

The New Public Administration and Service Delivery in Public Organizations in Nigeria.

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Abstract: *We examined the relationship between New Public Administration and Service Delivery in Public Organizations in Nigeria. The main focus of new administration is the use of market techniques to improve the performance of the public sector. The main features of NPA include performance contracting, cost recovering, commercialization, decentralization and accountability among others. The study adopts a content analysis method through the use of secondary data. The study recommends among others that the implementation of the reform can be tackled by being more practical, sensitizing public servants in an adequate/timely manner, and taking into cognizance the environmental realities of the Nigerian public service. It concludes that new public management is sine qua non for any civil service that wants to be effective in service delivery.*

Keywords: New Public Administration, Service Delivery.

INTRODUCTION

The New Public Administration represents the culmination of a revolution in public Administration. The belief that large and monopolistic public bureaucracies are inherently inefficient was a critical force driving the emergence of the New Public Administration (NPA) in the 1980s. Many governments have embraced the NPA as the framework or paradigm through which governments and organizations are modernized and the public sector re-engineered. The NPA reform is radically changing the traditional ways of delivery public services. Indeed, the NPA offers important lessons and analyses for public management throughout the world and Nigeria is no exception to the process of implementation of efforts aimed at achieving the outcomes embodied in the said NPA (Ohiole et al, 2015).

The Nigerian civil service which is shrouded in the hangover of colonial administration is still struggling to meet with the expectations of many Nigerians and this has craved the desire of government to adopt the NPA approach in order to enhance performance and efficiency of the civil service. In addition, the cost of governance in Nigeria has risen astronomically which has resulted to economic stagnation, fiscal crises and poor public service coupled with the increasing demand for an immaculate and regimented public service that conforms to international best practices (Pfiffner, 2004). These reforms did not only affect the Civil Service in isolation; but public enterprises as well. Although the high tide of the NPA phenomenon has arguably passed, the relationship between NPA practices and the performance of public organizations remains an extremely timely concern. In seeking out ways to cut back public sector budgets, governments are once again searching for tools and techniques that can enable public managers to deliver quality services at a lower cost.

The earlier reforms aimed at shaping a public administration that could spearhead national development, albeit in the mould of the colonial age. Current reform efforts aim to reduce the costs and refocus the activities of the public sector, to change the way it works, and to promote the role of the market and non-governmental actors both in service provision and in the economy at large. This time around, reforms are driven by pressures from economic crises and structural adjustment, donor imposition, domestic demands for change amplified by growing political pluralism, and emulation of reforms in other countries (Batley, 1999 Mkandawire and Soludo, 1999, Olowu,1999). Most of the more recent reforms, under the influence of the New Public Administration, have been driven by a combination of economic, social, political and technological factors, which have triggered the quest for efficiency and for ways to cut the cost of delivering public services. The focus of the NPA movement therefore, was on creating institutional and organizational contexts which are to mirror what is seen as critical aspects of private sector modes of organizing and managing (Economic Commission for Africa, 2004).

As observed by Hood (1993) NPA shifts the emphasis from traditional public administration to new public administration, pushing the state towards 'managerialism'. The traditional model of organization and delivery of public services, based on the principles of bureaucratic hierarchy, planning and centralization, direct control and self sufficiency, is apparently being replaced by a market-based public service management or enterprise culture.

This study argues that public sector reform efforts in developing countries need to embrace these changes selectively and draw on a range of public management models that are appropriate to different contexts while putting the needs and interests of citizens at the heart of

reform efforts consistent with the New Public Service approach. This study presents the efforts at improving public service delivery through NPA reforms in Nigeria.

THE CONCEPT OF NEW PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

New Public Administration represents a paradigmatic break from the traditional model of public administration. New Public Administration is a reformed public service that breaks away from the autocratic, repressive and conservative public administration operating under the whims and caprices of top - bottom hierarchy, underpinned by Weber's (1946) bureaucracy, Wilson's (1887) politics and administration dichotomy and Taylor's (1911) scientific management model of work organization. The New Public Administration which is hinge on efficiency, effectiveness and performance has given much impetus to the template and character of civil service operation.

New Public Administration is a label used to describe a management culture that emphasizes the centrality of the citizen or customer, as well as accountability for results. It is a set of broadly similar administrative doctrines, which dominated the public administration reform agenda of most Organizations for Economic Cooperation and development (OECD) countries from the late 1970s (Hood, 1991). It captures most of the structural, organizational and managerial changes taking place in the public services of these countries, and a bundle of management approaches and techniques borrowed from the private-for-profit sector (Chandler,1994)). Tummers (2013) illustrates that NPM perceives weaknesses of traditional practices of administration by criticizing the monopolistic forms of service provision. Instead, he refers to a wider range of service providers and some key components such as involvement of 'professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance, greater emphasis on output controls, disaggregation of units in the public sector, greater competition in the public sector, private sector style of management practice and greater discipline and parsimony in resource use'.

