

BUREAUCRACY AND WORKERS PRODUCTIVITY: AN APPRAISING GLANCE

EKE, GABRIEL FAVOUR (Ph.D)
Department of Political Science and Sociology,
Western Delta University,
Oghara, Delta State,
Nigeria
+2348056175436
ekegabriel favour@gmail.com.

&

OSAGHAE, FELIX SADO OSAYANDE (Ph.D)
Institute Of Public Administration
And Extension Services,
University Of Benin,
Ekehuan Campus,
Benin City, Edo State
Nigeria.
lixosaghae@yahoo.com
+2348064448851

ABSTRACT

The paper discussed the problems of bureaucracy in the light of its impact on organizational productivity, with a focus on the inherent impact of bureaucracy on workers performance. The paper revealed the view that Bureaucratic structures have hindered and reduced the level of organizational productivity and performance. Also, it stated that there is a relationship between bureaucratic structures and low productivity in the organization. The study concluded that for the workers productivity to be high, there is need for reduction in the level of bureaucratic principles. Finally, the study recommended an increase in workers rewards and motivation to enable them increase their productivity.

KEYWORDS: *Bureaucracy, low productivity, underdevelopment and poor attitude to work*

INTRODUCTION

Most workers in many establishments in recent times are performing below expectation. It has become a general phenomenon that the levels of productivity in these organizations have become very low and poor. The reasons for this attitude and level of performance are not far fetched. (Huckman and Pisano, 2006).

This is particularly, with most public organizations in Nigeria. People make these assumptions without knowing the inside story of such public establishments. All that they know is how such parastatals render poor services, how it cannot pay their salaries and so rely sorely on government subsidy to keep them going, the reason being the Nature of Bureaucracy in place. The ministry is saddled with a lot of rules and responsibilities, some are too complex that they have become a spoke in the wheel of progress (Nukunya, 2001). Some could be personnel or individual, in such establishment, they do not see anything good in the work of any other Person. Max Weber (1964) refers to bureaucracy as the ideal and rational type of administration useful for achievement of positive results. He however notes the dysfunctions of bureaucracy due to excessive application of its guiding principles by office holders. Indeed, excessive bureaucracy negatively impact on social and economic development, especially on poor countries. Meaton (1957) mentions that excessive bureaucracy makes public organization more arithmetic and self serving less able to achieve their core missions except their own. The ability of the ministry to succeed and meet its target depends on the attitude of these leaders called heads of department in the ministry. For the establishment to succeed and fully achieve its goals, it must

have the staff under its control. However, this cannot happen when the policies and the rules are quite unbecoming, that it has become a spoke clutch in the wheel of progress. According to Haggins (2001), some of these laws are so draconian that even the leaders do not even obey them sometimes.

Rules and regulations are laid down by the ministry to assist in achieving the goals and objectives of the organization. These set of goals cannot be achieved without the involvement of human and material resources of the ministry (Hall, 2002). The workers attitude to work may bring about positive or negative results, or rather the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the workers attitude may affect the level of production in an organization. Every organization requires effective productive and reliable workers in its workforce. An organisation where poor attitude and complicated work group exist as a result of complex rules and regulations goes a long way to hindering instead of encouraging the work group.

Some describe bureaucracy as a body of civil servants or as a routine office administration. For others, what comes to mind is red tapism and inflexibility (Griffin, 2003). It is a rule by official while some of these officials are characterized by red tapism, excessive paper work, fear of motivation, poor customer service, duplication of working procedure, strict adherence to procedure and weak managerial practice. They are there to advertise themselves and not the job, they are there to show up their ego. These in many ways have hindered the performance of the job. It is characterized by complex administrative hierarchy, specialization of skills and functions and prescribed limit on description (Osaghae & Umoru, 2017:196 – 205).

Sometimes, the right person is not taken in a job because he or she does not possess the right certificate. This is what is described as over devotion to precedence, lack of initiative, procrastination, proliferation of forms, duplication of efforts and departmentalization, thus making bureaucracy an inefficient organization. It is an institutional manifestation which tends towards inflexibility (Griffin 2003).

One of these symptoms of bureaucracy has made the workers in the government ministry to develop a kind of poor attitude to work which manifest in the form of sleeping on duty or in the office, thus neglecting the work. Leaving office before the closing time and coming to work very late and still signing the proper time, forging and forming sickness in order to be permitted to leave the office to receive treatment. Receiving and seeing of visitors when there is work to be done in the office and unnecessary delay in attending to the public in order to induce them to give bribe.

