

INNOVATIVE ADMINISTRATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY FOR SUSTAINABLE CIVIL SERVICE IN NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

Every government relies on its civil service for effective and efficient formulation and implementation of governmental policies/programmes. No nation can advance administratively and otherwise beyond the innovative capacity of its civil service who serves as the engine room. The absence of effective innovation hinders sustainability, effective and efficient service delivery in the civil service. The level of service delivery is a function of the innovative capability of the civil service. Innovation therefore remains very vital for the sustainability of the civil service. The focus of this paper is to assess how innovative administration has impacted on service delivery for sustainable civil service in Nigeria. Modernisation theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. The paper is qualitative in nature, relying on secondary sources of information. The findings indicate that there are innovative efforts in checking corruption and truancy in the civil service as well as commencement of digitalization processes for effective and efficient and sustainable service delivery. Also, civil servants are not properly rewarded to be innovative. Furthermore, civil servants sometimes find it difficult to adapt to changes occasioned by innovative ideas amongst others. Accordingly, the paper recommends that present digitalization process should be sustained. Also, civil servants should be encouraged and rewarded to be innovative. The introduction of every innovation should be properly communicated to civil servants before they are put to use.

Keywords: *Innovation, Administration, Civil Service, Service delivery, and sustainable.*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world system, innovation in civil/public service has been brought to a front burner and has become a topical issue as no one wants to remain static. There is global focus on innovation. Changes in global markets, increased customer expectations, need of new technologies and process, improving existing products and services, and government pressure, have all led to innovation which is becoming a key focus in the public sector (Obianyo, 2010). In an increasingly competitive global market, innovation has been considered very critical to the advancement of any organization be it private or public. The perception of the people about civil service can only be changed through innovation which will stimulate a more commercial, efficient and effective service delivery. The public sector identifies innovation as an opportunity to establish relationships that will enhance collaboration between various stakeholders from numerous organizations to improve the delivery of public sector goods and services in order to create and achieve public value and it particularly considers the development and implementation of an experimentation with new ideas, services and products into viable, practical and sustainable public service delivery outputs (Nel and Masilela, 2020).

Innovation could be said to be as old as human existence because from inception new things have regularly been introduced in all spheres of human endeavours which further indicates the dynamic nature of man. Without innovation capability, there would be no computers, aeroplanes, high-tech television and wireless technology just to name a few (Awosika, 2014). Innovation in the public sector creates a platform that encourages and exposes the civil servants to new opportunities, strategies through partnership and sharing of experiences and ideas for efficient and effective service delivery. The civil service is one of such systems that have witnessed innovations in various ways all aimed at improving capacities and making it sustainable. These are done through reforms to reposition the service for good service delivery that will enhance the sustainability of the service occasioned by economic situations (internal and external influence), political situations (internal and external), social and cultural considerations, security considerations as well as technological situations as at that time. Public service is one of the major agents of nation building and development. The transformation of any society or system depends on the effectiveness and efficiency of its public service particularly the developing societies (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2014). The challenges and opportunities in recent times require the civil service to embark on open and collaborative innovation for transformation and improvement of the systems and processes for sustainable service delivery.

Nigerian civil service has often been criticized for a number of reasons such as incompetence, corruption, favoritism, truancy, bureaucratic bottlenecks, poor organization and so on, consequently, the civil service have made efforts to be innovative. Accordingly, this paper seeks to examine innovative administration and service delivery for sustainable civil service in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL EXPLICATION

