

Public Management Reforms in Nigeria: The Application of Managerialism and Its Limitations.

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ABSTRACT- *The contention of this paper is the indispensability of administrative reforms. It contends with the fact that the need to position public administration for sustainable national development gives credence to the renewed global agitations for public sector reforms. Most country's attempt at public sector reforms however, seem to draw on the experience of the private sector – Nigeria not been an exception. The objective of the paper therefore is to look at reforms generally and the need for reforms by organizations. The paper then looks at managerialism and its applicability in Nigeria's public sector. The methodology used is the narrative approach which involves the use of secondary data primarily. It was revealed that various public sector reforms have been embarked upon in Nigeria before now and the reforms have in many ways contributed to a more efficient public sector in Nigeria. It was also revealed that managerialism depends on the will, commitment and strength of the political leadership; the support and the understanding of the general populace. It is therefore recommends among others, that cognizance be taken of the continuous need for the restructuring of the public sector and the general populace must be carried along.*

KEYWORDS- Reform; Public Sector; Managerialism; Privatization;

1. INTRODUCTION

What is administrative reform? There are many answers to this question, depending on who is answering it and his perspectives. However, it is generally seen as the artificial inducement of administrative transformation against resistance. This definition revolves around two keywords, “artificial inducement” and “resistance”. On the former, it is artificial because it is man-made, deliberate and planned. It is not natural, accidental or automatic. The implication of the latter is that human resistance is common to organizational changes and innovations especially if they are radical departures from the status quo. To overcome this is a suggestion, supporting administrative reforms with power and authority either through existing channels or by usurpation of authority. Administrative reform can also be seen as a conscious way to improve the system for positive goals of development. We can therefore conclude that administrative reform is a conscious effort directed towards an organization to transform the status quo with the injection of new ideas, resources and people in order to enhance efficiency.

2. METHODOLOGY

The problem in hand bothers on the assessment of public management reforms in Nigeria vis a vis the application of managerialism. It employs secondary data based upon financial journals, text books & the internet. Purposive

sampling method is used in the choice of the organizations. The approach is descriptive.

3. THE RATIONALE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS

Another critical question to ask is, why reform? Public management reforms are definitely applicable in developing countries. Before we examine that however, we want to look at the factors that informed the reforms. According to Bagaji (2002: 40), the reasons are very simple and of common sense. They are better alternatives (revising or changing an existing way of doing things), obsolete system (when the existing system is out of tune with the political, economic and social changes within a society), changes in the environment (for example, the wind of change in the United States of America affected the changes of permanent secretaries in Nigeria to Director General). In their own submission, Peter and Pierre (2007: 302) said cutting back expenditure was the major goal of reforms.

Administrative reform is needed to awaken sick organizations. Reforms can be seen as a prescriptive medication for the cure of organizational ailment. The question then arises, when do we say an organization is sick? First, whenever the expected results are not coming. Two, when there are many “dead cells” in the system i.e redundant personnel. Thirdly, an administrative system is sick if it is incapacitated by social, political and economic factors. Fourthly, when a system can no longer cope with

its demands as a result of age, size, span, civilization and modernization, it is perceived as sick. Furthermore, an administrative system is sick if it is facing an imminent danger of collapse resulting from corruption, ineptitude, nepotism, laxity, mismanagement, maladministration, belligerency, e.t.c. Also, when an organization is losing its focus and grip, it is sick. Finally, a sick organization is the one that has lost its capacity for production and efficiency. The above therefore represents though not all but substantial symptoms of a sick organization which require some kinds of reforms. History clearly reveals that an administrative reform is a universal and periodic phenomenon, (Dwivedi 2001:13)

4. PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORMS IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian state epitomized by various governments and through the three tiers of government (federal, state and local governments) over the years assumes the position of initiator, mover and regulator of socio, economic and political development. It equally took up the challenge of building the socio-economic and administrative structures to sustain the said development (Healey and Robinson 1992, Oyovbaire 1979:). It has also been argued that after independence, the state was faced with rising expectations from the general population and that the expectations were originally fuelled by the political sloganeering of pre-independence politicians and sustained by same even after independence (Balogun, 1995:), moreover, the politicians at independence had a bias for central planning of the economy as well as interventionist tendencies.

