He established a Central Secretariat in Lagos in 1921. In 1939 similar Secretariats were established for the three broad groups of Provinces administered from Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna. The 1940s and 1950s saw the emergence of the Nationalist Nigerian Administrator and marked the beginning of a truly Nigerian Civil Service. This period also marked the beginning of pressures for Reforms in the Nigerian Political and Civil Service Structure. Clearly, the Nigerian Civil Service has its origins in organizations established by the British in colonial times. A public service with colonial heritage of public administration during which the upper echelon of the civil service was dominated by the Europeans on whom were concentrated executive, judicial and legislative powers.

\(^3\) See Historical Development of the Nigerian Civil Service at [http://www.ohcsf.gov.ng/about_civil_service.html](http://www.ohcsf.gov.ng/about_civil_service.html)
Succeeding constitutional reviews increased the stake of Nigerians at the helm of the public service until Independence in 1960⁴.

In 1945, Nigerian Civil service was unified based on the recommendations of the Walayn Committee. The unification that brought both regional civil services in the North and south together came with significant changes such as the admission of Africans into higher grades of the civil service and the creation of the Central Public Service Board⁵. By 1954, the wave of decolonisation and independence movement that came in the aftermath of second world war have significant influence on the colonial power who are eager to bequeath the legacy of colonial bureaucracies and thus established Federal Public Service Commission with autonomous power to ‘appoint, promote, dismiss, and discipline junior civil servants under Macpherson Constitution. At Independence on 1 October 1960, the powers of the renamed Federal Civil Service Commission were extended to cover all civil service grades⁶.

The Nigerian civil service at post-independence was indigenised and witnessed shortage of local skilled manpower that can take over most of the offices left behind by the departed foreign personnel. While the country’s political power was handed over to the Northern political elites by the departing British colonists, the Civil service were dominated by the retinue of officers who are of southern origin. This lopsidedness in the recruitment into civil service was attributed to the preference of Islamic education to that of western education in the Northern part of Nigeria. As Danjibo (2009) noted the colonial authorities conspired with the Northern elite at the inception of colonial administration through the indirect rule to shield the Muslim north from being exposed to Western education and culture, and the consequential impact was that the north lacked the human capacity to run its

⁶ ibid
administration at the eve of independence\textsuperscript{7}. The post colonial Nigerian governments inherited administrative structures which were geared overwhelmingly to the requirements of the former British colonial powers whose concern were more with the extraction of natural resources than with economic and human development (Corkery, 1995). As a result, Nigerian government were not only confronted with the need to establish a whole machinery of government that would promote accountability, predictability, transparency, participation, and efficiency and effectiveness but to change the focus of civil service from that of colonial legacy of tax collection to the role of social service delivery, infrastructural development and nation building—capable of assisting the new government to plan and accelerate the pace of Nigeria’s socio-economic development (Okotoni, 2004: 224). The post colonial Nigeria ruling elite adopted the colonial bureaucratic legacy and expanded on package of imitative postcolonial reform that was based on inherited colonial legacy of elitism, paternalism, despotism, distrust, centralisation, secrecy, formalism, aloofness, hierarchical rigidity and urban bias (Haque, 1997:433).

The collapse of first republic in Nigeria vis-à-vis Military intervention in the polity in 1966 brought forward the inevitable role of civil service in the management of public institutions. Okotoni (2003) observed that the ‘top civil servants openly assumed political responsibilities. They were not only seen, but they were heard. They were in effect, responsible for policy formulation and implementation, while the military were preoccupied more with the prosecution of the civil war. The era also witnessed the emergence of higher civil servants, dubbed ‘Supper Permanent Secretaries’. They became highly influential ‘political technocrats’, particularly between 1970 and 1975. It was an era of highly bureaucratic power. But the fall of General Yakubu Gowon military regime on July 29, 1975 marked the end of the ‘golden age’ of the civil servants in the act of governance\textsuperscript{8}.

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Despite the history and politicisation of the Nigerian civil service from the post independent era to contemporary time, civil service still serve as the important bridge between the government and the people and help to coordinate state policies and programmes in social and economic management in terms of formulation and implementation of government’s policies, gathering and supplying of data for policy makers, ensuring continuity of services and public relations services.

**COMPOSITIONS AND PROBLEMS OF CIVIL SERVICE IN NIGERIA**

Since the independent era, the structure and composition of the Nigerian civil service has changed and witnessed significant transformation. Immediately after independence, the Civil Service comprises the Federal civil service and the other civil services in three regions (West, east and North) and later between the Federal civil service and that of the twelve states of the federation. Currently, the Nigerian civil service comprises the federal civil service, the thirty-six autonomous state civil services, the unified local government service, and several federal and state government agencies, including parastatals and corporations. The federal and state civil services were organized around government departments, or ministries, and extra ministerial departments headed by ministers (federal) and commissioners (state), who were appointed by the president and governors, respectively. These political heads were responsible for policy matters. The administrative heads of the ministry were the permanent secretaries who were former called Director-General. The chief director general was the secretary to the government and until the Second Republic also doubled as head of the civil service. As chief adviser to the government, the head of the civil service conducted liaison between the government and the civil service. Generally, the structure of Nigerian Civil Service is patterned on the British style. The service is divided into the following classes: administrative class, executive class, professional class, clerical class and the messengerial class who function as a catalyst for crystallizing the shared goals
of the society and as a machinery of public policy formulation and implementation. Despite its contributions to national development and democratic stability, the civil service over the years has been plagued by numerous problems.

Prominent among these problems is politicisation. The Nigerian civil service had been politicized to the extent that most top officials openly supported the government of the day. The introduction of the quota system of recruitment and promotion, adherence to the federal-character principle, and the constant interference of the government in the day-to-day operation of the civil service—especially through frequent changes in top officials and massive purges—meant that political factors rather than merit alone played a major role in the civil service. Eme and Ugwu (2011) noted that ‘the enthronement of federal character principle of recruitment and other spoils system techniques have sacrificed efficiency and effectiveness in the Nigerian public service’. Subsequent observation by Mohammed Salisu posits that ‘considerable political interference in the process of personnel administration has led to improper delegation of power, ineffective supervision and corruption. Thus, result in official apathy that has so far culminated into unauthorized and unreasonable absenteeism, lateness and idleness and, notably, poor workmanship’ (Salisu 2001: 2).

