

Inertia in African Public Administration: An Examination of Some Causes and Remedies

S K Asibuo*

Résumé: *Les fonctions croissantes de l'Etat moderne ainsi que le changement d'orientation intervenu dans son rôle par le passage d'institution purement régulatrice du maintien de l'ordre et de la loi à celui d'agent du développement socio-économique requièrent une fonction publique dynamique. Cependant, en raison d'un certain nombre d'obstacles, les bureaucraties publiques des pays africains n'ont pas pu satisfaire adéquatement les exigences de l'évolution économique et technologique rapide de leur environnement. L'un des obstacles les plus difficiles à surmonter est l'inertie qui peut être entraînée par plusieurs facteurs dont la taille de la fonction publique, une centralisation excessive de l'autorité de décision, une délégation de pouvoir et de responsabilité inappropriée, une adhésion rigide aux règlements et procédures, l'attitude au travail, l'autorité des fonctionnaires, un personnel pas suffisamment qualifié et l'environnement politique et constitutionnel. Au-delà des problèmes structurels, les éléments qui méritent une attention particulière sont ceux du moral bas et du manque de motivation de la direction et du personnel des organisations publiques. Les causes principales de la détérioration avancée du moral, de l'efficacité et de la discipline des fonctionnaires sont les suivantes : taux très bas des salaires, manque d'autres motivations, ainsi que la politisation de la fonction publique dans laquelle la promotion ne se fait pas sur la base de l'ancienneté ou du mérite mais plutôt sur des bases politiques. Les problèmes du sous-paiement ont été aggravés par les dévaluations massives entraînées par des programmes d'ajustement structurel.*

Introduction

All over the world, Governments have extended the scope of their activities beyond the traditional tasks of defence, maintenance of law and order and the collection of taxes. Robson has remarked that:

The increased functions of the state are one of the most commonplace facts of modern political history. Every textbook on government emphasizes the vast growth in the duties and responsibilities of public authorities today compared with a century ago.¹

Africa Development Vol. XVII, No. 4, 1992, pp. 67-80

1 W A Robson, 'Recent Trends in Public Administration' in W A Robson (ed.) *The Civil Services in Britain and France*, The Hogarth Press, London, 1956, p.48.

After attaining independence, many new African States realized that political independence, though laudable, is not adequate to promote economic and social development. To enhance their welfare objectives, many governments of the new states have created an environment quite conducive to a widespread social and economic well-being of their citizens. Educational institutions and hospitals have been established; basic infrastructure such as water, roads, telephone networks, railways, electricity and heavy-capital demanding projects have been undertaken; and several public enterprises, boards and other agencies have also been established to accelerate the pace of socioeconomic development.

However, in the pursuit of their multiple goals and aspirations, and in the fulfillment of their multifaceted functions, these public organizations face several administrative difficulties which call for reform. It is these problems which have made the public sector in most African countries ineffective, inefficient and unresponsive to the changing needs of the society. One of the most intractable of such obstacles is inertia. This may be defined as the combination of forces that tend to generate resistance to change and which reduces the ability and capacity of organizations to be flexible, adaptable and productive whether in the form of services or goods. This paper seeks to examine some of the causes of inertia in African Public Administration and also suggest possible solutions which will help ameliorate the business of the public bureaucracy.

Causes of Inertia

Any diagnosis of the organizational framework in which public servants operate should begin with Max Weber's model of bureaucracy. For our purposes the key features to note in Weber's ideal bureaucracy are the following: stress on a hierarchical structure of authority each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one and the assumption that initiative can come only from above; there is also stress on obedience by subordinates to their superiors: all operations are regulated by a system of rules; bureaucratic authority resides in the office not in the occupant of the offices and the office holder should not misappropriate the resources in the office (i.e official activity must be separated from the private life of the official). While Weber's bureaucratic model was not specifically intended for a single bureaucracy, it has elements that are familiar to all public organizations.

Inertia may be caused by a variety of factors. These include the following: the sheer size of the Civil Service; excessive centralization of decision-making authority; inadequate delegation of authority and responsibility; rigid adherence to rules and procedures; attitudes to work and authority of civil servants; inadequacy of qualified personnel; the political and constitutional environment of public sector which may not be conducive to risk taking and others.

