

The Role of Parliamentary Staff and Legislative Aides in the Bill Process of the National Assembly

By

Ishaka Dele

Department of Political Science and International Relations,

University of Abuja

Tel: 08060507986

Email: d120064real@yahoo.com

&

Maiye B. Olusegun

Department of Political Science and International Relations,

University of Abuja

Tel.: 08033911993

Email: barnabas.olusegun@yahoo.com

Abstract

One of the core responsibilities of the National Assembly is to pass bills into laws. It is very herculean to achieve this feat as a lot of human and material resources. This study assessed the role of parliamentary staff and legislative aides in the Bill process of the National Assembly. While legislators make laws, however, they cannot effectively carry out this assignment without the parliamentary staff and legislative aides. As an institution, the National Assembly in Nigeria is saddled with the responsibilities of making laws, representation, appropriation, oversight amongst others. Achieving these cannot be done effectively without the supports of members of staff of the National Assembly as well as the aides to our legislators. The study made use of both primary and secondary data to gather the empirical information needed. Also, the Weberian bureaucratic theory of institutional management was adopted as the theoretical framework. It was discovered that the

Nigerian National Assembly's bureaucracy has been playing invaluable roles in the bill process, especially in providing the legislators the enabling environment to pass useful bills into valuable laws. Though, their efforts are sometimes given the recognition it deserve. It is recommended among others that the capacities of parliamentary staff and legislative aides be improved through training and retraining in order to enhance their contributions to the bill process of the Nigerian senate. Also, staff and aides of staff need to be better motivated like law makers since they are invaluable personnel in the bill process. The reliance on consultants by the Nigerian Senate to carry out professional services by the Senate would be reduced if the parliamentary staff and legislative aides are well groomed for the job. Corruption should be reduced to the barest minimum in the Nigerian civil service including the National Assembly.

Introduction

The legislature is seen as the fulcrum, pillar or engine of democracy, without it there can be no democracy. This is because it is the institutional mechanism for the sustenance of democracy worldwide. The core mandate of the legislature world over includes the following; lawmaking, oversight, representation and the constituency related matters. The importance of Parliamentary staff and legislative aides which constitute the bureaucracy in the legislature cannot be overemphasized. Staff, which refers to human resources, human capital, or personnel in the organization working for the betterment of the organization and the individual, ranging from the boss as the head to the lower level personnel. Aighewi, (2004), has shown that although there are many factors of production in any organization, human resources have been asserted in all management literature and by practitioners to be the most important resources, the most versatile and the

only active agents of production capable of thinking, planning, executing and achieving results.

The centrality of legislature in a presidential democracy cannot be overemphasized. No Legislature can deliver on its mandates except it has the requisite staff that will provide adequate support to the others. Legislatures are the hub and the heart of democracy, while the staff is constitutionally empowered supports to the legislature (Wilson, 1966). It is because of the constitutional responsibilities that staff and Aides are recruited by legislatures and legislators alike to help them discharge their responsibilities.

The career Staff of the legislature is an important arm of the institution. The legislature can function effectively if it has permanent staff that help it to achieve its responsibilities e.g. like in the Nigeria National Assembly, when it is close down for business at the end of every election year, if it has no permanent staff to take charge of administrative and legislative activities within the powers given to it by the law, it will be very expensive to hire to put the incoming legislators on the issues that requires an expert advice. But having permanent staff in place will make it continuity a little easier from the definition of the term bureaucracy, is the pattern of activity in which ideally series of actions in functionally related to the purpose of the organization. The career staff is permanent and pensionable staff of the legislature. Their appointment and career are governed by Civil Service Rules and Regulations. Specifically, their tenure of office is never affected by changes in any political administration. The administrative staff of the legislature is categorized into the public service that run the day programs of the legislature (Habu, 2016) and political appointees of the legislators known as legislative aides.

The major function is to advise the presiding officer in particular and members on the matters of procedure as opined by Ojo (1997). Other duties are planning, organizing, resourcing, leading and directing, and controlling the organizational frame work of the arm for the purpose of achieving the goal of its establishment. The legislative Aides are personal staff of the

legislators and their appointment is at the instance of their principals (i.e. the legislators). In Nigeria National Assembly, the letter of appointment is issued by the National Assembly Service Commission to the legislative Aides which is at the pleasure of the legislator and subject to all other conditions applicable in the public service (Habu, 2016).

