

Reform of the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF)

The Problem

Prior to the formulation of the National Vision 20:2020 blueprint, the critical role of a professional and world-class civil service in its attainment was evident. Through the nation's history, the civil service has experienced several periods of instability, which undermined its ability to perform its policy advisory and implementation functions. Successive governments recognised that a country is only as effective as its civil service and the vision of a capable country can only be built through the reinvigoration of the service delivery of the Nigerian civil service.

It was against this background that two institutional assessments of the OHCSF were carried out in 2008 and 2009. The reports of the two studies formed the foundation for the far-reaching reforms that led to the entire restructuring of the OHCSF by the Jonathan administration in 2011. The reports recommended a fundamental restructuring of the OHCSF, leading to a reduction in the number of offices under the OHCSF. Although the implementation started in 2009, the transfer of the Bureau for Public Service Reform (BPSR) to the OHCSF from the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (OSGF) further increased than reduced the number of offices under the OHCSF. As a result, the Office became over-bloated, with some redundant departments and duplication of functions. Indeed, the systems and processes of the OHCSF were in dire need of re-engineering and re-invigoration as previous reform efforts were implemented in a piecemeal, rather than a holistic approach. This was the state of affairs when new reform initiatives under the Transformation Agenda were introduced in a more holistic manner. This was the background against which the developed National Strategy for Public Service Reform (NSPSR) became very relevant. This blueprint is a framework for civil service reforms in Nigeria. The NSPSR envisions a world-class public service that delivers government policies and programmes with professionalism, excellence, and passion. A public service characterised by merit, accountability, client focus, service delivery, collaborative operations, and transparency with other stakeholders. This blueprint identifies the role of MDAs as the powerhouse units of the civil service and the need to target reforms with the aim of building high-performing MDAs as innovative, learning, and efficient organisations with constantly improving systems that motivate employee behaviour and evolve the desired organisational culture.

Reform Actions

The following key reform initiatives have been undertaken to reform the OHCSF:

Development of the Strategic for Plan 2013-2017:

A five-year strategic plan was developed based on the evidence from numerous empirical diagnostic studies as well as a series of office-wide stakeholder consultations. These consultations engaged the entire staff of the OHCSF on how to implement the reforms recommended by those studies. The main objectives of the Strategic Plan are to produce:

1. A proactive, committed, result-focused, and accountable civil service

2. A well-motivated, professional, and ethical workforce
3. A civil service that works to identify and meet stakeholders' needs in a timely and qualitative manner
4. Effective governance and management systems for the federal civil service

The Strategic Plan was designed to ensure a repositioned, focused, functional and effective office that provides leadership for the Federal Civil Service (FCS). It infused the entire OHCSF with renewed vigour and also created a shared understanding of the type of Central Administrative Agency (CAA) that the OHCSF would want to be by 2017.

Development of Civil Service Law:

A project on coordination and development of the Civil Service Law for the Federation is ongoing in OHCSF in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Justice in preparation for the enactment of the Civil Service law.

Organisational Re-design of the OHCSF:

President Jonathan approved a new three-office management structure in January 2013, reducing the number of departments in the OHCSF from 25 to 12 departments. The new three-office management structure is as follows:

1. Service Policies & Strategic Office (SPSO)
 - a. Organisation Design and Development (ODD)
 - b. Civil Service Transformation Department (CSTD) and;
 - c. Leadership Development and Succession Planning
2. Common Services Office (CSO)
 - a. Human Resources Management (HRM)
 - b. Finance and Account (F&A)
 - c. Planning, Analytics and Monitoring (PA&M)
 - d. Procurement;
 - e. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Main Achievements

Some of the major achievements of the civil service reforms include:

- i. Streamlining of the Office functions to address civil service related issues. Some of the functions that have been streamlined include the following:
 - 1 Devolution of the management of the career of Procurement Officers to the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP)
 - 2 Re-invigoration of the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR)
- ii. The emergence of the OHCSF as the focal point and Strategic Champion for change in the Civil Service. The OHCSF has been repositioned as the Central Administration Agency (CAA) charged with the responsibility of coordinating and supervising the operation of the Federal Civil Service.
- iii. The development and adoption of a strategic plan for the OHCSF for 2013-2017 although this plan has not yet been formally launched for effective adoption by relevant stakeholders.
- iv. The streamlining its structure led to a reduction in the running cost of the agency