Strong institutions cannot emerge from present day Nigerian civil service where top echelons of these bureaucracies are handpicked on the basis of ethnicity, religion and class. Furthermore, disgruntled elements within and outside the civil service tend to politicise the activities of state by reading meanings and prejudice on government policies and programmes on the basis of primordial, religious, ethnic and regional sentiments. For instance, the recent government policy that limit the tenured the position of permanent secretaries to eight years regardless of age as a person or in service, has generated huge controversy as the affected officials used religion, ethnic and parochial sentiments to fight back. The policy stipulated that two terms of four years each for permanent secretaries with officials only allowed to commence the second tranche after being evaluated on
completion of the first and found worthy. This implies that whatever effort that calls for more accountability in spending and the reduction of waste in carrying out government’s activities or attempts at preventing corruption and underhand dealing will be blackmailed and politicised by the affected officials in order to maintain the status quo.

Another problem with the Civil Service in Nigeria is the high level of corruption (Okotoni 2003: 225; Expo 1979). Corruption is a major problem limiting public bureaucracies in Nigeria. Corrupt practices occur in nearly all ministries, departments, and agencies where virtually all members of the upper and lower levels of the bureaucracy are involved. Graft and corruption include bribery, extortion, and nepotism, and are characterized by the subordination of public interests to private aims and violations of the norms of duty and welfare, accompanied by secrecy, betrayal, deception and a callous disregard for any consequences suffered by the public. The public considers graft and corruption to be widespread and persistent in Nigerian civil service (Ogunrotifa 2012a).

Finally, Nigerian civil service are fraught with the following problems and discontents: lack of measurable objectives; inadequate evaluations; mismanagement of time; inadequate facilities; disorganization; personnel mismanagement; and over centralization. These internal weaknesses led many ‘public organizations to: define their output as money disbursed rather than service delivered, produce many low-return observable outputs (glossy reports and ‘frameworks) and few high-return less observable activities like ex - post evaluation, engage in obfuscation, spin control, and official amnesia exhibiting little learning from the past, and putting enormous demands on scarce administrative and technical skills’ (Easterly, 2002: 223). This however culminates in marring of government’s laudable policies vis-a-vis poor implementation strategies (i.e. bureaucratic procedures).
adopted by the civil service, effecting unworkable solutions, putting obstacles in the way of policies formulated by the political officials (Okotoni, 1996).

However, these problems associated with the Nigerian civil service stems from the Max Weber model (western) of bureaucracy that Nigerian Civil Service adopted couple with lack of political will by the ruling elite and the nature of economic system in Nigeria—capitalism that emphasizes primitive and excessive accumulation of wealth. These factors together contributed to the failure of the numerous attempts to reform the civil service from post-independence period to date.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS IN NIGERIA

Since the independence era, the Nigerian Civil service has undergone series of reforms aimed at tackling the problems of the institution and repositions it to meet the development challenges of the 21st century. From 1960 to date, the table below summarises the successive reforms civil service in Nigeria had underwent.

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<tr>
<th>Name of the Reform Commission/Panel</th>
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<tr>
<td>Morgan Commission</td>
<td>1963</td>
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<td>Eldwood Commission</td>
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<td>Adebo Commission</td>
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<td>Udoji Commission</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<td>Dotun Phillips Commission</td>
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<td>Decree No. 43</td>
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This paper tend to limit the review of the previous civil service reforms from post independence period to date in order to examine and understand the dynamics of transformational change that has shaped civil service, and what is absolutely lacking in most of these reforms.

**The Morgan Commission (1963)/Elwood Grading Team (1966)**

The nationalist movement that ushered independence in 1960 used indigenisation of civil service as part of its campaign. Shortly after the colonial rule, prescient Nigerian leaders at that time introduced and implemented Nigerianisation policy where British officials in the civil service were replaced with Nigerians. The fallout of this policy came with attendant problems such as shortage of skilled manpower, inefficiency, politicisation and complaint about wages. The general strike of September 27, 1963 put intensive pressure on the government and was forced to set up Morgan commission to look into the agitations of trade unions for increases in wages. Morgan commission not only revised salaries and wages of junior staff of the Federal government but introduced for the first time a minimum wage for each region of the country (El-Rufai, 2008). The outcome of the Morgan Report metamorphosed into the Elwood Grading Team. The Elwood commission was appointed to identify and investigate anomalies in the grading and other conditions relating to all posts in the Public Service of the Federation, with a view to determining an
appropriate grading system and achieving uniformity in the salaries of officers performing identical duties (Collins, 1980:324).

**The Adebo Commission (1971)**

The Adebo panel was commissioned to ‘review the existing wages and salaries at all level in the public services and in the statutory corporations and state-owned companies’ (Collins, 1980:324). The commission observed that low remuneration package is responsible for extreme shortage of senior civil servants. The Adebo Commission therefore ‘recommended the setting up of a Public Service Review Commission to exhaustively examine several fundamental issues, such as the role of the Public Service Commission, the structure of the Civil Service, and its conditions of service and training arrangements’\(^\text{10}\). The acceptance of the recommendations of the Commission led to the setting up of the Udoji Public Service Review Commission.

**Udoji Commission Of 1974**

The Udoji Public Service Review Commission of 1974 was set up during tenure of General Yakubu Gowon to review and over-haul the entire public service, and to ensure development and optimum utilization of manpower for efficiency and effectiveness in the service (Anazodo et al, 2012: 22). The major thrust of the commission is to carry out holistic reform of the civil service in terms of ‘organization, structure and management of the public service; investigate and evaluate methods of recruitment and conditions of employment; examine all legislation relating to pension, as regarding all post; establish scale of salaries corresponding to each grade as a result of job evaluation’ (ibid). The Commission recommended a coordinated salary structure that would be universally applicable to the Federal and State Civil Services, the Local Government Services, the Armed Forces, the Nigeria Police, the Judiciary, the Universities, the Teaching Services and
Parastatals. The Commission further recommended the introduction of an open reporting system for performance evaluation, and suggested the creation of a senior management group, comprising administrative and professional cadres (Salisu 2001: 3). The relevance of Udoji Commission is particularly salient in its proposition of modern management style, techniques and procedures that enhance the efficient functioning of the institution (such as the adoption of a “New Style Public Service based on Project Management, management by objective (MBO) and Planning Programming and Budgeting System (PPBS). Added to this is the recommendation that encourage the mobility of manpower between the private and public sectors. Udoji commission is credited with providing a comprehensive review of standard and quality service delivery, and compensation in the entire public service (Dibie 2003:81)

Dotun Phillips Commission (1985)