Whatever is the perception of National Assembly bureaucracy (parliamentary staff), it is at the core of modern legislatures and there is yet to be an alternative to it. It has continued to provide the major institutional support to the legislature to deliver on its mandate of law making, oversight and representation. Legislators may have numerous talents but in most cases, they do not have the extensive expert knowledge about the laws and oversight activities they are responsible for. The legislative bureaucracy has traditionally provided the needed support. In spite of its centrality, it is bedeviled by many challenges especially in the legislatures of emerging democracies such as Nigeria.

The parliaments function with parliamentarians who rely on the supports of their assistants and aides. It should be pointed out that unlike other bureaucratic institutions the legislative bureaucracy is made up of two categories of staff, namely, career and ad hoc. While the members of career staff are permanent, pensionable and their progress in their service is based on merit, the non-career counterparts otherwise known as legislative aides are personal staff of the legislators. Their continuous stay in the office is at the instance of their principals. In spite of the differences in the conditions of service, the two categories of staff provide very useful support to the legislature.

Legislative Aides came into existence as a result of serious frustration and complaints by the legislators that staff on ground cannot sustain their administrative needs to help in their law making process, hence the introduction of post of legislative aides for private, personal and official activities. The legislative aides are personal staff of the legislators and their appointment is at the instance of their principal (Al-Mustapha and Ussiju Medaner, 2013).

Similarly, the career members of staff are permanent and pensionable staff of the legislature. The appointment of career staff is governed by Civil Service Rules and Regulations. Some of their functions include; planning, organizing, resourcing, leading and directing, controlling the organizational framework of the arm for the purpose of achieving the goal of its establishment. While the legislators have been constitutionally saddled with the responsibility of passing bills into laws, the actualization of this herculean task cannot be realized without their aides and parliamentary staff. This research therefore, seeks to assess the role of parliamentary staff and legislative aides in the bill process. However, this paper seeks to achieve the following specific objectives: to examine the roles played by Parliamentary Staff and Legislative Aides in the Bill process of the National Assembly as well as to identify how the roles played by parliamentary staff and legislative aides affected the Bill process of the National Assembly

Literature Review

Bureaucracy in the Legislature

The primary responsibility of any legislature is lawmaking, which goes hand in hand with the oversight function. However, the legislature like any other arm of government requires a bureaucracy to effectively perform its constitutional role. The bureaucracy provides support services to the legislators so as to enable them perform their role of law making. The bureaucracy facilitates the lawmaking process from when a Bill is introduced in the Legislature to the time it is sent to the Chief Executive for Assent. The bureaucracy also assists in the drafting of Bills, Motions, and Resolutions; conduct of Public Hearings; sourcing of background information which enables the legislators to better understand legislative proposals and also keeps records of proceedings in the Chambers. The traditional method of exercising oversight function is through committee investigation and public hearings. Legislators need to know how effectively government programmes are working, how well agency officials

are responding to legislative directives, and the scope and intensity of public support. These committee hearings and investigations are possible through the efforts of committee staff.

The role and by implication, the power of the legislative bureaucracy is growing. This growing influence and importance of the bureaucracy is noticeable in the British Parliament, United States Congress, German Bunderstag, Swiss Riksdag, Chambers of Deputies in Italy, and Diet in Japan. This is because the legislators rely on the bureaucrats throughout all the stages of the lawmaking process.

Smith (1988) has enumerated the functions of staff in the legislature as they draft legislation, negotiate with lobbyists, exercise control over communication within and outside the legislature, participate in identifying issues and develop legislative positions. They conduct research; gather background information and draft legislation. They prepare speeches, floor statements and explanations to constituents. They coordinate legislative strategy, brief the legislator on pending legislation and at times they are expected to make some suggestions as to the course of action to be taken. The increasing influence and power of the bureaucracy in the legislative process can be attributed to certain factors. The legislators have many issues to attend to. Time is therefore one of their greatest constraints. Consequently, they depend more and more on bureaucrats to get their work done on time. In the modern legislature, no legislator can go it alone. According to Mark (1990:12), "some are more inclined than others to try to micromanage their affairs, but in general, members depend on staff to handle the nuts and bolts work of a legislative office". Reliance on staff is underscored by this picture of a Member's typical day:

On a normal day, a Senators or (Representative) has two and sometime three simultaneous committee hearings, floor votes, issues, caucuses, meetings with other congressmen from his state or region, plus lobbyists,

constituents, and press to handle. He will dash into one hearing, get a quick fill-in from his staffer, inject his ten minutes' worth and rush on to the next event often told by an aide how to vote as he rushes on the floor. Only the staff specialist has any continuity with substance. The member is consistently hops-scotching (Mark, 1990:12).

