

**APPLICATION OF NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT (NPM) IN THE
SERVICE DELIVERY OF NIGERIA CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM:
PERILS AND PROSPECTS**

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ABSTRACT

One issue that has become central in the political economy of any Nation in this 21st century is the reduction in the cost of governance through improved result-oriented civil service. The general acceptance that if the core management variables are imported in the modus operandi of the civil service will bring improved performance and efficiency in the service delivery is incontrovertible. The paper examines how New Public Management (NPM) becomes a viable option in repositioning and revamping the Civil Service. The paper adopts a content analysis method through the use of secondary data. More so, the theory of principal-Agent theory according to Yamamoto (2003) is used as a platform for the arguments put forward in the paper. The paper reveals that the adoption of the NPM in some emerging economies like Malaysia, Ghana, South Africa was a success but the same cannot be said in Nigeria due to parochial and attitude towards change on the side of the civil servants. In addition to the pitfall of New public Management was the marketization of public services has also created some challenges especially to the poor people who cannot afford high charges by private companies which claim serve people rather generate profits. The research recommends among others that the political will and commitment of the government and public servants is a recipe for a successful operation of the New Public Management. It concludes that New Public Management is the sine qua non for any civil service that wants to be effective in service delivery.

Keywords: New Public Management (NPM), Service Delivery, Civil service System, Perils and Prospects

1.0 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The quest to reinvent government emerged as a dominant reform initiative in the United States during the 1990s. Reinvention made its way into the agenda of many governments through the work of Osborne & Gaebler (1992), while the use of the term "reinvention" faded with the onset of the new century, the basic maxims of this initiative continue to dominate discussions of administrative reform and underpin the concept of the New Public Management (NPM) (Ricucci &Thompson 2007).

In contemporary terms, management is simply the expanded version of seeking the best combinations of variables to achieve the desired results. The lexicon that differentiates the new order from the old one: is "Administration". While the administration is the ability to harness both human and material resources to achieve the organizational objective (Adebayo, 2001), Nwachukwu (2009) sees management as a process demanding the performance of a specific function. Public Management is, therefore, the application of market forces and business practices to the management of government activities. Behind the current rhetoric of re-inventing, re-engineering or redesigning governance, the main agenda of most governments, international agencies and experts have been to structure the public sector in favour of local and foreign business interests favoured by a new generation of market-based biased politicians (Dibie, 2014).

One of the most influential factors that triggered the emergence of New Public management System (NPMS) has been traced to the historical paradigm shift in state ideology in the 1980s in advanced capitalist nations toward a neo-liberal market framework, which rejects the welfare state, rejects large public sector, doubts government capacity, blames public bureaucracy and believes in the private sector-driven economy (Nazrul, Kabir & Ashaduzzaman 2012).

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 the government to adopt the NPM 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 (Pffiffer, 2004). The New Public Management (NPM) approach has been of immense success in the Western countries and some of the emerging economies such as Malaysia, Brazil and South Africa that has adopted the model has credited it. The system has since begun to gradually find its legitimacy in some developing nations like Nigeria.

1.1 Statements of Problems

The new public management system has been practised in developed and some of developing countries have indeed added values to the responsibilities and duties of government. The saying that no nation can develop more than its civil service is incontrovertible, the civil service is the instrument through which a government can be made or marred. The Nigeria civil service has witnessed a number of reforms in order to make it more result-oriented. But it appears all efforts by the government towards revamping of civil service has not yielded the desired result. The success of the new public management system in other climes cannot be said of Nigeria. What then are the stumbling block that will not make such a laudable initiative work in Nigeria could the government officials who always want the status quo to remain to be responsible or is the public not be supportive of the system? It is this question that the paper seeks to address.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to examine the adoption of the New Public Management (NPM) into the modus operandi of the Nigeria civil service which is to serve as a panacea to enhancing socio-economic and technological advancement in the country.

Research Questions

1. How fared the New Public Management in the Nigeria Public Sector (Civil Service)?
2. What are challenges or stumbling block to the practices?
3. What are the possible solutions?