- v. There has been devolution of functions to MDAs

Specific Achievements

1. *Successful restructuring exercise.* Restructuring the OHCSF, which hitherto proved very controversial and difficult, is indeed a major achievement. The reduction of the very unwieldy structure of 25 departments to 12 is a significant achievement has produced a structure that is fit-for-purpose. This has reduced costs and wastes, in addition to raising efficiency in the Office.
2. *Institution of a Strategic Planning Culture and Practice:* With a strategic planning culture and practice in place, the OHCSF can correlate properly costed projects to strategic objectives.
3. *Development and Institutionalisation of Performance Management System:* The OHCSF and key stakeholders now have a common understanding of an effective PMS and are now developing a roadmap for the implementation of PMS service-wide.
4. *Reform of Employee Mobility Function.* The employee mobility function reform has led to a development of employee mobility policy. This policy aims to reform the posting and employee mobility practices in the federal civil service.
5. *Development of a Record Management Policy.* The record management policy aims to streamline and harmonise service-wide data management process, as well as provide broad guidelines on transitioning to an electronic records management regime.
6. *Improvement in Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System (IPPIS- HRMIS) Implementation:* The Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System helps to ensure compliance with the contract requirements and Oracle's implementation methodologies and deliverables.
7. *Implementation of the Competency Evaluation Tool:* The competency evaluation tool helps to ensure the assessment of candidates against the competency framework.

Key Challenges

1. The fact that the restructuring exercise took nearly a year before the three-office management structure was finally agreed upon and approved by the President shows that it was not easy an exercise. It is therefore normal to expect that resistance to the desired change could still be imminent in future.
2. The effective deployment of ICT is still a major challenge in OHCSF as existing processes are largely paper-driven
3. A lot of work is still required to transform the civil service to a world-class level.
4. Implementation of the Reform Agenda in the OHCSF need to be trained and their capacity adequately improved
5. Inadequate infrastructural provisions including office space and facilities to accommodate the expanding workforce

Assessment of Reform Initiative

Judged against the 10 assessment criteria, the OHCSF is no doubt on the right transformation trajectory, but there are still enormous challenges that need to be addressed in order to transform the civil service into a world-class model.

S/No.	Assessment Criteria	Result of Assessment
1.	Has the reform improved the quality and quantity of public services?	Not yet. Some time is required for the benefits of this reform to be obvious.
2.	Do more people now have access to services, including disadvantaged groups such as women, young persons, and people with disabilities?	Not Applicable
3.	Has the reform reduced the cost of governance?	Yes, the restructuring of the OHCSF has reduced the cost of governance and is leading to better IPPIS implementation.
4.	Has the reform made the service more affordable for citizens?	Not Applicable
5.	Has the reform reduced corruption?	Not Applicable
6.	Has the reform reduced unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape?	The reforms have reduced bureaucracy and red tape by divesting the Office of the Head of Service of functions that could be performed by others, but for which it represented a blockage in the system.
7.	Is the reform initiative likely to lead to improved development outcomes?	Yes. Reduction of cost of governance will free resources for provision of development projects.
8.	Are things improving, staying the same, or getting worse?	Things are improving. Recent initiatives like those on employee mobility and records management are steps in the right direction.
9.	Where things are improving, will those improvements endure?	If properly institutionalised, they will endure.
10.	Where things are not improving, what should be done?	Not Applicable

Proposed Next Steps

1. Continue with the implementation of the on going reform process in the OHCSF.
2. Continue with full implementation of the provisions of the Civil Service Administration (Pillar 4) in the National Strategy for Public Service Reform (NSPSR).
3. Capacity building to enhance effective implementation of the reform agenda and
4. provision of adequate infrastructural facilities to accommodate the expanded workforce