A congressional observer affirms this view when he declares inter-alia:

A legislator's life is not an easy one. There are persistent pressures, frequent frustrations, and endless demands. A member must attend party caucuses, scurry to committee and subcommittee meetings; confer with lobbyists and executive branch officials about pending issues; greet constituents in the office (and take them to lunch); take part in the essential legislative work of debating and voting on bills on the floor; and scan memoranda, documents, staff report, newspapers, and opinion journals, often into the wee hours of the night, (Matthews, 1954:52).

The legislative bureaucracy has often been a source of less biased information for legislative work. Being an independent professional staff, the bureaucracy is more reliable than alternatives from interest groups and the Executive branch officials. One experienced Democratic Senator in the U.S Congress was quoted as saying:

When the legislature depends on the executive agencies or private interest groups for research instead of relying on its sources of information,

it makes its choices from the alternative offered by the interest groups or the executive. Now we have an independent check when we have professional staff. They provide us with alternative. With adequate staff assistance, we are now able to understand bills as well as come up with legislation of our own (Balatis) (Beetham, 2006:17).

The influence and power of legislative bureaucracy is further reinforced by the links it always established through continuous interaction with its counterparts in the executive bureaucracy. These links lead to the formation of alliances, which are used to determine the final outcomes of certain public policies. Jones demonstrates the links between committee secretaries and officials of the executive branch and its effects on public policies in the U.S democracy. The constitution has provided for keeping Congress and the President apart, but this is no bar against the co-mingling of their respective employees. On the Congressional side, the staff of the major committee e.g. Defence or Foreign Affairs make common with executive department personnel to exercise significant influence over the formulation of policy (Beetham, 2006). Similarly the policies determined in the executive branch are also influenced by legislative staff who use their links to administrators to continue influencing what is done.

So pervasive and powerful are these alliances that Ripley and Franklin have labeled the "subs-governments". The nature of politics is another important factor in the increasing influence of the legislative bureaucracy in policy making. In a democracy, legislators have to periodically seek for re-election at the end of their mandate. The elections in most cases lead to the exit of experienced legislators for freshers. In a situation where experienced legislators are voted out and freshers are voted in, it is likely to affect the power equation between the bureaucracy (which is permanent) and the legislators. Fresh legislators have to learn the act of legislation from the

scratch and depend on the guidance of bureaucratic staff. The safeguard the integrity of the legislature, its bureaucracy should incorporate some elements that will ensure its neutrality and professionalism.

Aighewi, (2004), has shown that although there are many factors of production in organizations, human resources have been asserted in all management Literature and by practitioners to be the most important resources, the most versatile and the only active agents of production capable of thinking, planning, executing and achieving results.

Aldelfer (1967) illustrated this when he noted that if the process of administration in any organization were to be photographed, the resulting bird eye view of the entire complex would show men and women stationed at various places, arranged in various groups and doing various things. The photograph would show physical accoutrements as pencils, pens, books, typewriters, computers, files ledgers, etc. he required what makes these things spring into action and keep them rolling. If they are removed, everything disintegrated into physical and biological components; if they are substantially changed, new pattern appears. These forces, he pointed out, are actions of individual people, this explains why de Mello (1975) postulated that "the human being is the center of and yardstick of everything". Over the years, the influence of staff in the legislature has been growing. This has led to their being labeled in the US congress as "Unelected Representatives" (Malbin, 1980), the "power Lovers" (McPherson, 1975), "Ghosts on Capitol Hill" (Widen, 1975), "the hidden power elite" (Alphen, 1973), "hidden government in Washington, "invisible men who run congress" (Evans, 1963). No legislature can deliver on its mandate except it has the requisite staff that will provide adequate support to the legislative actors. According to Senator Hubert of the United States Congress "without the staff, the work cannot be done.

