

# Human Capital Acquisition and the Challenges of Developmental State: A Case of the Nigerian Civil Service 2000 – 2015

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## Abstract

The Nigerian civil service has not risen to its responsibility when it comes to implementing government policies within the rubrics of a developmental state. This paper, therefore, focussed on the human capital acquisition in the Nigerian civil service with a view to ascertaining the challenges confronting the service, despite the myriad of reforms of the civil service by successive governments between year 2000 and 2015; and proffering policy suggestions towards reversing the ugly trend. The analyses of secondary data were done using the lenses of the developmental state theoretical construct. It was found out among other challenges political interference by civil commissioners in the process of human capital acquisition for the service and jettisoning of merit system for ethnic and national spread considerations. It was recommended among other things that the functions of human capital acquisition should be left for core civil servants trained for that purpose to perform; merit system should be brought back to the service and incorporated in the process of implementation of the federal character principle.

**Keywords:** Civil Service, Human Capital, Development, MDAs, Reforms, Developmental State

## INTRODUCTION

Human capital represents the human factor in the organization; the combined intelligence, skills and expertise that give the organization its distinctive character. The human elements of the organization are those that are capable of learning, changing, innovating and providing the creative thrust which if properly motivated can ensure the long term survival of the organization (Bontis et al, 1999). Human element in organizational and national development is fundamental and germane as it constitutes the very driving force and in fact the controlling element to all other elements in any organization. It can also be further asserted that the development of any organizations and that of any nations can be tied to the human factors in such organizations or nations. The other factors in the production process can only be organized by the efforts of the men and women who form the nucleus of the human capital. The success or failure of any organization is dependent on the capacity of the human capital that drives the organization or nation to the realization of its goals and objectives. Although it is universally accepted that investment in modern equipment are essential ingredients for economic development and industrialization, it is important to recognize that man remains the prime mover and the decisive factor of rapid economic transformation.

The acquisition of this human capital is as important as the human capital itself. When the right choices are made, there is every tendency that the purpose for which they are acquired will be realized but when there is a faulty choice in the process of the human capital acquisition, there is every possibility of organizational failure.

An adequate human resources planning is paramount to ascertain the right number of qualified personnel required at the right time to do the job of the organization. According to Graham (1990), human resource planning is an attempt to forecast how many and what kind of employees will be required in the future and to what extent this demand is likely to be met.

The process of acquisition starts with recruitment and selection by the personnel department. In the public service, the Civil Service Commission plays this vital role guided by the extant rules and regulations.

The Civil Service of Nigeria was a British creation for the maintenance of law and order in Nigeria (Ogundiya, 2007). At independence in 1960, the role of the Federal Civil Service increased from mere maintenance of law and order to that of infrastructural development and social service delivery.

The Post 1960 Federal Civil Service (FSC) was essentially involved in setting and coordinating state policies and programmes in social and economic management and the establishment of public enterprises for the provision of social services. This development resulted in a more direct role of the civil service in the development of the country (Ogundiya, 2007). The consequence of this was the expansion of the civil service and the resultant need of personnel to pilot the affairs of government hence the acquisition drive.

Nigeria is blessed with abundant human resources. Despite this fact, the Nigerian Public Service has been unable to meet the expectations of the citizens both in terms of basic needs as well as institutional transformation. What the country has been inundated with is poor service delivery; corruption at the various levels of the public service; severe infrastructural decay and complete dysfunctional public service system.

