

INTERDEPARTMENTAL RELATIONSHIP AND OVERLAPPING RESPONSIBILITIES REFORM IMPERATIVES IN NIGERIA'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUREAUCRACY

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ABSTRACT

The increasing incidence of interdepartmental conflicts as a result of overlapping responsibilities in the Nigeria National Assembly Bureaucracy has been an issue of major concern for National Assembly governance. Several reforms have been instituted to address this challenges but with little or no progress seemed to have been made. Why are there consistent interdepartmental conflicts and overlapping responsibilities in the National Assembly? This paper is tailored toward an evaluation of the level of interdepartmental relationship and overlapping responsibilities reform imperatives of the National Assembly bureaucracy. The research design was content analysis using secondary data. Using a qualitative historical–institutional methodology based on documentary analysis, the study finds that while reforms—particularly those following the National Assembly Service Act (2014)—have expanded career progression and professionalization, persistent challenges remain in the form of jurisdictional conflicts, fragmented training functions, and overlapping mandates. The findings of the study showed that the duplication of offices, politicization of appointments and selections for training programs were responsible for interdepartmental conflicts. The study recommended amongst others the adherence to meritocracy and professionalism in appointments and harmonization of duplicated staff training agencies.

Keywords: Interdepartmental relationship, Overlapping responsibilities, Reform, Bureaucracy and National Assembly.

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the conceptual foundations of interdepartmental relationships and bureaucracy, situates administrative reform within both classical and contemporary perspectives, and provides an empirical-historical analysis of reforms in the National Assembly bureaucracy from the colonial era to the Fourth Republic.

Effective interdepartmental relationships are central to organizational performance, particularly in large public bureaucracies where specialization and hierarchy dominate (Peters, 2021). In legislative institutions, coordination failures often manifest as overlapping responsibilities, inefficient resource utilization, and inter-unit conflict, undermining institutional effectiveness (OECD, 2020). Nigeria's National Assembly bureaucracy presents a compelling case for examining these dynamics due to its complex historical evolution and recurrent reform efforts aimed at improving efficiency, professionalism, and service delivery.

There are three arms of government – the legislature, executive and the judiciary. The major function of the legislature or National assembly as one of the organs of government is rule making. However, the role of the National Assembly in the Nigerian democracy is law making, oversight on executive agencies and representation of the Nigerian people in the different constituencies of the country. To deliver on their mandate, the legislators require an effective and efficient bureaucracy to provide them with the needed support services. Over the years, the legislative bureaucracy has undergone reforms in order to enhance their performance.

In the legislature, bureaucracy has traditionally played important role providing needed support in all the stages of the legislative process from when a bill is introduced to when a law is enacted and sent to Mr. President for assent. The roles of the legislative bureaucracy transcend those that deal directly with lawmaking only but include other areas such as oversight on executive agencies and providing conducive environment for the legislators to operate.

Interdepartmental relationships within the National Assembly are evident through the extensive interactions among the Directorates and the offices of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, all of which work collaboratively to facilitate legislative functions. However, significant overlapping responsibilities exist across departments, particularly in the areas of training programmes and requests for training funds. These overlaps have created unhealthy competition among overly ambitious staff, legislators, and legislative aides, each seeking access to limited resources. The lack of a clear distinction between roles has blurred the boundaries between core and non-core staff functions, thereby undermining organizational efficiency. This situation underscores the necessity for structural reforms aimed at strengthening professionalism and delineating responsibilities more effectively. The present research seeks to fill this structural gap by advocating for the proper definition and harmonization of professional lines of duty within the National Assembly.

The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the interdepartmental relationship and overlapping responsibilities reform imperatives of the National Assembly bureaucracy.