Though the Nigeria Constitution, 1999 as amended is silent on the issue of the appointment of legislative Aides. In some advanced democracies, the conditions for appointment of legislative Aides are derived directly from specific constitutional provisions. For example, in line with Article V,

Sections 12 of the Colorado State (USA) Constitution, the resolution of the legislature on the selection of Legislative Aides stipulates that:

Each member of the Senate and the House of Representatives may employ a legislative Aide during each regular session. Legislative Aide shall be hired by each member through the office of the Secretary of the Senate or the office of the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives, as appropriate ... Legislative Aides serve at the pleasure of the hiring member or members and are appointed without regard to the senate personnel system (Habu, 2016:20).

Similarly, in Nigerian National Assembly, the appointment of legislative Aides is at the instance of their principals (i.e. the legislators). The letter of appointment is issued by the National Assembly Service Commission and the legislative Aides appointment letter clearly states, among other conditions that: *“Your appointment is at the pleasure of (name of Legislator) and subject to all other conditions applicable in the Public Service” (2011 Orientation Paper).*

The implication of the above condition is that the member can terminate the appointment of the Aide at any time loses confidence in such an Aide. The increasing influence of staff and legislative Aide in the legislative process can be attributed to the fact that legislators have one of their greatest constraints, hence they depend largely on bureaucrats to get their work done on time. On general, members depend on staff to handle the nuts and bolts of their legislative offices (Mark, 1999).

Legislative Aides

While the empowerment of National Assembly in Nigeria legislation explains the increasing interests in parliamentary aides, it does not elucidate why until now legislative aides in Nigeria have been so sparsely

studied compared legislatures in the country and executive administrations in general. The executive formulate policy proposals almost independently from elected officials, legislators scrutinise, amend and sometimes formulate policy, but under a closer control from elected officials. Accountability control is easier to exercise in legislatures, because of the nature of the work, but also due to the smaller size of parliamentary administrations compared to government ones. As Neuhold (2014) and Winzen (2011) discern from their studies on the role parliamentary administrators in different policy areas: the final decisions are always taken by elected rather than unelected officials. As described by Fox and Hammond (1977) staff resources are power. However, legislative staff cannot affect legislation directly, because contrary to elected representatives, they do not have the right to vote.

From a theoretical point of view, the study of legislative aides embodies some of the most fundamental questions on democracy and the relationship between the executive and legislature. First of all, legislative aides play important role especially considering the limited resources that parliamentarians have to process legislation compared to ministers. Moreover, parliamentary administration provides members of parliament information, which is independent from the government and lobbies. In this way, parliamentary aides are an important source of parliament's autonomy. This is especially important for members of the opposition and the minority, who are less prone to trust information provided by the executive administration, which is controlled by the governing coalition or majority party. Secondly, what is also important is how staff resources are distributed within parliament among different actors. For example, the organisation of parliamentary administration in the National Assembly privileges the majority and office holders such as committee chairs, party leaders and whips.

Besides examining the relations between aides and senators, scholars have also looked at the individual characteristics of officials. Price (1971) assumed that the activity of aide varies given their partisan or professional

orientation. Partisan aide continuously seeks opportunities to bring new initiatives and push proposals towards their desired outcome. Professionals that are defined as non-partisan experts, prefer to react to the needs of members by analysing and objectively presenting policies rather than proactively initiating policies. DeGregorio (1994) discovered that when staff is motivated by loyalty, members are more willing to involve them in the policy process than when they are motivated by personal interests. Experience and the characteristics to be anonymous (i.e. to not take a public stance or being associated with a specific policy) also positively influences the involvement of staff in the policy process have shown how the role of staff depends also on education, prior experience, organisational milieu, political values, personality and communications patters.

Composition and Staff of the National Assembly

The National Assembly, as the Federal Legislature is called under the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, is a bicameral legislature. It consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

The Senate has always been considered as the senior partner, in view of the more exalted position accorded to it by the Constitution. But it must be pointed out that as far as it relates to the process of legislation, the powers of both houses are the same.

