

**BOOK REVIEW: THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND THE
CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS IN NIGERIA BY TUNJI OLAOPA (2008) LAGOS, SAFARI
BOOKS (EXPORT) LIMITED**

A. O. Fagbemi (Ph.D)

The comprehensive nature of the book is at a cursory look reflected in the title which is two in one. The theory and practice of public administration are subjects that many scholars have written on. Combining these with Civil Service Reforms makes the book unique and very valuable to students of public administration, policy management, political science, as well as all public sector employees. The private sector is not left out as government reforms impact on the modus operandi of firms in the various sub-sectors of the private sector.

The introduction explains that the Nigerian civil service is rooted in the British civil service with the traditional model of lifetime career and security of tenure until retirement. This model is also that of unambiguous written uniform rules with seniorities a major criterion for promotion. The model also expects non-partisan civil servants. Olaopa narrates the history of the Nigerian civil service with the British Colonial government up to the 90s. The degeneration of the Nigerian civil service emanated from the trade off of the principle of meritocracy for patronage and political expediency. The introduction reiterates the neglect of the civil service as a direct result of the abolition of the post of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation between 1988 and 1999. The introduction summarizes the contents of the book.

Chapter one which is on the "Theories of Public Administration" leaves no reader in doubt as to the definition of public administration. The various definitions provided point to the fact that "Public Administration is government in action". The chapter discusses the theories of public administration including: the Administrative Theory of Henri Fayol (1841-1925); Frederick Winslow Taylor's (1856-1915) Scientific Management theory; and Woodrow Wilson's (1856-1924) essay on "The Study of Public Administration". Another theory of public administration discussed is that of Max Weber's (1864-1920) Theory of Bureaucracy. The author's extensive explanation of bureaucracy throws more light on the usage of the word. Bureaucracy is characterized by a well defined hierarchy of authority; a system of procedure for dealing with work and selection for employment and promotion based on technical competence. Gulick's papers on the Science of Administration and the introduction of the acronym PODSCORB are well articulated in the chapter. Other theories discussed in chapter one are those of Elton Mayo of the Human Relations School, Chester Bernard's "Function of the Executive", Herbert A. Simon's "Behavior within Organizations" and "The New Public Management". The New Public Management Approach is based on the assumptions that large state bureaucracies are inherently defective and wasteful. Olaopa opines that the adoption of the market-oriented techniques would enhance the capacity of the public service to deliver services to the citizenry. The author points out that the New Public Management model gives priority role to management and emphasizes empowerment, entrepreneurship and effectiveness. This highly informative chapter is invaluable to students of Public Administration and Management.

Chapter two on "The Civil Service and the Idea of Professionalism", continues with some contemporary theories of the civil service followed by the concept and practice of professionalism in the Nigerian civil service. The contemporary theories discussed are: the Public Choice Theory, the Agency Theory and the Transaction -Cost Theory. Olaopa gives clear definitions of these theories which will be useful to advanced students of public administration. The author refers to professionalism as the pursuit of excellence. The chapter gives the typology of professionalism as dynamics, cruisers and losers. Olaopa traces the development of professionalism in the Nigerian civil service from 1830 to this¹ century. Attributes of well performing organizations such as: leadership, accountability, character (people, communication and trust), as well as management tools such as Total Quality Management are discussed. Teamwork, Change management and recognition are presented as characteristics of well performing organizations. Adaptation of these techniques will go a long way in instilling professionalism into the Nigerian public service.

Chapter three focuses on the theory and practice of Public Administration in Nigeria. Five stages of public service as classified by Kirk-Greene (1965) are fully discussed in the chapter. The stages are: (1) the law and order, conquest or pacification stage (1890-19100; (2) the consolidation

stage (1910-1925); (3) the stage of modest economic development (1925-1945); (4) the stage of urgent political development (1945-1952) and (5) the transition to independence and the stage of rapid Nigerianization. Olaopa enumerates the various administrative reforms from the Hunt Commission of 1934 to the Udoji Commission of 1974. The 1988 civil service reform is also presented as addressing issues in the 1979 constitution regarding the adoption of the Presidential system. The highlights of the 1988 reforms are enumerated in the chapter. Chapter three ends with the teaching of public administration in Nigeria. The University of Lagos, Faculty of Public Administration has carved its name in gold in the teaching of public administration in Nigeria. The contributions of Training Institutions and Professional bodies to Public Administration in Nigeria are well articulated in the chapter. In particular the role of African Association of Public Administration in Nigeria (AAPAM) is well appreciated. The chapter ends with factors that inhibit the development of public administration as a profession.

Chapter four discusses the evolution of the Nigerian civil service and the reform initiatives. The chapter provides a lot of facts on the origin and evolution of the civil services from 1857 to post independence era. The era of Military intervention with centralization tendency is very well presented. The Udoji reform of 1974, the 1988 civil service reform and the Ayida Reform of 1995 are also discussed in the chapter. An interesting part of this chapter is the discourse on the effect of military rule on the Nigerian civil service. Olaopa observes that the command and control governance tradition of the military inexorably destroyed accountability mechanisms, civil service cherished values especially the ethical norms. This eventually led to a total erosion of professionalism, requisite knowledge, meritocracy and esprit de corp. Transparency and accountability suffered with the easily manipulatable procurement system. The economy was equally not better off. Aggregate national debt grew to all time high. It is against this background that Obasanjo's civilian administration took off in 1999.

The Obasanjo Civil Service Renewal Programme is discussed in chapter five. The chapter starts with statistics on the state of Nigeria's economy up to 2004. The process leading to the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) is well articulated in the chapter. This includes the retreat that resulted in the Kuru Declaration and the pilot studies conducted. The four components of the Reform Agenda as embodied in NEEDS are enumerated. Olaopa discusses the strategic foci of the Obasanjo Renewal programme. Among these are the re-professionalization of the civil service, monetization of fringe benefits, payroll clean up, restructuring, of MDAs, the creation of Service Compact for All Nigerians (SERVICM), pension reform and the establishment of Anti-Corruption Agencies.

Chapter six is on a proffered optimal system model for public administration in Nigeria. The suggested framework credited to Adamolekun (2007) has four planks. These are: State Legitimacy; Clear Vision, and Strategic Development Direction; Implementation Capacity and Focus on Development Outcomes. This framework is worth the consideration of the government for possible implementation. Olaopa goes further to suggest several elements of the optimal system model. Some of these elements include changing the cadre or pools system to functional fields of specialization; workforce control and management of growth of the services, establishing ethical values in the conduct of business and installation of Integrated Public Service human resources Information System, modernization of systems and processes using e-government solutions. The author also recommends a new pay, compensation and incentive systems after a clear articulation of the many problems associated with the current pay structure in the federal civil service.

The author of the book should consider some structural changes and a few additions. While the essential features of public administration theories were discussed, chapter one could be further enriched by discussing the degree of application of the schools of thought to public service of Nigeria. In chapter two, the section on "Contemporary Theories of the Civil Service" could come before the section on "The New Public Management Approach" on page 32. The section on "What is Administrative Reform" fits logically as a prelude to the section on Udoji Reform of 1974 on page 144. Pages 41-42 should therefore be edited to reflect the new content of chapter two which will now be mainly on the Civil Service and the Idea of Professionalism. Chapter three could be titled, "Overview of the Practice of Public Administration in Nigeria". The theories have been discussed in chapter one and there is little about theories in chapter three.

