



Public Administration, Policy Development and Preponderances of Professional Service Delivery: Rethinking the Strategies for Nigeria

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 06

Issue: 04

July - August 2025

Received: 14-05-2025

Accepted: 15-06-2025

Published: 23-06-2025

Page No: 154-163

Abstract

Myriads of issues today confront public administration globally. From withstanding the excruciating turbulence orchestrated by COVID-19 to the contending disruptive innovations of the 4th industrial revolution, public administration is at crossroads and therefore, cannot feign ignorance of her expected role of thorough professionalism and standing tall amidst these challenges. This study, therefore, x-rayed the contemporary issues, problems and difficulties mitigating effective professional conduct and delivery of public administration in Nigeria amidst the intervening prevalent factors. Methodologically, the qualitative research design was adopted and thematic issues were effectively and intellectually interrogated. The study was anchored on strategic management theory as expounded by David (2005); Mohd Khairuddin Hashim (2005). They drew insights from the profit-maximizing and competition-based theory, resource-based theory, survival-based theory, human resource-based theory, agency theory and contingency theory. The study found among other things that; - policy development across Nigeria's public administration is not driven by research outcomes and thus widens the gap between public policy and professional service delivery. - Incoherence, poor policy communication, poor policy institutionalization and lack of technovation components are factors that impede professionalism in public administration in contemporary times. Finally, it is prescribed that to foster professionalism in public administration in Nigeria, policymakers should do more by inculcating the preponderances relating to policy incoherence, poor policy communication, poor policy institutionalization and apparent lack of technovation.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJMRGE.2025.6.4.154-163>

Keywords: Public Administration, Policy, Development, Service Delivery

1. Introduction

Public Administration is the study of the activities of government. Where governments accept responsibility for development, public administration is the administration of development (Freysen, 1985) ^[12]. It therefore implies that at the heart of public administration is a contingency approach to devise strategic structural and procedural interventions appropriate to the situation by ensuring efficient professional service delivery. Thus, the objectives of this study is to explore public administration with respect to the myriads of issues that has impeded professional service delivery in contemporary times ranging from the

unprecedented predicaments of COVID-19 pandemic and exponential disruptive innovations of the 4th industrial revolution that has seriously challenged mankind and questioned the efficiency of continued usage of human beings in the practice of public administration.

To effectively do this after brief conceptual briefs, a tripartite approach comes in. First approach is the exigency to review the main drivers of changes from Old Public Administration to New Public Management and Public Governance as researches showed that the ascent of governance is a dominant mode in Public Administration (Vignieri, n.d). The second approach investigates the context of policy development with regards to the process of formulation and participatory nature; the third approach deals with the current debate on the logic behind professional service delivery in public service with role of new performance management and finally prescribe strategic options for Nigeria.

2. Conceptual explanations

2.1 Public administration

In the heart of the study of public administration, is the variety and elasticity in its conceptualization however, the following suffices to quench our thirst for definition and serve our purpose in this paper.

Public administration is an aspect of the larger field of administration. It exists in a political system for the accomplishment of the goals and objectives formulated by decision makers (Assalamualaikum, 2017) ^[3]. It is also known as governmental administration because ‘public’ means ‘government’. Hence, the focus of public administration is on public bureaucracy that is bureaucratic organization or administrative organization of the government (Laxmikanth, 2012: 2) ^[29]. Possibly, that was why Woodrow Wilson in his view, expressed that public administration is a holistic system that is responsible for the execution of law and policies in an effort to satisfy the public issues. It is a detailed process of executing public policy issues: maintenance of law and order, provision of basic amenities, and the overall management of governmental objectives. In fact, according to Laxmikanth, (2012: 2-3) ^[29] public administration is a “detailed and systematic execution of law”.

Public administrations refers to the act of making policies (legislative), implementation of decisions (executive), and adjudicating between the executive and legislature in case of conflict (judiciary). The activities of these organs are broadly seen as the act of managing public affairs by the government through several public institutions towards attaining the overall development of society *vis-a-vis* the provision of basic infrastructural facilities, such as food, security, shelter, education, health, roads and job opportunities, and host of others (Assalamualaikum, 2017) ^[3]. Citing Hodgson (1969: 1) in Olaopa (2012:2) ^[36] supported that “public administration comprises all activities of persons or groups in governments or their agencies, whether these organizations are international, regional or local in their scope, to fulfill the purposes of these governments or agencies”. The forgoing implies that public administration is not boundaries and culture bound.