The Sheer Size of the Civil Service

The public bureaucracy, or what is commonly referred to as the Civil Service, is the biggest organization in many countries. As a complex organization, it consists of Ministries, each of which is subdivided into several departments and divisions. Currently, the Ghana Civil Service for instance, comprises of eighteen ministries. The heavy volume of work handled by a large staff in these ministries results in the introduction of standardized procedures which normally become the subject of regulations and rules. Thus the sheer size and complexity of the Civil Service makes it difficult for it to operate with the speed which has characterized small organizations. One should not forget that big creatures normally move slowly.

Excessive Centralization of Decision-Making Authority

An important factor, which has been of much public concern, appears to be inordinate delays in rendering service to members of the public and in prosecuting government business. Delays can be attributed to the structure and procedures of the Civil Service. The problem of structure may stem from excessive centralization of decision-making authority in central ministries in the national capital. Due to the highly centralized bureaucratic structure, there is a lack of co-ordination of policies among departments as well as lack of dissemination of information for effective decision-making. The Ministers/Commissioners and the top central ministry officials are hard-pressed to cope with the volumes of work and range of decisions they have to make. The overall effect is procrastination.

Centralization of the machinery of government stifles prompt execution of several rural development programmes because regional and district officers lack sufficient discretionary authority to take decisions. Almost all major development decisions affecting local issues have to be taken in the national capital. This, usually, entails loss of precious time due to ineffective and poor communication networks - several district headquarters do not have telephone networks and officers have to rely on correspondence. The postal system also, tends to be unreliable because many postal vehicles frequently break down; letters take a long time to reach their destination. This delay, in some cases, throws many programmes and projects, whose implementation depend on the season, out of gear. Moreover, decisions taken far away from the scene of action tend to be deficient because they are divorced from the local realities. Consequently, local initiative, enthusiasm and aspirations are suppressed, if not killed. If on the other hand, depending on the urgency of the issue, the district departmental head takes a unilateral

decision without reference to his immediate boss - the regional head of department - he will be queried.²

In Ghana for instance, despite the Government's commitment to decentralization, there are still some elements of centralization in the public bureaucracy. Traces of centralization can be seen in the payment of annual increments, leave claims and the omission of names on payment vouchers. The payment of annual leave bonus sometimes involves the beneficiary travelling to Accra, national capital and location of the Accountant-General's Department in order to expedite action on the processing of his payment forms. Similarly, the omission of names on payment vouchers also means going from the remotest part of the country to Accra to clarify the issue with the Accountant-General's Department; correspondence from both regional and district departmental heads do not suffice to avoid making the trip to the national capital.³ The cost of transportation and hotel accommodation may, at times, not make the journey worthwhile.

Inadequate Delegation of Authority and Responsibility

Another cause of inertia which is closely related to the problem of excessive centralization is inadequate delegation of authority and responsibility by superior officers to their subordinates. That delegation of authority is of much practical significance in administration cannot be disputed. Delegation enables the superior officers to concentrate on the more important tasks while giving the subordinates an opportunity to take initiatives as well as demonstrate their capabilities. It also saves time and allows the utilization of local knowledge and talent. Thus the delegation process can provide a basis for making reliable performance appraisals and ensuring that decision-making is brought as close as possible to the scene of action.⁴

Yet, available evidence indicates that senior public officials are reluctant to delegate authority due to a variety of reasons. An important issue is the habits and ingrained attitudes of central ministry officials and their lack of confidence in the quality and capabilities of their subordinates, especially the field staff. Ironically, both the regional and district departmental heads were promoted to their present status after a thorough assessment of their experience and competence by central ministry officials; yet there is an increasing tendency, on the part of the latter, even though they posted these officers to head the regions, provinces and districts, to look down on them.

2 Interview with district government officials at Ejisu-Juaben and Bosomtwe and Atwima Districts in Ghana respectively.

3 *Ibid.*

4 See K A Owusu-Ansah, 'Possible Areas and Strategy for Administrative Reform in the Ghana Civil Service' *Greenhill Journal of Administration*, Vol.1, No.1, April-June 1974, pp. 12-14.