One of the most formidable legacies that Britain bequeathed to Nigeria at independence in 1960 was a virile civil service typical of a thorough-going developmental state. The country has since then taken somewhat giant strides to address its human capital development objectives. Today, the country can boast, to some extent, that its human capital development effort is on course. This could be attested to by abundant human resources available in the country. As much as these all important resources meant for developmental purposes are available, it is ironical that Nigeria's civil service is far from being the ideal and its services to the Nigerian public is dismal, to say the least. This paper therefore focuses on the acquisition of human capital in the Nigerian civil service as a developmental state. It interrogates issues that constitute challenges to the agencies of the state saddled with the responsibilities of human capital acquisition for developmental purposes. This work, therefore, is purposed to ascertain the challenges confronting the human capital acquisition in the Nigerian civil service; examine the various reforms aimed at turning around the Nigerian civil service between the year 2000 and 2015; and to proffer policy recommendations towards surmounting the challenges.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Developmental state as a theoretical framework, is adopted for this paper. Castells (1992:56-57), cited by Ojochenemi and Asuelime (2015) defines a state as developmental 'when it establishes as its principle of legitimacy, its ability to promote and sustain development, understanding by development the combination of steady high rate of growth and structural change in the productive system, both domestically and in its relationship to the international economy. Woo-Cumings (1999:1) described the theory of developmental state as the explanation for the East Asian industrialization. According to Johnson (1982) 'it is shorthand for the seamless web of political, bureaucratic and moneyed influences that structure economic life in capitalist Northeast Asia. It is conceptually positioned between a free market capitalist economic system and centrally planned economic system, and called a planned rational capitalist system 'conjoining private ownership with state guidance (Woo-Cumings, 1999:2). Drawing from Johnson (1982), Deyo (1987) and Evans (1995) among others, we understand developmental states to exist when the states possess the vision, leadership and capacity to bring about a positive transformation of a society within a condensed period of time. To be judged developmental, a state does not need to be in control of everything and successful in all spheres. A transformation that is positive overall may be accompanied by a range of negative consequences such as major environmental damage or greater societal tension, which become problems that society and the state have to address later in a subsequent phase (Fritz and Roch, 2007:3). Developmental states are characterized by a national development agenda and the capability of the state to coordinate its agents and various private actors towards this commonly shared development project (Wade, 2010:157). Developmental states depend upon capable and autonomous bureaucrats, such as those found at the upper level in China, which are capable of managing and coordinating sophisticated policies (Wade, 2010:157)

To be successful, truly developmental states or regime should among others, exhibit the following:

- (i) Matching or staking state legitimacy with achievement;
- (ii) Providing industrial leadership example to guide and encourage interested prospective private participants;
- (iii) Enabling the government to control for the benefit of all the micro and macro indexes of the economy. Import/export, interest rates, external borrowing and lending etc.
- (iv) Maintain an efficient and professional bureaucracy recruited on the basis of merit, thus disallowing mediocrity, patronage and clientelism;
- (v) Promoting multi-sectorial encouragement of research;
- (vi) Existence of economic and developmental oriented bureaucracy of experts protected from political pressures that will design and implement policies as it was in South Korea (Alam, 1989 in Agbaje 2014).

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Development**

Rogers (1969) sees development as a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capital incomes and level of living through more modern production methods and improved social organizations.

Todaro (2011) conceives development in a more holistic manner. Development according to him must be conceived as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. Development in its essence must represent the whole gamut of changes by which an entire social system turns to the diverse basic needs of individuals and social groups within the system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory and towards a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better.

According to Seers in his analysis of development, he says ‘the questions to ask about a country’s development are therefore: what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have decline from high levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if the entire three have, it would be strange to call the result ‘development’ even if per capital income doubled (Obi and Chukwuemeka, 2006:5).

From the definitions above, it is crystal clear that development is not only dependent on the capital projects that are available but also the human factors that can manipulate the capital resources for use by man.

### **Human Capital**

Human capital is the most important factor in the production process. Without it the other factors of production cannot organize themselves to realize the goals of the organization. It is a term popularized by Gary Becker an economist from University of Chicago and Jacob Mincer that refers to the stock of Knowledge, habit, social and personality attributes, including creativity embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic value (Becker, 1993). Bontis et al (1999), opined that human capital represent the human factor in the organization; the combined intelligence, skills, and expertise that gives the organization its distinctive character. The human element of the organization are those that are capable of learning, changing, innovative and providing the creative thrust which if properly motivated can ensure the long term survival of the organization. Scarborough and Elias (2002) believes that the concept of human capital is mostly usefully viewed as a bridging concept. That is, it defines the link between human resource practice and business performance in terms of assets rather than business processes. They point out that human capital is to a large extent “non-standardized, tacit, dynamic, context dependent and embodied in the people”.