Similarly, Essien (2015:54) ^[10] refers public administration to both the activities concerned with the management of government business as well as the study of those activities. He acknowledged that public administration has no generally accepted definition. To him, it is because the scope of the

subject is so great and so debatable that it is easier to explain than define. However, Eme & Ede (2007) stated that Public administration is therefore a field of study, that is, a discipline and an occupation. Public administration, by extension has been defined as the putting together of human and material resources in order to achieve the objectives of public policy. Administrative activities can take place in a variety of settings, provided the crucial elements are present such as the cooperation of human beings to perform tasks that have been mutually accepted as worthy of the joint effort (Eme & Ede, 2007).

Evans (1995) ^[7] stated that public administration consists of all operations which have as its purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of public policy. Perhaps, this explains why Mark Grindle (2004) ^[14] asserts that public administration is the activities that involve the executive branch of government. On their part, Hyden, Court and Mease see public administration as the area of study and practice where law and policy is recommended and carried out (2005). In all, we conclude by alluding that public administration is the totality of what government choses to do or not.

2.2 Service Delivery & Professional service delivery

Contemporary studies on the distinctions between the above variables have begun and our inputs in this study are a modest contribution to the ongoing intellectual debate and not ready to take a position rather to appraise what had already been said by scholars. Reason is because we are interested and hope that such debate should rage on to enable the world to have best of it as scholarly contributions on the concept of the professional service delivery is relatively scarce.

However, in Egberi & Madubueze (2014) ^[8], Kayode *et al* (2013) ^[25], posits that, Service delivery implies tangible and intangible goods and services provided by the government in order to improve the well-being of the citizenry. Carlson *et al*. (2005) in Kayode *et al*. (2013) ^[25] also conceptualized Service delivery as the relationship between policy makers, service providers and poor people.

According to them, it encompasses services and their supporting systems that are typically regarded as a state responsibility. These include social services (primary education and basic health services), infrastructure (water, sanitation, roads and bridges). Similarly, Bello-Imam & Roberts (2001) quoted in Agba *et al* (2013) ^[1], agree with this understanding of Service delivery when they noted that local service delivery is the provision of services intended to alleviate human suffering and by extension, enhance the quality of life of the citizens.

Essien (2015) ^[10] noted that Service delivery is a comprehensive concept. In the context of governance, public service delivery is the result of the intentions, decision of government and government institutions, and the actions undertaken and decision made by people employed in government institutions (Jike, 2003) ^[23]. Service delivery has an impact on human development directly if it is delivered to people in the form of basic services such as education, health and water and sanitation which contribute to promoting human development. To Nash and Nash (2003) ^[34], effective service delivery entails the provision of basic social services and amenities to the citizenry in such a way that their expectations are met or exceeded while at the same time the business of governance remains viable. Effective service delivery therefore is rendering services that correspond to the citizen’s desires, needs and expectations (Essien, 2015) ^[10].

The argument and debate from the foregoing is very clear and apt. Service delivery generally gears toward a similar trajectory however, professional service delivery is interested in primarily what makes one a “professional”? it is the argument of some scholars that “Professionals” are people in Professional occupations like the Medical Doctors, Lawyers and Financial planners etc. They contend that, Professionals offer their clients a sophisticated, knowledge-based expertise (Greenwood and Empson, 2003; Maister, 1993)^[17, 32], and the relationships these professionals create with their clients are the medium through which they impart this expertise to solve their clients’ problems (Gutek, 1995; Reihlen and Apel, 2007)^[16, 44]. Possibly, this is why Walsh & Gordon (2014) argued that professional service providers create similar “*quality-oriented*” exchanges with their clients.

Jaakkola and Halinen (2006)^[24]; Sharma and Patterson (1999)^[46]; Svensson (2006)^[45] are in agreement that professional services are delivered to clients through on-going relationships in which professionals and their clients interact to develop a shared history of the clients’ needs in order to solve their problems. Perhaps that is why Jaakkola and Halinen (2006)^[24] referred to as an “intangible” service(s). To him, it’s as a result of its high-degree of customer contact, as well as the level of individual judgment required by the Professional.