Other factors for failure of the senior officers to delegate authority to their subordinates include the fear of losing their positions to well groomed and brilliant subordinates, the desire to create an impression of indispensability and the latter's inexperience and lack of self-confidence.

In addition, in the case of decentralized programmes, central ministry officials are quite often reluctant to relinquish some of their powers and functions to decentralized departments because the programmes are seen by them as a device for curtailing their powers and influence. They are therefore not committed to the success of these programmes. Thus, the decentralization programmes of several African Governments suffer from a fundamental defect, in that, the very people who are to implement the programmes, and whose attitudes will determine their success or failure, are, at the outset, opposed to them, due to the loss of their privileges entailed in an effective implementation.

There is also the problem of effective supervision and control in the Civil Service. In order to encourage the subordinate to feel at ease in this dependency and to perform well, the superior should make available to him the organization's objectives, policies, rules and regulations and the standards expected of him. This is virtually absent in most Civil Service departments and agencies. As a result of the lack of clearly defined responsibilities and the hoarding of information, many junior civil servants are always naive, due to ignorance, and unable to perform well. This ignorance and the prevailing tendency on the part of civil servants to refer issues upwards for clarification cause delay. Shifting of responsibility has become common; the safest position to avoid mistakes is not to act. This also causes delay.

Rigid Adherence to Rules and Procedures

An important goal of the Civil Service is to give the public a service which is safe and sure, but swift and cheap. This necessitates caution and slow-moving in the activities of civil servants. Rules and regulations are rigidly adhered to in the interest of impersonal and impartial behaviour, but lack of imaginations, discretion and initiative on the part of public officials and the exercise of caution results in red tapism. According to Juran, red tapism may be defined as "delay, buck-passing, pigeon-holing, indecision and other phenomena which contribute to, and end in the action".⁵ Red tapism contributes to inertia in administration. Thus an aspect of operation that has often been denounced for delay in the Civil Service is the body of standing operating procedures popularly called "General Orders". The Daily Graphic in Ghana in an editorial comment, reiterated public condemnation of the cumbersome Civil Service procedures as follows:

5 B M Juran, *Bureaucracy, A Challenge to Better Management*, New York, 1944, p.38.

Much of the red tapism and the civil servants' much condemned inefficiency can be traced to the unrealistic and unnecessarily rigid orders which make it virtually impossible for the organization to function as it should and yield the desired results.⁶

It is true that the delay may simply be the legitimate time needed by a Civil Service department or a public organization to perform its official work. It should also not be forgotten that certain services undertaken by some public institutions and agencies by their very nature are too complex and may require reference to several different departments for their proper performance. However, what is disturbing is not the existence of the rules, but the rigidity with which they are adhered to without regard to variations in circumstances. Besides, some of these rules and procedures are outmoded. Most African countries have not reviewed their General Orders and Civil Service codes since independence. In fact, Ghana is currently reviewing its General Orders and Civil Service Code - after a period of thirty years. There is resort to too much paper work involving, not necessarily policy issues, but even routine matters. As pointed out by Aryeh Globerson:

An exaggeratedly legalistic approach leads to excessive correspondence and paperwork, including a multiplicity of authorizations and signatures. All this may be justified when matters of principle are involved, but it is very doubtful whether it serves any useful purpose when applied to routine matters where fixed procedures suffice.⁷

The cumbersome operating procedures stem partly from the hierarchic nature and structure of the civil service and also from the accountability which civil servants are liable. Hierarchical routing of correspondence and other communications delay decision-making. Documents and files have to follow a prescribed series of steps through administrative layers. Thus one of the major impediments to quick action can be traced to excessive layering in the central ministries. Files move from one office to another, and since most of these files are not classified according to importance, many matters cannot be settled without reference to the Permanent Secretary himself. Much of the time of senior officials is devoted to the review of papers and files received from subordinates. These are then passed on to still higher officers.⁸ According to Fainsod "... Procedural slavishness and dilatory

6 *Daily Graphics*, 2 January 1974.