The specific objectives are:

- i. To assess the reform in the National Assembly bureaucracy.
- ii. To evaluate the adequacy of the reform of the National Assembly bureaucracy
- iii. To assess the interdepartmental relationships in the National Assembly bureaucracy.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Interdepartmental Relationships

Interdepartmental relationships refer to patterns of interaction, coordination, and exchange among organizational units (Mintzberg, 2019). Such relationships may be cooperative—characterized by shared goals and reciprocal support—or conflictual, marked by rivalry and antagonism. Scholars identify competition over scarce resources, role ambiguity, value differences, leadership behavior, and weak communication as key drivers of interdepartmental conflict (Thompson & Perry, 2022). In public sector organizations, poor interdepartmental relationships often result in duplication of functions and bureaucratic inertia, while cooperative arrangements enhance policy coherence and institutional performance (Peters & Pierre, 2020).

This refers to the manner in which departments in an organization behave towards one another. It also means the interactions and transactions that take place between them. The behavior or interaction/transactions could be co-operative and reciprocal or hostile and conflictual. When it is co-operative, it means they work towards the same goal and derive mutual benefits from it. For example, in the National Assembly, all the structures from the Directorates to the least unit must work towards supporting the function of lawmaking, oversight and representation, which in turn will ensure good governance and sustenance of democracy in the country. However, if the relationship is hostile, conflictual or antagonistic, it means that the different structures operate at cross paths. This is always due to the following:

- i. Competition over scarce resources;
- ii. Differences in values;
- iii. Conflict over roles;
- iv. Arrogance and abuse of power by the leaderships of the structures;
- v. Absence of dialogue and consultation among the leaderships of the structures.

Overlapping Responsibilities

Overlapping responsibilities occur when two or more units share similar mandates without clear delineation of authority. While some overlap may encourage redundancy for accountability, excessive duplication leads to inefficiency, waste,

and conflict (OECD, 2020). In legislative bureaucracies, overlapping mandates are particularly evident in areas such as training, research support, welfare administration, and security services, often resulting in fragmented service delivery and competition for budgetary resources. The effects of overlapping responsibilities in legislative bureaucracy consist of bloated bureaucracy and waste of tax payer's money. For example, the following Departments and agencies are charged with the responsibilities of training in NASS:

- i. Department of Personnel Management (for Staff and Legislative Aides);
- ii. Department of Finance and Accounts (Legislative Aides);
- iii. NSNL (Legislators and Staff);
- iv. NABRO (Legislators and Staff);
- v. PARP/NILS (Legislators and Staff);
- vi. vi. NASC (Legislative Aides).

Concept of Reform

Darwin Charles (1859) in Olaopa (2009) expounded the theory of evolution and how nature is always evolving in shape and use. This framework describes how human societies are dynamic and tend to spark off changes in the demands and values of society. Olaopa (2009) defines reforms as the process of aligning the public service structures, system, process, human and material resources to the government policies, targets and plans. In other terms, reform is basically modifying how the government conducts its business in a perspective of the reality in the present or expected form of a desirable state. (Olaopa,2009. As defined by Udoji 1974 administrative reforms was considered to be any systematic changes that the administration system is supposed to undergo to result in more efficient, effective and responsible administration. Administrative reform involves deliberate efforts to realign public service structures, processes, and human resources with changing governmental goals and societal expectations (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Building on evolutionary perspectives, reform is viewed as a response to environmental pressures and institutional inefficiencies. In Nigeria, administrative reforms have historically been driven by the need for efficiency, professionalism, and service orientation (Olaopa, 2019).

However, reform outcomes are frequently constrained by political resistance, organizational inertia, limited capacity, and implementation gaps (Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2017).

In his personal definition Carden (1969) defines administrative reforms as forced introduction of the administrative change against the opposition. It is artificial because it is man-made, deliberately planned. It is induced because it

involves persuasion, arguments and the ultimate threat of sanction. It is undertaken in the belief that the end results will always be better than the status-quo. Administrative reforms are therefore deliberate and conscious efforts at ensuring the transformation of administrative systems, structures and ethos in order to achieve an effective, efficient and goal oriented service.

Administrative reforms(whether partial or holistic) are occasioned by several factors including:

- i. The need for an administrative efficiency and effectiveness.
- ii. The need for service orientedness amongst the workforce.
- iii. The desire to break the cycle of status-quo to transformational service.