The NPM concept is centered on the proposition that a distinct activity-management-can be applied to the public sector, as it has been applied in the private sector, and that it includes a number of elements like: the adoption of private sector management practices in the public sector; an emphasis on efficiency; a movement away from input controls, rules, and procedures toward output measurement and performance targets; a preference for private ownership, contestable provision, and contracting out of public services; and the devolution of management control with improved reporting and monitoring mechanisms (Aucoin, 1990; Bale and Dale, 1998).

Rhodes in Ezeani (2006) posits that new public administration has the following central doctrines: a focus on management, not policy, and on performance appraisal and efficiency; the disaggregation of Public bureaucracies into

agencies which deal with each other on a user-pay basis, the use of quasi-markets and contracting out to foster competition; cost-cutting, and a style of management which emphasizes, amongst other things, output targets, limited-term contracts, monetary incentives and freedom to manage. Obi and Nwanegbo (2006) opine that NPA is a label used to describe a management culture that emphasizes the centrality of the citizen or customers, as well as accountability for result. It captures most of the structural, organization and management changes taking place in the public services of most OECD countries and a bundle of management approaches and techniques borrowed from the private- for-profit sectors.

Today most of the programmes in the country are being piloted by the Public Private partnership (PPP). This has been observed mostly in the area of Power. As part of the practice of the New Public Administration, the National Integrated Power Project (NIPP) came into being. The Oronsaye presidential committee on the rationalization and restructuring of Ministries, Departments and Agencies was also part of the steps to key into the NPA model. The committee white paper report was scrap and merged some of these parastatals which would have reduced the cost of running the nation's bureaucracy. Other areas where government and the private sector have collaborated are health, road constructions, education etc (Olaoye-Osinkolu, 2013).

CONCEPT OF SERVICE DELIVERY

In the service delivery model, citizens participate in decision making processes, replacing the top-down process that characterizes too many governments. The ultimate focus is on effective and efficient delivery of government services. Angahar (2013) explains that service delivery refers to the provision of social or public goods that will promote socio-economic well-being of the citizens. He observes that public services offered by government are numerous and may include the provision of public utilities, security, economic development projects, and the enforcement of the law and so on.

Kayoed *et al* (2013), posits service delivery to imply tangible and intangible goods and services provided by the government in order to improve the well being of the citizens. Carlson *et al* (2005), in Kayode *et al* (2013) also conceptualized service delivery as the relationship between policy makers, service providers and poor people. According to them, it encompasses services and their supporting systems that are typically regard as a state responsibility. These includes social services (primary education, and basic health services), infrastructure (water, sanitation, roads and bridges).

NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

Nigeria has embarked on reforms that seek to modernize their public sector in order to enhance its efficiency

(Samaratunge & Hughes, 2002). Most independent observers agree that public sector organizations in poor African countries, like Nigeria performs badly, even considering the difficult circumstances they operate in. To varying degrees they suffer from a number of well known bureau-pathologies, inefficiency, centralization, fragmentation, poor leadership, lack of capacity, patrimonialism, rent seeking, corruption, and poor accountability and legitimacy. The need to improve efficiency and accountability is therefore obvious (Ayoade, 1988). This is in their quest to develop economies that will meet the expectations and aspirations of their citizenry. As Mkandawire and Soludo (1999) write, the need to reform Nigeria administrative structures to ensure efficiency and reduce the likelihood of corruption is obvious. Economic Commission for Africa ECA: (2003) notes that Nigerian Public Service have recognized that public sector modernization is no longer an option, but a necessity to help governments respond to changing societal needs and maintain competitiveness in an ever changing international environment. As a result, over the last three decades, there have been a number of New Public management (NPM) reform areas that Nigeria has embarked on with varying degrees in application and outcomes (Kiggundu 1998; Hope 2001).

NPA type reforms have been, and are being, applied to Nigeria civil services because these civil services are seen as unprofessional, often lacking capacity to solve the tough new problems of their governments; too bloated in size in relationship to their outputs; suffering from dysfunctional rigidity; lacking in, and not caring about, measurement of their performance; preoccupied with their own rules and practices rather than promoting, protecting, and serving the public interest; and, generally, being too corrupt and intent on maintaining their own patrimonial and territorial interests.