(a) The Senate

The membership of the Senate, though not its size, is fixed by the Constitution. The Senate shall consist of three Senators from each State and one from the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Thus the size of the Senate is related directly to the number of states and the creation of more states will inevitably mean an increase in the size of the Senate. There shall be a President and a Deputy President of the Senate, who shall be elected by the members of that House from among themselves (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

Subject to the provisions of section 66 of the Constitution, a person shall be qualified for election as a Senator if:

- (i) he is a citizen of Nigeria and has attained the age of thirty-five years;
- (ii) he has been educated up to at least school Certificate level or its equivalent, and
- (iii) he is a member of a political party and is sponsored by that party.

Apart from the elected members of the Senate, the Senate also has some supporting administrative staff. The supporting staff consists of the Clerk to the National Assembly and such other staff as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly. The method of appointment of the Clerk and other staff shall be as prescribed by the Act.

The House of Representatives

The House of Representatives shall consist of three hundred and sixty members, representing constituencies of nearly equal population as far as possible, provided that no constituency shall fall within more than one State. There shall be a Speaker and a Deputy Speaker of the House who shall be elected by the members of that House from among themselves. Apart from the requirement of attaining the age of thirty years for members of the House of Representatives, the qualification for membership is like that of the Senate. There are also several supporting administrative staff who are all under the Clerk of the National Assembly.

Theoretical Framework

This study can be located within several theoretical standings. However, the emergence of the management process and organization theory like the National Assembly can best be explained with the Weberian bureaucracy. Max Weber (1864-1920), is said to be the 'father of bureaucratic management theory.' Weber was a German sociologist and political economist that viewed bureaucracy in a positive light, believing it to be more rational and efficient than its historical predecessors. Bureaucracy is a personnel and administrative structure of an organization. Business, labour, religious, educational, and governmental systems depend on a large workforce arranged in a hierarchy to carry out specialized tasks based on

internal rules and procedures. The term is used mostly in referring to government administration, especially regarding officials in the federal government and civil service. It is often used derogatorily to suggest waste, inefficiency, and red tape (Chand, 2010).

Bureaucracy is an administrative system designed to accomplish large-scale administrative tasks by systematically coordinating the work of many individuals. Weber has observed three types of power in organisations: traditional, charismatic and rational-legal or bureaucratic. He has emphasized that bureaucratic type of power is the ideal one (Chand, 2010).

Weber's theory of bureaucratic management has two essential elements. First, it entails structuring an organization into a hierarchy. Secondly, the organization and its members are governed by clearly defined rational-legal decision-making rules. Each element helps an organization to achieve its goals. Weber developed the principles of bureaucracy a formal system of organization and administration designed to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Although Weber considered bureaucracy to be the most efficient means of organizing, both his own experience and subsequent research have shown that it often results in certain disadvantages. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria confers the role of law making on the legislative arm of government. This role is exercised through the passage of bills which may originate from the executive, Member of Parliament or the public. Due to the technicalities involved in the law making process, the legislators tend to rely on the technical expertise of parliamentary staff and the legislative Aides to carry out their law making function efficiently. Legislators expect their support staff to have superior knowledge in the area of bill formulation, drafting and bill analysis in order for them to meet up with their constitutional role of law making. Hence parliamentary and legislative Aides increase their knowledge through research and training to better position them in the bill process.

In the modern world, the bureaucracy is a major organizational context, within which policy making, implementation and evaluation takes place. So important is the bureaucratic input in the policy process that the concepts of administrative policy making and bureaucratic policy system have become commonplace in policy studies. The traditional conception of public bureaucracy's role in public policy is that of bringing to bear on policy making and implementation, expertise, skill and competence. The bureaucracy then is only conceived instrumentally in terms of enabling goal attainment. Through advice and exclusion; this conception precludes bureaucratic officials from policy activity and goal setting. Second, the public administration in many modern states, are conceived as being politically neutral, anonymous and insulated from the socio-political sub-process of policy making. This conception as the previous insulates administration from politicization. The first conception, the politics/policy and administration dichotomy is not valid today, because of executive dominance of policy making. Consequently, public administration has assumed considerable policymaking power. The second conception of neutrality and anonymity is no more rigidly held in some societies because administrators are increasingly becoming powerful, influential and active in the socio-political process.