In spite of the compelling necessity for reforms, there are number of problems, which directly or indirectly reduce the capacity of administrative reforms to achieve their stated aims. According to Egurube (1988), these problems include the following:-

- i. Lack of support from the political leadership;
- ii. Internal hostility by members of the organizations because of the fear that it might affect their jobs, status or certain benefits they currently enjoy;
- iii. Hostility from the external environment within which the organization functions. For example, the clientele of the organization may resent reforms because it might affect their interests in one way or the other;
- iv. Problems of implementation of reform objectives such as lack of adequate human and material resources;
- v. Absence of implementation machinery might affect the success of the reform; Insufficient enlightenment of the local community on the intent of the reform.

Concept of Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy denotes a formal organizational system characterized by hierarchy, specialization, rule-based operations, and merit-based recruitment. Max Weber's classical model remains foundational, emphasizing predictability, discipline, and impersonality as prerequisites for efficiency (Weber, 1946/1978). Contemporary

scholars argue that while bureaucracy is indispensable for large organizations, rigid adherence to rules can inhibit flexibility and innovation (du Gay, 2020). In order to qualify as a bureaucratic organization, Max Weber (1946) cited in Adebayo(1984) specifies the following requirements:

- i. The regular activities required for the purposes of the bureaucratically governed structured as distributed in a fixed way as official duties.
- ii. A specific sphere of competence has been marked off as part of systematic division of labour.
- iii. The official is subject to strict and systematic discipline and control in the conduct of his office.
- iv. All operations are governed by a consistent system of abstract rules and consist in the application of these rules in particular cases.
- v. The organization of offices follows the principles of hierarchy; that is each lower office is under the control and supervision of the higher one.
- vi. Officials are subject to authority only with respect to their impersonal official obligations.
- vii. Candidates for bureaucratic positions are selected on the basis of technical qualifications. In the most rational case, this is tested by examinations hence they are appointed and not selected.
- viii. Being a bureaucratic official constitute a career. There is a system of promotions according to seniority or to achievement or both.

The existence of bureaucracy is therefore central to the survival and effectiveness of any governmental organization and large corporations. Hence human structures such as body of officials, division of labour, delegations of duties, appointments based on merits and professionalism, adherence to impersonal rules and to hierarchy, as well as system of checks and balances, system of discipline and control, career growth and development based on training and achievement to mention but a few are central to bureaucratic ethos. Bureaucracy is therefore indispensable in human societies particularly for governmental and large organizational settings because it is imperative for organizational effectiveness growth and development.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in historical–institutional analysis. Data were sourced from secondary materials including constitutional documents, legislative debates, official reports, reform acts, and scholarly literature on Nigerian public administration. Documentary analysis was employed to trace the evolution of the National Assembly bureaucracy, identify reform phases, and analyse patterns of interdepartmental

relationships and overlapping responsibilities. Thematic analysis was used to organize data around key themes: (i) bureaucratic structure, (ii) reform drivers, (iii) coordination challenges, and (iv) reform outcomes.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Evolution of the National Assembly Bureaucracy

Findings reveal that the legislative bureaucracy evolved from colonial administrative units dominated by expatriate officials to a professionalized Nigerian-led institution by 1954. Subsequent political transitions—from the First Republic through successive military and civilian regimes—introduced structural disruptions and reforms that reshaped bureaucratic organization. The 1979 Constitution formally recognized the legislative bureaucracy, while the 1988 Civil Service Reforms expanded departmental structures and professional career paths. The most significant transformation occurred under the National Assembly Service Act (2014), which introduced directorates, expanded promotion opportunities, and reduced rigid distinctions between core and non-core staff.

Interdepartmental Relationships and Overlapping Responsibilities

Despite structural expansion, the analysis shows persistent coordination challenges. Overlapping responsibilities are most evident in training, research support, welfare administration, and facility maintenance. Multiple departments and agencies—such as Personnel Management, NILS, NABRO, NSNL, and NASC—perform similar training functions, leading to duplication, competition for funds, and weak accountability.