Innovation

Innovation as a concept has been so popularised by individuals, organizations and government all over the world. As a concept, there is no generally acceptable definition of the word, however, simply put, it has a lot to do with new things, new ideas of an individual, organization and even government that improves its services in a changing world. Human being is dynamic in nature as the world is changing on a daily bases, human beings cannot be static. Adjustments to meet the changing ideas and situations are often said to be innovation. Innovation is what we cannot do without because no one or government is static. Innovation has been practiced throughout human history and has become a way of improving human life (Afegbua, 2015). Government around the world advance innovation as a significant mean to improve public service. As a concept, it entails the introduction of new ideas that would enhance achievement of organizational purposes, thereby ensuring growth in the organization (Maduabum, 2014). Innovation seems to be more popular and well developed around the firms. According to Awosika (2014), innovation involves the act of researching, acquiring, introducing and building up new ideas, technologies, processes and products aimed at not just for solving problems, but improving efficiency and effectiveness, and thus enhancing the standard of living. As opined by Osborne and Brown (2005) cited in Afegbua (2015), innovation is about the introduction and adoption of new ideas that produce a change in the existing relationship between an organization and its internal and external environments. To Kanter (1988) cited in Robbins and Judge (2001), innovation is a new idea applied to initiating or improving a product, process or service. In an organization, innovation may be new product, new service, new way of doing things, new relationship that will enhance service delivery. Moreso, innovation is the process in which valuable ideas are transformed into new forms of added value for the organization, customers, employees and stakeholders (Merx-chermin and Nijhof, 2005). In the government circle, innovation brings about change to the governance of public services, by improving their level of accountability and transparency, their performance, or the user involvement and satisfaction level (Walker,

2006). Innovation in public organization seems to be propelled political consideration and ambitions. Innovation is a more specialized kind of change, but not all changes necessarily involve new ideas or lead to significant improvement (Robbins and Judge, 2010). Innovation is not a matter of sheer luck; it requires systematic and rational work, well organised and managed for results.

Reasons for Innovation

According to Wehrich, Cannice and Koontz (2008), they clearly identified the following as the reasons for innovation in an organization be it public or private:

1. An unexpected event, failure, or success
2. An incongruity between what is assumed and what is really is.
3. A process or task that needs improvement
4. Changes in the market or industry structure
5. Changes in demographics
6. Change in meaning or in the way things are perceived
7. Newly acquired knowledge

Sources of Innovation

- (i) Structure of the organization influences the innovation drive of the organization. In a vertical differentiation, formalization and centralization, innovation seems to be lower while organic organization facilitates the flexibility, adoption and cross fertilization of idea which makes innovation easier.
- (ii) Long tenure management: serving an organization for a long time provides legitimacy and knowledge of how to accomplish tasks and obtain desired outcome.
- (iii) Slack in resources: When an organization is face with slack in resources, innovation is nurtured.
- (iv) Inter unit communication: innovation seems to be high in an organization that has high inter-unit commitment (Robbin and Judge, 2001).

Administration

The act of administration is as old as human existence. Also the act of coming together to achieve a common goal is essential human possession (Atairet and Ibang, 2021). The English word “administer” is derived from a combination of two Latin words “ad” and “ministrare” meaning “to serve” or “to manage”. Literally, the term administration means management of affairs-public or

public (Laxmikanth 2009). It involves the effective and efficient utilization of human and material resources to achieve the desired organizational goals. Administration is vital in the family, community, state, nation, international organizations, clubs, religious organizations, association etc. The smooth running of any group or organization is broadly the function of the excellent administration of such a group or organization (Atairet and Ibanga, 2021).

In Ogbochie (2017), administration is the purposeful coming together of a group of people with utmost intention of achieving a set goal through the process of planning, organizing, co-operating, co-coordinating, monitoring, supervising, directing and evaluating. By this definition, for administration to be achieved, there must be deliberate coming together of people with common intended goals that they intend to achieve, by organizing human and material resource and utilizing them for the benefit of the group. Building the pyramids as an administrative achievements as well as a remarkable technical accomplishment by managing the affairs of the Roman Empire with the means then available, organizing national state out of medieval feudalism and creating discipline armies out of an undisciplined crowd of armored knights were as well as political feats, (White, 1955 cited in Okoli and Onah, 2002). It is a rational human activity which is inherent in any organized social life – public or private. It occurs even in such a simple activities as when two men cooperate to roll a stone that neither could have move alone (Polinaidu, 2013). The activities of government are centered on administration. Administration is the most obvious part of the government; it is the government in action, it is the executive, the operative, the most visible side of the government (Wilson 1987 cited in Ogbochie 2017). Administration according to Berley, G. E cited in Polinaidu (2004), must involve:

- (a) People; because without the presence of people there can be no administration
- (b) Action; people have to do something before administration can enter the picture; and
- (c) Interaction; administration is people interacting with other people to accomplish task. From the above, it can be evident that human resource (people) is the centre of administration. Innovative ideas can only come to lime light through proper and well organized administrative system that encourages innovations. For effective innovation, administration plays important roles. As identified by Ogbochie (2017), the following are the importance of administration:
 1. Administration saves cost
 2. It reduces the poverty level of the organizational members

3. It gives direction to the organization as it sets target and works to achieve them
4. It plans and executes
5. It helps in the distribution of functions in the organization to avoid monopoly
6. It gives room for efficiency through the division of labour, where worker are placed properly in their area of specialization
7. It maintain orderliness and equity
8. It provides an organized way of achieving objectives in an organization
9. It co-ordinates resources to reduce waste
10. It encourage healthy competition
11. It curbs unnecessary strife and rivalries among members in the organization
12. It helps in the check and balances in the organization
13. It helps in the realization of a sustainable growth and development of an organization

Service Delivery

Service delivery is the primary concern of any organization that deals with one or more persons. The concern here is not limited to only those in public service; it is also of great importance to the private organization. The growth of any organization directly depends on the quality of service such organization delivers. Effective service deliver rely on the mode and manner members of staff handles the constitutionally assigned functions and responsibilities given to them. As noted by El-Rufai (2006), service delivery is the degree of an organization and/or employee performance, output and productivity in the discharge of their responsibilities within the available time, money and other resources towards the achievement of overall goals of the organization. It involves all aspects that have to do with when, how and where a service is delivered to a customer, and whether it is fair and in line with the laid down procedures. Service components are usually not always physical products, but instead are a combination of resources (skills and material) that must be appropriately planned and designed (Martins and Ledimo, 2015). According to Ikeanyibe and Imhanlahimi, (2006), effective service delivery connotes the formulation, design and implementation of governmental policies, programmes or service to the satisfaction of the clientele. It involves implementation of assigned duties and responsibilities as outlined in the constitution/rules of the organization which one pledged to carryout in other to meet the organizational objectives. Accordingly, the degree to which an organization or employees performs its duties and functions towards achieving set goals determines the spate of service delivery - whether it is efficient or inefficient, effective or

ineffective, economical or not economical, productive or not productive (Ezekwesili, 2010). The public must have some sense of satisfaction in the services so rendered. For the people to be satisfied, the service must reflect courtesy, fairness, timely, equity, relevance, accountability, effective and efficient. It underscores the fact that the services so provided actually reach the target groups and they are satisfied in its mode of operations/implementations. Service delivery is successful implementation of assigned task to the satisfaction of the public/clientele.

Civil Service

The civil service is the engine room of government business and a part of our system of government. Modern government still depends to a great extent on the work of the National Civil Service and their employees (Demmke, 2010). It comprises of the entire body of those employed in the civil administration as distinct from the military and exclusively elected official of the different tier of government in Nigeria. According to Nnadozie (2004), the civil service is conceived as a highly trained, experienced and bureaucratized body of individuals employed in the service of the state in a civil but primarily ministerial capacity. The government depends on the civil service for implementation of its policies and programmes because they are experience and have the know-how. They are a well-organised body of permanent paid officials of government ministries that are solely responsible for implementation of government policies/programmes as prescribe by the constitution. It should be noted that, whatever definition of the civil service, its relevance includes its indispensability as a body that carryout the running of government business. The civil service basic roles and the civil servants are:

- (a) To assist the government in the formation of policies by providing the necessary data.
- (b) To implement the decisions (that is approved policies) without fear or favour.
- (c) To ensure that the wider and more enduring consideration against the exigencies of the moments so that the conveniences of today does not become the embarrassment of tomorrow (Al-Gazali, 2007).