Discussion of Findings

Indeed, the passage of Bills by legislators in the National Assembly is not an easy task as also argued that getting committee documents like papers and various contributions by experts presented at the public hearing on the Bill are easy to come by. Also, Bills especially the Executive Bill are often difficult to obtain by the staff and legislative Aides for them to have an insight on the role they supposed to perform. More so, the respondent lamented what he described as 'uncooperative attitude of some management staff and some senators' who do not give them enabling environment to perform their role in the Bill process of the Senate.

The second respondent was a retired staff of National Assembly; he identified some challenges faced by staff and Aides in the Bill process of the Senate as; organizational, logistics, expertise and supervision of staff and Aides in the Bill process. He also summarized that since National Assembly was still new and as such the parliamentary staff and Aides alike are still struggling to efficiently give in their international best practices in performing their role in the Bill process of the Senate.

Another respondent, a senior legislative Aide who was in National Assembly between 2011-2015 simply said the challenges faced by both the staff and Aides in the Bill process was “lack of accurate and quick information about a particular Bill. Similarly, another opined that the challenges included “the lack of transparency in dissemination of information, lack of trust and lack of knowledge of the Bill by the some senators especially the first timers. These adversely affect the quality of legislation and at the same time affect the role that staff and Aides supposed to play in the Bill process.

Another challenges faced by staff and Aides in the Bill process according to one the respondents is the failure of the Senators to develop themselves in their primary task of legislation leading to hasty approval of Bill requests from the Executive that required thorough scrutiny and consequent shoddy handling of topical issues as a result of inexperience.

However, another respondent said that the major challenges include the hoarding of Bill information by senators, that most senators tends to be too partisan and individualistic when making contribution on floor on a particular Bill, which according to him, make it difficult for the staff and Aides to exactly know what the Bill entails in order for them to play their role.

Another said that National Assembly management has not provided a conducive working environment by providing the necessary working materials for the staff and Aides to perform their duty. He listed some of the working materials that lack in some offices to include items like the

computer system and its accessories, table and chairs. He also mentioned staff motivation and welfare and salary increment.

The problem of conflicts between the staff and the Aides was identified by one of the respondents. He argued that conflicts of interest do exist between the parliamentary staff and legislative Aides in their line of duty. He further said that most of the staff do ranked themselves higher than the legislative Aides. He said that most staff exhibit domineering tendency and as such this do not go down well with the legislative Aides especially Aides who are first timers.

Another challenge the staff and Aides faced said a respondent is the lack of information about the activities of the Senators especially schedule meetings and other legislative engagements even though there used to be announcement of some of the meetings as published in the order paper, at times the staff and Aides find that such dates are often change without prior notice thereby affecting the role they are to play in the Bill process.

Yet, another said the major constraint faced by the staff and Aides in the Bill process is lack of incentives and motivation by most senators. A secretary to one of the standing committee of the Senate said that, one of the challenges faced by staff and Aides is the problem of poor finances appropriated to committees. He said most of the committees lack good funding and this adversely affect the committee's activities.

Having access to most senators is one major problem faced by staff and Aides according to one of the respondents. He said some staff and Aides who are working in a committee find it difficult to have one on one discussion their bosses. He further said that most of the senators behave like 'thin gods' and surround themselves with people in which the staff and Aides gets instructions from their bosses. Similarly, another respondent observed that National Assembly " has no organized information data bank where you can have access to vital information on Bills when necessary" according to him " challenges I faced when I was Aide was lack of adequate prompt information flow. Outcome of committee meetings, arrangement for public hearings, invitations etc. are at times shrouded in secrecy or not

made known to staff and Aides in order for them to play their role in the Bill process. He agreed that NASS has website but outdated and most of the time is not updated and can be used as are reference point for staff and Aides in the Bill process.

The findings from the information above revealed there are role play by parliamentary staff and legislative Aides in the Bill process of the Senate and the unwillingness of the senators to assist the staff and Aides in the Bill process. Majority of the staff and Aides do not have requisite knowledge on Bill process and tracking, no wonder National Assembly members spends millions of naira to hire expertise to draft legislation on Bills. The import of the discovery is that staff and Aides play an important role in the Bill process and can be brought to a greater height if most of the challenges faced by staff and Aides are adequately addressed and if the Senators themselves begin to see the staff and Aides as partner in the business of legislature and democracy.