These findings align with contemporary public administration literature which argues that structural proliferation without functional clarity exacerbates coordination failures (Peters, 2021).

Impacts of Reform on Bureaucratic Performance

The reforms have yielded notable benefits, including improved career progression, professionalization, and clearer alignment of related functions into directorates. However, unresolved jurisdictional conflicts and weak interdepartmental coordination continue to undermine potential efficiency gains. This reflects broader reform experiences in developing countries, where structural change often outpaces behavioral and cultural adaptation (Andrews et al., 2017).

Reforms in the National Assembly Bureaucracy

The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates of Nigeria into one country by the British in 1914 were for several reasons but prominent amongst them are:

- i. Differences in the railway policies of the different protectorates.
- ii. Need to remove artificial barriers between the North and the South and
- iii. The need to even-up with development of various parts of Nigeria (Anyebe:2008)

If the amalgamation of 1914 was aimed at creating a political fusion of the North and South, it did not have the objectives of building a unified state for the purpose of establishing an indigenous government. Thus, between 1914 and 1946 very little efforts was made to integrate Northern and Southern protectorates. They were administered separately and the colonial officials in these administration jealously fought to keep each group of puddings separate, except departments such as customs, education, railways, police and prisons little efforts was made at integration (Elaigwu, 2005). Moreover, until the introduction of the Richards constitution of 1946, which provided for a central legislative council, there was no central legislation in which the people of the territory could meet and deliberate on issues affecting the country as a whole. The Northern province had no representation in the central legislature until 1947. Thus, even the 36 member Advisory Council established after the amalgamation having only six Nigerians selected to represent the territorial area was subjected to the whims and caprices of the Governor General. The six Nigerians practically were decorative.

The 1922 Clifford Constitution provided for the elections of four Nigerians to represent what the colonial government called the sophisticated elements in Lagos (three representatives) and Calabar (One representative).

The Richards Constitution of 1946 provided the tonic for Nigerians to embark on deliberate and purposeful efforts towards a more united society. These led to the mounting of pressure on the colonial government for further constitutional development leading to self-rule.

Sir John Macpherson succeeded Richards as Governor of Nigeria in 1949 and introduced a new central law-making body known as the House of Representatives. This body consisted of 68 seats for the Northern Region and 34 seats each for the Eastern and Western Regions, with both the North and West operating bicameral legislatures. Growing pressure from Nigerian nationalists led to the London and Lagos Constitutional Conferences of 1953 and 1954, during which representatives of the major regional parties convened to negotiate political reforms. The outcome of these discussions was the recognition of Nigeria as a federation comprising the Northern, Western, and Eastern Regions, along with a designated Federal Capital Territory, as formalized in the 1954 Lyttelton Constitution.

Reforms within the National Assembly bureaucracy date back to the earliest stages of the institution's development. The National Assembly evolved from administrative units established under the Colonial Secretary's office to support the various legislative councils, including the Lagos Colony Legislative Council of 1861, the National Council of 1914, and the Legislative Council created under the Clifford Constitution of 1922 and later continued under the Richards Constitution of 1946. During this period, all staff serving these legislative bodies were expatriates from the British House of Commons, employed as official reporters and clerks at the table. However, nationalist demands for the Nigerianization of the civil service eventually led to the appointment of Nigerians into the legislative bureaucracy. Despite these changes, the Secretary to the Colonial Government continued to serve as the Chief Administrative Officer of the legislature for some time.

The year 1954 marked the beginning of the emergence of full-fledged legislative bureaucracy dominated by Nigerians. Mr. Ade Ojo, MBE, was appointed the first indigenous Clerk of the House of Representatives. From then, the legislative bureaucracy became a Nigerian affair (Debates of the Nigerian Legislature, 1954).