Nevertheless, our intention in this paper is not advance the contextual and intellectual debate on the issues on “service delivery” and “professional service delivery”. In fact our effort is to establish a mix between the two because, intellectualism thrives at where both cannot be clearly distinct, a mix becomes imperative. We contend therefore that Professional service delivery is everything “service delivery” with a high degree or closer attention to clientele history, emotions, relationships and reactions with a view to render quality-oriented exchanges. This to us should be the generalized intentions of “service delivery” and not just attending to or meeting up ones set target without a clear attention to the inherent clientele satisfaction which is supposed to be the hallmark of services rendered.

Table 1: Distinctions between Service delivery and Professional service delivery

Service delivery	Professional service delivery
• Tangible and intangible goods and services provided by the government • Services targeted at alleviating human problems • Comprehensive concept; > intentions & decisions of govt • Interested in Service quantity	Asking the question of “who is a Professional?” – Doctors, Lawyers, Bank workers. Services targeted solving individualistic problems. Specific with how clients feel and emotional stability after services had been rendered. Service quality.

Source: Author’s compilation.

3. Policy development

In-situ, what usually comes to mind whenever the issue of development is raised is “poverty”. The efforts to tackle poverty and ensure sustainable society brings about the need for policies and programmes that will drive the process towards achieving the developmental derivatives. However, policy development is centered on the efforts, energy and skills to harness, aggregate and put together all the needed ideas necessary for economic growth by improving the

political and socio-economic welfare of the society.

In his view, Addison (2004) explained that much of today’s debate is centered on poverty reduction as the primary objective for development policy. He aptly noted observed that people differ as to how to define poverty: economists typically favour monetary measures, using data collected from household surveys of incomes and expenditures. If the household falls below a defined poverty line, then it is classified as poor. However, since not all countries have the data to define poverty in this way, the US\$ 1 per day measure is often used to calculate the global and regional aggregates. Thus, it is our submission that policy development is an action plan which propels government to deploy, commit and invest resources in support of a preferred value.

Saltou (2020) in UN-DESA report identified the generic hallmark of good policies to include but not limited to the following;

- Clarity of purpose
- Clearly identify key issues.
- integration with other policy instruments
- Other policies, legislation, ndp
- Organisation & presentation of the plan – clear and logical
- Evidence-based - policy plan rests on factual diagnostic evidence base
- Internal consistency - closeness of links between objectives and strategies/actions; methods and anticipated results
- Monitoring and evaluation - provide for monitoring policy implementation and identify entities carrying out monitoring and evaluation

4. Old Public Administration vs New Public Management and Public Governance

What we enjoy in the world in contemporary time was all what public administration provided to us. From the breakthroughs in Science and technology, medicine, religion etc were cases of public administration. In relation to this, Frederickson, Smith, Larimer, and Licari (2016) found that most of the important events that have taken place in our society were probably accomplished through the significant contribution of what we would today call public administration. For example, the movement from feudal society to the civilized nation-state in Europe, America and recently the Asia etc or the pursuit of both modern (e.g., democracy, freedom, safety, and justice) and societal goals (health care, education, equity, jobs) are instances of the impact of Public Administration. In these breakthroughs of societal records, core elements of public administration were found relevant.

Based on traditional assumptions (Weber, 1952), the fundamentals of public administration are:

1. Recognized formal authority;
2. established laws and rules;
3. Separation of responsibilities according to expertise;
4. Hierarchy as a method of coordination management;
5. BCwritten records to establish continuity;
6. Separation from the organization of the people working in it;
7. Interest in organizational technologies

The development started with the expansion of bureaucracy

and Taylorism, later the advancement of institutionalism showing how public institutions re-shape and shape the interaction of individuals and organizations in their political, social, and economic perspectives. Frederickson, (1999) ^[11], observed that during the late 1980s, this language was replaced by decision theory, neo-classical economics, and public choice. At the end of the 1990s, public administration moved towards cooperation theory, organizational theory, network theory, management theory, stakeholder theory (Frederickson, 1999) ^[11]. The endless trend continues with cotton-edge breakthroughs in recent times both in theory and practice particularly from the advanced economies leaving the global South with “copy and paste” method of public administration.

Fundamentally, public administration has passed through series of changes but, public administration has traditionally been somehow synonymous with government bureaucracy. Aptly captured by Osborne (2010) public administration emphasis on hierarchy, command-and-control, and top-down management has been replaced “passing through three dominant stages” by networks and collaboration. Adding to this Emerson & Nabatchi (2015), noted that indeed the notion of authority, meant as the existence of a policy center characterizing the Weberian hierarchal model is being supplanted by leadership, networks, and governance capacity, enabling regimes of public policy and implementation.