Davenport (1999) posits that people possess innate abilities, behaviour and personal energy and these elements make up the human capital they bring to their work. And it is they and not their employers who own this capital and decide when, how and where they will contribute it. In other words, they can make choice. The concept of human capital refers to the ability and skills of the human resources of a country, while human capital formation refers to the process of acquiring and increasing the number of persons who have the skills, education and experience that are critical for the economic growth and political development of a country (Okojie 1995:44). It is even more critical in a developmental state. This is especial in the circumstance where the state is the major driver of the developmental process and equally dictates the regulatory terms for the operations of the private sector within the development agenda set by the state. Acquiring the human capital formed is an important aspect of this work. This involves series of processes which include acquisition, development and retention and to these processes we now turn our attention.

### **Human capital acquisition**

Human capital acquisition involve the process of recruitment and selection in every organized system to bring into the system the qualified human capital that will make the system function towards the realization of the organizational goals. Recruitment is the first step in the process of filling a vacancy “it includes the examination of the vacancy, the consideration of all sources of suitable candidates, making contact with those candidates and attracting applications from them (Graham, 1990).

Recruitment is the development and maintenance of adequate manpower sources. In other words, recruitment is to create a large pool of persons who are willing and available to work for a particular organization (Beach 1980). According to Public Service Rules (2008), recruitment means the filling of vacancies by the appointment of persons not already in the public service of the federal republic of Nigeria. It however excludes the transfer of officers from other public service in the federation to the federal public service.

Butler et al (1991) defines recruitment as “encompassing the array of organizational practices and decisions used to affect the number or types of individuals who are willing to apply for or to accept employment in a given vacancy. The process of recruitment begins when it has been established that there is a vacant position to be filled. The personnel department swing into action to place an advertisement of the job armed with the job analysis (Job description and job specification) in the newspapers, internal magazines, leaflets, television etc. The sources of employment could be internal or external. Many organizations embark on recruitment drive to achieve a number of objectives some of which are:

- (i) To increase the pool of qualified personnel from which the organization could choose with a minimum cost;
- (ii) To help enhance the success rate of the selection process by identifying potential qualified candidates who could be shortlisted for the next selection stage.

The use of the internal or external sources of recruitment or both is determined by the following factors according to Stoner in Aibieyi (2010):

- (1) Organizational policy regarding recruitment;

(2) The availability of the required staff within the organization and its effect on the overall Organizational effort;

- 3) The level of position to be filled; and
- 4) The number of job positions to be filled.

Selection on the other hand is a continuation of the filling process. According to Fatiregun (1992), selection is the exercise of choosing for excellence through the process of rejecting or matching of the applicants, first against the attributes which we expect will make for success on the job and secondly, matching of the candidate one against the other until we have ordered all of them in order to have relative suitability.

In fact, selection is the process of sorting out or eliminating those applicants believed to be unqualified to meet the jobs requirement. It is also known as short-listing of candidates. It is the second stage in the process of filling a vacant position. At this stage, care is taken to make sure that the right thing is done so as not to jeopardize the process of getting the best for the organization.

The first step in the selection process is to shortlist the applicants. In doing this, some basic standard such as minimum qualification, minimum age, experience, etc. should be established to ensure fairness in the selection (Okoh, 2005). The major objective of the selection process is to find out enough aptitude, skill, interests so that his matching with the job can be done accurately. It is also aimed at making an acceptable offer to the candidate that appears from the evidence obtained to be the most suitable for the job in question (Okoh, 2005). Selection process usually varies in operation as different organizations design their selection process to meet the needs of such organization.