TENETS AND APPLICATION OF NPA TO SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

DECENTRALIZED DECISION MAKING

One major argument of NPA is that centralization is costly due to loss of flexibility. It promotes redtapes, rigidity and hampers service delivery due to emphasis on procedures instead of efficient service delivery. Decentralization offers a recipe in this regard because it reduces the bureaucratic hurdles through managerialism which gives officials as managers of public resources, the wide latitudes to manage their units for better performance. This can be achieved by having leaner bureaucracies; devolution of budgetary and financial controls; institutionalization of corporate governance initiatives and private sector model for a restructured public service. The introduction of market criterion as a cardinal plank upon which the NPA reform initiative rests guarantees allocate efficiency (goods and services are efficiently allocated to suit consumer's demand) and technical efficiency (input-output correlation). In the very wieldy and centralized Nigerian federal system and

practice, decentralization would translate to granting sub-national governments greater discretion in decision making and service provision through administrative and constitutional reforms that decongests the sixty-six items on the Exclusive Federal list in favour of the concurrent, residual lists and fourth schedule (functions of Local Government Councils) with a revision of the current vertical allocation of revenue skewed in favour of the Federal Government to the tune of 53%. This is in tandem with the principle of subsidiarity of devolving political decisions to the lowest practical level based on sharing authority, responsibility and provisions for improved efficiency in service delivery and resource management as a feature of decentralized decision making (Obi and Nwanegbo, 2006). It has the potency of guaranteeing better performance and cost-reduction compared to the traditional rigid public administration system.

COST RECOVERY

As a reform element, cost recovery helps to increase market discipline by preventing over-use of services by consumers and introduces the culture of prudence in the use of public services, thereby reducing pressure on demand which could be leveraged upon to meet consumers demand through improved quality and availability. These are achieved by introducing user-fees or charge for public services. The situation in Nigeria before the attempt at privatizing Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) and unbundling it to pave way for successor companies was that of waste, massive irregularities and unaccountability. The pre-paid metering and other reform packages are targeted at halting the numerous maladies that pervaded the activities of this previous wholly-controlled and owned government agency in Nigeria. This initiative which had in 2001 been extended to telecommunication with measured progress can also be applied to redress the ugly state of road networks in Nigeria, possibly through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) as a cardinal plank of NPM anchored on Build, Operate and Maintain (BOM) that reintroduces toll collection in order to recoup cost and keep the roads in a constant state of maintenance which is currently lacking in the Nigerian public sector. This position was reinforced by BGL Research (2013) in their analysis on infrastructure bonds and the public investment deficit in Nigeria. The foregoing discourse lends credence to the argument of public choice theorists that existing democratic arrangements and public bureaucracy can be very poor predictors of citizens preferences and demands, otherwise social services like motorable roads, potable drinking water, affordable housing and reliable electricity supply ought to be democratic dividends that citizens enjoy after fourteen years of seeming civil democratic practice in the country. A major argument against cost recovery as a reform platform for improving public service effectiveness is that it would alienate the poor from having access to social services. The solution can be found in subsidizing these services for the poor or practicing,

progressive user- charges rate that makes the rich to pay for the consumption/user charges of the poor.

ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

As a public sector reform platform, the NPA advocates a redefinition of the role of the state in such a way that government focuses on its core areas of competence in service provision. According to Olowu (2002) “there are some basic government tasks that even weak states should strive to get right (such as) a foundation of law, a benign policy environment including macroeconomic stability, investing in people and infrastructure, protection of the vulnerable and protection of the national environment”. Nigeria has in the last few years been struggling to grapple with most of the above mentioned irreducible responsibilities of government which further explains its consistent 14th position on failed states ranking and abysmal performance on Human Development Indices (Soludo, 2012). There has been massive and consistent outcry from public analysts and commentators that costs of governance (mostly personnel costs of political and bureaucratic elites) in Nigeria is very high and that this is a drag on public sector effectiveness. This calls for a reform initiative that makes for leaner efficient and effective government with emphasis on qualitative service delivery. This can be better realized through PPP cardinals like contracting, franchising, effective market provision of some service. The argument of public choice theorists that government can be too big, disconnected from people and hijacked by vested interests is very germane here.

PERFORMANCE CONTRACTING

These are agreements specifying standards of performance or easily quantifiable targets which public office holders and managers of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government must meet over a stipulated period. The main objective here is to clarify the objectives of service organizations and their relationship with government, facilitating performance evaluation based on results instead of blind and unproductive conformity with bureaucratic rules and instructions. Targets are carefully set and operational autonomy is given. This way, performance can be evaluated; accountability and public service effectiveness are measured. The key performance Indicators (KPIs), an initiative of the National Planning Commission under President Jonathan’s Transformation Agenda (Obia, 2012) seems to approximate this particular tenet of NPA. Only time will tell the extent to which the KPIs can lead to public service effectiveness in Nigeria. Performance contracting through various indices discussed above seem to validate the contention of public choice theorists that market considerations provides optimal mechanism for service delivery and decision making as antidotes for the ineffectiveness of traditional public administration in developing countries especially Nigeria.