For the above reasons, public management has experienced three dominant paradigms (Osborne, 2006), including:

1. A more respected public administration from the early 20th century to the 1980s.
2. The second mode, new public management, from the late 1980s to the 2000s
3. And a third has appeared recently and deals with public administration

Ikeanyibe, Orji & Okoye (2017) ^[22] in their study on Governance paradigm in public administration and the dilemma of national question in Nigeria, stressed that each of these paradigm or stage of development entails an emphasis of what should constitute the focus and the locus for the study of public administration. However, scholars to some extent agree on some distinguishable path in the development of public administration (Basheka, 2012; Henry, 2007; International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1968; Peters, 2003) ^[20] in (Ikeanyibe, Orji & Okoye, 2017) ^[5, 22]. Nicholas Henry has severally updated his 1975 Review article where he acknowledged four paradigms to the acknowledgement of six paradigms in a latter publication (Henry, 2007) ^[20]. Peters (2003) however, argues that the development stages might not all have achieved the status of a paradigm as described in the philosophy of science but did have some of those characteristics (for both good and ill). Thus for him clear paradigm shifts are distinctively three. For Henry (1975) ^[20] in (Ikeanyibe, Orji & Okoye, 2017) ^[22], recognizable paradigms in public administration are:

- Paradigm 1: the politics-administration dichotomy, 1900–1926.
- Paradigm 2: the principles of administration, 1927–1937.
- Paradigm 3: public administration as political science, 1950–1970.

- Paradigm 4: public administration as management, 1956–1970.
- Paradigm 5: public administration as public administration, 1970–present.
- Paradigm 6: governance, 1990–present.

The *Old Public Administration* model was espoused in the context of liberal constitutions and advanced by the work of Max Weber, Woodrow Wilsons, Gurlick and Frederick Taylor. Till date, Woodrow Wilsons is indisputably the father of Public Administration. His original interests were to make public administration a scientific discipline, in other to enhance the understanding of methods through which we improve efficiency and effectiveness in public policy development, design and implementation. To this end, during his time at the White House, he borrowed the “Principle of scientific Management” from Frederick Taylor (i.e., division of labour, training, tasks-oriented procedure). Till the 1980s, their postulations in public administration were untouched and worthy to note that in Europe, Weber’s “Pure Bureaucracy” was premised around; - legal/rational authority, - jurisdiction, - hierarchy, and - procedures.

Table 1: Elements and Principles of Old Public Administration

• Elements	• Principles
• The dominance of the “rule of law” • A focus on administering set rules and guidelines; • A central role for the bureaucracy in policy making and implementation; • The “politics–administration” split within public organizations; • A commitment to incremental budgeting; • The hegemony of the professional in the service delivery system.	• Hierarchy and rules; • Permanence and stability; • An institutionalized civil service; • Internal regulation; • Equality.

Sources: Culled from Osborne (2006: 378) & Pollitt *et al* (2007)a: 3.

Beyond the features of the pure bureaucratic model, as explained, the Old Public Administration was committed to competing ideas across the length and breadth of the global politics with great attention to the welfare state, and to a professional service delivery system. With the development, bureaucracy stabilized with administrative gimmicks and responses and delivered organizational effectiveness. Factors such as; a hierarchical division of labor, management by objectives, written records, merits-based appointments, full-time based employment became a top-burner.

As noted by Vegnieri (n.d) a new set of ideas began to displace the Old Public Administration in the early 1980s. In other words, a new mode of Public Administration was therefore promoted. Public expectation was leading the emergence of alternative forms of service delivery and giving rise to a new movement of reforms. Another season of changes in the substance and ideological setting of Public Administration occurred. Such dominant approach was lately termed as “New Public Management” (Bryson *et al.*, 2014; Hood, 1991, 2001) ^[18].

On the New Public Management, relevant literature such as Hood (1991; 1995), Larbi (1999) ^[28], Pollitt & Bouckaert (2011) ^[33] identifies the forces which have driven changes in

public administration. Although not completely new (Hood, 2001: 12554) ^[18], contextual factors together with the development of new theories promoted as season of system level reforms. They also moved Public Administration as a discipline within business schools, in the Anglo-Saxon countries, while closer to political science and law studies in southern- Europe (Osborne, 2006: 379).

