
**MANAGING BUREAUCRACY IN THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

This paper is titled, Managing Bureaucracy in the Nigerian Economy for Sustainable Development: Issues, Challenges And Solutions. The paper considers major issues surrounding the concept of bureaucracy which in most cases has been seen with negative views and perceptions by both Administrators and managers of organizations alike. The paper argues that if the Nigerian Economy must be managed effectively for Sustainable Development, the basic principles and tenets guiding bureaucracy and bureaucratic practices must be adhered to by everyone who is saddled with the responsibility of managing the Nigerian Economy at all levels. Some of the challenges affecting bureaucracy were looked at, as well as the prospects. It was suggested amongst others that for the purpose of bringing about efficiency and effectiveness so as to ensure Sustainable Development, Government appointments into positions of authority should be based on merit and not on favouritism and nepotism.

Keywords: Nigerian Economy, Bureaucracy, Management, Development, Sustainable development.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the years, there has been no agreeable interpretation to the concept of bureaucracy. Some scholars see it as a clog in the wheel of progress of Administration. These scholars also see bureaucrats as timid, ineffectual, power-seeking, Negative-minded and Sadists in nature. (Oruebor, 2012).

According to Nwachukwu (1999) in Oruebor (2012), some other scholars have termed bureaucracy as a mechanism that fosters advanced legal and economic systems, and therefore advances civilization.

In actual fact, no economic system can grow beyond a certain limit without the use of bureaucracy and bureaucratic principles; because, although the concept is used in a pejorative sense, as in “Bureaucratic red-tape”, in a scientific sense, it has been realized that bureaucracy is a medium through which organizational tasks, goals and objectives are accomplished. Thus, if the Nigerian Economy must be managed effectively and efficiently, the use of bureaucracy and bureaucratic principles cannot be overemphasized.

In this paper therefore, the authors intend to look at challenges and prospects of Bureaucracy in the management of the Nigerian Economy for sustainable development.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL CLASSIFICATION/BRIEF REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Here, we shall both do a bit of conceptual clarification as we both define and review a few related literature as follows;

(A) BUREAUCRACY

According to Ogunna (1999), Bureaucracy as a concept was first conceived by a French Economist named Vincent De Gournay who saw it as the rule of officials. Gournay considered bureaucracy to be a major element in the rationalization of the modern world and the most important of all social processes. He asserts that domination succeeds through administration.

However, it was Max Weber, (1864-1920), a German Sociologist who popularized the concept using three major characteristics as follows;

- The structure and functioning of the organization.
- The rewards of the incumbents or officers.
- The protection of the incumbents or officers.

In the perception of Weber, he saw an organization with a hierarchy of paid, full-time officials who formed a chain of command and these are concerned with the business of administration of controlling, managing and co-ordinating a complex series of tasks. Bureaucracy is a system of control, it is a hierarchical organization in which superiors strictly control and discipline the activities of subordinates. In order for this control to be effective, it must be regarded as legitimate: there must be a minimum of voluntary submission to higher authority. (Oruebor, 2012).

Max Weber therefore defines bureaucracy as, a system of Administration characterized by expertness, impartiality and the absence of humanity.

Other definitions of the concept of Bureaucracy as advanced by Nwigbo (2003) are as follows;

“Bureaucracy consists of functionaries, the aristocracy of idols: the democracy of idolaters”.
(G.B. Shaw)

“Bureaucracy is the term usually applied to a system of government, the control of which is so completely in the hands of officials that their power jeopardizes the liberties of ordinary citizens”. (H.J. Laski)

“Bureaucracy is the systematic organization of tasks and individuals into a pattern, which can most effectively achieve the ends of collective effort”. (Pffifner and Presthus).

“Bureaucracy is a system of organization designed to accomplish large-scale administrative tasks by systematically co-ordinating the work of many individuals”. (Peter M. Blau and Marshall W. Mayer)

Technically, the term bureaucracy is used in two senses; in its larger sense, it is used “to describe any personnel system where the employees are classified in a system of administration composed of a hierarchy of sections, divisions, bureaux, departments and the like”. In its restricted sense it is used to describe “a body of public servants organized in a hierarchical system which stands outside the sphere of effective public control”. Bureaucracy is indeed a system of administration in which professional class of expert civil servants administer the affairs of the state in an impartial manner and is organized in a hierarchical way.

Four main types of Bureaucracy have been identified by Karl Marx. They are;

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- **The Guardian Bureaucracy**; which is defined by marx as a scholastic officialdom trained in right conduct according to the classics”. This type of civil service regards itself as the guardian of public interest.

 - **The caste Bureaucracy**; this type of bureaucracy has a class base and arises from the class connection of those in the controlling positions. This type is mostly prevalent in political systems practicing oligarchy. It was practiced years ago in India when only the Brahmins and Kshatriyas could become high officials.

 - **The patronage Bureaucracy**; Another name for this type of bureaucracy is “the spoils system”. This type of civil service exists where public jobs are given as a personal favour or political reward.