The civil servants are mostly custodian of government data and information and they are expected to act without fear or favour as they discharge their statutory functions. The civil servant must take decisions that are administratively correct and stand by it which sometimes such decisions may not be palatable to the political class that might be in power.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Psychological/Idiosyncratic theory of modernisation as propounded by E. E Hagen (1963) cited in Okereke and Ekpe (2002). According to Hagen, traditional societies are characterized by non-innovating personalities. Hagen further maintained that it is the innovative personalities that initiates and stimulate economic growth. The structure of the traditional society is not oriented towards the production of innovative personality. The traditional society is hierarchical and authoritarian and all its aspects that allow few at the apex that is submissive to authoritarian decision above them and in turn exercises authority on persons below him. For possessing these characteristic, it does not allow the development of creative personalities with high need for achievement, daring and open to new ideas as is the case of developed societies (Okereke and Ekpe, 2002). As a modernization theory that emphasizes on movement from traditional or less developed to developed or modernity to modernized, third world countries must overcome their traditionalism. This theory is appropriate because it truly illustrate the bases why some bureaucrats act the way they do. Nigerian civil service dates back to the colonial era which is finding it almost difficult to adapt to the changing world. The colonial principle is still highly relevant till date. As a civil service, there is need to encourage innovative personality which will enhance the growth and development of the civil service for effective service delivery. Society with high achievement motive is likely to be innovative, demonstrates entrepreneurial drive and hence, high level of economic development (McClelland, 1961 cited in Okereke and Ekpe, 2002).

Administrative Innovation in Nigerian Civil Service

The Nigerian civil service was traditionally structured and tailored towards the British colonial administration which the colonial masters used to report performance of government to their home country. Civil service in most country was based on the traditional system and thus there was need for a paradigm shift. Government around the globe have identified the inherent challenges associated with traditional and outdated public sector organizational designs, hierarchical structures, processes, and functions within government department. Government institutions are often criticized for their bureaucratic practices and methods in terms of service delivery of public goods and services (Nel and Masilels, 2020). The Nigerian civil service was tradition-bound, somewhat ponderous and showing signs of deterioration and several undesirable characteristic of which the following were the most prominent: over-centralisation, incessant conflict between cadres, little emphasis on results and concrete performance, counter-productive, separation of authority from

responsibility, some topmost hierarchy, dangerously low staff morale and productivity, inadequate staff development practices (Awosika, 2014). It is against the above backdrop that innovative ideas for effective and efficient civil service was initiated and encouraged. As an organization, it must foster innovation and master the act of change or they will become candidate for extinction. Victory will go to the organizations that maintain their flexibility, continually improve their quality, and beat their competition to the market place with a constant stream of innovation products and services (Robbin and Judge, 2001). Globally, the world today is highly competitive and as such, civil service cannot be static, it must move along the global trend by being innovative. According to Awosika (2014), innovation in public service refers to conceiving a creative idea and successfully implementing it to solve a pressing public service problem. It can be inform of human resource development and management, service delivery, information and communication technologies, policies, structure, procedures, processes or even in product.

Specifically, in Nigeria, to sustain the civil service and for efficient and effective service delivery, identified corruption as the bane in the service need to be confronted headlong to serve and sustain the civil service. The civil servant assists the politicians to siphon public funds. In fact, it is often said that it is the civil servants who teach the politicians how to steal from the government coffers. To fight corruption in the civil service and in Nigeria public service, some of the following innovative ideas were engaged.

- (i) Establishment of code of conduct bureau where public officers as well as civil servant are expected to declare their assets before and after leaving office.
- (ii) Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)
- (iii) Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offence Commission (ICPC).
- (iv) Bureau of Public Procurement
- (v) Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act 2004
- (vi) Money Laundering Act 1991
- (vii) The Advance Fee Fraud (419) and other fraud related crime Act 1995
- (viii) The Budget Monitoring Price Intelligence Unit

All these and more were innovative ideas aimed at tackling the prevalent case of corruption among the civil servants, public servants and Nigerian citizens. Corruption has been identified as one of the problem in Nigeria civil service and public service. According to Ikejiani – Clark (1995), corruption represents:

Inducement by means of improper considerations to commit a violation of duty: an inducement in kind or cash to secure service or goods from public officials or agencies through illegitimate or unlawful or irregular means.