7 Aryeh Globerson, 'Problems of Public Administration in West African Countries', *Public Administration in Israel and Abroad*, Jerusalem, 1964, p. 92.

8 Albert Waterston, 'Administrative Obstacles to Planning', *Economia Latina Americana*, Vol.1, No.3, July 1964, p.318.

tactics at lower levels have created bottlenecks which only heroic action can break".⁹

A typical cause of unjustified delay is the processing of simple routine matters through an excessively cumbersome procedure. Examples are money claims such as insurance, social security, bank loans against large organizations, licence applications and passport issues. Contractors and private businessmen face several handicaps because of rigidly followed rules and regulations. To secure approval for industrial or import licenses, a businessman is often required to fill out numerous forms, visit several government offices in the national capital and wait outside government offices for long periods.

A related cause of delay in the Civil Service is the devotion to precedents. Due to considerable pressure exerted by the public, administrators find it more convenient to solve problems in a manner that has been tried before, rather than venture into the unknown. Precedents play a major role in decision-making in the Civil Service. A precedent is a previous decision or case taken as an example for subsequent cases or for supporting similar acts. The basic rationale behind the idea of precedents is not only to avoid the possibility of a central government department or agency giving different decisions at different times in similar cases, but also to facilitate the expeditious disposal of similar cases in future. In effect, the constant reference to precedents will help achieve uniformity and also preserve the Civil Service tradition of fairness and impartiality. However, an inherent major weakness is that precedent usually makes little or no allowance for cases of unusual circumstances which have no bearing on current situation. In a situation where precedent is lacking, the official will refer the matter to his superior, and if the case is unusually difficult, it may slowly travel along the administrative chain of responsibility until a decision is made at the top level, after an exasperating time lag.

Attitudes to Work and Authority of Civil Servants

Besides the structural and procedural problems of the Civil Service, there are attitudinal problems that have, not only called for constant public comment, but also created room for delay. The attitudes to work and authority of most public servants deserve much to be desired. Due to their apathetic attitudes, they do not apply themselves to work as much as they should. An editorial in the *Ghanaian Times* opined:

9 Merle Fainsod, 'The Structure of Development Administration', in Swerdlow I (ed.) *Development Administrations - Concepts and Problems*, Syracuse University Press, 1963, p.11.

*... by every yardsticks the attitude to work of the civil servant of today has become one of the most serious problems which must be counted among those that call for priority treatment.*¹⁰

While it is fair to accept that the attitudes to work of quit a number of public servants are poor, one must also not lose sight of the factors which have created this situation. Their purchasing powers, their sense of motivation in relation to the incentives that are given them and their patterns of living are important issues that deserve attention in any critical analysis of administrative problems of the Civil Service. Low morale and lack of motivation on the part of both the management and staff of public organizations may stem from several causes. It may be due to the politicization of the Civil Service in order to make it politically responsive to the aspirations of the regime. When public office is treated as a legitimate object of spoils, when promotion is not based entirely on seniority or merit but rather on political considerations - this leads to a sharp deterioration of the morale, efficiency and discipline of civil servants.

Another cause of low morale is that civil servants are grossly under remunerated. Besides, they lack other forms of incentives and welfare programmes. Under these circumstances, many civil servants are compelled to supplement their salaries by engaging in business or accepting other employment which results in the neglect of their official duties. In some African countries, especially those which have embarked upon International Monetary Fund/World Bank inspired Structural Adjustment Programmes, currencies have been devalued massively. Consequently, inflation is too high and the minimum wages are so low that they can not even buy a kilo of meat. The civil servants are therefore dissatisfied with their poor incentives and this is manifested in the widespread lack of concern for the nation and the masses where personal interests are involved. This lack of concern for the nation finds expression in the careless manner in which some civil servants use public or government property and in the desire to grab, at the expense of the state. Civil servants are so demoralized that they are unlikely to identify the objectives of the Civil Service/Organization with their own aspirations. This situation is further exacerbated when workers either have no access to the decision-making process or channels for articulating their needs and points of view.

