

Public sector governance and service delivery in Nigeria: Issues and challenges

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Abstract:

This paper explores the propensity of the Nigerian public service to adequately manage public affairs. The paper focuses on the significance of public service delivery to the citizens in a manner that will enhance or improve service delivery to the generality of the masses, in a civilian administration in Nigeria. The paper uncovered that government reform introduced to improve service delivery have not been yielding any positive result. Why this persistence failure is as a result of reform of public service delivery called SERVICOM to achieve its objectives. This is can be traceable to lack of political will on the part of government and the governed, therefore, limiting its operations. The paper advocates that SERVICOM should gained a wide publicity, proper coordination, given it a "legal backing" to make it efficient and effective.

Key words: service delivery, servicom, military regime, public service reform, civilian administration

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the public service of any country, be it developing or developed country, serves as an avenue where

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government policies and programmes are articulated. Meaning that it is the machinery through which public policies are formulated and implemented. The primary motive of a public bureaucracy is the concerned with public administration, therefore the management of public affairs rests on it (Oyedele, 2015). However, public service aid in transformation of both social and economic development.

The major problem confronting government of a developing country, Nigeria inclusive is hinged on the ability of the public service to properly improve the welfare of its citizens. This happens as a result of government trying to fulfil her social responsibility by delivery of public goods at a reduce cost, through public service, most especially in this era of economy crisis and globalization. Similarly Woods (2006) in his book titled the globalisers recalled that “IMF, the World Bank, and their borrowers, were presenting globalization as a panacea to the problem of public service delivery in the Third World countries. Again, it was said that they were doing that not out of pure economic motive rather it was politically influenced (p.3). Notwithstanding, the effort of public service of Nigeria collaborating with NGOs in terms of resources utilization and to ensure prompt and quality service delivery had always been worrisome over the years. This persistence increase in number of far-reaching reforms on repositioning the public service and aimed at improving its performance has become a mere dream without actualization since the inception of civilian administration in Nigeria.

At this point, it is pertinent to bring to bear that Nigeria public service is the engine room of government and the most critical instrument of the modern state and its profitability has been put to test by series of governmental policies such as socio-economic, structural and political transformation, reference to the previous leadership in this country. To be factual, during the military regime the country embarked on series of reforms yet the efficient and effective service delivery is challenged

(Anazodo, Okoye and Chukwuemeka, 2012). Again, under this present administration a number of strategies and measures has been put in place to improve the delivery of the services to the people. However, it is not glaring if this effort at reforming the service can translate into a meaningful development. One aspect of the strategies aiming at improving service delivery is **SERVICOM**.

The main trust of this paper is on **SERVICOM** and public service delivery in Nigeria. The first section deals with the significances of Public Service Delivery to the citizens of any country. The second section looked at the public service reforms in Nigeria, considering the military regime and the civilian administration. The third section reviews the state of public service delivery in Nigeria. Lastly, the conclusion.

The Significance of Public Service Delivery

Going by the recent economy situation of Nigeria and other developing countries of the world, the government is under obligation for the maintenance of stability and promotion of economic and social development. More so, Nigerians are faced with high cost of living and other economic conditions that made the citizens to be too demanding, government agencies are been mandated to the realization of this goals. With this, the public service of any country is regarded as the engine room, and life-wire of the state.

Ademolekun (1983) sees civil service as “the body of permanent officials appointed to assists the political executive in formulating and implementing governmental policies.” In the same vain, civil service is an avenue through which government of both the federal, state or local government are administered (Agbodike & Osawe, 2015).

Looking at the public service worldwide the functions cannot be underestimated this includes; Provision of social amenities to the people. A good example of such services is

education, health, supply of water, housing, transport and communications and so on. As stated above, the public service is the veritable instrument of government use for the implementation of both the policies and decisions making of government either in a developed or developing nations. It must be recognized by the ruling authority that the primary motive of government is to deliver prompt service, and efficient and quality services to its citizens at a reduce cost.