Significance of the study

1. Reorient the public sector in Nigeria to embrace the practices, so as to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness in the administration of the public service.
2. It will serve as an eye-opener to the strategic means of achieving ends through means and the use of people.
3. Serve as a source of references for further studies and research on similar issues as it affects the achievement of goals of any given organization.

1.3 Theoretical framework

The Principal-Agent theory which is also described as agencification, in the submission of Yamamoto (2003) explains a reform method within the government which is designed to create, within the public sector, autonomous or semi-autonomous organisations in which the implementation function is separated from the policy-making function'. In other words, agencification is the separation of the provider and User of public goods. Basically, the recipients of public services are the government (which usually also provides them) and the public. The intention of agencification is to demarcate the two roles. This is done by creating a contractual relationship between the two parties, the principal and the agent. The principal is the party requiring service or goods, and the agent. is the party supplying the service or goods. The . principal pays the agent. The agent is expected (or is assumed) to have the expertise and to be able, hopefully, to provide the service at a price lower than it would cost if the principal were to provide it personally. In the public sector, the government- at any level- becomes the principal contracting to buy public services from the agent. The agent could be an external body or a semi-autonomous organ that is part of the public sector. Yamamoto (2003) says that in Britain, the Thatcher government out of fear of the reaction of labour unions, retained the agencies as part of the government: whereas in Japan, Independent Administration Institutions were established to execute the policies. Most often, anyway, it is a combination of the two options. The relationship between the principal and the agent is usually rooted in a contract. Such a contract could be implicit, obligational or relational, depending on how much mutual trust exists between the parties (Boston et al, 1996). The aim of the principal-agent theory would thus be to provide an intellectual and legal. framework for working out 'the most satisfactory way of negotiating, specifying, and monitoring contracts so as to minimize the likelihood of violations resulting from opportunism on the part of the agent (e.g. due to shirking, deception, cheating and collusion)' (Boston et al, 1996, p. 18). As is the usual nature of contractual relationships, rewards accrue to the agent, but there may also be penalties for breach of contract. Since the principal may not have all the

information necessary to make the best selection, safeguards may be taken in the form of bonding or the stipulation of penalties for non-performance.

1.4 Methodology

Data was gathered from text books, articles, magazines, internet materials, Newspapers as well as published and unpublished writings, (secondary source), while the content analysis (qualitative) which is a method for summarizing any form of content by counting various aspects of the content was employed. This enables a more objective evaluation than comparing content based on the impressions of a reader/listener.

1.5 Research design

The research employed descriptive research design which helps to provide answers to the questions of who, What, when, where and how associated with a particular research problem. The research seeks to analyse the practice of New Public Management in Nigeria, its challenges and solutions.

The research was designed so as to gain understanding of the problem, its origin, applications elsewhere and also its application in Nigeria, the effect, challenges and solutions.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Review of Related Literature

The concept of New Public Management (NPM) has found its place in the lexicon of public administration and is fast gaining prominence. In a fused society like Nigeria that is functionally diffused, particularistic, descriptive, insensitive to market forces and poor pricing among others, such a situation will make the system a worthwhile venture if well pursued. The term has been defined by many scholars mid various schools of thought which efforts will be made to examine. Musa (2006) posits that New Public Management is concerned with performance improvement and presumes that a distinct activity "management" can be applied to both the public and private sectors. There are differing interpretations of what NPM consists of. But there is general agreement that key components include deregulation of line management; conversion of civil service departments into free-standing agencies or enterprises; performance-based accountability, particularly through contracts; and competitive mechanisms such as contracting out and internal markets. The term New Public Management encompasses a wide range of perspectives that are intended to overcome the inefficiencies inherent in the traditional. model of public administration.