In agreement to that, Vegnieri (n.d) stated that the New Public Management emerged as a response to the rising complexity and fiscal crisis faced by governments around the world. NPM was a stamp which has been put on top of any Western countries reforms of public sector. “[T]he doctrines of public sector management encompassed by New Public Management have been variously described by different commentators” emphasizing that “there is some tension between the different intellectual streams that feed into the NPM” (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011: 10) ^[43], with different words in Hood (1991, p. 4, 1995, p. 95) ^[18] in Vegnieri (n.d). Some other scholars believed that the pressure of financial shortage caused public institutions to adopt policy programs aimed at shrinking large organizations and at reducing the plethora of public institutions and agencies (Vegnieri, n.d). To him, the innovation in technology and information renovated and speed-up the relationships between organizations and staff and also allowing world-wide communication. The emerging globalization boosted competition and claimed to abolishment of economic national borders, especially within European countries. This view was supported by Hughes (2003) ^[19], Hulme, Minogue, & Polidano (1998) by agreeing that the liberalization of several economic sectors promoted competition among organizations in service delivery and citizens’ demand for certain standards of quality of public services.

In summary, NPM is “a chameleon-like and paradoxical creature” (Pollitt *et al.*, 2007: 4) ^[42], not owing universal characteristics (Ferlie & Geraghty, 2009, p. 431). Several efforts and attempts to delineate core elements of the New Public Management but the intellectual debate is not ended and the last word has not been heard. Larbi (1999:12) ^[28] sees NPM as “a vision, and an ideology or a bundle of particular management approaches and techniques”. To Lan & Rosenbloom (1992: 535) It was also defined as a “market-based public administration”. Pollitt *et al.* (2007:1) ^[42] insists that NPM is “managerialism”, or a result of “reinventing government” (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993: 1) ^[39] or just a “post-bureaucratic model” (Barzelay, 2001: 153) ^[4]. In its most extreme form, NPM asserted the superiority of the private sector managerial techniques over those of public administration, by taking for granted that such techniques would have led improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of public services delivering (Osborne, 2006: 379; Thatcher, 1993) ^[40]. Theories that supported its advancement abound, and we therefore contend that professional service delivery couldn’t have made headway without the contentious issues around the NPM that matches words with actions, value orientation and result with great attention social-dynamics of human being.

5. Policy development, Process of formulation and Participation in Nigeria

Extant literature on policy development or formulation in Nigeria shows sufficient attempt at addressing the relevant issues as it borders all spheres of challenges. For instance, Nwafor-Orizu *et al.* (2019) examine public policy

formulation and implementation in Nigeria: questions, challenges, and prospects. The paper attempts to fill the gap in the literature by examining the public policy questions and establishing a panacea for them. A retrospective study of Nigerian public policy practice was undertaken. The findings indicate that ethno-religious and tribal heterogeneity breeds non-tolerance, which poses a problem to the aggregation of diverse public interests into public policy, and that the corruption-bred strong-individual has marred the implementation of public policies against strong-institution factor and the issue of citizenry acceptance of this practice as a right and non-abrogable one. The paper recommends sociopolitical restructuring and reorientation of the entire citizenry as an excellent alleviation of these public policy questions.

Similarly, Ben (2018) attempts to critically elucidate the dynamics of policy development and implementation in the Nigerian federal system along inter and intra-governmental relations. It applies a descriptive research method to espouse the views of various scholars on the key issues affecting policy development and implementation in the Nigerian federal system. The paper observes inconsistencies in development policy formulation and implementation amongst Nigeria's different organs and levels of government. The current situation, where the federal government is a towering overlord over the constituent states, needs re-examination and possible realignment. Despite this, the paper maintains that there is still hope for consolidating Nigeria's federalism through effective policy formulation, implementation, evaluation, communication, and feedback mechanisms. Finally, the paper recommends mobilizing adequate resources for practical policy actions and improved service delivery.

Onimisi and Osasona (2019) investigated factors affecting effective policy implementation in Nigeria, focusing on the Federal Character Principle. The Federal Character Principle was enacted and captured in Section 14 (3) and (4) to ensure equitable employment distribution in the Nigerian civil service. However, it appears that the policy implementation is ineffective because disparity remains prominent in employment distribution despite the enactment of the policy. Building on existing literature and using existing secondary data, the paper identified corruption, lack of political will, personal interest, and poor policy evaluation strategy as factors responsible for the ineffective implementation of the Federal Character Principle in the Nigerian public service. The study paper provides a valuable blueprint for policy implementers, governments, and policy-makers to close in on the identified factors hindering the effective implementation of the Federal Character Principle in Nigeria.