The Dotun Philips Civil Service Reform of 1988 was set up by the Military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida to review the structure, composition and methods of operation to cope with the demands of government in the 1980s and beyond, (Omoruyi, 1991). The commission looked into the problems of inefficiency, lapses and inadequacies in the civil service and attempt to introduce structural changes that could ensure swiftness in administrative practices and eliminate rigour of red-tapism. The report of Dotun Philips commission recommended that the position of Permanent secretary be replaced by more politically oriented position of Director-General (Jain 2004:127). The overview of the commission report, as Anazodo et al (2012) observed, suggest that ‘the minister was made both the chief executive and the accounting officer of his ministry. But before the reform the permanent secretary was the accounting officer of the ministry. The permanent secretary’s appointment was made political as its duration/tenure was left for the pleasure of the president or governor by making their position non-permanent any longer. The Dotun Philips reforms properly and correctly aligned the civil service structure with the
constitution and presidential system of government, designating permanent secretaries as directors-general and deputy ministers. They were meant to retire with the president or governor. The permanent secretary had a choice whether or not to accept the post. The review commission professionalized the Civil Service, because every officer whether a specialist or generalist made his career entirely in the ministry or department of his choice. Each ministry was made to undertake the appointment, discipline and promotions of its staff and the ministries of finance and national planning were merged. The acceptance of some of the recommendations of Dotun Philips Commission report led to the Civil Service Reform Decree No. 43 of 1988.

**Civil Service Reform Decree No. 43 of 1988**

The Civil Service Reform Decree No. 43 was implemented under the Military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1988. The reform which was widely termed ‘Decree No. 43’ was a military fiat that aimed at repositioning civil service without input and democratic discussion from the public. The 1988 reforms formally recognized the politicization of the upper echelons of the civil service and brought about major changes in other areas. The main highlights of 1998 reforms are: the merging of ministerial responsibilities and administrative controls and their investment in the Minister as Chief Executive and Accounting Officers; (b) replacement of the designation of Permanent Secretary with ‘Director-General’ whose tenure will terminate with the Government that appointed him/her and who will serve as Deputy Minister; greater ministerial responsibility in the appointment, promotion, training and discipline of staff; vertical and horizontal restructuring of ministries to ensure overall management efficiency and effectiveness; permanency of appointment, as every officer, is to make his/her career entirely in one Ministry; abolition of the Office of the Head of Civil Service; and abolition of the pool system (Igbuzor, 1998:8).
The reform also established new administrative department called—the Presidency with retinue of top government officials, purposely to coordinate the formulation of policies and monitor their execution, and serve as the bridge between the government and the civil service (all federal ministries and departments)\textsuperscript{12}. However, the 1988 Civil Service Reforms despite its lofty ideals of efficiency, professionalism, accountability, and checks and balances, did not achieve its desired objectives.

Alison Ayida Panel of 1994

The Ayida Review Panel on the Civil Service Reforms was inaugurated on 10th November 1994 to, amongst others, re-examine the 1988 Reforms. The Report of the Panel was highly and constructively critical of the 1988 Reforms. It reversed most of the reforms of 1988, namely, that the: civil service should revert to the system that is guided by the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Civil Service Rules, the Financial Regulations and Circulars; the Ministers should continue to be the Head of the Ministry and should be responsible for its general direction but he/she should not be the Accounting Officer. Instead, the Permanent Secretary should be the Accounting Officer of the Ministry; the title of Permanent Secretary should be restored. She/he should be a career officer and should not be asked to retire with the regime that appointed him/her; the post of Office of the Head of Civil Service should be re-established as a separate office under the President and a career civil servant should be appointed to head the office; the pool system be restored for those professional and sub-professional cadres that commonly exist in ministries/extra ministerial departments; ministries/extra-ministerial departments should be structured according to their objectives, functions and sizes and not according to a uniform pattern as prescribed by the 1988 Reforms. Each could have between two(2) to six(6) departments; personnel management functions in the Civil Service should be left to the Federal Civil Service Commission with delegated powers to ministries; financial accountability in the
Civil Service should be enhanced through strict observance of financial rules and regulations; recruitment into the Federal Civil Service at the entry point should be based on a combination of merit and Federal Character, but further progression should be based on merit; Decree 17 of 1984 which empowers government to retire civil servants arbitrarily should be abrogated; the retirement age in the Civil Service should be sixty (60) years irrespective of the length of service; Government should harmonize the pension rates of those who retired before 1991 and those who retire after 1991; and salaries, allowances and welfare packages of civil servants should be substantially reviewed upwards and should be adjusted annually to ameliorate the effects of inflation, and discourage corruption (Anazodo et al, 2012; Emma and Eme, 2011; Fatile and Adejuwon 2010).

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM UNDER PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO (1999-2007)

The inception of transition to civilian rule that ushered the emergence of President Olusegun Obasanjo as the Nigerian Head of state came with fulfilling ‘electioneering’ promise of reforming the civil service and other public institutions with a view to expunging extant rules, procedures and regulations that frustrate effective service delivery consistent with modern systems in the Civil Service. The economic philosophy under which civil service reform under Obasanjo regime hinge was on market: ‘that government has no business in business’. Therefore, all the existing government projects, plants, enterprises, refineries and shareholdings in industries, trade, banking, finance and agriculture must be privatised and sold, so that government, particularly the Federal Government, can concentrate on governance. So, the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) has been very active, since the present regime came on board on May 29, 1999, in selling off enterprises, including houses and other landed properties owned by the Government. The major thrust of Civil Service reform under Obasanjo regime can be summarised in five ways:

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Pension Reform

In 2004, General Olusegun Obasanjo regime enacted a law to decentralise and privatise pension administration in Nigeria through the Pension Reform Act 2004. By this Act, the National Pension Commission (PENCOM) was constituted as a regulatory authority to oversee and check the activities of 25 registered Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs). This new pension scheme is in line with the regime's neo-liberal policies in all areas of life.

Before the 2004 new scheme, there had been in existence the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) and in 1962 the creation of National Provident Fund as compulsory savings for workers in both public and private sectors. This old pension scheme was inherited from British colonialism, which purposely designed it for expatriates. It later accommodated local public sector workers and was in operation until the 2004 decentralised and privatised scheme. Although, in 1974, a little amendment was made which retained the private sector within the National Provident Fund, the public sector was withdrawn from it. And in 1993, another amendment was made with NSITF re-established and converted from a Provident Fund into a Limited Social Insurance Scheme. The old pension scheme of 1962, as amended in 1974 and 1993, was very relatively favourable to workers (Elekwa et al 2011:20). It was a non-contributory benefit scheme that allowed government to allocate specific resources to the consolidated revenue meant to pay pensioners. This, of course made, at least, public sector attractive to workers since their old age could be guaranteed after quitting service, especially in a country where there is no social benefit for the unemployed and senior citizens.