### **Human capital development**

Having acquired qualified and skilled manpower, there is every tendency that such personnel should be trained for better performance and to bring out the best in him. The importance of training cannot be overemphasized. It brings out the innate talent for owner's use to better the organization and himself especially in order to impact specialized knowledge and develop skills as agent of change and national development. Human capital development therefore, involves employee's development policies which express the organization's commitment to the continuous improvement of the skills and abilities its employees in order to maximize their contribution and to give them the opportunity to enhance their skills, realize their potentials, advance their career and increase their employability both within and outside the organization (Amstrong, 2009). Agboola (2016) opined that "In an increasing globalized world, competitiveness is key. Countries which rise to the top of the global indices of success, especially on social economic development are those that invest heavily in human capital development and in cutting-edge skills and training programmes for those who manage their civil service, economics, trade and industries".

Underdeveloped countries are strongly committed to the programmes of constructing roads, dams, power houses, factories pertaining to light and heavy industries, hospitals, schools, colleges and a host of other activities associated with development planning. For this, they need engineers, technicians, technical supervisors, managerial and administrative personnel, scientist, doctors, nurses, veterinarians, agronomists, accountants, statisticians, economists, secretaries, stenographers, etc. if there is dearth of this varied type of human capital, physical capital cannot be productively utilized. As a result of machine breakdown and wear out soon, materials and components are wasted and the quality of production fails (Jhingan, 2011).

Success is, therefore, achieved in the implementation of government policies and programmes if there is a sound understanding of the issue and what is at stake and how to go about them. The acquisition of necessary skills for the pursuit of state and national interests and skilful adaptation of the external environment for the attainment of the general goals and objectives of the government is fundamental. To achieve this, training is necessary.

Fanibuyan (2001) defines training as the systematic process of altering the behaviour and or attitudes of employee in a direction to increase organizational goal achievement and development programmes generally aimed at educating supervisory employees above and beyond the immediate technical requirement of the job and have a main objective of the improvement of the effective performance of all managers.

Staff training and development according to Ezeuwa (2009) can be seen as the use of human resources to quantitatively change man's physical and biological environment to his benefit or even seen as involved in the introduction of new ideas into the social structure. Staff training is considered as the process of giving staff at all levels sufficient instruction and direction which will enable them to perform their duties well (Aibieyi, 2010). There are however different types of training in human resource development. The best type is that which serves the purpose of the organization. Fulton (1990) identifies two types of training programme in the public service, namely internal and external training programmes. The internal training programmes are conducted in-house (induction training, training in specific skills and techniques, supervisory training and job rotated management training). The external training programmes are essentially off-the-job in external institutions. He notes that 70% of training is conducted in-house and advises that as much as possible there is need to have a balance between

the amount of training done internally vis-à-vis external training.

Ojie and Agbagbara (1991) in Aibieyi (2010) corroborated Fulton's view on internal and external training in the public service. These include induction and refreshers courses, seminars, conferences and workshops, on-the-job training, study leave with or without pay or in-service training for short courses.

It is sad to note that most organizations and nations find it very difficult to invest adequately in the training of its work force and even when they do, the attitude of the beneficiaries to it is usually very repulsive. The expected seriousness is not always there. It is worthy of note that every MDA in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service has training section situated in the Human Resource Management Department and is headed by a Deputy Director (Training). Budgetary allocations are made yearly for this purpose and staff are given opportunities to access the funds for all types of training including foreign ones. The performance of the civil servants, despite training opportunities still remains abysmally poor. It remains to be interrogated whether the training opportunities are actually utilized for the purposes they are meant or they are just mere jamborees for officers to collect Duty Tour Allowances (DTA) and 'Estacodes' (if foreign) typical of corrupt practices that are endemic in the nation's public service.

### **Retention of Human Capital**

Retention is the most difficult of the tripod in the process of acquisition of human capital. Having trained a work force, there is the need to look for ways to make the employee to stay in the organization. There is always a high possibility of experienced workers leaving a particular organization to more lucrative ones if the opportunity arises. To prevent such from happening, there is the need to provide incentives and motivation to encourage them to stay. These incentives include good pay, robust welfare packages, good leadership, good prospect in the organization, as put by Reed (2001) that 'every worker is five minutes away from handing in his or her notice, and 150 working hours away from walking out of the door to a better offer. There is no such thing as a job for life and today's worker has a few qualms about leaving employers for greener pastures. Having this at the back of our mind, there is the need to be methodical in handling the available for a continuous survival of the organization.