The fact however remains that the Nigerian public sector, embodied in various ministries, agencies, establishments

and enterprise of government grew phenomenally within forty years of independence. The growth was partly sustained by the ability of the government to fund public organizations which were being created, dissolved and re-created as the case may be. The ability to fund these organizations rested on the magnitude of oil revenue that accrued to the state and was shared to the three tiers of government.

As the initiator, mover and regulator of economic and socio-political developments, various Nigerian governments, over the years made laws, established commissions, promulgated decree e.t.c all in an attempt to enhance, guide and provide a frame of reference for organizations operating in Nigeria. It is instructive to recall that in the mid 1970s, the then Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) promulgated the indigenization decree. The decree prescribes the types of businesses which were strictly to be owned by Nigerians, those that could be jointly owned by Nigerians and foreigners and those that could be legally owned solely by foreigners. This decree by its existence, affected the ownership and management structure of private sector organizations. Added to this was the gradual opening up of the Nigerian economy which commenced with the structural adjustment programme (SAP), and the import of government concern for advancing private sector operations became clearer.

It is equally instructive to note that between 1972 and 1994 particularly, various governments set up reform commissions to consider such issues as salaries and wages, organization, structure, management, recruitment and conditions of employment among others. See table below for more details on these reforms -:

TABLE 1: PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS IN NIGERIA (1970-1994)

YEAR	BY WHOM	PURPOSE	CHAIRMAN
1970-1971	All governments of the federation	Review of wages and salaries (public services commission)	Chief S.O. Adebo
1972-1974	All governments of the federation	Organisation, structure and management, recruitment and conditions of employee programmes, pensions and super-annuation, regrading of all posts and review of salaries	Chief J. O. Udoji
1976	Federal government of Nigeria	A look into the complaints and extent of implementation of accepted recommendations.	Chief S. Olu falae
1985	All governments of the federation	The structure, staffing and operations of the Nigerian civil service in the mid – 80's and beyond	Prof. Dotun Philips
1987	Federal and state governments of the federation of Nigeria	To work out guidelines for implementation of civil service Reforms as embodied in the Udoji's and Philips's reports	Vice Admiral Patrick Koshoni
1994	All governments of the federation	To review the 1988 civil service reforms.	Chief Allison Ayida

Source: Bagaji, 2002.

These reforms specifically targeted public sector organizations in terms of their structure, management, salaries and wages, recruitment and pension provisions e.t.c. All the above are indications of how governments have attempted to steer and shape the activities of the organizations both in private and public sectors.

Beyond 1994, government has also put various structures and agencies in place to impact not only on the public organizations but also on the private sector organizations. They include the strengthening of the National Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), National Poverty Eradication Programmes (NAPEP). The most encompassing of these was the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). NEEDS have four major objectives namely:

- 1) Wealth creation
- 2) Employment generation
- 3) Poverty reduction and
- 4) Value reorientation

These four objectives are to be driven by four major strategies

A) Reform of government and its institutions through:

- i) Public sector reform (professionalism, restricting, trimming and training).
- ii) Privatization and liberalization
- iii) Service delivery by government agencies
- iv) Eliminating of abuse of government contract through due process
- v) Transparency and anticorruption
- vi) Reform of the tax system

B) Growing the private sector

- i) Diversifying the economy base and reduce the dominance of oil
- ii) Mainstreaming the informal sector and strengthening their linkage to the real sector
- iii) Altering the strategy for industrial development to make it less import dependent..