The Contributory Pension Reform which is one of the key elements in the Public Service Reforms was to ensure that persons who have worked in the public and private sectors receive their retirement benefits as and when due. Under this new scheme, a compulsory
contribution of 7.5% of workers' basic salary and 7.5% of same from employers of labour will now become pension of workers after retirement. The scheme accommodates workers in both public and private sectors with minimum of five employees, and only pensioners and those with 3 years to retirement as from 2004 are exempted (Salami and Odeyemi 2012:3). The new scheme, therefore applies only to the workers from 2008. The analysis of the Pension reform act suggests that the new pension scheme is not uniform to all categories of workers. While 7.5% of every worker salary is deducted as his/her contribution to pension with the employers remitting 7.5%, totalling 15%, only 2.5% is deducted from armed forces workers while their employer – government – remits 12.5%, totalling 15%. Again, judiciary workers under Section 8 (2) of the 2004 Pension Reform Act are exempted from the new scheme entirely. This Contributory Pension scheme adopted the Chilean pension system put in place by the brutal military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in 1974.

Monetization Policy

The new monetization policy which is one of the key elements in the Public Service Reforms that will help to ascertain the true cost of spending that government officials used in maintaining governmental positions. The fundamental aim of the policy is to prevent and thwart government officials from using the Public or tax-payers money for personal gain. Prior to the implementation of this policy, public office holders and civil servants had numerous fringe benefits attached to the condition of service and remuneration of package. For instance, for most civil servants and public officials, residential quarters were provided, furnished and maintained by Government. Utility bills for these quarters, including electricity, water and telephone services, were also picked up by Government at minimal cost to the Officers. In a similar manner, Government facilitated procurement of vehicles by these Officers at generous rates that could be conveniently deducted from their salaries. Domestics Servants were hired for them at Government expense while their
medical bills as well as those of their spouses and children were also defrayed from public purse. However, with the new monetization policy that was passed into law vis-à-vis passage of certain Political and Judicial Office Holders Acts 2002, it is legally stated that monetization of the salaries and allowances of all categories of Federal Public Servants that were formally paid in kinds be converted to cash by the salary and wage commission (Stephen 2011: 61). Under this scheme, ‘the government’s houses, cars, furniture etc which were for the use of bureaucrats and other Political Office Holders were to be converted into private property. The policy makers believed that the scheme will encourage private initiatives and facilitate creativity and motivation and most importantly, improve the service of quality delivery, promote patriotism and efficiency among civil servants’ (ibid).

The monetization policy of Obasanjo regime which was borrowed from the United States primarily to curb excesses and save money for solid development purposes, noted for cutting unnecessary and unproductive spending by the political office holders and top echelon of the civil servant as well as reducing the burden of providing basic amenities for political office holders have contributed significantly to the continued increase in government recurrent expenditure. What turn out to be the greatest undoing of the policy is that it was characterised by fraud and corruption. For instance, the House of Representatives paid almost N500 million above the showroom price of the 380 units of Peugeot 407 cars acquired at a princely N2.3 billion. Besides that, the leadership of the Nigerian parliament sold their official government houses to themselves at ridiculous, give away prices.

Restructuring of Pilot Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)

One of the cardinal policies in the public service reform is the re-organisation of MDAs for effective service delivery. Obasanjo regime observed that the federal bureaucracies have considerable number of duplicating and overlapping functions between agencies, and between tiers and arms of government. In doing this, the Federal government established
the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) in September 2003 as an independent agency in the Presidency to ensure the re-organisation and re-assigning of all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of all arms and branches of the federal government (El-Rufai, 2011). The restructuring policy ensures that all MDAs structure to have between 4 and 8 departments and 2-4 divisions per department. These were approved by the Executive Council of the Federation on May 16th, 2007 and applicable to all MDAs immediately (ibid).

Down-sizing and payroll reform

One of the complaints about Nigerian civil service is that it is over-bloated, large and unwieldy as many workers performing a duty that should have be done by few people. In correcting this, Obasanjo regime began down-sizing of staff across all MDAs following the review of three critical questions: how many people do we need to do the job and what type and with what skills? And, what is the best way to get this work done? (Eme and Ugwu, 2011:48). During the down-sizing process, it was observed that ‘the civil service was rapidly ageing, mostly untrained and largely under-educated. Their average age then was 42 years, and over 60% were over 40 years. Less than 12% of the public servants held university degrees or equivalent. Over 70% of the services were of the junior grades 01-06, of sub-clerical and equivalent skills’ (El-Rufai, 2011). The cleaning up of civil service vis-à-vis down-sizing began with the headcount of all civil servants across all MDAs. About 45,000 names were prepared by MDAs and forwarded to BPSR for removal (ibid). As Eme and Ugwu (2011) noted that ‘the first batch of officers that were retired involved a total of 35,700 officers. The FCSC has already issued over 20,000 disengagement letters to the affected officers. In compliance with the directives of President Olusegun Obasanjo, social assistance/pre-retirement training was organized for the disengaged officers at the conclusion of which cheques covering severance payments were issued to the retirees’. In terms of payroll reform, it was discovered that 20% of the public service employees were
'ghost workers’—non-existent people on the payroll which goes to staff of personnel and accounts departments (El-Rufai, 2011). In rectifying this anomaly, the Executive Council of the Federation approved the implementation of Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS) to all MDAs in February 2006. IPPIS is computerized and biometric database that will capture all the bio-data of all employees during the headcount process and eliminate payroll fraud. El-Rufai (2011) noted that ‘in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), out of an initial headcount of 26,000, we found 3,000 ghosts in the first round of audit. By the time we introduced biometric ID and centralized, computerized payroll, we found nearly 2,500 who failed to show up for documentation’.

Review and Update of Public Service Rules and Financial Regulations

In order to tackle corruption that have become endemic and pervasive in the Civil Service, Obasanjo regime undertook a holistic review of the Public Service Rules and Financial Regulations and produced a White Paper which was amended and approved by the FEC on 9th May 2007 (El-Rufai, 2011). This policy ensures that accountability, probity and transparency.