The inability of the staff and Aides to have one on one discussion with the Senate committee chairmen and the treatment meted to this category of people in their line of duty cannot improve information dissemination on Bill process. The challenges of legislative aides and parliamentary staff include the over bloated size of the bureaucracy with most of the staff having no requisite skills and competencies to deliver on their mandate. The large size of the bureaucracy is a result of the mass employment undertaken in the year 2007 which was influenced by the legislators. Some of those employed were former aides of the legislators, who up till now have found it difficult to imbibe the culture of the civil service. Also, the weak intellectual capacity on the part of legislative aides is a matter of concern. Some of them were employed not on the basis of merit but simply because they had contributed to the success of their principals at the polls. Given their weak capacity, they cannot provide the needed support to their principals in terms of generation of research inputs for understanding of different legislative issues. Though NASC has always tried to ensure that the legislators bring in qualified Aides to assist them, its effort is yet to yield

much result. The senators must begin to bring the staff and Aides closer and jettison the current tradition of secrecy pertaining to Bill process of the Senate.

Recommendations

Arising from the foregoing, this paper recommends the following:

- i. That there should be a very strong connecting link between the members of the National Assembly who are the law makers and the bureaucracy in National Assembly.
- ii. Parliamentary staff and legislative aides should be strengthened terms of capacity building, provision of requisite facilities and deployment of only competent staff to provide support services to the leadership, and committees of the two chambers. The staff posting should be devoid of lobbying from the legislators.
- iii. Also research capacity should be built through formulation of policy on research that will compel the legislators to patronize NASS Research Service instead of depending on experts and consultants who have over the years drained the resources of the Assembly.
- iv. On the conflicts between chairmen and Secretaries on one hand and Secretaries and Aides of the chairmen on the other, each one of them should be made to operate within his area of jurisdiction. Doing so will bring harmony and cooperation in the working of the committees.

Conclusion

The importance of parliamentary staff and legislative Aides in the Bill process of the legislature specifically Senate cannot be overemphasized. They assists Senators in the Bill process of the Senate through draft legislation and are actively participate in all known processes of Bills. This study reveals that the staff and Aides in the Senate of Nigerian National Assembly adequately participate in the Bill process despite the hurdles,

challenges that confronts them on daily basis. These challenges ranges from lack of knowledge on Bill process, lack of quick access to information, secrecy of meetings by Senators, unfavorable working environments and lastly, lack of adequate motivation or incentives from the Senators.

It is on record that since 1999 the parliamentary staff and legislative Aides have played an important role in giving members of the National Assembly a conducive environment to work. They also assist in the passage of Bills in both chambers of the Nigerian National Assembly. The National Assembly is a fertile ground for staff for the education of staff and Aides in all aspect of governance. In fact, a hardworking staff and Aides may become an expert in many fields such as Agriculture, Economy, health, labour, judiciary, oil and gas and many more through their role in the Bill process. The staff and Aides come face to face with the nitty-gritty of governance as top bureaucrats meets with different committees to explain the workings of government when called upon by the Senators. He/she is opportune to have hands-on information on what goes on in the health sector, Agriculture, judiciary, oil and gas, labour and how a proposed Bill when passed into law would shape the economy of the country and improved the lives of average Nigerians. Apart from the challenges encountered in their line of duty, Senate is basically a place for hard working staff and Aides. A staff and Aides assigned to Senate must toughen himself/herself up for hard work. It therefore necessitates that staff and Aides must always be on their toes so as not to draw the wrath of the Senators. The staff and Aides must have ears on ground, comb his /her sources frequently as well as keep up with the proceedings at the plenary, public hearings and at the committee meetings. He /she must be open to unscheduled public hearings on proposed Bills.

Because of the vast nature of work in the Bill process in the National Assembly, the staff and Aides has some challenges. The challenges may be generic or personal. The personal challenges may be in terms of capacity and capability of the staff and Aides i.e. his/her working equipment in various offices. The capacity tells if he/she is able to carry on with the huge

workload in the Bill process and his/her capacity may dwell on training and qualification

The generic challenges affect every staff and Aides in the Bill process of the Senate. The average staff and Aides in the Senate is bug down by huge work load in their respective offices. Some of them attend plenary, observed some hours on Bills session, motions and other legislative issues are discussed and decisions taken upon by the Senators especially those concern Bill process of the Senate. The staff and Aides must also brace themselves up for the public hearing on proposed Bills. Public hearing are legislative are legislative processes that offer the general public windows to contribute to Bills set to be passed by the Nigerian National Assembly or air their views on any topical issue affecting the nation. It is a tasking work because the staff and Aides need to professionally collate several views from the participants at the hearing. The staff and Aides must also take views of proponents and the opponents of the Bill.