 - **The merit Bureaucracy**; this means, career, open to talent. In this type of bureaucracy, the best brains by merit, are brought to the service. The attempt is to procure the best man who is to be judged by objective methods. It is the method mostly adopted in modern times by civilized countries and it is preferred above the other three types earlier mentioned.

Max Weber, while giving a final touch to the definition of the concept of Bureaucracy therefore looked at it as follows; “Bureaucracy is an administrative body of appointed officials, and is from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is, in this sense, formally the most rational known means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. It is superior to any form in precision, in stability, in

the stringency of its discipline and its reliability. It is finally superior both in intensive efficiency and in the scope of its operations, and is formally capable of application to all kinds of administrative tasks”.

The term Bureauracy according to Oruebor (2012) also refers to any large, complex organization in which employees have specified responsibilities and work, within a hierarchy of authority. Corporations, companies, states, local and federal governments have bureaucracies without which, organizations would not function.

Nwigbo (2003) has further given a list of the characteristics of bureaucracy which include:

- Division of labour
- Impersonal order
- Bound by Rules and Regulations
- Sphere of competence
- Hierarchy
- Personnel and public ends
- Written Documents.

Marx Weber, further gave his own list of the following characteristics;

- Separation of office and its incumbent
- Selection by merit
- Fixed remuneration of officials.
- The official is subject to discipline and control while performing his official work
- Hierarchy of offices

- Allocation of activities of the organization needed to fulfill its objectives
- Allocation of Authority required to discharge these activities.
- Strict adherence to rules.

(B) DEVELOPMENT/SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The word or term, Development means several things to different scholars in diverse professions. Scholars have agreed over the years, that development is both multifaceted and multi-dimensional.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) agrees with the view that human beings should be the central focus of real Development efforts when it argued that people are the real wealth of a nation; therefore the basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to live long, healthy and creative lives, etc. (Harry, 2009).

In a similar vein seers (1967) posits that, any talk about development should expressly answer the following Questions; what is happening to poverty? What is happening to unemployment? And what is happening to inequality?

Similarly too, Angaye (1995) stated that;

“Development should therefore be seen as improvement in the material, physical, mental spiritual and moral quality of life resulting from rising incomes, the reduction or eradication of poverty, unemployment, unjustified inequalities, provision of better food, shelter, health, education and protection, high self-esteem or respect, increased form of choice and ability to determine one’s own destiny”.

While the main goal of development is to satisfy human needs and aspirations, the report of the world commission on environment and Development of the Brundtland Commission report, 1983 says;

“Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs. In essence, sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations.

Following the Brundtland conception of the idea of Sustainable Development, the world congress of Architects in 1993, describes Sustainable Development or Sustainability as “meeting our needs today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Sustainable Development therefore involves a consideration of three aspects of reality which are; the physical environment, the socio-political and the economic environment.

3.1 THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY

Currently, according to statistics, the Nigerian economy is ranked as the 31st largest economy in the world in terms of nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the largest in Africa and the 27th largest in terms of Purchasing power parity.

Although the GDP shrank during the covid-19 pandemic, Nigeria’s GDP has grown between 1 percent and 7 percent per year for many decades.

This is why Nigeria is now considered as a middle-income country and as a Newly Emerging Economy (NEE).

Nigeria has the largest market in Africa with a population of over 200 million. It is one of Africa's key oil producers, producing high-value, low-sulfur crude oil. The Nigerian economy is heavily dependent on oil.

However, despite being Africa's largest economy, the Nigerian Economy is bedeviled with several economic challenges. Some of the biggest ones include the following;

- Corruption
- Poor Human Development
- Over dependence on crude oil
- Crime and terrorism
- Low export earnings
- High rate of unemployment
- Lack of basic infrastructure
- Market monopoly by the government

Others include;

- Economic inequality
- Great Depression
- Hyper inflation
- Inflation of food prices
- Poverty

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- Public Debt
- Recession
- Youth unemployment
- Fuel subsidy
- Poor education system
- State-society gap