C) A new value system

- i) Incorporating the sociological dynamics of the society *Not business as usual again
- ii) No hiding place for people who made money through illegal and illegitimate means

D) Implementation of a social charter

Oladijemi (2006) however classified these reforms or change programmes into three, namely Government and institutional reforms, Private sectors reforms and Social charter of human development agenda. Suffice it to say that the perceived role of the Nigerian state made manifest by various governments has impacted on organisations whether public or private.

At the level of the public sector, a certain pattern emerged thus:

- 1) Increase in the number of public sector organizations reflected in terms of their number, size, pervasiveness in all areas of life and the complexity of their operators. According to the

Ayida (1994) report, "as for parastatals located in the presidency, the office of the secretary to the Government of the federation supervised about 40 parastatals and agencies". The results were that there has been duplication of functions, lack of clearly defined line of authority and conflict of roles, among others". Infact, the panel asked 15 parastatals to be transferred to ministries and 3 parastatals to be scrapped.

- 2) Increase in recurrent expenditure relative to capital expenditure in most public sector organizations.
- 3) Conflict of interest of public agencies; where some acted as regulatory agencies of the economy, others acted as participants, initiators and movers of the said development(Umo 2001:97).

In effect, where economic and social developments were concerned, the government became the prosecutor, the judge, the accused and the accuser. This state of affairs seemed to have expanded beyond the reach of the public sector organizations at the expense of the private sector until the economic crisis of the early 1980's which brought forth the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) under the General Ibrahim Babangida regime.

It has been argued that SAP was an indication that Nigeria, and in large measure, the generality of public sector organizations through which various governments had sought to initiate, move and regulate development had failed. Others equally argue that the institution of SAP also signaled a failure on the part of the private sector to mobilize productive resources which the indigenization decree and the trickling effect of government oil revenue expenditure was supposed to enhance (Balogun, 1995:20).

The great diversity and the sheer number and size of public organizations has called forth policy regulatory bodies and documents such as Financial Regulations, Public service Rules, Code of Conduct Bureau etc. The regulations and regulatory bodies are supposed to provide both public sector and private sector organizations with codes which allow the diverse organizations to be integrated and coordinated into effective instruments focused on achieving both organizational goals and purposes of government. Having failed to achieve economic development at expected levels, however, the Structural Adjustment Programme supported by the International Monetary Fund was advocated for, to reduce the size of government in terms of the number and diversity of its public organizations and its interventionism in the economic sphere. This, coupled with the advent of globalization, is modifying the place of government, thus, public organizations in development

The barriers to increased public employee productivity are legion, especially the Nigerian public personnel management approach that has created endless, cumbersome ,inflexible system of position description, job classification, testing, training, promotion, salary administration and disengagement modalities, which in

combination have resulted in what Shafritz et al [2007],quoting Wallace sayre , called a ‘triumph of techniques over purpose’ which generally inhibits management’s ability to reward and punish workers for performance or lack thereof. No wonder it is generally assumed that the productivity rate in the private sector is far more superior than that of the public sector.

5. WHAT IS MANAGERIALISM AND WHY MANAGERIALISM?

Managerialism can be described as the application of business management techniques. It is the application of the techniques of managing a commercial venture to the running of public organizations such as the public service or the Local Government

Managerialism is the reinvigoration of old techniques of administration with a new doctrine or guiding philosophy which seeks new techniques of administrative improvements such as periodic management audits and programme evaluations.

According to Burnham (1941), managerialism takes place when the control of large business moved from the original owners to professional managers, society’s new governing class would not be the traditional possessors of wealth but those who have the professional expertise to manage and to lead those organizations. According to Shafritz, Russell and Borick (2007:311), managerialism seeks to contract out to the private sector as much of the public business as it can.

Beginning in the 1980’s, some developed countries led by Britain and New Zealand embarked on a major overhauling of the public enterprises (PE) sector. In Britain, PE reform was pushed through a comprehensive privatization programme and New Zealand combined privatization and commercialization. But according to Pierre and Peters (2007:302-303) in countries like Belgium, France and Italy, privatization, debureaucratization, customer orientation and decentralization have been striking reform processes. Continuing they said Germany shared a seeming lack of attention for managerial issues and structural reform with other Germanic systems like Austria and Switzerland. Also Luxembourg has shown little sign of far reaching administrative or public sector reforms.