In the Nigerian civil service, access to information and files in most cases cannot be achieved without inducement. Certain public service rules are most times violated for selfish interest by civil servants which affect sustainable service delivery. The Nigerian government was involved in the running of the Nigerian economy as well as owing businesses and this was pervasive from 1960 till the 1980s and beyond until it came up with innovative ideas of privatization and commercialization of government businesses. The economy before this initiative suffered for so long as a result of over regulated policies of government in the past, private involvement that would have enhanced economic growth was absent. Government businesses were characterized by inefficiency, ineffectiveness and corruption. The innovative administrative idea of privatization serves as a way out of the inability of the public sector to properly managed government business and hence delivers quality goods and services to the people.

In the area of E-governance and E-government, there are a lot of innovative ideas which has improved service delivery for a sustainable civil service. E-governance involves the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) in the act of governance. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Innovation has been very useful for efficient, effective and sustainable service delivery in Nigeria civil service. The introduction has helped in a number of ways to enhance accountability, transparency, accuracy, easy training, networking, online, meeting and so on. Government meetings and information are easily transmitted through internet. ICT innovation has help government to achieve some level of accuracy in its operations and has reduced cost of administration; the level of human error in most government transaction is reduced. Since the coming of ICT, the risk of running government affairs has reduced and the service delivery has improved because of digitalization. Information and communication technology no doubt offer great opportunities for Nigerian and indeed all developing countries vis-à-vis public service delivery, and citizen's satisfaction (Obiageli, Anthony and Chi-Junior, 2020). In this age, many transactions are carried out with high degree of efficiency through the innovative internet revolution. It is almost impossible to see any organization in recent time that has not adopted the use of internet and this has greatly impacted on service delivery.

Another innovative idea in administration for effective service delivery is the introduction of SERVICOM which translate to measuring public bureaucracy

productivity, base on service compact with all Nigerian. The SERVICOM ensures that services are not only provided, but they are of quality. It ensures good leadership and provides a platform to educate the citizen on their rights and so on. SERVICOM was introduced in 2004 to enhance sustainable service delivery.

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) more so is another innovative idea aimed at ensuring service delivery in the Nigerian civil service. This idea involves the collaboration of the private bodies in the act of governance. It is always a kind of partnership venture between the government and the private sector with the aim of delivering quality service to the citizens. Some bureaucratic system and inefficient structures are gradually being phased out in favour of private operations, ownership or both which is perceived to be more efficient (Aransi and Adeyemo, 2012).

Innovation through the New Public Management (NPM) System

Nigeria civil service is fashioned in line with British tradition and innovative idea of following the NPM has positively influenced service delivery in the Nigerian civil service. NPM can be considered as a set of new ideas about the role of government as well as a set of managerial innovation in the public sector (Van de Walle and Hammerschmid, 2011 cited in Afegbua 2015). NPM represent a paradigm shift from the traditional ways and involves the introduction of market mechanisms in the public sector, and also the concept of entrepreneurial system, considers customers or clients' satisfaction as paramount importance. With the awareness of NPM, the primary consideration of the public sector is a good service delivery to the generality of the citizens and the citizens have the responsibility to hold public functionaries and agencies accountable in the event of their blatant negligence or refusal offer quality services to the people. The NPM ideas inspired many reforms aimed at improving public service delivery. In Nigeria, the 1988 civil service reforms have inherent elements of NPM. The reforms brought about professionalism of the civil service. It is also evident that the introduction of National Economic and Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) at the Federal level, State Economic and Empowerment Development Strategies (SEEDS) at the state level and Local Economic and Empowerment Development (LEEDS) at the Local Government level has elements of NPM. The above innovative efforts were to check the undesirable behaviours of the civil servant aimed at improving services delivery for sustainable civil service.