Robert Behn, in (Pfiffner, 2004) defines the New Public Management as the entire collection of tactics and strategies that seek to enhance the performance of the public sector. The New Public Management is therefore tied to the notion of re-engineering the public sector Of re-inventing of government. The term reinventing is a management philosophy that seeks to revamp the process through which public sector organizations operates. It calls for changes in the structure of public organizations, their culture, management systems and other aspects in support of the new initiatives (Hope &Chikulo, 2000). New Public Management represents a paradigmatic break from the traditional model of public administration (see O'Flynn cited in Doorgapersad, 2011). New Public Management 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 Management which is hinged on efficiency, effectiveness and performance has given much impetus to the template and character of civil service operations. According to Omoyefa (Fatile & Adejuwon, 2010), civil service reforms were:

Initiated against the background that government required a departure from the 'traditional method of administration and the urgent need for a renewed public sector to propel the government to its quest for sustainable socio-economic, political and technological development. So, there was a need for structured re-engineering of the public sector with the intention of new values of professionalism, accountability, responsiveness and a focused sense of mission for maximum efficiency in the economy.

Following from the above, it can be deduced that reform such as the injection of the NPM is therefore to achieve better delivery of basic public goods and services that affect the living standard of the poor and to also make the state or government institutional mechanism pro-market, right-sized, decentralized, managerial and customer friendly. Adamolekun (2002), states that the civil service is commonly used as the synonym of the machinery of the government, this is so in Britain and most commonwealth countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the British conception, the civil service refers to the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the decision-makers. The civil service according to the 1999 constitution as amended, section 318 subsections 1 is:

Service of the Federation (state) in a civil capacity, the staff of the office of the President, (Governor), the vice President, (Deputy 'Governor}, a ministry or department of the Federation (State), assigned with the responsibility for any business of the government of the federation (state), (FRN, 2009).

The term civil service is normally used when referring to the body of men and women employed in a civil capacity and non-political career basis by the Federal and State Governments primarily to render and faithfully give effect to their decisions and implementation (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011).

2.2 The Emergence of the New Public Management

The historical shift in state ideologies in the late 1970s in advanced Nations towards a Neo-liberal framework was one of the most influential factors leading to the emergence of New Public Management. This model discouraged welfare state practice, opposes public sector championing the economy, blames public bureaucracy. This ideological transition takes place in major western countries especially Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the United States of America irrespective of the difference in their forms of government and political leaning. At the micro-management level, the neo-liberal nomenclature of New Public Management is reflected in its Neo-managerial administrative setup based on organizational principles, leadership styles and corporate experience borrowed from the business sector (Dibie, 2014).

Originating from the United Kingdom, and the United States NPM model has been embraced by developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America as well as the transitional societies in Eastern Europe such as Ukraine, Serbia etc. The main components of the New Public Management include the principle of market competition, business management, customer orientation (clientele) and value for money can be observed in these countries and regions (Gelas, 2014).

In some developing countries, the New Public Management model has not only taken root in relatively advanced economies in Asia and Latin America but also in African countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria etc. However, scholars such as Pfiffner (2005), Polidano (1999) have argued that in the last two decades NPM has assumed the status of a global model of public sector reform. The rationale behind the emergence of New Public Management cannot be far fetched. The most common explanation that can be offered for adopting the approach is the weakness or failure of the traditional state bureaucracy, especially in term of its unmanageable size, managerial inefficiency, public inaccessibility, corruption and self-serving agenda. Nevertheless, these allegations against state bureaucracy were always there in the past but it was not as intense as it is in today. The new order is to reduce the scope and role of public bureaucracy transfer resources and services from the public to the private sector and to restructure the public sector in the image of business management because it is undisputed that the private sector looks more competitive, productive, efficient, innovative, responsive (Dahida & Ahmed, 2013).

In the words of Dibia (2014), the New Public Management arises from a critique of traditional public administration. This is borne out of the inflexibility of the system and its emphasis on control. This is very pervasive in Africa and other developing nations, where politics and administration are inseparable. Most of the public institutions are subjected to strong political control thereby by making it possible for the government to meet the needs of the citizens. But with new public management, it will usher that platform for public sector operators to take initiatives and express themselves without overbearing government intervention, making public bureaucracies becoming strong without necessarily being big, increasingly proactive than being reactive, tasked to mobilize scarce resources for achieving more with less (Efficiency) and relied upon to provide services that are faster, more responsive and caring.