Statement of the Problem

The work of the organization is influenced by a lot of complex administrative hierarchy, specialization and rigidity. These factors have in many ways affected the level of productivity in an organization. There is slow and low pace of work, lack of thoroughness in application of procedure of work, lack of total commitment to the objective of the ministry's goals and achievement as well as embezzlement of funds. Some heads of department whose duty is to wear expensive clothing to office, sit back and wait for any files to come from the junior staff or other department instead of searching for them. The work that is supposed to be done in one day is transferred to another department because of the rules. A work that is urgent that is supposed to be done by the staff available is delayed waiting for the right person to do it; some say that is not my assignment to do hence the work is left undone (Adebayo, 1981).

Some of these workers in the organisation are lazy and unproductive and always looking for monetary rewards for every little thing done. Over reliance on paper qualifications for selection of staff instead of the proper people to do the job have affected the level of productivity in the organization. Another problem which has affected the rate of production is the method of promotion. It is known and accepted that most times those who are promoted are those with higher qualifications rather than hard work and those who are equally rewarded are those with connection to those on top. If the right people are not employed and rewarded and when promotion is based on connection, the level of productivity is bound to be low. The situation has led to certain statements in the civil service, that the job is not my father's job even, why must I die for it. Government work is no man's work. Government job is carried on the shoulder, not on the head so that when it is heavy, you bent your shoulder for it to fall off, it is a system where monkey works baboon eats.

Based on the foregoing basic questions, how could the civil service rules be fashioned to help increase production in an organization? How could attitude of workers change so as to increase their performance and productivity? How could bureaucratic structures be made to have a human face in an organization? How could reward system be made more available to increase productivity?

Conceptual Clarification

In Weber's view, a bureaucrat is one who fits the ideal of being appointed on the basis of expertise and training. Bureaucrats are public officials who acquire their positions on the basis of their qualifications and skills and who are primarily responsible for the implementation of public policy (Ethridge and Handelman 2010:268-269). Bureaucracy is an institutionalized method of organized social conduct in the interest of administrative efficiency.

The idea of a civil servant as a platonic guardian, though very old as the name itself suggests, totally dominates the modern literature on public administration even today. The standard prescription deriving from the public has been to select good officers for public office and give them the knowledge and power to do what they believe in public interest. This idea underpins the dominant discourse that good people insulated from political and economic pressure will act in public interest (Das, 1998:1). For Max Weber, he recognized bureaucracy as the characteristic of public administration for a state with extended territorial sovereignty. He presents the bureaucrat as a benevolent social guardian maximizing general welfare, which is somehow equated with the objectives of the state (Olaopa, 2008:43).

The features of bureaucracy according to Max Weber includes, hierarchy which involves principles and levels of graded authority which ensure a firmly ordered system of superiority and subordination in which higher officers supervise lower ones. Specialization, which is a process whereby the functions of the job are defined and qualifications of the individual to fill it are so specified. Discipline in bureaucracy, this is a developed system of rules which can be learned, which make for efficiency and effectiveness. Impersonality, the allocation of privileges is impersonal in a bureaucracy and so is the exercise of authority which should be in accordance with rules laid down. Career structure, this refers to obligations such as qualification, training, monetary remuneration, pension rights, tenure of office etc (see Edigin and Otoghile 1994).

Public Administration and Bureaucracy

The term 'bureaucracy' according to weber (1964) is often heard and used in connection with the conduct of public affairs and the activities of public officials in particular. What exactly is the meaning of the term? Or rather, what does the average person think the term means? To give an insight into the popular concept of the term 'bureaucracy' a sample is given below, being an excerpt from press publications of Sunday observer, editorial comments, 14 January 1979.

We clamour for fast development of our economy and we seem to believe that the importation of technology is the answer. It would appear that a mighty spanner has been thrown into our wheel of progress by an unreasoning bureaucratic protocol and red-tapism in a bid to maintain the status quo. The thinking seems to be that if our scientists are given enough room to breathe and can invent some of the things we now import, the chances of some officials getting rich quick would have been reduced. (Adebayo, 1981)

The word 'bureaucratic' therefore appears to have acquired an opprobrious meaning, an odious connotation. It is associated with inefficiency, lack of initiative, un-intelligent rigidity in the approach to human problems, undue fussiness and bossiness on the part of officials and downright stubbornness. This appears to be the sum of impressions that spring to mind at the mention of the word bureaucratic, when applied to the way that public officials go about their business.

It is interesting to note that this impression is not confined to the Nigerian public service or those of other underdeveloped countries. Nor is it an impression that has gained prominence only in recent times. As far back as the eighteenth century, there was recorded evidence of outbursts against what were considered to be the odious aspects of public administration. These were seen to be manifested in the way public officials went about their business and the impression created in the minds of the public was summarized by the term 'bureaucratic'.