Civil Service Reform being the cardinal policy of neo-liberal regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo, lack of political will by his successor culminated into reversing or scaling back most of the policies such as downsizing and cleaning up of cleaning service. It can be recalled that during the time President Umaru Yar’adua, more than 20,000 civil servant and policemen that were remove during the reform exercise found their way back into the system

Steven Oronsaye Panel (2010-2011)

In order to deepening the neo-liberal reform process of his predecessor, President Umaru Musa Yar’adua inaugurated Steven Oronsaye Committee for reform of Federal civil service
in 2010. Mr Steven Oronsaye who was a new Head of Civil Service of the Federation at that time was mandated to review organisational structure of the service in line with the previous reform exercise. However, Steven Oronsaye Committee observed that Federal Civil Service as presently constituted in a pyramid structure was massively overcrowded and clogged up at the top with so many senior persons not about to retire soon, if the old rules were followed. On the other hand, just below the top echelon, there are bright and competent officers with no room for advancement. The committee claimed that this was responsible for the lack of speedy progression at the top band. To correct this anomaly, the Committee recommended that permanent secretaries and directors (but not assistant directors) will serve for an initial period of four years extendable, subject to good performance, to eight years, irrespective of their ages and years in service. So far, the panel report has been gazetted and implemented, while the affected officials have been eased out of the Federal Civil service.

However, following the death of President Umaru Musa Yar’adua in May 2010, his deputy Goodluck Jonathan was inaugurated as the Nigerian President. He retained the Steven Oronsaye Committee, and renamed it: *Presidential Committee on the Rationalisation and Restructuring of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions and Agencies* to review the structure of public institutions in March 2011. Committee was given the following terms of reference:

- To study and review all previous reports/records on the restructuring of Federal Government Parastatals and advise on whether they are still relevant.

- To examine the enabling Acts of all the Federal Agencies, Parastatals and Commissions and classify them into various sectors.

- To examine critically, the mandates of the existing Federal Agencies, Parastatals and Commissions and determine areas of overlap or duplication of functions and make
appropriate recommendations to restructure, merge or scrap to eliminate such overlaps, duplication or redundancies.

- To advise on any other matter(s) that is incidental to the foregoing which may be relevant to the desire of Government to prune the cost of governance\textsuperscript{14}.

Steven Oronsaye committee in its 800-page report submitted to President Goodluck Jonathan at the Council Chambers of the Presidential Villa—Abuja, posited that the existing 541 MDAs in the country, only 163 deserve to exist. The Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), which should not be in existence in its present form because the body was set up to do is a replication of the mandates of two existing bodies namely: the Highway Department of the Federal Ministry of Works with respect to the maintenance of safety and orderliness on our highways and the role of the Nigeria Police Force in ensuring law and order on our roads. Among other agencies recommended for outright scrapping are the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) who are considered to be performing the duties and responsibilities of Nigeria Police Force. The Panel recommended that: the existing 263 government’s statutory agencies in the country be reduced to 161; the abolition of 38 agencies, merger of 52 and reversion of 14 agencies to departments in the relevant ministries; and the management audit of 89 agencies capturing biometric features of staff as well as the discontinuation of government funding of professional bodies/councils\textsuperscript{15}. The Steven Oronsaye committee noted that about N124.8bn would be reduced from agencies proposed for abolition; about N100.6bn from agencies proposed for mergers; about N6.6bn
from professional bodies; N489.9bn from universities; N50.9bn from polytechnics; N32.3bn from colleges of education and N616m from boards of federal medical centres.

The committee report, no doubt, is a rehash of the White Paper on the Ahmed Joda Panel Report on the Review, Harmonization and Rationalization of Federal Government Parastatals, Institutions and Agencies (2000) that recommends that some parastatals and agencies should either be scrapped, commercialized, privatized or self-funding. Unfortunately, some of these agencies are not only existing but are receiving full Government funding, which runs into billions of Naira. As at the time of writing this paper, the Nigerian Government has accepted the Steven Oronsaye Committee report, and has announced the setting up of a 10-member White Paper drafting committee on the harmonisation of the panel report.

CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE PREVIOUS REFORMS OF FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE

Despite these avalanches of reforms, the Federal Civil Service is still considered stagnant and inefficient, and incapable of reforming itself (Salisu 2001). Critical appraisal of previous reform on federal civil service suggests that these reforms have had little effects and not far-reaching enough in making civil service efficient and offer quality service delivery. Several scholars have attributed lack of political will (El-Rufai, 2011), political patronage, cultural, structural and institutional defects (Anazodo et al 2012), administrative attitude and behaviour (Eme and Ugwu, 2011), and faulty diagnosis and prognosis arising from human resource problem, management issues of leadership, merit pay and related governance reforms (Olowu, 1999). The observations of scholars above are just the symptoms, and do not necessarily account for the underlying failures of these previous reforms. This is because if that were true, then the solution would be simple: let have a committed leader that rise above sentiment and mediocrity, and use pressures and force to compel the implementation of the reforms to the latter; and Civil Servant and public
officials to behave well in the management of public institutions; and pay rises for public employees.

But even if all these measures were implemented, it would not make any fundamental difference as the problem of waste and corruption, inefficiency, red-tapism, weak accountability, low professional standards, poor productivity, and lack of control, redundancy and others will persist as long as hierarchical process of making decision is not reformed. In fact, the old problems facing Nigerian Civil Service will re-emerge when such leader leaves power. The truth is that these previous reforms did not address lack of democratic practices in the management of public institutions nor attempt to reform the age-long colonial imposed hierarchical administrative structure that emphasizes superior authoritative command and delegation to the subordinate that tend to part and parcel of contemporary civil service in Nigeria.

The British model of civil service that Nigeria inherited and adopted is based on Max Weber’s theory of Bureaucracy. Because of the development of capitalism that ushered the emergence of large scale industrial organisation in Germany at the turn of the 20th century, Weber’s model was based on capitalist model of management—that is how large scale industries can be effective managed with precision, speed, clarity in communication, reduction of friction and reduction of personnel costs. And because capitalism separates the worker from the control of industry and organisation, Weber incorporated hierarchical domination of authoritative command (as typified by the separation between the boss and employees) into the management of public bureaucracies. In reality, management of public institutions must be different from that of the private because of their respective goals and motives. Weberian model ignored democratic practise in the administrative structure of public management. Since 1862 when the Nigerian Civil Service was established to date, Weberian model of hierarchy or hierarchical domination of administrative apparatuses has been the basis for decision making in the civil service and these have not been part of
agenda in the reform process of the institution. However, previous reforms, no doubt, are attempt to reform the rotten capitalist model of management on which Federal Civil Service was based in order to make it efficient. As long as this capitalist model of management remains the foundation of Nigerian civil service, the reform exercise will amount to time wastage. This stems from the fact that the passion to work and the zeal to serve the nation in the public service has been abandoned for greed thus organised looting of the public funds becomes the order of the day to the detriment of service delivery to the general public. The ideas that since I am the boss, and you are my subordinate pattern of do what I say will continue to usher structural deficiency and corruption in the system to which politician have contributed in a great deal to. For instance, the situation where appointed minsters are designated as the Chief Executive Officers of Ministries where they compel technocrats to do as they wish doesn’t help matters. Unless the ongoing reform addresses the lack of democracy in management or democratisation of administrative structure of Federal Civil Service, politicians and top echelon of the civil service will continue to abuse the rules and regulations guiding the operation of the system, and sabotage the genuine efforts of making Nigerian Civil Service offer quality service delivery and meet the development challenges of the 21st century.