Inadequacy of Qualified Personnel

Inertia may be caused by shortage of qualified personnel. The tremendous expansion in the functions of Government over the past four decades has not

10 Ghanaian Times, 4 September, 1973.

been matched by a corresponding increase in the availability of qualified personnel. Our educational institutions have been unable to produce enough qualified personnel in the numbers and with the speed demanded by the economic, social and political development of the African countries. Consequently, the few trained personnel find themselves so heavily loaded with responsibilities that their effectiveness is dissipated. Even in some government departments it is difficult to get staff to carry out the prescribed routine operations on documents.

In Ghana for instance since 1983, the central government, has embarked on an Economic Recovery Programme with substantial financial support from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. As part of this programme 32,542 personnel have been retrenched in the Civil Service and the Ghana Education Service over the period 1987-1989 and a total of C5.5 billion has been paid out in compensation packages.¹¹ Since 1985, there has been an embargo on the recruitment of new staff. This has exacerbated the acute personnel problems facing ministries and departments. In the course of a fieldwork conducted in 1988, the author of this article discovered in Ejisu-Juaben and Bosomtwe districts in Ghana that many decentralized departments such as Social Welfare, Information and Community Development, did not have any supporting staff - messengers, clerical officers, typists etc. Undoubtedly, this situation makes field administration virtually impossible in that at times offices had to be closed in the absence of the only senior officer manning the whole district department. The shortage of basic office skills hampers the expeditious disposal of public businesses. While these shortcomings cannot be easily remedied, more attention to these lower level administrative problems may well help break the bottlenecks which frustrate administrators.

The Political and Constitutional Environment of Public Sector not Conducive to Risk-taking

The political and constitutional framework within which public administration, especially the public service, operates is not conducive to creativity. Creativity involves risk-taking - something which is not appreciated in the public sector. A commercial firm, on the other hand can take a risk because if a private firm makes a mistake no great harm is done to the country at large. In fact, its harmful repercussions are localized. But in the case of a mistake by the public service the situation assumes a different dimension because the whole country may be affected. The public sector deals with people's lives, ambitions and aspirations. Caution is certainly called for in handling public business, especially in the area of health and

11 See, 'C5.5 Billion Paid Out to Redeployees in Civil and Education Services' (No author indicated) in *Ghana Civil Service Journal*, No.1, 1990, p.27.

food, where the slightest mistake or omission might result in the administration of dangerous drugs to the public. Moreover, public servants are quite often subject to public scrutiny and question. The passion for accountability fosters legalism and delay. Niskanen observed this fact when he expressed that: It has long been observed that legislators, the press, and political scientists appear to be more interested in how honestly our public activities are conducted than on how well they are conducted".¹²

Such attitudes, it is argued, have made public servants cautious. To them the successful career will be one without mistakes not one noted for innovation. This is what Painter has referred to as 'maintenance values' which can be broadly described as 'keeping your nose clean'.¹³

Other Factors

Inertia in administration can be caused by the unwillingness to alter a programme in which a government organization has invested substantial financial and human resources including equipment. For example, after the Ghana Government had spent a great deal of money on equipment, seminars and workshops to facilitate the implementation of its educational reform the Junior Secondary School Programme - it resisted any efforts by parents, the National Union of Ghanaian students (NUGS) and other pressure groups, to suggest alternative educational programmes.

Decision-making through the committee system in administration despite its alleged advantages, can sometimes lead to inertia. Rather than save time, committees may actually waste it by going into excessive detail and by delaying decisions while waiting for another committee to make a decision which affects its work. At times, the sheer size of some committees and their cumbersome procedures impede on prompt decisions being taken on vital issues. In fact some of these committees are not necessarily meant for taking important decisions but avoiding them. Walter Sharp argues that public administration in the United Arab Republic (UAR) is:

*cluttered with special committees and councils for a variety of purposes.... (These Committees often) reflect a desire to sidetrack knotty problems, or to remove the onus for difficult decisions from a single official to a group...*¹⁴

12 Niskanen, W, *Bureaucracy and Representative Government*, New York, Aldine-Atherton, 1917, p. 192.

13 Martin Painter, 'Administrative Change and Reforms', in Brian Galligan (ed), *Australian State Politics*, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1986, p. 203.

