

Tunji Olaopa. 2017. *Reforms, Governance and Development in Nigeria: Experiments in Reform and Reform Thinking*. Austin, Texas: Pan-African Universities Press. 307 pages, paperback. ISBN: 978-1-943533-24-4. Price: \$45.00

Dr. Tunji Olaopa's *Reforms, Governance and Development in Nigeria: Experiments in Reform and Reform Thinking* was published in 2017 by Pan-African Universities Press. Apart from its academically-stimulating introduction, the author has seamlessly produced a very useful book divided into two parts, with each comprising of seven and six chapters, respectively.

The 307-page book examines the issues of governance and development in Nigeria, which is seen as Africa's most populous democracy. It approaches these critical issues from policy orientation to political analysis. Its major pre-occupation is with the critical assessment of the value of public policies and authoritative decision-making process since the establishment of the Nigerian civil service in 1954.

Reforms, Governance and Development in Nigeria: Experiments in Reform and Reform Thinking effortlessly identifies and clearly establishes subsisting latent and manifest impacts of the colonial civil service on the emergence of Nigeria as a democratic developmental nation in Africa. With sound theoretical and empirical grounding, it interrogates the systematised objectives, methods and principles that guide governance in the country. To a large extent, the book problematizes the methods and materials, with which policies are formulated and implemented in Nigeria and then insists on the imperativeness of reforms as conditions for state performance.

Additionally, the publication provides abundant information about the perennial underperformance of Nigeria and its economy. The author began with problem identification that, with both theoretical and empirical evidences, located Nigeria in the epicentre of Africa as the most difficult administrative context in the world. He went on to assert that this problem was created by the colonial administrative architecture, which introduced and perpetuated ethnic representation as against merit and competence in civil service recruitment. As a result, the leadership of Nigeria's first republic inherited an overly bloated civil service and was conditioned to settle for compromise as against professionalism in public administration and civil service, six years after the Nigerian civil service was established in 1954.

Although there are many arguable reasons for scholars to explain Africa's under-development, this volume does an excellent job of identifying a

dysfunctional public service as a causal factor of Nigeria's under-development. He substantiated the foregoing with an empirical theory of *Migrated Structures*, which offers lucid account of the migration of civil service across the Atlantic to Africa without a pivotal value-systems that makes it functional in the West. This explains why the state is lacking in the delivery of welfare services to its citizens and hence, the need for committed, issue-based and problem-solving reforms.

Part I, sub-titled as 'The Underbelly of the Reform Dynamics', discusses reforms, governance and development on leadership and virile institution building and lays very sound theoretical foundations for the discussion. It deals with Organisational Development Theory (ODT) by offering its definitive explanations, identifying the juncture at which OD finds its way into organisational culture, situating the civil service within the theoretical context, and applying it to the problem areas of the civil service namely, meritocracy, effectiveness, efficiency, elitism and advancement of the bureaucrats' class interest. The foregoing makes reforming the civil service system in Nigeria a herculean task. It offers clear information about how systemic and institutional weakness can spill over to the failure of reforms.

Meanwhile, the first part (Part I) reignites the debate about the essence of social science and humanities, the two broad fields of study aptly serving as a nest for public administration, in this era when relevance of discipline is measured in terms of cash flow to development. It also confronts this bourgeois capitalist idea with argument for the relevance of the discipline whose major laboratory is civil service. In support of this, the book urges humanities and social science scholars to rejig the pedagogy with a view to making lecture contents relevant in praxis. Further to this is the call that research should be issue-based and problem-solving as well. In all, this part of the book can be seen as a treatise on ideas, theories and models of virile civil service systems, reforms, structures as well as institution building, without which the Nigerian state and Africa as whole will continue to fail in the fulfilment of the obligation of statehood.