2.3 Relevance and Applicability of the New-Public Management Approach in civil service

According to Dahidu & Ahmed (2013) and Dibia (2014), they outlined certain variables and the ways New Public Management operates as distinct from the old model of public administration to include;

Reorganization: The New Public Management system involves the reorganization of the public sector with a view to improving information and control. The reorganization includes explicit standards, performance and performance indicators and has a strong emphasis on controlling and measuring performance.

Competition: It involves concerted effort to increase competition within the public sector or through direct competition between public and private service providers. One of the aims of

NPM is to eliminate monopolistic tendencies and allow market forces to determine prices of goods and services.

Incentive-Based Management: This requires adopting personnel management techniques from the private sector. It also involves moving from rigid pay-scale to performance-related pay. Such action should preclude the trade union influence.

Decentralized Decision Making: One major argument of NPM is that centralization is a costly clue to loss of flexibility. It promotes red tapes, rigidity and hampers effectiveness clue 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.

Public Reporting: NPM emphasizes accountability and transparency as a 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 seems to initiate 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.

2.4 New Public Management in Nigeria; Echoes of the Civil Service

One critical case for the origin of New Public Management in the western, metropolitan world, in Britain for example, it emerged out of the administrations of Margaret Thatcher mid-Ronald Reagan in the United States of America (USA) of the 1980s which initiated the privatization of public enterprises. In the Nigerian case, this critical reform to be ill tandem with the modern concept of new public management garnered momentous ground in 1988 with the government setting up the Technical Committee on Privatization and Commercialization (TCPC) via Decree No. 25 of 1988. The committee was inaugurated in July 1988. One of the cardinal objectives was to adjusting the capital restructuring needs of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) to be privatized or commercialized under the Act, in order to ensure good reception in the stock exchange market for those to be privatized as well as to facilitate good management and independent access to the capital markets. The above objective of privatization and commercialization policy clearly depicts the beginning of the implementation of some tenets of New Public Management which talked about contracting government enterprises to private hands for efficient and prudent management (Ibi etan, 2013).

The return to democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999 ushered in the radical implementation of the New Public Management principles in public sector organization. For instance, rationalization and restructuring the civil service for efficient and effective service delivery becomes a rallying point. Linking up to and accepting globalization, transfer of new administrative thinking, new or modern technology in managing the new order ill public sector administration. These include the introduction of Information Communication

Technology and e-governance. Today, the Nigerian state has embraced the new public management and is trying to capture a stronghold in discouraging wasteful management, cost reduction in governance, budget implementation tie to specific goals, and objectives, or programme of the organization before the money is released. Like the Civil service Performance Improvement Programme (CSPIP) in Ghana and the Panel on Administrative Improvement in Malaysia, the Obasanjo led administration set up a special body to handle the affairs on the improvement of the public/civil service in the country. The Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPRS) came into being as a novel idea due to the need for a stable institutional platform which would drive and sustain the reform programmes (New Public Management) in the Nigerian public sector (Seidu, 2010).

The Bureau of Public Service Reforms (EPRS) as an institution or agency according to Seidu (2010) is the first of its kind in the history of public service reforms in Nigeria. The BPRS is situated in the presidency and it has been described as the "engine room and coordinator of sectoral reform", it is also regarded as the central reform management institution. The major reform goal of the Bureau of Public Service Reforms in the development and proposed implementation of the national strategy on public service reforms" which is towards the transformation of the public service into a world-class status by the year 2020.

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 Management, 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 NPM 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).