First Republic (1960- 1967)

Nigeria attained political independence from the British government in 1960, adopting a democratic parliamentary system under the Independence Constitution of that year. The constitution retained the federal structure of government and established a dual leadership framework in which the Governor-General, Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe (1960–1963), served as the ceremonial Head of State representing the British Monarch, while Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (1960–1963) served as the Prime Minister and Head of Government and Administration. The constitution also provided for a bicameral legislature at both the central and regional levels. At the federal level, the Parliament consisted of the Senate and the House of Representatives, while at the regional level, legislative authority was vested in the House of Assembly and the House of Chiefs.

In July 1963, an all-party conference convened and agreed that Nigeria should transition into a republic. This decision led to the enactment of the 1963 Republican Constitution, which replaced the Governor-General with a President who would exercise the same ceremonial powers previously held under the Independence Constitution. Consequently, Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe (1963–1967) became the first ceremonial President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, marking the end of the Queen of England's role as Head of State. The office of the Prime Minister, still held by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (1963–1967), remained responsible for governing the nation. Under the Republican Constitution, the National Parliament comprised 44 Senators and 312 members of the House of Representatives.

Second Republic (1979- 1983)

In September 1975, the Military Government led by Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo established a 49-member Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) chaired by Chief Rotimi Williams. By September 1976, the CDC completed and published its recommendations in a two-volume report outlining the framework for a new constitution. Later that same year, a 230-member Constituent Assembly (CA) was inaugurated under the chairmanship of Sir Justice Udo Udoma. Of the members, 190 were indirectly elected through the Local Government Units acting as an electoral college, while 40 were appointed by the Federal Military Government. The Constituent Assembly submitted its final report in June 1978, which formed the basis for the promulgation of the new constitution.

The 1979 Constitution introduced an Executive Presidential System, merging the roles of Head of State and Head of Government in the office of the President. It also established a bicameral legislature referred to as the National Assembly, comprising a 450-member House of Representatives and a 95-member Senate. At the time of independence, the administrative structure supporting the National Assembly consisted of the Senate, the House of Representatives, and a small administrative bureaucracy that included the Sergeant-at-Arms Unit and the Official Report Unit.

In 1966, the First Republic was toppled and all political institutions including the national legislature were dissolved. In the absence of the legislature, the staff of the Parliament were redeployed to the Federal Civil Service.

In the Second Republic, tremendous changes had been introduced into the bureaucracy of the National Assembly due to change from Parliamentary presidential system of government. As a result of the transmutation from the Parliamentary to the Presidential System of Government, it became imperative to reconfigure the bureaucratic structure. The 1979 Constitution changed the name of the Legislature from Parliament to National Assembly and also recognized the existence of the legislative bureaucracy. Thus, Chapter 5 Section 51 of the Constitution states as follows:

There shall be a Clerk to the National Assembly and such other Staff as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly and the method of the appointment of the Clerk and other

Staff of the National Assembly shall as prescribed by that Act

(Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as

Amended 2023: 81)

Specifically, the bureaucracy of the Second Republic had the following offices:

- i. The office of the Clerk to the National Assembly;
- ii. Offices of Clerks to the Senate and House of Representatives and the Directorates of Senate and House of Representatives; iii. Administration, Sergeant-At-Arms, Official Report, Library.

The Second Republic legislative bureaucracy only lasted four years before it was disbanded as result of 1983 coup de tat. The staff of the legislature were either redeployed to the mainstream Civil Service or retrenched.

The Military Government led by General Ibrahim .B. Babagida that took over power in 1985 introduced Civil Service Reform in 1988 as part of its transition to civil rule in 1990. The bureaucracy of the Third Republic National Assembly expanded in line with the 1988 Reforms which recommended for the establishment of eight (8) Departments in each Ministry, Department and Agencies (MDAs). The structure of the bureaucracy of the National Assembly was thus:

Office of the Clerk to the National Assembly

- i. Office of the Clerk of Senate; ii. Office of the Clerk of House of Representatives; iii. There were Common Services Departments:
 - (a) Department of Personnel Management;
 - (b) Department of Finance and Accounts;
 - (c) Department of Legal Services;

- (d) Department of Estate and Works;
- (e) Department of Planning, Research, Library and Computer Services;
- (f) Department of Information and Publication.