14 Walter R Sharp, 'Bureaucracy and Politics: Egyptian Model' in Siffin W J (ed), *Towards a Comparative study of Public Administration*, Indiana University Press, 1957, p. 165.

Political instability also causes delays in administration. Experience has shown that in those African countries which have witnessed several military interventions, such as Ghana and Nigeria, continuity in administration has been undermined. This has retarded progress in the implementation of several development projects. A new government assumes office and blames the previous regime for adopting policies and programmes not in the interest of the people. In order to legitimize its power base, the succeeding regime abandons some of the old programmes and projects of its predecessor without any meticulous evaluation of their viability, and embarks on its own objectives and priorities. For political reasons, it may take a longer period before any consideration can be given to the revitalization of such abandoned projects. This attitude has retarded the development of some coup-infested African countries and underlines the fragility of the authoritarian system. Due to the frequency of coups, some African countries have not been able to build up any stable institutions capable of formulating any long-term plans.

Possible Solutions

This section discusses solutions to some of the problems of inertia which have been the subject matter of the preceding section. The first major remedy to overcome the problems of excessive centralization of decision-making authority is decentralization. Decentralization entails the removal of functions from the centre, this may be either functional or geographical. Functional decentralization refers to the transfer of authority to perform specific tasks or activities to specialized organizations that operate nationally. Examples are the creation of public enterprises to build and maintain utilities and field offices within national ministries to deal with health care or road construction. Geographical decentralization, on the other hand, involves both processes of deconcentration (i.e. delegation to field offices) or devolution (i.e. to local authorities or other local bodies).

As the latest fashion in development administration, decentralization has a number of appeals. It ensures that the public business will be dealt with more expeditiously; various types of procrastination and red tape will be eliminated by doing away with the requirement of frequent reference to central authorities before action can be taken in the field. Ministers/Commissioners and the national ministries will be relieved of several daily actions most of which will in any case be governed by established precedents. To senior managers in other public organizations, decentralization is also valuable because it tends to ease the burden of detail that weighs on them and it enables them devote more time to major problems.

Decentralization requires delegation of a large amount of discretionary authority and allocation of responsibility. This in turn increases the opportunities for initiative. There is no better technique of training young officers

for higher duties than by letting them make decisions at their own level. Decentralization also facilitates increased knowledge of and sensitivity to local problems and needs, because of closer contact between field officials and local residents. Another argument in favour of decentralization is that if decisions are made by field officers they are more likely to be relevant to local needs and conditions. Local residents are more likely to be seriously committed to development programmes which affect them and will therefore participate actively in implementing them. Moreover, success in fulfilling a community need will encourage people to try to meet others.

However, decentralization programmes in the African countries have recorded more failures than successes due to a variety of reasons. In the past, some of the decentralization programmes were hastily instituted without any careful assessment of the personnel establishment and capacities of the decentralized departments and agencies that would be needed to perform their functions. It was simply assumed that capacity for management existed. These deficiencies adversely affected the implementation of the reforms. Caution and careful planning are called for before governments in the Third World embark on major institutional reforms such as decentralization.

Most of the decentralization programmes failed because of insufficient understanding of the provisions of the reforms and the new roles expected of both councillors and district civil servants. This stemmed from the lack of adequate education on the real meaning and the fundamental philosophy of these reforms. On the 1980 Zambia reforms for instance, Bodemeyer notes that:

*A good deal of conflict and confusion therefore appears to be attributed to the fact that people are expected to work within an organizational model which is basically different from the one they are used to, and nobody has put much efforts into explaining to them the difference.*¹⁵

Sound decentralization demands a clear enunciation of policy. To this end, it is suggested that legislations dealing with decentralization programmes should be seriously reviewed, paying particular attention to those sections which, through their imprecision, are conducive to role conflict. Similarly, policy statements must be clear as to the type of decentralization envisaged - whether the intention of central government is deconcentration or devolution. The success of decentralization in the Third World countries will depend on the extent to which decentralized departments and agencies

15 Bodemeyer, R, *Administrative Development: The Effects of Decentralization on District Development in Zambia*, Giesen, Federal Republic of Germany, Centre for Regional Development Research, 1984, p. 66.

receive the political support of the national leadership. Success will also depend on the extent to which district officials help to provide the necessary administrative support for district councillors, thus enabling them to initiate plans for effective local development. Finally, decentralization programmes cannot be implemented without adequate financial and human resources.