This paper however offers Democratic Centralism and posits that ongoing reform can only be sustained and meaningful provided the democratization of administrative apparatus is made the cardinal agenda of the reform process where management and running of public institutions (Ministries, Departments and Agencies) are be placed in the hand of more qualified hands under the democratic control of the staff and employees who are working there.

THE CASE OF DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

The term ‘democratic centralism’ is derived from two words ‘democracy’ (which allows for free and open discussion) and ‘centralism’ (central control which ensures party unity and
The idea of democratic centralism as the basic organizational principle for the structure of the revolutionary proletarian party was first advanced by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and found practical expression in the organizational structure of the League of Communists (founded in 1847). The principle of democratic centralism was further articulated by Vladimir Lenin in his works *What is to be done* (1901), *One: Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (1904) and other numerous articles, reports and speeches such as *A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks* (1904). Lenin worked out the organizational principles for a proletarian party of a new type: party membership on the basis of acceptance of its program and compulsory joining of one of the party organizations; ironclad discipline, equally binding for all members of the party; the strictest implementation of party decisions; the subordination of the minority to the majority and of lower organizations to higher ones; the election and accountability of party bodies; and the development of the activity and initiative of the party masses. Lenin in his book *what is to be done* (1903) developed democratic centralism as a response to the organisational split between the two factions (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) in the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. The Mensheviks faction led by Julius Martov supported a looser party discipline and membership, while the Bolsheviks faction led by Vladimir Lenin supported freedom of discussion, unity of action. This irreconcilable organisational and ideological difference led to the split between the two factions that eventually culminated into the formation of two different parties—Bolsheviks Party and Mensheviks party in 1907. Lenin led Bolsheviks Party therefore put forward Democratic Centralism as the party’s main organisational method, and argued that there must be freedom of members of the political party to discuss and debate matters of policy and direction but once the decision of the party is made by majority vote (democracy), all members are expected to uphold that decision (centralism). In *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (1904), Lenin had explained that

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17 See Lenin’s (1903) *what is to be done* available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/ Pp. 5
the debate between the Bolshevik adherents of centralism and their Menshevik opponents could be reduced to the basic question of ‘bureaucracy versus democracy’.

In theory, democratic centralism in Bolsheviks part depicts that Party members were bound to carry out a policy once it had been adopted; there was room for democratic input in the pre-congress discussion and elections. Thus democratic centralism implies that an organisation ought to be so structured as to provide the capacity of any part of organisation to participate in determining policies relevant to their own responsibilities. In this regard, unity is not achieved by orders from above but can only be based on agreement and commitment. When a policy has been determined by means of protracted and thoroughgoing discussion amongst those who must carry it out, then unity in action is easily achieved.

Democratic centralism, in Lenin’s view, also implied ‘universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a definite action; it rules out all criticism which disrupts or makes difficult the unity of an action decided on by the Party’. However, a detailed feature of democratic centralism was spelt out by Lenin in his collected works as follows:

- Periodic election of all party committees
- Responsibility of party committees up and down.
- The minority accepts the majority
- Majority positions remain until policy is changed.
- Lower bodies accept the decisions of higher ones.
- Party organisations and members act with collective responsibility

Consequently, Lenin describes, in his book *State and Revolution (1917)* that in the context of democratic centralism, there must be a set of circumstances where the widest and most

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democratic of discussion should take place prior to any decision. He also suggests the right of people to determine their own activity, and opposes any division of labour between administration and action. Disputes amongst the leadership were not simply had out behind closed doors. Debates over Bolshevik policy were fought out in the open, with positions put in mass-circulation papers.

However, Lenin further applied his theory of democratic centralism to public institutions and workers organisations in the aftermath of the 1917 revolution in Russia to be as:

(a) All officials (eg managers) to be elected by the workers' organisations, with direct right of recall.

(b) All officials to receive the same wages as a skilled worker.

(c) Popular participation in all administrative duties

(d) Direct management and control by the workers.

Inside the Bolshevik Party internal debate was vital for assessing policies, strategies and tactics being argued to the mass of workers. Feed back by rank and file members was vital for modifying and refining Bolshevik policies. Indeed it was the strong traditions of internal party debate that made Bolshevik activists much more capable of arguing their politics in public than their reformist rivals. The reality is that any decision adopted at a conference can only be provisional, and not something set in stone, because the real world changes. Political analyses need to be updated and refined between conferences and that is not a task for the leadership alone.

The relevance of democratic centralism to the Nigerian civil service will help to democratise the management and decision-making of civil service, and how the way the institution will be administered, and ensure that quality service and international framework are strengthened. This is capable of entrenching collective and equal participation where the
best actions are decisions taken when you work in a group, with respect and cooperation, as will be seen in its application to civil service reform below.

**HOW DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM CAN BE APPLIED TO THE ONGOING FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE REFORM.**

The important role played by the Civil Service makes it imperative that every country has a modern and responsive civil service that can understand, interpret and apply government policies which results in tangible services for the population. To have a result-oriented and modern civil service that is efficient and unwieldy, and can implement development goals and administer government policies on a day-to-day basis without corruption, the ongoing federal civil service reform must initiate democratic practice where all categories of staff (workers and employees) are involved at one stage or the other in the decision making process of the MDAs. Though, Lenin did not specifically developed democratic centralism in relation to the management of civil service, but his idea can be applied in the context of ongoing reform process, and focus on the democratization of administrative structure in the civil service reform. Below represent my own formulation of how democratic centralism can be applied to Civil service as far as ongoing reform is concerned.

