Administrative Bureaucracy as a Bottle Neck to Service Delivery in Higher Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

Quality service is the key objective of any institution that wants to remain in business. The paper examined administrative bureaucracy as a bottleneck to service delivery in higher institutions in Nigeria. Therefore, bureaucracy is a formal organization established deliberately to realize specific social goals. Administrative bureaucracy is a system of administration characterized by expertness, impartiality and absence of humanity". It systematically organizes tasks and individuals into a pattern that can most effectively achieve the ends of collective efforts. However, the tertiary education system must strengthen its administrative bureaucracy by developing its employee's bureaucratic skills through adequate training and retraining. Principles and norms of bureaucracy should be strictly followed. By so doing, the tertiary education system can be better positioned to make enormous contributions to the development of any country. Therefore, to avoid unnecessary red-tapism, which is inherent in bureaucratic practices, employees in the tertiary education system should be trained and retrained in using modern scientific tools to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the performance of their assigned responsibilities. It is by so doing that they can contribute to national development.

Keywords: Administrative, Bureaucracy, Service delivery, Bottleneck

Introduction

The present understanding of "bureaucracy" as a cumbersome model in operation in today's modern organization seems to be a far cry from what the founding father of Bureaucracy intended it to be. Generally, Bureaucracy is associated with inefficiency, lack of initiative, intelligence, rigidity, etc. This ideology about Bureaucracy has informed a societal desire to 'smash' Bureaucracy in our institutions and organizations, to liquidate bureaucratic habits and customs. However, the emergence of the modern organization at the dawn of the industrial revolution gave rise to various tools to manage the new formal workplace to achieve its goal-oriented initiative (Haralambos & Holborn, 2010). These models range from managerial and leadership methodologies for carrying out work in the office; it includes organizational and behavioural management strategies for simplifying work, in which the bureaucratic model stood out as very relevant.

Adebayo (2007) states, "The term bureaucracy is often heard and used in connection with the conduct of public affairs and the activities of public officials, who are usually known as civil servants in charge of government agencies. To this set of workers, Bureaucracy glaringly appears inevitable because of the broad scope of related work activities, hierarchical

structures involved in work management, divided work responsibilities and complex paperwork associated with modern organizations (Duru,2001).

Higher or tertiary institutions are a perfect example of a typical bureaucratic organization with its complexity and hierarchical structure, manifesting in various Faculties and Departments within the institution. Bureaucracy enhances equity and justice as rewards are based on employees' educational qualifications and technical competence. This creates harmony within the system and subsequently brings about national development, which can only thrive in an atmosphere of peace and harmony. In most instances, the head of a tertiary institution may need the requisite bureaucratic-administrative skills to perform his functions. This calls for assistance from well-trained and experienced bureaucrats who have been exposed to the rudiments of administration over the years and are well-equipped and better placed to offer time-tested advice to the political head of the tertiary institution. Duru (2001) rightly observed that bureaucratic norms and principles are part and parcel of the tertiary education system. Employment is based on merit and technical competence, and the principle of hierarchy, which is inherent in Bureaucracy, is observed, ensuring that order flows downwards.

In contrast, compliance flows upward the ladder of the hierarchy. The method of operation is based on laid-down rules which must be followed. Remuneration is according to rank and qualification. There is tenure of office for all employees. These create stability which is sine-qua-non to national development; however, as Bureaucracy is a form of work organization, the historical meaning of the term refers to a body of non-elected government officials but is nowadays understood as an administrative system used by corporations and public institutions. This paper examines administrative Bureaucracy as a bottleneck to service delivery in higher institutions in Nigeria.

The Concept of Bureaucracy

The term bureaucracy was coined by Monsieur de Gourney in 1845 and later developed and popularised by German sociologist Max Weber (1864 – 1920). Weber used Bureaucracy to describe a rationalistic and efficient organization of government administration and industry (Ihejiamaizu, 2006). The term "bureaucracy" is derived from the words "bureau" and "Kratos." While "bureau" denotes the office," Kratos" refers to power or rule. The contention of Weber was on rational action, which is a natural consequence of complexity in human organizations, as is visible in state administration, business, education, science, military organizations and religious groups. Despite several scholarly attacks on Weber's ideal model

of Bureaucracy with all the misgivings and apprehensions, and despite associating Bureaucracy with red tape, excess of paperwork, rigidity, remoteness, inefficiency, arrogance and corruption, the merits of Bureaucracy cannot contend. Bureaucracy enhances efficiency, precision and effectiveness, which are the hallmarks of public administration. Most of what is classified as bureaucratic bottlenecks are human weaknesses and failures wrongly classified as emanating from the practical application of the principles of Bureaucracy.