There were also sections and units such as:

- i. Sergeant-At-Arms; ii. National Secretariat for Nigerian Legislature (NSNL).

Based on the 1988 Reform, the National Assembly bureaucracy was professionalized. This meant that every staff had to make his full career in his department.

Third Republic (1992- 1993)

The transition to the Third Republic commenced with the establishment of a 17-member Political Bureau in 1986, tasked with developing a comprehensive blueprint for Nigeria's political transformation. This blueprint was informed by extensive nationwide debates and consultations. In its report, the Bureau recommended, among other proposals, the introduction of a socialist ideology through mass mobilization, the strengthening of local government structures as an effective third tier of government, and the adoption of a two-party political system. The Federal Government accepted most of the recommendations, except for the proposal advocating the adoption of socialism.

The Third Republic formally began as a transition program in 1992 but was abruptly terminated on November 17, 1993, when General Sani Abacha seized power in a bloodless coup that compelled the Head of the Interim National Government, Chief Ernest Shonekan, to resign. This intervention disrupted what had been an ongoing transition from military to civilian governance. Under the political framework of the intended republic, structures such as democratically elected state governors, state houses of assembly, and a National Assembly Serving As The Federal Legislature Had Been Established To Anchor The Return To Democratic Rule.

Fourth Republic

The Abacha Coup of November 17, 1993 did not lead to the disbandment of the National Assembly bureaucracy hence, its structure remained intact. However, new changes were introduced; leading to the establishment of the following Offices and Departments:

The Office of Deputy clerk to the National Assembly (DCNA); o The Department of Library, Research and Statistics; o The Department of Medical Services; o The Department of Procurement Services; The Department of Information and Technology (ICT).

The following support agencies were also created:

The National Assembly Services Commission (NASC);

The Policy Analysis and Research Project (PARP) (now referred to as National Institute of Legislative Studies (NILS); o National Assembly Budget and Research Office (NABRO).

The challenges of the new structural arrangement in the National Assembly bureaucracy in terms of interdepartmental relationships and overlapping responsibilities were visible in the area of training. The following Departments and agencies are charged with the responsibilities of training in NASS:

- i. Department of Personnel Management (for Staff and Legislative Aides);
- ii. Department of Finance and Accounts (Legislative Aides);
- iii. NSNL (Legislators and Staff);
- iv. NABRO (Legislators and Staff);
- v. PARP/NILS (Legislators and Staff);
- vi. NASC (Legislative Aides).

It is noteworthy that balkanization of training programmes in the above -mentioned departments and agencies led to the following challenges:

- i. Difficulty in establishing a comprehensive database on training;

- ii. Competition over funds for training;
- iii. Benefits opportunistic staff who can move from one Department to another in search of training opportunities.
- Sourcing of Information for the legislators:
 - i. Department of Library, Research and Statistics;
 - ii. PARP/NILS
 - iii. NABRO
 - iv. Committee Secretariats
 - v. Consultants and Experts
- Security
 - i. Sergeant-At-Arms
 - ii. Nigerian Police Force
 - iii. State Security Services
 - iii. Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)
 - iv. Maintenance of facilities:
 - i. Personnel Management (Cleaning, Water and Electricity);
 - ii. Estate and Works (Gardening, Plumbing and general repairs;
 - iii. iMedical Services (Fumigation);
 - iv. Procurement Services (Hiring and renewal of contractors).
 - v. Welfare: -
 - i. Personnel Management (Pension and Life Assurance);
 - ii. Procurement (Insurance).
 - vi. Discipline:
 - i. Personnel Management (Processing of disciplinary cases to NASC).
 - ii. (Approval of recommendations or otherwise).
 - vii. Promotion, Conversion and Upgrading:
 - Department of Pension (Recommendation which might be approved or not).
 - NASC (Approval or rejection).