The significance of public service delivery to the citizens of any country, and the need to effectively deliver this kind of service cannot be overlooked. That is why the need to access this service by the citizens of a particular country is demanding. Therefore, government is faced with the challenges of providing basic public services to the people as at when due. However, over time the menace of service failure surfaced especially within the developing countries of the world. Nevertheless, this has become the concern of many developing countries of the world, Nigeria inclusive. How to effectively address this challenge, in light of this, it has become the necessity of government of every developing nations to involved citizens participation in decision making on how public services are provided (Oluwu, 2008).

A Comparative Study of Public Service Reforms under the Military Regime and Civilian Administration in Nigeria

Comparing the reforms of public service carried out during the military regime and that of civilian administration in Nigeria. The civilian administration witnessed comprehensive reforms of public service because reforms made were subjected to legislative proceeding of the national assembly and coupled with the directives from the office of the president. Also, within this period a lot of committees were constituted and most of the committee were named after the person that brought them a

good example of such committee Oransaye's and Fike reports and others (Okorie & Stella, 2014).

In military regime, most of the reforms carryout were characterised with the capitalist whose interest is in what they can gain rather than to provide for the citizens. According to Cornelius, Okorie and Sunday (2014) opined that reforms in civilian administration in Nigeria have been influenced by the workers or the representatives. In most cases, the reforms done attract in peace-meal, not without criticism and political interference (Finer, 1941; in Ademolekum 1993; Eme, Innocent & Ugwu 2011). But Debie (2003) and Ademolekum (1993) are of the same view that during the military regime, public service reforms were being described as ineffective and possess low morale, while the civilian administration was characterised by ethnicity and wrong application of the Federal character principle.

More so, from 1999-2009 civilian administration reforms undertaken were passed through the legislative process in reformation. A good example, the first reform with legal proceedings was entrenched in the decree no 43 of April 1st, 1988 under General Ibrahim Babaginda, from 1999 most of the reforms followed the procedure of legislative rule.

Conclusively, reform of civilian administration in Nigeria, is seen from the legality and the rule of law or the constituted authority, where the National Assembly have to legislate on the bill before passing it into law. While in military regime, reforms are carried out without reference to the constitution. The military rules with the decree, authoritative, pronouncement, order, and hierarchy.

The Government Programmes and Service Delivery (1999-2009)

This is a high level commitment on the part of government at reforming the public service in Nigeria. The reform is to

address the problem affecting the management of public service which later metamorphosed into low quality service brought about by prolong military rule. However, on assumption of office to be specific may 29, 1999, the then president in his inaugural speech identified areas of inefficiency in terms of provision of social services to the people inherited from his predecessor, the president speech reads “that Nigeria’s are in fact being “deprived”. “Our public offices have for too long been a showcase for the combined evils of inefficiency and corruption, whilst being impediments to effective implementations of government policies. Nigerians desire better. We will ensure that they get what is better”. Part of the inaugural speech on reforming the public sector are;

- i. Public Service Reforms; public service reform encompassing the implementation of the general staff audit and pay roll clean up; restructuring of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies/Parastatals of government.
- ii. Pay Reform- The reform of pay roll is aimed at improving the public sector governance most especially in the area of wage increment from N 2,500 per month to N5, 500 per month taking effect from 1st May, 2000.
- iii. Restructuring of ministries, departments, and agencies MDAs- The restructuring of MDAs and Parastatals is one of the major policy of civil service reforms because it emphasized on reorganization of MDAs for improved service delivery. (El Rufai, 2011).

Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS). IPPIS came into existence after the discovering of 20% of the civil service staff as ghost workers, by the Minister of Federal capital territory (FCT). El- Rufai, disclosing this abnormally at the Federal executive council and FEC approved the commencement of IPPIS within the MDAs. This to serve as an

alternating measure where a computerised and biometric database would be capture during the headcount exercise as a way of eliminating payroll fraud (El-Rufai, 2011).

Monetization of Fringe Benefit: Monetization is one of the crucial factor in reform of civil service that enable the government to know the cost of running and maintenance of government positions. However, in 2002, the new monetization policy was enacted and it is was implicitly stated that monetization of workers' salaries and other benefits of federal civil servants that were initially paid in kids be converted to cash by the salary and wage commission (Stephen, 2011).