Another challenge the staff and Aides would have to tackle is getting behind to get information in the closed-door sessions. Closed-door session is a normal legislative practice where critical national issues are discussed by legislators away from public eyes, including staff and Aides. What happens in closed-door session is very important because far-reaching decisions are usually taken in the session. Some Senators holds staff and Aides in disdain thus posing as a challenge in their role in the Bill process. For instance, staff and Aides seeking for clarification on issues especially on Bills may be put on hold for long time or may not be responded to by Senator .Well, some of the attitudes of some Senators most times stems from uncooperative and lackadaisical attitudes of the staff and Aides in the Bill process.

Bibliography

- Akintola, J (1999) *Law Practice and Procedure of Legislature*. Ibadan: Spectrum Publishing.
- Al – Mustapha, U. M (2013) *The Legislative Aide in the parliament*. Abuja
- Alpern, M.D (1973), “*The Hidden Power Elite*.” News Week. Vol.2. No. 1. An Invisible Net Work of Hill Power (1977), Washington Post. PPE. 1,59 and 10.
- Beetham, D (2006) *Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century: A Guide to Good Practice*. Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union.
- Cox, G. W., and Matthew D. McCubbins (1993) *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- DeGregorio, C. (1994). “Professional committee staff as policy making partners in the U.S. Congress”. In: Congress & the Presidency 21 (1), p. 49.
- Evans, R. (1963), “*The Invisible Men who run Congress*.” Saturday Evening Post, PP. 13-17.
- Evans, R. (1963), “*The Invisible Men who run Congress*.” Saturday Evening Post, PP. 13-17.
- Fox, H.W. and Hammond, (1977), *Congressional Staffs: “The Invisible Force in American Law Making*. New York: The Free Press.
- Habu, I.S. (2016), “*The Role and Challenges of Parliamentary Staff in a Nascent Democracy*”, National Assembly, Abuja. Nigeria Journal of Legislative Affairs. Vol. 3, March 2010, No. 1&2.
- Hill, W.L, (2007). *Strategic Management: An Integrated Approach*. Sydney: John Wiley and Sons
- Johnson, H (1970), “*Congressional Staff: The Third Branch of Congress*.” Washington Post: 1A and 19A.
- Macpherson, M. (1975), “*The Power Lovers*.” Washington Post: 10-13; 18.
- Maikasuwa, S. A (2015), “*The National Assembly and National Development in Nigeria*”, a paper presented in the Department of Political Science, University of Abuja

- Mathew, D. (1974) *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press.
- Miquel, P. G. and J. Snyder, (2004), *Legislative Effectiveness and Legislative Life*. MIT Department of Economics Working Paper No. 04-28.
- National Institute for Legislative Studies (2013), *14 Years of Law Making in the National Assembly*, Abuja: NILS: 2013NDI. 2013. Development of Parliamentary Research Services in Central Europe and the Western Balkans.
- Salih, M.A. (2005) Introduction: The Changing Governance Role of African Parliaments. In *African Parliaments*, edited by M.A. Mohamed Salih. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Smith (1988) in Habu I S, Ahmadu R A and Ajiboye N (2003), *Bureaucracy and Law Making in the Legislature*, unpublished Manuscript , National Assembly, Abuja
- Snyder, J. M (1991) On Buying Legislatures *Economics and Politics* 3:93-109. *Studies Quarterly* 7(3):415–422.
- The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Vincent de G (1745), Shifting Meanings of the Term 'Bureaucracy', *International Social Science Journal* 31 (1979), pp. 563–584.
- Weber M, (1946) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright MiHs, New York: Oxford University Press
- William, B. (2006). *Introduction to the Law and Legal System of the United States* (4th ed.). St. Paul, MN: Thomson West.
- Wyden, A. J. (1975), "Ghost on Capitol Hill." *News Week*: 33.