The Reform in the National Assembly Bureaucracy

The reform under the National Assembly Service Act, 2014 was informed by the need to :

- i. Expand the bureaucracy in order to remove stagnation and provide opportunities for upward mobility;
- ii. Enable the staff of the legislature have the opportunity of rising to the Zenith of their career of being appointed Permanent Secretaries.
- iii. Expand the bureaucracy commiserate with its status as an arm of government; o Motivate the staff of the bureaucracy for higher performance through regular promotions; o Remove the dichotomy between core and non-core staff as every staff could now rise to the position of Permanent Secretary and or Clerk to the National Assembly which hitherto was an exclusive preserve of the Directorates of Senate and House of Representative.

The reform has resulted in the emergence of the following structures of the bureaucracy:

A. Office of the Clerk to the National Assembly:

- i. Clerk to the National Assembly;
- ii. Deputy Clerk to the National Assembly.

The departments in the office of both the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly include:

- i. Department of Information and Communication Technology;
- ii. Department of national Secretariat of Nigerian Legislature;
- iii. Department of Protocol;
- iv. Department of Sergeant-At-Arms;
- v. Department of Official Report; vi. Department of Internal Audit.

B. The Senate

- i. Clerk of the Senate; ii. Deputy Clerk of the Senate.

The departments in the office of both the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk of the Senate include:

- i. Department of Chamber Office;
- ii. Department of Table Duties Office;
- iii. Department of Bills Office;
- iv. Department of Journal and Procedure Office;
- v. Department of Committees Office;
- vi. Department of Management Office.

C. House of Representatives

- i. Clerk of the House Representatives;
- ii. Deputy Clerk of the House of Representatives.

The departments in the office of both the Clerk and the Deputy Clerk of the House of Representatives include:

- i. Department of Chamber Office;
- ii. Department of Table Duties Office;
- iii. Department of Bills Office;
- iv. Department of Journal and Procedure Office;
- v. Department of Committees Office;
- vi. Department of Management Office.

Directorates

The five (5) Directorates with their respective departments are:

1. Directorate of Finance and Accounts

Departments

- i. Department of Senate Accounts;
- ii. Department of House of Representatives Accounts;
- iii. Department of Management Accounts;
- iv. Department of Legislative Aides Accounts;
- v. Department of Budget.

2. Directorate of Legal Services

Departments

- i. Department of Legal Drafting;
- ii. Department of Litigation and Counselling;
- iii. Department of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Citizens' Rights;
- iv. Department of Legal Research and Report.

3. Directorate of procurement, Estate and Works

Departments

- i. Department of Procurement;
- ii. Department of Supplies;
- iii. Department of Engineering and Environmental Services;
- iv. Department of Works;
- v. Department of Tenders Secretariat.

4. Directorate of Corporate Affairs

Departments

- i. Department of Personnel Management;
- ii. Department of Planning and Legislative Budget;
- iii. Department of Library;
- iv. Department of Information and Publication
- v. Department of Research and Statistics.

5. Directorate of Common Services

Departments

- i. Department of Medical Services
- ii. Department of Dental Services;
- iii. Department of Pharmaceutical Services;
- iv. Department of Liaison Office;
- v. Department of Special Duties.

Advantages of the New Reforms

The major merits of the National Assembly Bureaucratic reform

- i. It has reduced jurisdictional conflicts between Personnel Department and the Directorate of Procurement and Estate and Works in terms of facility maintenance as the responsibilities for cleaning, and gardening have all been transferred to the Directorate of Procurement, Estate and Works;
- ii. Many of the staff have either been promoted, upgraded or converted which hitherto was not the case because of lack of vacancies;
- iii. It has enabled a realignment of Departments, Units and Sections with related services and functions into Directorates thus facilitating effective co-ordination and Management;
- iv. The creation of Directorates has given the staff of the bureaucracy the opportunity to rise to the Zenith of their career.