According to Arroba and wedgewood-oppenhein (1994:15-16), it is a truism that the public sector managers faces a very different set of challenges from that of his private sector counterpart. However, the last decade has seen more and more recognition of the similarities rather than the difference between the public and the private sector. Management tools familiar to the private sector are now seen as equally relevant in the public sector-even in government department.

There is an urgent need therefore to refocus the public service from policy towards management , as did British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher when she began her 11year stint in 1979 ,where she tried to force the

bureaucracy to be more responsive to the needs of its customers [citizens].

On the need for reforms, Adamolekun (2007:45), said public enterprises reformers seek to achieve a combination of the following objectives.

- i) To avoid liquidity crises and rising debts
- ii) To restructure and rationalize the public sector in order to remove the dominance of unproductive investment.
- iii) To ensure profitability by avoiding trading losses.
- iv) To prevent public enterprises from being an ever-increasing burden on the government budget and to facilitate them access to the capital market.
- v) To ensure positive reforms on investment in restructured enterprises and improve managerial and operational performance of those enterprises that will remain in the public sector.
- vi) To initiate the gradual process of cession to the private sector of public enterprises that, by the nature of their operations and their socio-economic factors are best performed by the private sector.
- vii) To create a favourable investment climate for both local and foreign investors.
- viii) To provide institutional arrangements and operational guidelines that would ensure that the gains of the reform program are sustained in the future to encourage wider share ownership, especially among the lower income groups.

Modern public managers are expected to be policy entrepreneurs who forcefully develop, argue for, and yet , sell creative solutions to vexing problems. Current thinking calls for the most aggressive actions on the part of administrators to fight the never ending threats of waste, fraud and abuse.

6. DOMESTICATING MANAGERIALISM IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE: A REFLECTION

The thinking is that public organizations are too many, too big and involve themselves in too many areas, including areas where they have no business such as actual production, distribution and marketing of goods and services. It is also said that the number of agencies, their sizes and areas of involvement be rationalized, to release productive energy into the private sector which is seen as having fared better than the public sector in terms of getting value for investments made (Balogun 1995:26). In fact, the economic crisis of the 1980’s could partly be attributed to the size of the public service, the size of its wage bill and recurrent problems of budget deficits and that the weakness of the service was in fact a drag on development effort rather than its mover (Adamolekun, 1997:35-36).

Added to the above is the fact that public service cannot continue to increase ad infinitum. Such an increase may not be sustainable, given the uncertainties and the limitations of oil revenue which had funded the initial

expansion. Thus, public service organizations have been organized, being reorganized or reoriented to consider not just service but the economy and the effectiveness/efficiency associated with the service.

The government is also in the process of retracting the public service, that is public sector organizations from core economic activities, where possible, attempting to limit their operations to purely social service and regulatory functions. At the same time, the government is also calling on private sector organizations seeking profit to invest, make profit but provide goods and services in the quantity, quality and price needed by Nigerians.

The movement of government, and thus public organizations, out of hard core economic activities is evident in the drive to privatize and commercialize many public organizations such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and its subsidiaries, National Electric power Authority etc. Public organizations which are not privatized are considered for commercialization.

There is no gainsaying that inspite of the increasing resources and budget, the Nigerian public service has witnessed over the years, especially between the 1980's to the tail end of the 90's, a declining productivity, declining quality of services, and declining reputation of the public service itself. Managerialism therefore as explained by shafritz et al must 'emerge' and ride, if not to the rescue, then at least into the fray with new tools of programme evaluation and policy analysis, with quantitative precision, which can call into question the efficacy and utility of long standing public programmes. For example, new budgeting techniques from PPBS to zero based budgeting are reputed to enhance the political executives and legislators ability to better see, if not better control, where money was spent.