- Head of civil service must be elected among the top echelon (permanent secretaries) of the civil service.
- Permanent Secretaries in each ministry must be elected from among the level 14 to 18 officers.
- Director in MDAs must be elected from the civil servant in the grade Level 12 and above
- Each Ministry must be autonomous over certain policy actions and decisions.
- Factionalism must be banned in the civil/public service.
• Each department or agency in the ministry must be independent and have authority over technical matters, competent to deal with issues and policies affecting their own regiments, and must report its assessment to its Departmental council (DC) and Central Ministerial Committee (CMC) through its representative in DC in a free and open discussion and debate.

• Every civil servant in the respective Ministry, Department or Agency is a member of departmental board, obliged to discharge its duties and responsibilities, responsible to CMC orders and regulation, and general rules and regulations governing the civil service and Nigerian constitution.

• All Agency/Department must have Departmental council (DC) where all workers/employees must participate in the department decision making process and day-to-day running of the department or agency.

• There must be thorough debate and criticisms on policy issues at the DC and CMC.

• The Departmental council (DC) must have at least five elected representative who will represent its interest at the CMC.

• There must be Central Ministerial Committee (CMC) in each ministry. The CMC must be the highest decision making organ of the ministry where decisions on finance and budget, procurement, appointment, promotions, staff training, staff discipline and welfare are democratically made.

• The meeting of CMC must be strictly based on the principle of democratic centralism. There must be freedom of CMC members to discuss and debate matters of policy and direction but once the decision has been made by the majority vote (democracy), all members are expected to uphold that decision and defend it outside (centralism). The right of a minority view on policy must be affirmed, and they should express themselves freely within CMC meeting.
• Policy failures that arise out of lapses in policy decision and implementation must be laid at the table of departmental board and CMC. Probe must be conducted and the affected officer(s) or office holder must be sanctioned.

• All elected officials (Head of civil service and Permanent Secretaries) are subject to the direct right of recall by workers and government if found guilty.

• The membership of CMC shall comprises: the Minister (who head the council and chairs the meeting), the Permanent secretary (who is secretary to the council), all directors and deputy directors in each department or agency of the ministry, all elected members of trade union within the ministry, chief accountant of the ministry, auditor, and other members elected into that committee.

• The right of all CMC members to have an equal vote and role in decisions making.

• Under emergency situation, Minister/Commissioner can take unilateral decision provided it does not include financial matters and technical task.

• The current Civil Service rule that limit the aspiration of Professionals from being permanent secretaries and Head of service be abolished.

• Reduction of current system of classification of civil servant on the basis of administrative, executive, professional, clerical and messengerial staff, and instead it should be streamlined into administrative, professional and clerical staff.

• The administrative and profession cadre must be free to switch cadre provided they have relevant qualification and passion to effect change. For instance, an engineer can be administrative staff if he or she has a cogent experience, skills and qualification.

• Every Professional cadre officer is to make his/her career entirely in one Ministry.

• There must be central tender board and due process office (merged together) where all contracts and tenders from all MDAs above the limit the MDAs can handle, are properly and centrally scrutinised and awarded.
Following the formulation of Democratic Centralism model above, it is important to make certain clarification about some terms that featured in the model such as Central Ministerial Council (CMC) and Department Council (DC).

**Central Ministerial Council (CMC)**

The CMC will be the highest decision making organ of the ministry. It must hold its meeting every two weeks, and decision must be made based on the principle of democratic centralism. The Minister (who is a political head of the Ministry) is the chairman of the CMC who will preside over the meeting. Membership of the CMC shall comprises: The Minister, Permanent Secretary, Director(s) of each unit or department within the ministry, deputy director(s), Representative of Labour Union in the ministry, Elected Members and Director-Generals of the agencies and department under the Ministry’s supervision, Chief accountant of the Ministry, Chief Auditor etc. The CMC shall have power over all spheres of the ministry—from Finance, appointment, promotion, discipline, policy formulation, implementation, policy appraisals, policy design and evaluation, training and development or any issue that is affecting or that can affect the ministry. In relation to this, the CMC must have unilateral power to recruit employees relevant to its own needs and vacancies, but such appointment must be forwarded to Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC) for confirmation. The CMC must also have the power to discipline any erring staff and forward such disciplinary measure to FCSC for confirmation following thorough investigation. The CMC can delegate any obligation to any unit or department within the ministry, and the respective unit or department must report back to the CMC within the stipulated time.

Under the armpit of Democratic Centralism and CMC, the following are the roles and responsibilities of the Minister and Permanent Secretary.

- The Minister must outline his/her plan, agenda, and vision for the Ministry through CMC within one month of the assumption of office.
• The Minister must inform the CMC about the agenda, vision and set target of the government of the day for deliberation, action and how best to achieve them.

• The Minister cannot take unilateral decision relating to the ministry except in the period of emergency.

• The Minister must be able to defend the overall interest of the Ministry in the Federal Executive Council.

• In the absence of the Minister, the Permanent Secretary (who is an administrative head of the Ministry and Secretary to the CMC) presides over the CMC meeting.

• Permanent Secretary cannot initiate unilateral policy or decision without the approval of CMC.

• Permanent Secretary must defend the overall interest of the Ministry and CMC decisions at the FEC.

• Permanent Secretary shall present the report of previous CMC meetings to the members for scrutiny and amendment, and to the Security agencies, Legislature or Judiciary in case of investigation, legislative oversight or judicial adjudication.

**Departmental Council (DC)**

The Departmental Council (DC) must be the highest decision making organ for each Agency and Department. For instance, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigerian Port Authority (NPA) and Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA) are examples of government agencies and departments. They must have independent and autonomous status, and free to take independent position relating to its functions and works without any undue interference from supervising ministry and Government of the day. In line with the principle of Democratic Centralism, the Federal Government should stop appointing
board members for the parastatals, agencies and departments, and allow employees of these agencies and departments to manage it themselves.

- By democratising the administrative structure, the Director-General who is elected directly from employees/workers of the agency/department shall be the administrative head, and presides over the DC meeting.

- The DC must hold its meeting weekly.

- The membership of DC must comprises: the Director-General, deputy Director-general (who is a secretary to the DC), directors and assistant directors in each unit/department of the agency, representatives of labour union in the agency, chief accountant, and other worker from grade level 12 and above.

- The Director-General can summon an emergency meeting of the DC as situation permit.

- The Deputy Director-General can preside over DC meeting in the absence of the Director-General.

- The Director-General and the Deputy cannot initiate unilateral policy or decision without the approval of the DC.

- The DC shall direct and delegate policy issues to relevant unit/department of the agency and such feedback must be reported within the stipulated time.