Part II, which has the title of 'The Change Agenda and the Future', makes an optimistic projection into the future of Nigeria and Africa in terms of economic performance and democratic governance. It hopes that the steady and consistent reappraisal of prospects and challenges of Africa will yield positive transformation of Africa's postcolonial and post-independent conditions as well as efficient welfare service delivery to the citizens. It premises this optimism on some domestic, continental and international initiatives such the Lagos Plan of Action, NEPAD, the World Bank 2013 tentative summary of African economic performance in *Africa Development Indicator*. The argument here is,

the extent to which these and other initiatives are sustained and strengthened will determine the extent to which politics, governance and civil service are democratised. And the question as to whether Nigerian civil service is ready for the future of bureaucratic trends, transformations and prospects will find its answer in the quality of reforms it is willing to undertake.

Also, this section of the publication interrogates governance-civil service nexus. It posits that for a state to be regarded as democratic, it must be efficient and effective in providing adequate public goods and services to its citizens. Public service remains the umbilical cord connecting government to the governed. The sensitive it is to problem before it surfaces, the precise its diagnosis of existing problem and the accurate its prognosis of early warning signs of problem, the better it is positioned to perform. It further raises important questions about why past policies and decisions about development and state performance have failed in Nigeria. This failure is subject to two broad categories of analysis. The first category situates the past policy decisions failure in the character (legitimacy) of the state that is advocating for change and transformation. The second, takes on the capacity readiness of the public service to translate the change agenda into tangibles that relates to development of the state and the quality of life of its citizens. It is important to note that central to policy outcomes is security in all its ramifications, of citizens.

Furthermore, it poses critical questions about the level of security of the Nigeria's national space. To what extent does it conduce development and create opportunities for the citizens to realise their potentialities? It argues further that the extent to which government performs the security function determines the extent to which its right to rule is accepted by the citizens. Thus, this part sketches a critical relationship among state, civil service, policy decision, security, legitimacy, and development. It is on the basis of the relationship among the foregoing that the author adapted Prof. Ladipo Adamolekun's (2005) empirical categorisation of 29 African states according to public policy effectiveness and reform. It is pertinent to note that Nigeria, in that critical categorisation, was identified as a "*hesitant* reformer close to the vicious cycle of non-reformers (i.e. Somalia, Sudan) than the virtuous cycle of advanced reformers (i.e. Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius)"; see pages 31 and 197. *Reforms, Governance and Development in Nigeria: Experiments in Reform and Reform Thinking*.

Above all, Part II of *Reforms, Governance and Development in Nigeria: Experiments in Reform and Reform Thinking* makes an academically-stimulating entry on leadership, change dynamics and the Nigerian civil service. It reviews salient conceptual, empirical and theoretical literature on leadership, while it as well deals with the exercise of formal procedures, programmed decisions

and delegated authority within a systematised framework of job descriptions. In this regard, leadership is seen to be key to effective an efficient public administration and management performance. In fact, McGraw (2006: 148) had once asserted that "... the personalities of political leaders have an influence on their performance and policy choices, and ultimately, then, the strategies and actions of the state." It, as well, bridges the gap between the public sector and both written and unwritten issues of public concern. Furthermore, one can underscore that it is a proposal designed to address the need for culture good leadership in the Service.

Taken together, *Reforms, Governance and Development in Nigeria: Experiments in Reform and Reform Thinking* is a masterpiece on Public Policy Making and Analysis, Development Administration, Theories and Practice of Public Administration, Comparative Public Administration, Current Issues in African Government and Politics. It handsomely rolls into one volume the history of civil service in Nigeria, the imperativeness, trajectories and vicissitudes of civil service reforms, the necessity of institution building, democracy-civil service nexus, state performance, past policies and decision failures, reform ideas, methods, and models. The facility – with which the author delivers the book, the logic as well as the depth, and the soundness of thought that the book presents about governance and development in Nigeria – makes it a must read for college students, independent scholars, researchers and, indeed, general administrators.

References

McGraw, K. N. (2006) Why and how psychology matters. In R. E. Goodin and C. Tilly (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of contextual political analysis* (p.148). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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