Privatization can be defined as the relinquishing of ownership and control of public enterprises by the government and these enterprises are to be owned, managed and controlled by the private sector individuals and corporate bodies. The Nigerian experience gives room for enterprises to be fully privatized or partially privatized. Full privatization means total divestment by the government of all its ordinary shareholding in the designated companies; while partial privatization means divestment by the government of part of its ordinary shareholding in the designated enterprises. Commercialization on the other hand means reorganizing public sectors enterprise to make then profit oriented and free from being run on government subvention and intervention.

A Technical committee on privatization and commercialization (TCPC) was out in place by the government and a total of 111 enterprises were stated for privatization- partly or fully. As at now about 85% of the enterprises have been privatized. However, after a clinical appraisal of the privatization and commercialization programme, it became clear that some enterprises would not be privatized in their present form, except at a considerable loss to the government. Such enterprises

include: All sugar companies, All steel mills, all paper and Newsprint manufacturing companies, All petrochemical Enterprises, all fertilizer Manufacturing companies, Nigeria Airways (Bagaji, 2002:130).

For these enterprises, government adopted a new strategy to bring them to a state where they could be privatized. The TCPC declared 11 enterprises unfit for privatization and stepped down four enterprises from privatization to full commercialization. The federal ministries of Agriculture and Transport prior to the establishment of the TCPC had privatized 18 enterprises. The methods of privatization were public offer of shares, private placement of shares, sale of asset by public tender, management buyout add the deferred public offer.

The privatization and commercialization programme of the government impacted positively on the economy. This is because a number of public utilities have already gained their solvency and began to regain/record substantial operational surpluses. The TCPC also generated over N5billion on privatization revenue for the federal government, created a large body of shareholders across different income groups and geo-politically without necessarily creating millionaires at the detriment of the poor masses.

In an effort to gain maximum control of personnel cost, and minimal problems with introducing labour saving technologies managerialism seeks to contract out the private sector as much of the public's business as it can.

The economic benefit can be summarized thus; (Babangida, 1992), drastic reduction of the drain on the public treasury and vastly improved operational efficiency in the allocation of public fund/resources, higher government revenue and the spread of popular capitalism through widespread ownership of share in these enterprises.

The programme has introduced healthy competition among the enterprises (many private televisions and Airlines sprang up and the Nigeria Airways became a spectator rather than a participant. It has instilled a reasonable measure of financial discipline, the floatation of share and debenture of these enterprise has greatly stimulated the growth of the capital market, the "dead woods" mainly old politicians retired and tired civil servants are being replaced by aggressive and result oriented managers; knowledgeable, well experienced and high caliber personnel are occupying the boards, there is also the creation of Shareholders Association to act as pressure group and also create a forum for shareholders to actively participate in the Annual General meetings of the enterprises thereby acting as a watchdog on the Board of Directors.

All the above at least, indicate the following;

- i) Public organizations are being called upon to provide value for money in their activities (there is due process programme now in place in government and also Bureau of public procurement) rather than the earlier concern with

service, no matter the cost. This was known mainly of private sector organizations before.

- ii) Public organizations are being called upon to rationalize both their sizes and their operations; that is to question what their core activities are and to acquire just the right quantity and quality of personnel to undertake that core business instead of employing people before finding work for them to do. Public organizations are rationalizing staff and staff functions at increasing rates.
- iii) Public organizations are also being required to consider their customers as kings (the general public) rather than see the services they provide as favours being done to the public (there is a service delivery project going on by the federal Government called servicom).

The private sector is being given the pride of Place as the engine of development rather than having public sector organizations as competitors and regulators, the competitions is being slowly reduced and regulatory functions increased.

The main point is that for the public sector in Nigeria, the mechanistic rule and routine, law and order have reduced and organizations are being called upon to shake itself loose and take cognizance of the fast changing environment occasional mainly by globalization. The private sector organizations in Nigeria, despite their weakness, have been better in adapting to the changing environment. The public sector on the other hand, being large and generally mechanistic with entrenched structures, processes and practices has not been easily adaptable.