2.5 The Pitfall of the New Public Management in Nigeria

The importance and how the New Public Management has turned around the fortunes of developed and emerging economies is no longer news. However, in Nigeria, it seems we have not yet embraced in totality this new concept. This is because; our administrative system still looks more of a traditional administration than the modern one that accepts the new public management principles. In Nigeria, the public sector organizations are actually in the state of paradox i.e. accepting the New Public Management or continuing with our traditional-cultural based administration (Onah, 2005). It is commonsensical, that the new public management is a good concept but in the Nigerian context one cannot guarantee its corporate existence and implementation because of the following reasons;

According to the submission of Promberger & Ruaskala (2003), most African governments decided to adopt NPM with high expectation of enormous improvements, but this has not been a case. For example, privatization policy has brought flexible labour relations, civil service reform caused retrenchments, and outsourcing as well has led to unstable work pay and job insecurity.

In addition marketization of public services has also created some challenges especially to the poor people who cannot afford high charges of services charged by the private companies or public organizations operating in business-like which are not really to serve people rather generate profits.

Moreover, improving performance as one of the New Public Management targets is still a challenge as well for most African governments such as Nigeria. According to NPM, it is important to link promotions of civil servants to their performances but this has not been in that way chiefly because of the immeasurability and intangibility of its services. All agencies are supposed to be managed based on results and not on input and process, but this has not been the case. Nigeria has continued to manage her agencies more on traditional Weberian model rather than the New Public Management model which emphasizes on creation of performance-based accountability while dismantling traditional financial and personnel control systems. Eventually, performance is not paid particular attention rather is more like embracing traditional bureaucracy and deliberately putting aside NPM reforms (Olaoye-Osinkolu, D. (2013). In addition, the lack of a political will has contributed to the failure of the NPM reforms in Nigeria. If at all politicians would be serious and decide to pay particular attention to the implementation of these reforms perhaps things would be different. Politicians can have the intention to keep or strengthen their power and control by consciously using the reform wave instrumentally or symbolically, or both (Kajimbwa, 2013). However, the reluctance of central governments to decentralize both financial and human resource management to the lower levels is also a failure to implement NPM reforms.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The major driving force behind the adoption of the new public management was the fact that the socio-economic situation of many developing countries was on the precipice. It is no longer news that the economic stagnation is seen in huge national and sub-national debts, the balance of payment problems, high rates of unemployment, 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 and lack of effective economic policies. In order to relieve this old mantra, came the intellectual thinking on how public services should be organised and delivered. This was probably because the populace in various countries was now better educated and more sophisticated in their thinking, tastes and demands. If only one element is to be pointed out as characterising the NPM, it would be marketisation. The administration of public services was now benchmarked against private business, power should be exercised by those who give the service; the consumer should have a choice; the reason to exist should be determined by how well the organisation performs; there should be measures of performance and public accountability. The recent declaration of the Treasury Single Account by the government is one of the ways to promote the new public management agenda which will make the civil service to be more honourable in its area of financial transactions.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

There is an urgent need for developing countries such as Nigeria to adopt civil Service performance-improvement programmes such as the New Public Management to enhancing good governance that will engender economic growth and sustainable development. These

include the provision of improved education, infrastructural and health care facilities. For the New Public Management 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 NPM, unlike the traditional public administration, is driven by market forces which see the public as a client rather than citizens.

The spate of corruption which has hindered a lot of policies should be reordered. This is coming on the heels of the poor implementation of some people-friendly policies such as the monetization of fringe benefits which was introduced in 2003 with a view to reducing the cost of governance by monetizing the gale fringe benefits accorded the army of public servants in the country. More synergy between the public and private sector in the formulation and implementation of government policies is important for proper management of state resources. Another critical area is the legal framework to ensure that policies are implemented and anything short of the standard should be sanctioned according to the provisions of the law.

Reforms in the 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 the reform process.

However, the only challenge is to identify the suitable grounds for public sector reforms in relation to the context of a respective location where the reforms are to be carried out. NPM is taking a lead in reforming public sector at every corner of the world, although it has shown some successes in other climes to some other parts of the global community like Africa, the story may be different due to incompatibility existing in local structures such as administrative cultures and development setups.

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