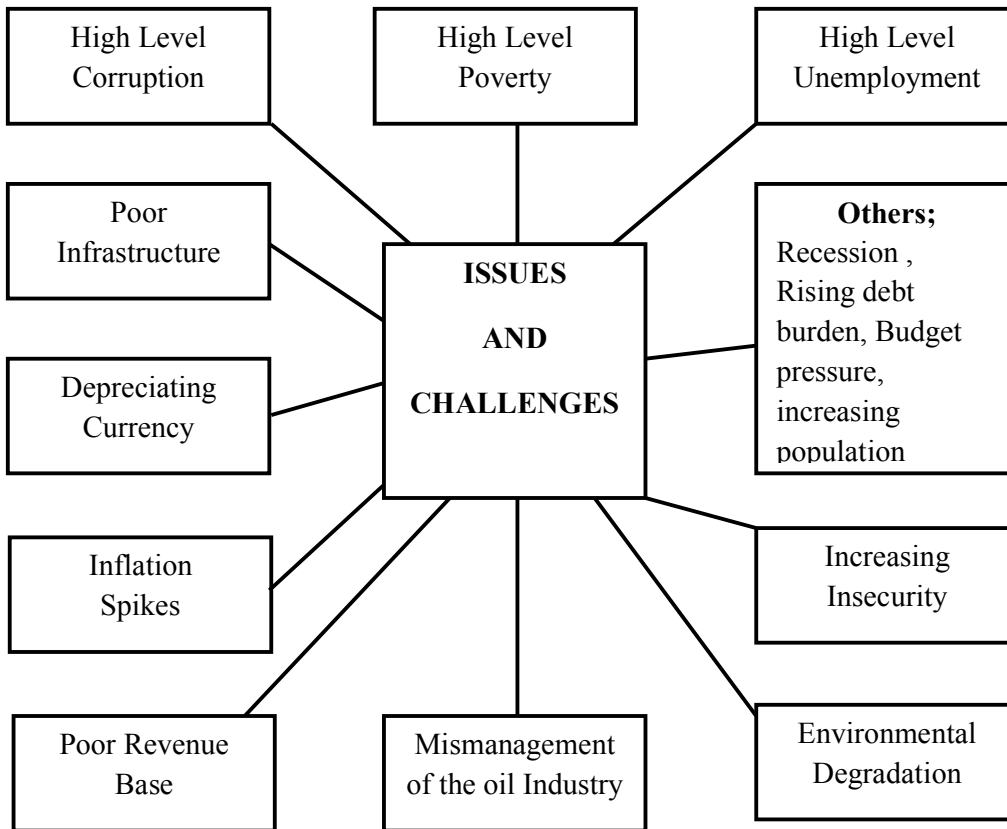


Fig. 1.1 Issues And Challenges in the Nigerian Economy

Source: Dr. Gospel Chukwu (The Nigerian Economy; Issues, Challenges And Solutions)

Being a key note address presented in 2021 at the SMS Conference, Kenpoly, Bori.

4.1 CHALLENGES/DEMERITS OF BUREAUCRACY

Looking at its characteristics, Bureaucracy performs many valuable tasks which we have come to take for granted, however, there are a few challenges associated with it. Oruebor (2012) has advanced the following key challenges and Demerits;

- Bureaucracy is deliberately slow, difficult and cumbersome.
- It leads to Red-Tapism or slowness of action even in very serious matters.
- It does not give room for officials to use their initiative.
- Bureaucracy is not effective for small organizations.
- Bureaucrats are power seeking, and power drunk in organizations.
- In times of crisis, bureaucrats are trained to follow orders and conduct routine operations rather than make policy decisions and take initiatives in response to crisis.
- Bureaucracy is too large, too powerful, and too un-accountable to the people or to elected officials.
- It is a heavy guardian of the status quo.
- Corruption is a major malaise especially, in the Nigerian Bureaucracy.

5.1 PROSPECTS OF BUREAUCRACY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Both Obikeze and Obi (2004), have advanced the following as some of the benefits and prospects of bureaucracy which will also go a long way in the management of the Nigerian Economy for Sustainable Development;

- Bureaucracy encourages harmony in organizations.

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- The principle of specialization as emphasized by bureaucracy bring about a high level of productivity.
 - Bureaucracy bring about efficiency at all levels of organization.
 - It is good for large scale organizations.
 - It gives room for the smooth running of organizations.

Going forward, Nwigbor (2008) have also advanced the following prospects;

- Ministers and other public officers should possess a dynamic personality.
- There should be maximum decentralization of powers and authority to enable more actors perform their roles in the management of affairs.
- A sound system of education should be developed to ensure that corruption is expunged.
- Public servants should be promoted on the basis of merit and not by political favouritism.
- There should be administrative tribunals where civil servants can bring their complaints and seek for redress.
- There should be good leadership and management.

Other very important factors include the following'

- Government organizations should be highly effective and flexible.
- There should be a just and efficient personnel management.
- There should be a maximum degree of co-operation among the various officers and actors of government.
- There should be effective motivation of personnel.

If and when all these are put in place, the Nigerian Economy will be better off, and there will be Sustainable Development.

6.1 CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

Truth is bureaucracy is not a demon; it is not a mystery – it merely operates within the confines of the law, and within established rules and Regulations. In fact no Democracy can function without bureaucrats.

We conclude therefore that despite the challenges surrounding Bureaucracy, it has a major role to play in the management of the Nigerian Economy for Sustainable Development.

7.1 SUGGESTIONS

To enable us effectively use bureaucracy and bureaucratic principles in the management of the Nigerian Economy for Sustainable Development, the following suggestions will help us;

1. Government appointments should be based on merit and not on politics or favouritism. This will ensure that only credible people are involved in the management of the Nigerian Economy.
2. Managerial policies, principles and practices must follow established rules, regulations and guidelines.
3. Bureaucracy should be understood and practiced from the angle of its merits and not the Demerits.
4. The myriad of challenges attacking the Nigerian Economy should be addressed by the government.
5. Corruption should be tackled head-on, and not just by mere lip service.

6. There should be flexibility in the management of affairs of government especially when it affects management of the Nigerian Economy.
7. Both public and private organizations should not have water tight policies.

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