A study by Holbeche (1998) of high flyers found that the factors that aided the retention and motivation of high performers included providing challenge and achievement opportunities (e.g. assignments), mentors, realistic self-assessment and feedback processes. Armsrong (2009) enumerates possible reasons for leaving a job. They include better pay, better prospect, more security, more opportunities to develop skills, better working condition, poor relationship with manager/team leader, poor relationship with colleague, bullying or harassment etc.

He further provided possible actions to stemming employee turnover. They include:

- (i) Designing job to maximize skill variety, task significance, autonomy, control overwork and feedback, and ensure that they provide opportunities and growth. Some roles can be customized to meet the needs of particular individuals;
- (ii) Encouraging the development of social ties within the organization;
- (iii) Ensuring that selection and promotion procedure match the capacities of individuals to the demands of the work they have to do. Rapid turnover can result simply from selection or promotion decisions;
- (iv) Eliminating, as much as possible, unpleasant working conditions or the imposition of too much stress on employees;
- (v) Taking steps to improve work- life-balance by developing policies including flexible working environment that recognizes the need of employees outside work; and
- (vi) Dealing with uncompetitive, inequitable or unfair pay systems etc.

Majority of these steps that could stem labour turnover are not incorporated into the civil service system in Nigeria. Hence, at the slightest opportunity, good hands in the civil service either find their ways into public service agencies and parastatals where the working conditions are better even with the same employer, the federal government.

### **The Nigerian Civil Service**

Civil Service is the term used to cover those public servants who are direct employees of the federal and state governments other than the police, armed forces personnel, the judicial personnel and the teachers. Its usage excludes also the employees of statutory corporations and boards (Nwosu, 1977).

According to Adebayo (1986) the Civil Service comprises all servants of the state, other than those holding political appointments, who are employed in a civil capacity and whose remuneration is paid out of money voted by the legislature.

Ademolekun (1983) sees the Civil Service as "the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the political executive in formulating and implementing governmental policies", while he defines public service as the totality of services that are organized under government authority. It can therefore be said that civil service is

narrower in scope and excludes some government employees who are public servants.

In pursuit of the developmental objective, the Nigerian government has put in place institutions in form of ministries, departments, and agencies to help in that direction. These Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) include the ministry of education which is responsible for the provision of training of manpower for the development of the nation through the education agencies like the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. It is said that education is the bedrock of any nation's development strategies. Adamu (2002) opined that investment in education and training is imperative if the aim is to propel the economy to higher levels of productivity and income and thereby accelerate the rate of economic growth. Education, she said, increases the number of knowledgeable workers by improving their skills and enabling them to face new challenges.

In the same vein, the ministry of agriculture and its various agencies are put in place to achieve self-sufficiency in agricultural produce and to, export to other countries for foreign earnings. The ministry of health is another institution of government set up to provide good health services for her citizens, as it is an axiomatic truth that "a healthy nation is a wealthy nation". The health services are provided through the primary, secondary and the tertiary health institutions. Other ministries like that of Finance, Works and Housing, Transport and Aviation, Petroleum, Culture and Tourism, Defence, Science and Technology, Solid mineral, Power and Energy, Interior, External Affairs etc. are put in place to provide various services to the people directly or through other agencies so that the development goals can be achieved. All these institutions of government fall under rubrics of the agents of the developmental state to deal with such issues as illiteracy, hunger, poverty, employment, economic and social inequalities that are hallmark of development indices. The private sector is not left out of the arrangement as the government provide a supervisory role in regulating the activities of that sector.