Factors Inhibiting Innovation in Nigerian Civil Service

Political Interference

Despite the usefulness of innovation in Nigerian Civil Service, there are some inhibiting factors that affect innovative ideas in the Nigerian civil service such as political interference in the activities of the civil service which has affected almost every part of the Nigerian civil service as well as innovation in the Nigeria civil service. From the recruitment processes, merits are sometimes relegated to the background giving room to unqualified persons who may not add value to the service to be recruited. Most people recruited are based on political recommendation, even posting to some offices/places within the service is most time base on political interest, as noted by Onwe, Abah and Nwokwu (2015), political heavy weights often take advantages of any recruitment privileges available to sneak in their clientele cum loyalist who might have help them in their political career. Apparently, these persons recruited may not have innovative ideas since they do not have the capacity to function in the position they find themselves. Also, some innovative idea may not be allowed to see the light of the day since considerations seems to be given to political colonies. Political office holder like taking glory, any innovative idea that may not bring glory to them is often overlooked. Innovation has a lot to do with merit, but when meritocracy is relegated innovation suffers.

Bureaucratic bottleneck

Bureaucratic principles also affect innovation in the Nigerian civil service. There is tendency for senior officers to capitalize on the ills of bureaucracy to prevent the implementation of innovative ideas particularly, where such ideas emanate from subordinate civil servants (Maduabum, 2014). Some senior officers may resist directly/indirectly innovative ideas that tend to bring commendation to subordinate staff because every effort made by the subordinate must be reported accordingly through the senior staff. This type of behavior could be likened to what Peter (1997) cited in Awosika (2014) refers to as Bureaupathology which implies negative administrative behaviours of professional and experts in organization which thwart achievement of public goals and delivery of quality public service to consumers. They use their status and position to violate operational basic procedure for their benefit.

Systemic Issues

Also, innovative ideas are not deliberately encouraged by the system. This encouragement could come in terms of recognition of efforts of staff with innovative ideas, and enabling environments are not provided by the government for staff who are innovative. The absence of deliberate innovative

culture in the Nigeria civil service hav affected innovative initiative in the service. This is one of the challenges confronting innovation in Nigerian civil service.

Resistance to change

Resistance to change is also another factor inhibiting innovation in Nigerian civil service. Most civil servants do not want to adapt to the current global trend, they believe in the old method of service delivery which is not relevant in the contemporary world. Also, some bureaucrats resist innovation especially when such innovative idea tends to expose their ineffectiveness in line with global trend.

Lack of funding

Innovation becomes impossible when funds are not available to effectively handle it. Every innovative initiative requires funds to operate as such, when funds are not available, the civil servant will not be encouraged to carry out such innovative initiative since everything depends on funds.

Corruption

Corruption has constituted an unrelenting bane to innovative ideas in the Nigerian civil service. Though, various effort has been put in place to curb corruption in Nigeria which the civil service is part of, this effort seems not to have fully check the cases of corruption amongst the civil servants in Nigeria. Corruption comes in various forms such as during recruitment, posting to preferred places, kick backs, over pricing, contract inflation etc and all these depend on the value of the staff, the value of the society and the value of government that is power with regards to corruption. Innovation will not be encouraged if the right thing is not done. Kick backs undermine innovation and the intending innovators may not be encouraged since the funds may not be used for what it is meant for.

Conclusion

An innovative civil service sector offers quality service delivery and strengthens relations between the citizens and the public. It is obvious that in recent time, government depend on innovation for effective service delivery to meet with the current global trend. Civil service innovation is increasingly being regarded as the fulcrum of service delivery and ensures sustainable civil service through improve performance. The civil service as the engine room in the running of government businesses, however, suffers from well known

problems like, bureau-pathology, corruption, inefficiency, centralization, poor accountability etc, hence, it is innovative initiative that can help solve these teething problems. This paper x-rayed the concept of innovation and its sources, administration, service delivery and the civil service. Also, a critical assessment of administrative innovation in the Nigerian civil service was done. Innovation is critical to civil service ability to effectively response to the social and technological changes in the world.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the findings in this study, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. Civil servants should be encouraged to be innovative by appropriately rewarding every innovative idea.
2. The civil service sectors in Nigeria should embark on open and collaborative innovation within the service for transformation, redefining and improving the system and process for quality service delivery.
3. Innovative output and input should be identified and utilized for the benefit of all.
4. Civil service should set up an agency/department that harnesses various innovative ideas.
5. Every innovation should be properly and adequately communicated and the civil servants should be trained in line with the new idea.

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