Challenges of the New Reform

The challenges of National Assembly Bureaucratic reform include:

- i. The issue of jurisdictional conflicts and overlapping responsibilities over training amongst the Department of Personnel Management, NSNL, NILS, NABRO and NASC is rampant;

- ii. Overlapping responsibilities over implementation of insurance policies between the Department of Personnel Management and Directorate of Procurement, Estate and Works;
- iii. Conflicts between Researchers and Committee Secretaries over who is responsible for sourcing of information for the legislators.

Discussion of Findings

Evolution of the National Assembly Bureaucracy

The findings show that the National Assembly bureaucracy has undergone a gradual but significant transformation from a colonial administrative structure dominated by expatriate officials to a professionalized, Nigerian-led institution by 1954. Early legislative administration lacked indigenous participation and functional integration, reflecting colonial priorities rather than nation-building objectives. Post-independence political transitions—spanning civilian and military regimes—introduced repeated structural disruptions, including dissolution, redeployment, and reconstitution of legislative staff. The formal recognition of the legislative bureaucracy under the 1979 Constitution marked a turning point by institutionalizing legislative administration, while the 1988 Civil Service Reforms further expanded departmentalization and professional career paths. The most far-reaching change occurred with the National Assembly Service Act of 2014, which strengthened bureaucratic autonomy, expanded directorates, and enhanced career mobility, thereby consolidating the bureaucracy as a core institution of democratic governance.

Interdepartmental Relationships and Overlapping Responsibilities

Despite structural growth and reform, the findings reveal persistent weaknesses in interdepartmental relationships within the National Assembly bureaucracy. Overlapping responsibilities are particularly pronounced in functional areas such as training, research support, welfare administration, and facility maintenance. Multiple departments and support agencies—including the Department of Personnel Management, NILS, NABRO, NSNL, and NASC—simultaneously perform similar roles, especially in staff and legislative training. This fragmentation has resulted in duplication of efforts, competition for limited resources, weak coordination, and accountability gaps. These challenges indicate that structural expansion was not consistently matched with clear functional delineation and coordination mechanisms.

Impacts of Reform on Bureaucratic Performance

Overall, the reforms have produced positive outcomes, notably improved professionalization, expanded promotion opportunities, and clearer grouping of related functions into directorates. Staff motivation and career progression have improved compared to earlier periods characterized by stagnation and limited advancement. However, the persistence of jurisdictional conflicts and weak interdepartmental coordination continues to undermine efficiency gains. This finding suggests that while reforms have succeeded at the structural level, behavioral, cultural, and coordination challenges remain largely unresolved. The experience of the National Assembly bureaucracy therefore reflects a broader pattern in public sector reform in developing contexts, where institutional restructuring advances faster than changes in organizational culture and collaborative practices.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has discussed the reform in the National Assembly bureaucracy focusing on the challenges of Interdepartmental relationships and overlapping responsibilities. It has shown that in spite of the reform, there are challenges such as jurisdictional conflicts as a result of functional overlap and dearth of clear cut line of responsibilities amongst the support agencies.

The study concludes that while administrative reforms in Nigeria's National Assembly bureaucracy have strengthened institutional capacity and career development, persistent challenges of overlapping responsibilities and weak interdepartmental relationships remain. Addressing these issues requires clearer functional delineation, enhanced coordination mechanisms, and sustained leadership commitment to reform implementation.

The recommendations of this study are as follows:

- i. The office of the clerk of the National Assembly should ensure the harmonization of all duplicated offices/ agencies for Staff training and development such as NASC, NSNL, NABRO and NILS with the mandate for training of legislators and Staff.
- ii. The Clerk of the National Assembly should adhere to merit and hierarchy in the selection of legislators and legislative aides for training. The selection processes should be completely depoliticized.

- iii. The sourcing of information for legislators is the sole responsibilities of research analysts, experts and consultants. Adherence to professionalism and established line of duty by the National Assembly top hierarchy is germane for effective National Assembly governance.

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