These efforts of government cannot materialize without a formidable and competent workforce that can drive the various institutions into the realization of the said goals. Human capital competency will help in the effective service delivery to the people which will enhance development, hence the need for effective and efficient human capital acquisition policy in the various institutions of government. In spite of the existence of the MDAs of government and in collaboration with the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the goals of government in service delivery is still a mirage. The abysmal service delivery by the various MDAs can be attributed to inappropriate acquisition of personnel by the government agency empowered to do so and other forms of problem bedevilling the public service like corruption, laziness, absenteeism etc. According to Murana, Salahu and Ibrahim (2016),

In Nigeria, civil service which constitute the hub through which the government implements its policies and programmes is bedevilled with a lot of problems which have over the years constituted a significant drag on the overall growth and development of the Nigerian state. These problems range from over bloated workforce as a result of political patronage that made many unqualified personnel to join the civil service and other sorts of vices such as inefficiency, absenteeism, wastefulness and corruption.

These problems necessitated the reforms embarked upon by the governments of Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar Adua and Goodluck Jonathan between 2000 and 2015.

### **The Civil Service Reforms during Obasanjo Administration**

According to Obasanjo (2005), the reform of the Civil Service is one of the central themes of the government's agenda. "For without a transparent and effective civil service, government business and service delivery to the public will be crippled and mired in dishonesty and graft. I am convinced that an efficient, transparent and accountable civil service should be the hallmark of our democratic transformation and development. The Nigeria people deserve nothing less" (Obasanjo, 2005). In his effort to re-orientate the value system and improve the standard of living of Nigerians, Obasanjo regime provided well remunerated packages for civil servants to enhance democratic governance. Since 1999, the government has increased the salaries of workers twice, while several officials hitherto deprived of promotion have been promoted (The Guardian, May 30, 2004: 15).

The thrusts of the civil service reforms among others include professionalizing the service with skilled and knowledgeable technocrats with appropriate motivation to assist in up-grading the operations of government; reducing waste and inefficiency by monetizing fringe benefits within an incentive structure that supports private sector development by out-sourcing services which are considered to be unnecessary and only tangential to effective government and operation of the service; improving morale by instituting a more transparently managed contributory pension system that guarantees pension payment as and when due and under direct control of the retiree; rightsizing the workforce of the service by weeding outsourced cadres and those that do not have the qualifications, which required discipline or the proper state of physical and mental health to serve effectively; instituting fiscal and budgetary reforms within the context of a Medium-Term Public Expenditure framework in order to sanitize budgeting and funding of government programmes (Yayale, 2007 cited in Solomon, 2015 pp. 112-113).

### **The Civil Service Reform under Yar'Adua**

During the Yar'Adua administration, the National Strategy for Public Service Reforms (NSPSR) was developed by the Bureau of Public Service Reform (BPSR) and the Inter-Ministerial Team (IMT) of Public Officials. This strategy has four pillars, namely: creating an enabling governance and institutional environment; creating an enabling socio-economic environment; public financial management reform; and civil service administration reform. The key targets of the strategy are: effective governance of civil service as an institution; organization efficiency and effectiveness; result-oriented human resource management; professional, ethical and accountable work culture; and improved competence of civil servants. In August, 2009, the federal civil service commission established a new tenure policy limiting the term of permanent secretaries and directors to maximum of eight years in office. As a result, nine permanent secretaries were forced to retire in October, 2009. Some of them were unproductive and ageing, who under the old order would have been in office for almost as long as they liked.

### **President Goodluck Jonathan's Reform**

President Jonathan inaugurated the Presidential Committee on Rationalization and Restructuring of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions and Agencies, on August 18, 2011 headed by Steve Oronsaye. This step was taken as an attempt to address the problem of rising budget profile and to reposition the public service for efficiency and effectiveness for the delivery of services that will promote good governance in Nigeria. The committee was given the mandate to study and review all previous reports on the restructuring of federal government parastatals and advise 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 mandate of the existing federal agencies, parastatals and commissions and determine areas of overlap or duplication of functions and make appropriate recommendations to either restructure, and to advice on any other matter(s) that is incidental to the foregoing which may be relevant to desire of government to prune the cost of governance (Tell Magazine, April 30, 2012).