Pension Reform: In 2004, General Olusegun Obansajo regime introduced a law to privatized pension administration in Nigeria through the pension Act 2004. The national pension commission (PENCOM) was established as a body to monitor and control the activities of 25 registered pension fund administrators. However, the pension reform aimed at reducing the problems associated with the scheme. It is a contributory scheme funded by both the employer and the employee.

Anti- Corruption: This is a fight against corrupt practices on the part of public officials that led to establishment of Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and other measures to checkmate the activities of public officials in respect of management of finance. Going by the monthly publication of SERVICOM, and government reacting to poor quality of service delivery and coupled with the inefficiency and the corrupt tendencies of public officials which serve as a cog to the wheel of effective implementation of government policy, government has shown a concern by coming out with the following measures; sorting people's views and experience of service, designing a programme for service delivery, and creating an institutional environment for service delivery.

Understanding the term Servicom

SERVICOM: Talks about public service delivery, which is the focus of this paper. This service delivery reform originated from British Government through a body called the Department for International Development (DFID) in Britain to the federal Government of Nigeria (Olaopa, 2008). However, the origin of SERVICOM in Nigerian Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Parastatals. This can be traced to Kuru conference held in February 2001 in Accra Ghana. The conference marked the beginning of SERVICOM orientation and awareness among Nigerians. Referenced to the paper delivered by Abdullah (2008) quoting Ad'Obe's speech the SERVICOM national coordinator "no reform by the government would succeed unless it brings about improved service delivery in a specific aspect of the life of the people. "Therefore, whatever reform embarked upon, service delivery is both the subject and the object of the reform. Therefore, SERVICOM is the mother of all reforms" (p.11).

Notwithstanding, SERVICOM reform process started in June 2003, at the swearing in of the new elected National Assembly members. President Obansajo drew attention of the people to the poor quality of civil service delivery in Nigeria, declaring that Nigeria's are in fact being "deprived". "Our public offices have for too long been a showcase for the combined evils of inefficiency and corruption, whilst being impediments to effective implementations of government policies. Nigerians desire better. We will ensure that they get what is better" (p.11).

More so, the actual SERVICOM with all Nigerians was officially launched in Abuja on the 21st march 2004, in collaboration with the special presidential retreat on service delivery. SERVICOM is embedded in Government service initiatives. For MDAs to be efficient and effective in their day-to-day administration.

The Objectives of Servicom

The major objective of SERVICOM is to meet the challenge of service failure nationwide. However, as the engine room of government service delivery initiatives was to:

Make the MDAs more customer focused in their service delivery procedures and processes;

Create public awareness in terms of the damage effects of service failure to the Nigerian society;

Instigate the general public of the need to recognize and challenge service failure as their civic right as well as their civic responsibility.

SERVICOM is all about provision of service to citizens which is their entitlement. Its implementation has involved series of training and re-training, workshops/seminars, and retreats for senior officers in public service in order to create awareness in this category of staff to the new orientation for the civil service.

In a nut shell, SERVICOM has provides opportunities for the civil service and the public servants in the following categories. (i) It is an opportunity for public servants in Nigeria to become customers friendly. (ii) Since the general public has been aware of their right to insist on quality service, and complain where necessary, public servants will be conscious of public rating especially as it has to do with their performance. (iii) It create room for restructuring and repositioning the public service for effective service delivery.

Assessment of Nigeria's Public Service Delivery

Looking at public service delivery in Nigeria, record in the past have shown that it is a wasteless effort, especially in the area of management of public enterprises. A good example are; NIPOST, NNPC, NRC, NITEL, and Power Holding Company and so on (Okon, 2008). In the same vain Emeh (2012) observed

that public enterprise have several problems which affect the quality of their goods and services they rendered. In fact, most of them cannot compete with their private counterpart who are in the same line of business. And are such affect their performance level.