Concept of Administrative Bureaucracy

Administrative Bureaucracy is a system of administration characterized by expertness and impartiality". A systematic organization of tasks and individuals into a pattern can most effectively achieve the ends of collective efforts. The bureaucratic administration is the most efficient of organizations, and as an ideal type, the closer the Bureaucracy is, the more effective and efficient the organization will be in its standardized functioning (Ferreira, 2004), being this ideal-type a historical form of rationality and scientificity (Ferreira, 2004).Weber referred to efficiency as a complex of values and procedures that included quality of behaviour (e.g. speed, uniformity of action), extent of the field of action, and effectiveness of operation costs (Beetham, 2008). Some examples of Bureaucracy, according to Weber, are the following: decisions and their procedures based on general criteria, an average level of competence in interpreting the law thanks to the training provided; full-time remuneration reduces the temptation of corruption; assessment by public exams that increases its justice, basing its functioning on the experience of specialized professionals.

Service Delivery

According to Beetham (2008), service delivery is a business framework that supplies services from a provider to a client. It also includes the constant interaction between the two parties during the duration of the time in which the provider supplies the service, and the customer purchases it. Quality service delivery is one of the vital building blocks in any education system. Learners will access and use only if services are delivered with a certain quality, ultimately improving their knowledge and skills status.

Bureaucracy and Bureaucratic Power

Bureaucratic power emanates in good part from resources peculiar to Bureaucracy. Whether in democratic or non-democratic societies, the first and fundamental source of power for bureaucratic organizations is in the expertise they command. The division of labour within

large-scale organizations such as tertiary institutions engenders their employee's acquisition of specialized expertise even though they may have different technical qualifications. For this reason, an organization is a source of expertise apart from the skills its members initially bring to the job. Performing the same tasks day-in-day-out is an essential source of bureaucratic expertise and consequently conveys power to the bureaucrat and bestows on the individual and public agencies an invaluable kind of practical knowledge that comes from experience. This knowledge, in time, becomes part of the memory of a government organization and is transmitted to new employees through training and indoctrination programmes (Umoh, Akpan and Wilson 2010). Acquisition of skills by the bureaucrat engenders expertise which becomes the channel of influence in exercising his functions, especially in developing public policy through "advice" and exercise of discretion.

Administrative Bureaucracy as a Bottleneck for Effective Service Delivery in Nigeria

Any organization stands and falls on its ability to get the right people into the right jobs at the right time; however, civil service is no exception. How permanent secretaries and other senior civil servants are recruited and appointed is, therefore, one of the most critical issues in determining the effectiveness of government. Administration without bureaucratization can explain the underlying problems of inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Therefore, contemplating administrative bureaucratization beyond mere reforms can guarantee goal-focused Bureaucracy. In that connection, the administrative Bureaucracy would mean the rule of the office. More technically, administrative Bureaucracy refers to a rule operated from a table or an office, characterized by written documents (Ujo, 2015).

One of the fundamental goals of a tertiary education system is to contribute to national development through high-level relevant manpower training. This involves the development of skills of the employees to enable them to contribute to national development. This goes further to confirm the position that development can only take place in a nation where its citizens are developed. Contributing to this observation, Ujo (2015), he/she outlined the right quality and quantity of staff as essential features of a developed administrative institution. According to him, an institution can only carry out its functions if workers are adequate to implement government policies. On the right quality of staff, he stated that it is not just having staff but having the right quality of staff. That is to say that staff with relevant qualifications must be obtained.

A good tertiary institution must ensure that its employees are trained to meet the challenges posed by knowledge, especially in this era of information and communication technology

(I.C.T.). This is the only way they would be highly equipped and better positioned to contribute to national development. Development is a process of socio-economic and political transformation of problem-generating structures in such a way that it leads to improvement in the standard of living of the people, including income, education, health and nutrition, as well as other related social services, decreasing inequality in the distribution of income, urban–rural imbalances and political and economic activities.

The essence of administrative Bureaucracy is the provision of essential public services through implementing government programs and policies (Idike et al., 2019). According to Jaakkola and Halinen (2006), delivering professional services to clients involves dynamic relationships in which professionals interact with their clients to understand the latter's needs with a view to solving their problems. As a complex activity, service delivery entails meeting not only expressed needs but also the unexpressed needs of clients, prioritizing needs, allocating resources, and being able to account for what has been done (Gowan, Seymour, Ibarreche, and Lackey 2001). Inferred from this is that service delivery involves meeting and exceeding customers' expectations.