At the end of its assignment, the committee recommended the abolition of 38 agencies, merger of 52 and reversion of 14 agencies to departments in the relevant ministries. The committee also recommended the conduct of management audit for 89 agencies to capture the biometric features of staff as well as the discontinuation of government funding of professional bodies/councils.

In summary, the committee recommended the scrapping of 102 statutory agencies from the then 263, abolition of 38 agencies, merger of 52 and reversion of 14 to departments in the ministries. It also recommended the discontinuation of government funding of professional bodies and councils. However, till the end of Jonathan's administration, nothing was done to implement the recommendations.

All these efforts were put in place to find a lasting solution to the problem of underdevelopment which is brought about by the incompetence of the civil service and the overwhelming waste occasioned by the activities of civil servants.

### **The Civil Service Commission**

The civil service commission is the arm responsible for the government personnel functions. When there is need for transparency and promotion of the merit system, the civil service commission is given the responsibility to handle every form of personnel functions without government interference. According to Sharma and Sadana (2010), 'the independent of the recruiting authority is considered essential for impartial recruitment. One central agency in charge of all recruitment and selection has also the advantage of acquiring specialized competence and experience personnel in this matter'.

The functions and duties of Civil Service Commission varies from country to country, broadly speaking, the functions and duties are classified under three headings; (1) the selection of candidates for appointments and matters incidentally thereto e.g. checking up the health and character of successful candidates, their assignment to the different department, and sometimes confirmation of appointment after the probationary period; (2) promotion, disciplinary cases and hearing of appeals, and (3) fixing of salary and wages, classification of posts, condition of service, negotiations with service associations, organization and methods, and training and research into personnel problems.(Sharma and Sadana; 2010: 425).

In Nigeria, the Federal Civil Service Commission (FCSC) has a wide range of responsibilities. According to Federal Government of Nigeria Public Service rules (2008), authority for recruitment into the public service for grade level 07 and above is vested on the Public Service Commission. Among others, the functions include the following:

- (i) Representation of the FCSC at senior staff committee meetings of ministers;
- (ii) Review and approvals of recommendations on disciplinary cases of senior officers;
- (iii) Recruitment of senior officers;
- (iv) Ratification of promotion of officers to senior positions including conducting promotion interview and disciplines;

- (v) Hearing appeals on matters of appointments, promotions and discipline;
- (vi) Providing guidelines on appointments, promotion and discipline.

In performing the above functions, the FCSC need to acquire the best hands for the government to be able to achieve its goals of development. The various ministries in Nigeria have their different roles towards the realization of governmental objectives. Education policies can only be realized when there are efficient personnel in the ministry to pilot the policies to a logical and positive end. Like every other ministries, there is need to for the acquisition of reliable human capital to make development a realistic goal. And the only agency saddled with such responsibility of acquiring the best human capital is the Civil Service Commission.

**Challenges to Developmental State in Relation to Human Capital Acquisition in the Nigerian Civil Service**  
Nigeria as a developmental State faces a lot of challenges in the recruitment process that hinder development. Until the challenges are tackled head long, it will be difficult for Nigeria to achieve her developmental goals. The challenges include among others:

- (i) The control of the Federal Civil Service Commission by the political class. The career civil servants who are employees of the federal civil service commission are supervised and controlled by the appointed politicians who are known as the commissioners headed by a chairman. This set of politicians dictates to the career civil servants in the employment process whereas in an ideal developmental state, the agency is supposed to be free from political interference.
- (ii) Ethnicity is one of the major factors in the employment process by the civil service commission. The political class do promote their ethnic chauvinism by influencing the employment of people from their ethnic nationality at the detriment of other ethnic groups who do not have their town man or woman as a commissioner. Merit is thus slaughtered on the slab of ethnic chauvinism.
- (iii) Closely related to the immediate foregoing in the destruction of merit system is the federal character principle that is one of the major criteria for recruitment into the civil service which, of course, is meant to be supervised and ascertained by the civil commissioners in the Commission. It prescribes the need for ethnic balancing in the recruitment process irrespective of the ability of the candidates involved in terms of intelligence and capability. In the process, meritocracy is sacrificed at the altar of ethnic balancing or representativeness. In other words, merit is relegated, in most cases, to the background to promote mediocrity. This is a political settlement that allows every section of the Nigerian society to be represented in government.
- (iv) Corruption is another problem that has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. It has penetrated every segment of the public service hence derailing the process of recruitment of qualified personnel in the public sector by the civil service commission. This invariably affects the quality of services rendered by the public officers and the level of development achieved by the state. When unqualified candidates buy their ways into the public service, it will be translated in the quality of their services to the populace in the area of service delivery and this will negatively affect the realization of the development goals so desired by the state.
- (v) The developmental states need an intelligent and independent bureaucracy. The kind of control and supervision from different quarters of the executive and the civil service commission, would not allow an independent bureaucracy in Nigeria. They are not allowed to take initiative of their own instead, they are being dictated to by the political executive in the formulation and implementation of government policies which are their primary functions. These entire issues sum up to acquisition of human capital bereft of required quality and competences to deliver on the core mandates of their respective MDAs.

## CONCLUSION

The developmental challenges confronting Nigeria have not abated despite that successive governments in Nigeria have adopted developmental state paradigm which have succeeded in other climes. The human resource acquisition processes in the civil service from 2000-2015 were fraught with all manners of corrupt practices. Training for adequate human capital development hardly has desired effect on the public servants' performance. Negative attitude of civil servants toward training needs to be addressed.

Further to that, the civil service is not able to retain its best hands especially those with opportunities of job mobility and better conditions of service including especially a better pay. Civil servants in Nigeria, except at the level of permanent secretaries, are still very poorly paid.

The reforms of the civil service in the period under focus have not been able to address the core challenges that have been identified in this paper. Even the pay reforms have ultimately become a sort of placebo almost within the short run. The reforms were in most cases highly cosmetic and fashioned to dance to the tune of the neo-liberal reformers of the Bretton Wood institutions particularly the IMF and the World Bank. The poverty, unemployment and inequality situations have worsened in the period under focus and so the developmental state



that Nigeria typifies is a failure in these respects. These are the consequences the fundamental flaws identifiable in our civil service human capital profile brought about by such processes as acquisition, development, retention and maintenance.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations will help in addressing the challenges already identified in the task of human capital acquisition in the Nigerian civil service:

- (i) The core function of human capital acquisition for the civil service should be left to the top civil servants who career officers specifically trained for that purpose. A drastic reduction in the interference of the politicians in the recruitment function of the FCSC is desirable. This will make dealing with corruption in that process much easier because the Public Service Rules are more specifically applicable to career civil servants than the political office holders in the name of civil service commissioners. This, to a large extent, will also reduce the problem of ethnicity, nepotism and undue political patronage that characterise human capital acquisition in the Nigerian civil service.
- (ii) Recommended also is the introduction of the merit system into the federal character principle. The best should be recruited from among the qualified ones while considering the national spread. There is no section of the country that does not have high flyers. Such should be identified and brought into the service.
- (iii) Next is the induction of newly recruited which should include national and attitudinal re-orientation. This is hardly done. Many who came into the service with ethnic chauvinistic orientation are not given a new orientation that would enable them channel their expertise and brilliance to national ideals.
- (iv) Training and retraining of civil servants should be matched with job and performance evaluation. The current evaluation system through the yearly filling of Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) forms should be completely overhauled and concrete performance-based promotion criteria should be introduced into the service.
- (v) The pay reform in the core civil service is long overdue if the developmental state will not collapse completely. Most parastatals and agencies pay higher than their supervising Ministries. This is a case of supervisees receiving higher pay than their supervisors. This will of course result in poor supervision which is what the core civil service, in relation to the parastatals and agencies under them, typifies. This is largely responsible for loss of competent hands from the civil service especially after training that leads to acquisition of higher degrees and further technical/skill competences. The remuneration regime in the core civil service should be made to more attractive across board.

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