Underlying causes of bureaucracy

It should be stressed that all the above complaints against bureaucracy, including complaints against Nigerian public administration, apply to bureaucracy in its worst forms only. Ordinarily, although bureaucracy is not a virtue in administration, yet it is an element of administration and inseparable from it. Bureaucracy implies a certain degree of inflexibility and impersonality. To this extent, it constitutes a

problem to administration; but again to the extent that these problems are inseparable from administration, bureaucracy is a process and an element of administration.

Certainly, the underlying reason is that the complexity of the modern state and the magnitude of the services it has to render to the public and citizens of the state make it necessary to have an expert administration – an expert administration which must cope with formulation, execution, and enforcement of rules and regulations and which involves division of labour specialization, organization, planning, and regimentation of large groups of individuals. All these in turn imply hierarchy.

In attempting to operate machinery involving the management devices mentioned above, there is inevitable delay in the provision of services to clients. It is this delay which produces the outcry against administration under the name of bureaucracy.

But it is important to bear in mind that these undesirable characteristics of bureaucracy are not peculiar to government alone. They exist in all large institutions and establishments whose size has grown to a point at which the whole machinery becomes complex and cumbersome. It may be in industry, in business or even in the Church. It exists wherever there is a large-scale organization. It is therefore, almost an axiom that there is an inevitable conjunction between complexity and bureaucracy.

Forces in the External Environment:

Policies made by the organization can influence leadership behaviour. For example in the school system, the policies made by the Ministry of Education have effect on the leadership styles of the head of school.

Also, the expectation from the Ministry of Education, community, parents – teachers association, alumni member, etc affects the leadership style of the principal. Organisations are not self-contained. They have to respond to the pressure of an external environment, social, political and economic.

Bureaucracy: a process in administration

Having said all these things, it is still important to emphasize that bureaucracy, as such, is not hereby being condemned. This is because if kept within reasonable limits, bureaucracy and bureaucratic practices are functionally necessary for the operation of a large administrative apparatus. For example, documentary records are indispensable to the efficient operation of a large organization; structure and hierarchy are similarly indispensable for the efficient performance of work in a large-scale organization.

What is condemned or deplored in bureaucracy is when these practices and operations are overdone. When, for example, the filling of forms is needlessly multiplied and elaborated, or the adherence to circulars is so rigidly and religiously enforced even when they have outlived their usefulness. This is when bureaucracy becomes a curse on administration. A situation is thus produced which some writers on public administration describe as over-organisation and excessive development or bureaucratic routines which get in the way of discharging efficiently the functions of the organization.

Other factors that bring about poor attitude to work

- (a) Lack of proper work placement: Management must place the workers properly in the job you want them to be. This is done by first evaluating the pre-employment qualifications and experience of staff; they should not allow a situation to develop where one person performs a particular function considered to be very critical to the organization otherwise poor work attitude will develop, this is because if that person is sick or unable to be present, a critical part of the function is paralyzed.
- (b) **Lack of correct work environment:** If this is not properly handled it will affect productivity, moral, discipline, efficiency and commitment. It is imperative to have the necessary tools and absence of this will make the workers staggering around. The office should be conducive, they should be painted clean. Effort should be made to provide canteen for relaxation, clinic which provides first aid services before the person is rushed to the hospital. There should be common room where people should relax at intervals and meet or receive their visitors. Truly, where workers are working hard and no where to relax and rest, there is no way problem of poor and weak attitude will not arise.

Overview of workers performance

Staff attitude to work may bring about positive or negative result, or rather effectiveness or ineffectiveness in an organization. The study centres on the cause of poor attitude to work in public organization. Every organization requires productive and reliable workers. An organization where complicated work group and system exist, there must be ineffectiveness, as such factors militating against

effective performance must be looked into. The level of production in an organization depends on staff attitude to work and level of performances either effective or ineffective depends on job satisfaction.

Workers may also increase their performance level because of participation in decision or co-partnership scheme and through their relationship with group or supervisors. According to Strance (1980), the idea of concept arises because it is not feasible to run any organization efficiently on the basis of ordering staff around on errands. One of the basic problems in any organization is how to improve on people and to stop poor attitude to work or reduce the traces of it. In an organization, this is not an easy task, since many people derive only slight personal satisfaction from their job and enjoy little sense of accomplishment or creativity (Abioluwajumi, 2017:44 – 47).

A critical examination and assessment of workers performance in most organizations, in recent times have not only fallen short of expectations, have become sources of concern to many. Management inability to meet the workers psychological needs account for the poor attitude to work in most public and private organizations today.