Empirically, service provision and delivery evoke a sense of contractual relationships between policymakers, service providers, and the populace. Corroborating this view is Nnadozie (2010), who saw development as the capacity of members of society to actualize themselves by participating actively in the social engineering of their lives and destiny. They must draw their strengths and aspirations from their socio-economic milieu. The people must be accessible and confident to set goals and be involved in their realization. This can only be achieved through effective and efficient Bureaucracy. Highlighting the influential and developmental role played by the administrative Bureaucracy. Duru (2008) subscribed to the following reasons for these roles:

The choice of professionals, the determination of their skills and the content of their work are now principally determined by their professional elites, professional organizations and their institution and higher education faculties.

The intense, sustained attention that an individual bureau or office can devote to a particular issue or problem provides a reservoir of understanding and knowledge that an agency political official finds difficult, if not impossible, to match.

The bureaucrat does not exist in a political vacuum but instead interacts with various elements in their political environment, including the public at large, interest or clientele groups that may affect or be affected by agency activities. This accounts for the need for the

tertiary education system to see the development of bureaucratic skills of its members as a priority if they must contribute meaningfully to national development.

Theoretical Framework

Three theories became imperative for a vivid discussion of the sociological exposition of administrative Bureaucracy and its bottlenecks. These are Max Weber's rational theory which explains in detail what Bureaucracy entails; the Alvin Gouldner situational/degree bureaucratic theory, challenging the inevitability of Bureaucracy and the Heckscher and Donnellon (2004) post-bureaucratic theory, which argues that the use of Bureaucracy is no longer fashionable in the Post-Modern organization and proposes a move beyond Bureaucracy – an invention of a new boundless organizational capacity – devoid of the Weberian iron cage – a best 'manager' of complexity. Weber's Bureaucracy has precise levels with assignments, division of labour, written rules, written communications and records, impersonality and replaceability (Stark, 2007).

Weber also acknowledges that Bureaucracy could be challenged by the constant changes that occur in society and by bureaucratic leaders' and followers' limitations (such as misinformation, strategic errors, logical fallacies, decision-based on emotions and irrational actions). Both Stalker and Burns and Katz and Kahn (Year?) seem to expatiate on this when they say that bureaucratic structures may not be enough if an individual is to perform well on the job. Information is necessary to supplement organizational designs to clarify roles given the changing environment in which organizations reside and to make adjustments for human beings and their various behavioural patterns (Ibrahim, 2007). Gouldner's Bureaucracy is more realistic and fills the gap of imperfection in Max Weber's ideal type. A more humanistic approach to Bureaucracy would allow the human being' at work to be discretional in behaviour. Johnson et al. (2009) observe that post–bureaucratic organizational form liberates employees from the increasingly dysfunctional hierarchical constraints engendered by bureaucracies and enhances their ability to deal with the unpredictable requirements of an increasingly volatile workplace caused by the social and economic changes associated with destabilized capitalism".

Conclusion

Bureaucracy is a formal organization established deliberately to realize specific social goals. Administrative Bureaucracy is a system of administration characterized by expertness, impartiality and absence of humanity". It systematically organizes tasks and individuals into a pattern that can most effectively achieve the ends of collective efforts. However, the tertiary

education system must strengthen its administrative Bureaucracy by developing its employee's bureaucratic skills through adequate training and retraining. Principles and norms of Bureaucracy should be strictly adhered to, for it is by so doing that the tertiary education system can be better placed to make enormous contributions to their service delivery. The administrative Bureaucracy is the engine or powerhouse of any institution and the key to national development.

Recommendations

To avoid unnecessary red tape, which is inherent in Bureaucracy, employees in the tertiary education system should be trained and retrained in using modern scientific tools to increase effectiveness and efficiency in performing their assigned responsibilities.

Nepotism and favouritism should not be used as a yardstick in recruiting employees into the tertiary education system. The paper recommends that the bureaucratic principle of appointment on merit be followed by ensuring that only qualified persons capable of performing their official functions qualitatively and optimally are employed.

Impersonal, abstract rules based upon rational decisions for employees of the tertiary education system should be obeyed for maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

The wrong attitudes of employees in the tertiary education system are erroneously attributed to Bureaucracy. Lapses on the part of officials within the tertiary education system should not be blamed on Bureaucracy, whose primary goal is to enhance effectiveness and efficiency.

Political appointees as heads of the tertiary education system who need more administrative experience should always seek the advice of experienced administrative officials who have accumulated enough knowledge through many years of service.

Employees in the tertiary education system should be adequately motivated. The reward for achievement enhances commitment on the part of workers in an organization, whether public or private.

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