From all indications, however, the desire of the current government is that public organizations get leaner, more organic, less mechanistic, more adaptable, effective and economic, modeled along the lines of private sector-profit-making organizations. Today, the public sector in all modern nations are focusing on bringing in the best of private sector ideas, including competitiveness, customer orientation, contracting out, strategic management and so on.

7. IMPEDIMENTS TO THE ADOPTION OF THE APPROACHES

No matter the beauty of the approaches there are limitations. Operators of the new approaches are faced with a lot of obstacles in their desire to use them.

According to Maduabum and Gayya (2004:216), whether all we have outlined above happens or not depends on the will, commitment and strength of the political leadership, the support and understanding of the general populace and the resources that are brought to bear in effecting these changes. In the words of Shafritz, Russel and Borick (2007:354-355) management concepts, largely developed in the private sector, are now applied daily in public sector organizations. But how they are applied is heavily

influenced by organizational role, size and structure-and by the political environment.

According to Farnham and Horton (1996:17-18), there are limitations imposed by overall resource decisions and policy boundaries made by politicians. They said there is evidence of some considerable convergence between managing public and private organizations since the early 1980's. This has been described as the "new managerialism" or the new public management. Many private management techniques are now duly used in the public service and the language and practice of business are becoming common to the public sector. Public managers are now being trained along side private managers and are expected to demonstrate the same competencies as their private counterparts. However, their managerial role is still limited by overall resource decisions and policy boundaries made by politicians.

Lastly, policy reversal on the part of the government is another limitation. According to Adamolekun (2002:46-48), varying combinations of these reform measures are currently being implemented in most countries. Only a few countries have moved vigorously with privatization (Ghana, Uganda and Zambia) but in Kenya and Nigeria, it is characterized by periodic policy reversals.

8. CONCLUSION

Public sector management has remained one of Nigeria's greatest challenges of all time, majorly as a result of the public sectors lack of innovation, over adherence to obsolete management style/techniques and the absence of purposeful reforms and rigorous/sincere implementation of the same.

This ugly trend has in the last three decades engendered a critical rethink of public sector management. This disposition gingered a paradigm shift that meant the adoption of private sector principles in the management of public affairs. Its result have been quiet encouraging but not without some impediments. Privatization and commercialization of some public enterprises has taken some financial burdens off the government while empowering the enterprises to be more prudent and profit oriented thereby creating more jobs and addressing the problems of unemployment which continues to skyrocket, disfiguring the face of public governance in Nigeria.

As laudable and viable as the idea of managerialism in the public sector is, its full application to public sector management in Nigeria continues to be impeded by certain factors like the lack of the required political will to see it through to full implementation, the lack of resources needed to enshrine managerialism in public governance, public hostility to new innovations as a result of ignorance, bad faith or vested interests, and Nigerian's highly unpredictable policy environment, where policies are made and reversed at the will and instance of men in political leadership.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are imperative paradigm shifts that cannot be overlooked if managerialism would make the needed impact on public sector management in Nigeria.

First, an extensive purposeful and vigorous public sensitization should be carried out on the importance of managerialism to public sector management, to garner public support for all such exercises.

It is also important for the government to demonstrate political will for its adoption by making funds available and as at when due, to facilitate the process of pay off. Where necessary, there should be training /retraining, and other such activities.

Similarly, government should pursue policies with some consistency, to avoid wastage and the truncating of good ideas and processes. Public sector reforms should therefore be pursued to its logical conclusions irrespective of the government or political party in power.

Furthermore, the implementation of managerialism in public sector management should be phased, prioritized and sequenced, so that the government does not take more than it can effectively handle per time.

Lastly the curriculum for teaching public administration should be significantly drawn up in the light of contemporary realities that allows for public governance to adopt market principles to ensure efficiency and effectiveness

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