Many factors largely are responsible for these problems of poor attitude to work, which include poor salary structure. This has continued to cause dissatisfaction of workers resulting in protest, truancy, and lateness to work and wishful disobedience to constituted authority.

Moreover, workers promotion exercise has been on tribal or ethnic sentiment. Workers therefore “going up” to deliberate slow down pace of work thereby leading to low performance. Inability of the management to provide adequate training to their workers, loans and advances that are normally granted to employees to meet their financial obligations are no longer allowed.

Also, management’s oversights, which relate more directly to the day to day operations of the project cause not only frustration but also direct loss of productivity through forced idle time. Most staff are happier when they are exercising their skills, and they are unhappy when they are denied or prevented from doing this (Warren, 1989:144). A major problem confronting managers in this regard is that of how to motivate employees to perform assigned task to meet predetermined standard (Koontz et al, 1990).

On the other hand, there have been various criticisms against the Nigerian workers attitude to work. He is seen as being irresponsible, Lazy, highly unproductive and always seeking monetary rewards. Fashina (1984) observed that despite the various demands of Nigerian workers for better conditions of service, the situation still remains the same, the Nigerian workers are still performing very much below expectation; what is more, workers productivity remains below average, the morale is still low, the efficiency virtually is nil. What is important is not the fact that workers performances are still low, what is important is whether the so called motivational package given to them is commensurate with the level of work done. Workers will always perform better whenever the reward system is commensurate to the amount of work performed. In maximum efforts, it is essential that these various needs which are the motivating factors for good performance are satisfied.

Nature of Public Bureaucracies

According to Max Werber (1954), it is used in a descriptive sense to refer to certain kind of formal organization characterized by a complex administrative hierarchy, specialization of skill and functions, prescribed limits on descriptions set first in a system of rules, impersonal behaviour with regard to cliental and separation of ownership and control in the sense that the members of the bureaucracy do not own the tools and instrument with which they work.

In a very simple language, bureaucracy is referred to as the system of authority, men, offices and method that government uses to carry out its programme. The term public used here is limited and referred to government bureaucracy; nevertheless, bureaucratic characteristics are not necessarily confined to government agencies. There are many private organizations in Nigeria which have bureaucratic features e.g. Ministry of Education, Benin City.

But public bureaucracy is differentiated from Private Bureaucracy by its Public nature which represents both .It expresses them to Public strutting and its concerned with Public Interest.

Conclusion

The study attempt to trace the Effects of Bureaucracy on workers productivity and examined the role which bureaucracy play on job performance, and other motivational incentive play in changing the attitude of workers towards their job. There is a general agreement among the various authorities, authors and some bureaucrats that incentives play a vital role in encouraging or reducing the level of employees’ performance.

It is known and accepted that bureaucratic bottlenecks are barrier to public service delivery. There is a direct relationship between poor service delivery and bureaucratic procedures, that incompetence in the service is traceable to bureaucratic principles. Bureaucratic bottlenecks help to reduce or slow down public service delivery. However, it is known to be responsible for poor performance in the Public Service.

The issue of lack of promotional incentives also has something to do with workers attitude, it contributes to poor attitude to work, which affects workers productivity (Osemeke, 2016: 81 - 86).

The Way forward

The following were the way forward put forth as proposed solutions to bureaucratic principles on workers' productivity. Obviously, these bureaucratic procedures affect workers attitude to work. Due to these bureaucratic procedures, the productivity of workers are reduced, the management should therefore embark on measures to increasing workers productivity such as:

- (1) The management should device a properly laid down promotion policy. This policy should be based on competence and not the other way round which is seniority, the organization should give equal degree of importance to both experience and performance.
- (2) Rewards in the area of money should be attractive enough considering the unpredicted nature of the Nigerian economy.
- (3) Introduction of more training programmes at all levels of the departments and make sure that those who have not enjoyed any form of training be trained in other to enhance their performance
- (4) The management should try as much as possible to make the job more satisfactory either by financial rewards or by any other means which will encourage them to put in their best.
- (5) There should be effective and efficient communicative network for adequate flow of information between the management and the staff. This will create an avenue for good report and reduce tension.
- (6) Finally, management should involve the staff in the discussion of their affairs, particularly those issues that affect them.
- (7) The parastatals that are carrying out similar duties should be merged so as to save revenue and to reduce clumsiness and idleness.
- (8) The decision for employment should be based on meritocracy, qualification and specialization and not on prebendalism, so as to remove bureaucratic bottleneck and to make the service more effective and efficient.
- (9) From time to time the organization should carry out staff audit so that idle, lazy and ghost workers will be fished out

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