The problem of ineffective delegation of authority can be remedied by the education of senior officials to appreciate that sharing responsibility with competent subordinates does not necessarily deprive them of their managerial prerogatives. Counselling and participation of officials in seminars and workshops may further relieve the senior officials of any fear of losing their jobs to their subordinates. The latter's inexperience, lack of self-confidence and other difficulties might be solved through systematic training and counselling programmes. In order to encourage efficiency, realistic targets should be set for workers. However, workers should be involved in this exercise. Their progress can be monitored at mutually agreed stages and by methods familiar to them.

The outmoded and cumbersome procedures, rules and regulations such as the General Orders and the Civil Service Code, should be revised to suit current changes in the machinery of government in particular and the society as a whole. Furthermore, in order to check hoarding of information in the Civil Service and in other public organizations, it is suggested that ministries and departments should prepare handy brochures of only those parts of the General Orders (GOs) and other policies which are relevant to their own operations. These should be distributed to every literate employee of the organization. A clear understanding of the GOs, it is hoped, will increase the flexibility with which the Civil Service and other public agencies cope with their environment.

In order to overcome irresolution, lack of initiative and other tendencies towards inertia, and in order to attract administrators of high calibre, it is suggested that positive efforts should be directed at a system of proper selection, training and promotion of suitable candidates for all levels in the public service. In addition, service, based on merit, must not only be established, but also encouraged. Such a system cannot be effective without adequate facilities for training. Comprehensive training schemes and staff development programmes should therefore be made available to all categories of staff. These may serve the double purpose of improving the performance of the present duties carried out by the trainees and identifying promising candidates for future promotion.

Besides training, any reform programme should also aim at improving the morale in the Civil Service, developing leadership skills, improving *esprit de corps* and above all ensuring that civil servants are paid salaries comparable to other public organizations and also commensurate with their qualifications and output. This will not only remove the tendency among

civil servants to devote less than the full working day to official business because of the need to earn additional income for their sustenance, but will also help to retain staff. The pay system, cost of living and fringe benefits should be reviewed from time to time (in line with changing economic trends). Furthermore, if civil servants are to operate effectively without any anxiety, then, they should be assured of their security of tenure and adequate pension and social security schemes.

Finally, a regular system of transfer of public officials may help to reduce inertia in our administration. If transfers are made at regular intervals they may reduce the tendency of civil servants establishing an informal network of relations, based on vested interests in the status quo at the stations they occupy, for a long time. Such regular transfers, if effectively implemented, will help to reduce the acute problem of personnel shortage which is most felt in the rural areas. Transfers will further ensure a fair distribution of competent officials some of whom are concentrated in the national headquarters and are reluctant to go to the hinterland.

Conclusion

It is evident from the review of some of the principal causes of inertia that it is not only detrimental to the needs of a dynamic administration, but also not conducive to rapid socioeconomic development. By its very nature, inertia breeds stagnation and frustration. Inertia runs counter to reforms aimed at ensuring that organizations are more responsive to changes taking place in their environment. More importantly, inertia in public administration, by slowing down and impeding on the provision of essential services, such as health, is inimical to the interest of the ordinary people, especially the illiterate people in the countryside who have little access to public officials; and who may not have social and political connections and, above all, any money to influence their way through.

Public expectation is for a more dynamic and flexible Civil Service which will be more responsive to technological changes taking place, not only in its environment, but also in its scope and functions and more responsible to the socioeconomic challenges. Thus, if the management technology (i.e the appropriate application of methods, procedures, rules, operations and culture in the civil service) is improved, the major constraints on efficiency and productivity will be removed. Tax payers will then enjoy better services from the Civil Service.

* Lecturer, Public Administration Studies, School of Administration, University of Ghana, Legon.