- The DC shall have power to recruit, and appoint any relevant to its needs and vacancies directly, but the confirmation of such appointment is subject to the approval of relevant higher authority.

- The DC shall have power to discipline any erring staff and forward such disciplinary measure to relevant commission for confirmation following thorough investigation.
The proposed model of Democratic Centralism worked: out how democratic centralism should be applied in Nigerian Civil Service; and reflect the obvious reality—that workers and employees of public corporations, Ministries and government agency are part and parcel of the organisation dynamics—who are aware of the problems and are in the best position of solving them, and make that institution stronger. By democratizing the administrative apparatus, best, competent and capable employees would be able to participate in the running of these organisations, and thus, ensure that there will be no coordination problem that will allow unnecessary bureaucracy capable of undermining its capacity building, institution capability, and ability to discharge quality service delivery that devoid of corruption.

IMPLICATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

Let us now turn to some of the implications of the above model of democratic centralism in Nigerian Civil Service and other public institutions. In particular, how does our democratic centralism opens up democratic space that will usher participatory democracy in terms of structures and agency, and in terms of the decision making process linking them in public organisations in Nigeria? Further, how in terms of process do we conceptualize the role of collective responsibility in public administration? How does democratic centralism expose bureaucratic problems such as corruption, inefficiency, waste and policy failures in public institutions? Does the process of democratic centralism lead us beyond the rhetoric of capacity building and strong institutional framework? Here I argue that reforming the governance and management of public institutions in Nigeria vis-à-vis democratic centralism will curb dangers and discontents of bureaucratism, inefficiency and ineffectiveness that dogged its delivery of quality service in the 21st century epoch in the following ways: first, strengthening democratic values will tackle the moribund challenges associated with weak institutional mechanisms, and encourage the participation of those employees who have been traditionally apathetic and sceptical and imbued with a sense of
powerlessness. By allowing the free flow of opinions, policy critiques, and self-criticisms at the departmental board and Central Ministerial Committee of respective Ministry, Department and Agency (MDA), performance appraisal, good policy planning, formulation and implementation. In addendum, the implication of Democratic Centralism in public organisations is that it encourages participation of those who lack organizational experience, and exposes mediocrity and incompetence of workers/employees of these organisations. In this regards, the principle of collective responsibility in public administration is required in the evaluation and monitoring of past and previous policy direction while checks on policy failures can be easily traced and identified.

Second, democratic centralism struggles against corruption, wastefulness and inefficiency. It is a desiratum for a model of management where the experience of the workers, the awareness of problems, and the superiority of collective intelligence are on the table. This will prevent bad management, wastage, embezzlement, corruption, and misuse of company assets by insisting on the opening of ledgers, transparent commercial and industrial strategies, accountability mechanisms such as mandatory disclosure of accessible, comprehensible and comparable data about government and corporate sustainability performance, and the periodic scrutiny of balance sheets and accounts in an open democratic discussion. This will increase workers’ self-confidence and their capacity to collectively contribute to a socialistic kind of management and labour relations on the one hand, and, on the other, create a counter-weight against authoritarian rules of bosses and technocrats in public administration.

By understanding and addressing the obstacles that inhibit workers, civil/public service, and government (federal, state and local) from realizing their developmental goals while enhancing the abilities that will allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results, democratic centralism will provide effective capacity building in Ministries, Department and
Agencies so as to be able to handle the problems associated with modern day environmental, development, economic and social transformations at the local, state or national level and allow for better governance that can lead to sustainable development and democracy. By building institutional capability, democratic centralism will inevitably help to improve institutional structures and processes, enhance the ability of Nigerian public institutions to perform specific activities so as to achieve its goals in a sustainable way, and provide strong institutional framework that adhere to rule of law, peoples’ aspirations, and societal expectations.

The implication of democratising the management and decision-making of civil service depicts that replacing a hierarchical management model with collective decision-making, will guarantee collective and equal participation that will inform better and quality public decision, and allows civil/public servants to democratically organise the work dynamics in the MDAs, and to be more willing to support the Government of the day and political head (Minister) to achieve his/her transformational agenda, vision and plan for the MDAs, and the country in a motivated and neutral way.

CONCLUSION

Given the central role played by the civil service in Nigeria’s national life, attempts to improve governance have appropriately focused on reform of the bureaucracy. The Nigerian Civil Service has undergone several reforms since its creation by the British colonial power in 1861. From post-independence era to the contemporary times, successive governments in Nigeria have introduced reforms aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal civil service. Still, the service has failed to deliver efficient service to the people as it suffers from obsolescence, lethargy and a lack of enthusiasm in carrying out government policies. Most of these previous reforms largely failed because of plethora of factors: lack of political will to implement the reforms on the part of the political leadership, politics, sentiments and mediocrity that has undermined and ensured
that the recommendations of several committees were never implemented to the latter, government attempt to reform civil service out of the way of its capitalistic foundation without taking a break from the status quo, and conscious attempt at ignoring democratic practice in the management of civil service. With these in sight, the ongoing civil service reform is not going to achieve desire result unless the problem associated with lack of democratic practice in the administration of civil service is addressed. This paper however, makes case for democratic centralism—a model through which democratisation of administrative structure of federal civil service can be initiated. It is envisioned that the model of democratic centralism being put forward in this paper, will curb weak governance structure, red-tapism, weak accountability, low professional standards, waste and corruption, poor productivity, and lack of control, and redundancy that characterise the present state of affairs in Federal Civil Service.

With this development, it is obvious that the principle of democratic centralism has highlighted important characteristics of participatory democratic practices capable of avoiding bureaucratic monopolisation, as well as containing important lessons of employees’ participation in decision making over resources of the state and its institutions that seek to change dominant values from an individualistic and individual responsibility to a collective responsibility and more cooperative outlook. By reforming Nigerian Civil Service in line with the principle of democratic centralism outlined above, it will help to build institutional capability that will inevitably improve institutional structures and processes, enhance the ability of Nigerian public institutions to perform specific activities so as to achieve its goals in a sustainable way, and provide strong institutions that adhere to rule of law, peoples’ aspirations, and societal expectations.

It can be concluded that the quest to improve governance in Nigeria by increasing accountability, predictability, transparency, participation, and efficiency and effectiveness of the Federal Civil Service will require strong political leadership with unflinching political
will to break with the entrenched system, and build a strong institutional framework that will enhance the ability of Nigerian public institutions to achieve its developmental goals and handle the problems associated with modern governance of large scale, diversity, and technical complexities in a sustainable way.

REFERENCES