Another striking issue, is the view of Anyadike (2013) that since the public enterprise are governed by government they are not exempted from political interference such as employing the candidate that is not qualified to do the job of the enterprise, even carryout project that have no value to the organization, and donating money to political party in power and other purpose, such political interference from the officials of government affect the efficiency of the organization and the overall service delivery to the people. Nevertheless, the Nigeria civil service have been criticized for impartiality, indiscipline, transparency, accountability, loyalty, integrity, professionalism, and so on (Magbedelo,2016).

Following the observable weaknesses of the entire public service in Nigeria, several numbers of public service reforms were introduced start from the colonial, post-colonial or military regimes to the present civilian administration. In assessing the public service delivery of Nigeria, the focus of this paper is on the reformation of the civil service under the civilian administration. However, the SERVICOM reform is a programme designed for the disposition of the Nigerians citizens in terms service delivery and asserted on the client's perspective but its success in transformation of citizen's lives is in jeopardy.

Challenges of Servicom

It is glaring that SERVICOM itself is not devoid of challenges, although the idea of SERVICOM was a welcome development as a way of making the civil service to be efficient and effective and be commitment to serving the people. However, one of the

major obstacle to its success is the issue of implementation, this boiled down to lack of public awareness. They should be massive mobilization and sensitization of the people on the need to demand for quality service, and to be served better. SERVICOM provides opportunities of the right of the citizens to be served in an on timely manner but such opportunity was not known to the citizens. Today, majority of Nigerians citizens in both ministries, departments, and agencies do not even know the message of SERVICOM. This is because SERVICOM is limited in scope. Again, while the citizens do not know is due to the fact that SERVICOM do not spread to all tiers of government instead to ministries, departments, agencies, and parastatals. This has cumulated to the reason why quality service implementation cannot be demanded by the citizens.

More so, SERVICOM programme is been delayed due to lack of continuity and budget implementation. Notwithstanding, the programmes requires close monitoring and supervision of Ministries, departments, and agencies, and parastatals, and people should make sure that they are served rightly as it their right to be served right. Also, the body concerned do not receive their allocation on time.

Another area of challenges of reforms is effective implementation of SERVICOM programme, low level of compliance with rules and regulations guiding service delivery reform, the public servants even though they do not act according to the lay down rules hardly they go on punishment. To be factual, there are no laws to enforce its workability and prosecution of an official that fails to comply with SERVICOM charter.

At this juncture, it will be interesting to note that SERVICOM was not established by any laws that include punishment of the offender, making the reform to remain inefficient and ineffective. To this extend this national issue has not been properly addressed since the inception of the civilian administration in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

This paper explored the significance of public service delivery to the Nigerian citizens. The paper found that public service delivery has not been translated into a meaningful development during the long term of military ruled in Nigeria. In order to address this menace, the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo initiated a reform programme among others service delivery or SERVICOM reform with the mandate of “service compact with all Nigerians”.

Again, as mentioned earlier, the good intention of the SERVICOM reform effort has been thwarted as the service delivery is ineffective and inefficient. In fact, the mandate of the service delivery reform was to serve as the strategy for monitoring government policies and programme, and its implementation within the arms of government has remained a mere dream. This issue could be attributed to constraints of implementation of the reform. Apart from SERVICOM reform, some reforms are still facing problem of continuity and are such required a proactive approach on the part of government for them to realize their core objectives. The critics of reforms implementation has attested that reform has strong political will but still suffered inconsistency and sabotage (Olaopa, 2008). Be it as it is, recommendations suggested that, for reform to be effective the government in power must ensure continuity in our reform process by following the SERVICOM charter, principles and objectives to the later.

Meanwhile, government should make sure that SERVICOM reform should be implemented in order to make it effective. Civil servants who violate the rules and regulations of SERVICOM should be punished accordingly. As a matter of urgent the National Assembly should enact law in this regard that will punish the violators of rules and regulations guiding service delivery reform or SERVICOM.

More importantly, for government to react to the issue of implementation of service delivery reform, the citizens who are the direct beneficiary of this programme must be begging to demand for quality service. Measures should be taken to ensure that the interest group or pressure group are involved in the formulation and implementation of the policies and programme of service delivery (Ademolekun, 2002).

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