COMMERCIALIZATION

The objective of commercialization as an element of NPA is to facilitate productivity and greater efficiency in public service. It is the sale or reorganization of public enterprises wholly or partially owned by government and ensuring that such enterprises operate without subvention and they make profits. The Jerome Udoji Civil Service reform of 1974 recommended the adoption of some private sector principles in the Nigerian public service and Onosode report of 1982 suggested the privatization and commercialization of the non-performing public enterprises. Government responded by setting up the Bureau for Public Enterprises (BPE) and National Council on Privatization (NCP) to drive the process. The process has not been particularly transparent, even as the Nigerian National Assembly had to institute a panel to investigate the process. Going by the growth, employment opportunities and inter-sectoral linkages which the telecommunication reforms engendered, thereby making Nigeria the fastest growing market in that sector in Africa, the public choice theorists are very apt in their submission that market considerations affords optimal mechanism in effective public service delivery.

CITIZENS CHARTER

A fundamental dichotomy between the traditional public administration and NPA is in their perception of individuals that patronize them, while NPA views individuals as customers who must be treated as “Kings” and satisfied in service delivery, the old model construes them as citizens – treated with levity in some developing countries. The African Public Service Charter in projecting the NPA reform mandate anchors on principles of equality (treating citizens as equals before the law irrespective of differences). Neutrality (public service serves public interest and shall not discriminate against employees, shall also uphold political neutrality); Legality (public service shall be provided in strict compliance with the law); principle of continuity (conducting public service on ongoing basis and in all its component parts in accordance with the rules governing its operations) (Obi and Nwanegbo, 2006). This citizen’s service charter underscored SERVICOM as basis for measuring effectiveness based on timeliness and quality service delivery as a component of Obasanjo Service Delivery Initiative between 2003 and 2007 (Oladipo, 2007 and Nnamani, 2009). However, more efforts are still required to consolidate these attempts in order to galvanize service delivery in the Nigerian public sector. The efficacy of market principles and private sector practices in boosting public service effectiveness cannot be overemphasized as canvassed by public choice theory.

PUBLIC REPORTING

NPA emphasizes accountability and transparency as pivot of good governance. This is strengthened by access to reliable and accurate information on activities in the public domain

especially on fiscal and financial matters and macroeconomic framework. Although the recently endorsed Freedom of Information (FOI) Act in Nigeria ought to be a lubricant in this regard, its juxtaposition with the official Secrets Act seem to vitiate the anticipated impact of the former in enthroning transparency and accountability in the Nigerian public services, especially in the light of recurrent corruption cases that litter the Nigeria public space and has become quite buffeting and befuddling. Even the Fiscal Responsibility Act designed to plug revenue leakages, promote fiscal discipline and prudence across tiers, arms and units of government have not been able to do much (Nzeshi, 2011). Lack of political will and the narrow self interests of the political and bureaucratic elites seem to have ruptured the gains that could have been recorded here, and this reinforces one of the main submissions of public choice theory as presented by (Stoker 1991). Since openness leads to transparency, it is believed that the more open they become, the more the members of the public would be able to check operational abuses in these agencies (Obi, 2009).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, we presented arguments on the effects of NPA on public service delivery in Nigeria. It was observed that the major driving force behind the adoption of the new public administration was the fact that the socio-economic situation of country was on the precipice. It is no longer news that the economic stagnation seen in huge national and sub-national debts, balance of payment problems, underperforming industries, etc. and the excessive scope of governments' engagement in business, mediocrity in administrative performance and the lack of accountability, among other things is the manifestation of inefficiency lack of effective economic policies, and inadequate service delivery. In order to reprieve this old mantra, came the intellectual thinking on how public services should be organized and delivered. The challenge for Nigeria therefore is to integrate the New Public Administration model of change with the indigenous-based measure of change in the public sector. What remains to be seen is how Nigeria integrates the positive elements of NPA into their own unique systems and brings about changes in their public organization. This study therefore recommends the following:

For the New Public Administration approach to be rooted in the civil service culture, the enabling environment must be created. The social security of the people must be vigorously addressed because NPA unlike the traditional public administration is driven by market forces which see the public as client rather than citizens.

There is a need to cultivate a culture of Research and Development in the Nigerian public service and Public affairs through a purposeful research to policy linkage that taps into feeding policy process from research output in the nations tertiary education sector and research institutes.

The legal framework to ensure that policies are implemented and anything short of standard should be sanctioned according to the provisions of the law. Reforms in public sector are definitely considerable for socio-economic improvements in any country. Since reforms imply innovation, to make a new or create a new form as opposed to the old order therefore things like systems of production and distribution of goods and services, improvement of public health, education, housing and living condition in general are to be considered on high regard during reform process.

The implementation of the reform can be tackled by being more practical, sensitizing public servants in an adequate/timely manner, and taking into cognizance the environmental realities of the Nigerian public service. These include provision of improved education, infrastructural and health care facilities.

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