Interestingly, Gonzallo (2015) observed that the policies of previous governments are rarely replicated by subsequent ones. To him, Presidents, ministers, governors, heads of local government, and heads of institutions (both bureaucratic and political) in Nigeria tend to link their administration to different social and economic policies or programs. Lack of continuity and abandonment of previous initiatives explain why so little attention is paid to the issue of maintaining projects or programs created or initiated by previous regimes. Indeed, successive regimes find it politically inefficient to maintain existing programs because they provide no direct personal fame or glory. Under these circumstances, the public bureaucracy in Nigeria does not have the opportunity and time to implement policies effectively and coherently.

An example of this tendency of a succeeding regime to stop implementing a predecessor's policies was the cancellation of General Olusegun Obasanjo's Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) policy and the launching of the Green Revolution by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, who succeeded him. When General Mohammed Buhari came to power, he also discontinued the implementation of the Green Revolution and introduced the "Go back to land policy." When General Ibrahim Babaginda took over the government, he again abandoned the "Go back to Land" policy and introduced the Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI). It is noteworthy that the various policies, as they were abrogated and introduced, had their primary goals to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production and curtail food importation (Egeran, 2011). Because of this, the changes and breaks were unnecessary and did nothing good. They were just the political leaders' selfish way of putting their names on policies in a different way.

6. Preponderances of Professional Service Delivery on Public Administration in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the role of public service has come under severe criticisms within the context of the gap that exists between its anticipated role and its actual output. The public service in Nigeria is today viewed as an avenue for sharing the "national cake" among the major ethnic groups. Hence, the unending demands for fragmentation of governmental structure into units, ministries, and departments etc. (Onuoha, 2005) ^[37]. Painfully though, these fragmentations are carried out in spite of the obvious difficulties in sustaining the existing ones (Kaufmann & Kraay, 2002) ^[26]. The situation is further aggravated by the public perception that the public service is amoral, hence, it should be plundered to sustain individual, community and ethnic survival or other primordial grouping interest (Essien, 2015) ^[10].

However, we contend that the following are the challenges of public administration in Nigeria, threatens professional service delivery;

1. Failure of mainstreaming the tenets of the New Public Management in relevant policies

Ikeanyibe (2015) ^[35] articulated that the initial impetus to adopt NPM principles in Nigerian public administration became pronounced with the introduction of the SAP in 1986. The introduction of SAP was triggered off by obvious need to withstand the intense economic crisis faced by the country following the collapse of the world market price of oil that began in 1981 and the suffocating external debts burden there from (Ikeanyibe, 2015) ^[35]. SAP was a socio-economic adjustment policy designed by International Financial Institutions of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for benefiting countries of their loans, especially in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and former socialist countries of Europe, to tackle the effects of economic recession and globalization. The conditionality given by these international financiers were mainly in terms of adjustments to shrink the public sector, privatize publicly-owned enterprises, reduce regulation of foreign trades, end consumer subsidies (including subsidies on food and basic needs), and promote the production of goods for export (Archer, 1994) in (Ikeanyibe, 2015) ^[35]. SAP emphasized lessening the unwieldiness of government by privatizing many of the public enterprises found in some productive sectors where government should not ordinarily have strong participation in

a capitalist system. It was in the main an economic adjustment and stabilization policy but contained an important administrative aspect of rationalizing and restructuring of public sector enterprises and overhauling of the public sector administrative structure.

To him, NPM reforms are specifically meant to improve administrative efficiency and economy through some management doctrines or precepts. Hood underscores seven of these doctrines which are observable from OECD countries that have propelled the reforms: - "Hands-on professional management" in the public sector which makes for active, visible, discretionary control of organizations from named persons at the top, "free to manage"; - Explicit standards and measures of performance, that is, proper definition of goals targets, indicators of success, preferably expressed in quantitative terms, especially for professional services; - Greater emphasis on output controls: resource allocation and rewards linked to measured performance; breakup of centralized bureaucracy-wide personnel management; - Shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector or what is also known as unbundling or breaking up of formally monolithic units into corporatized units around products or services; - Stress on private sector styles of management practice to achieve flexibility and greater efficiency; and - Stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use (Ikeanyibe, 2015) ^[35].

2. Inconsistencies in pursuing public service reforms

Successive governments in Nigeria have found it almost impossible to pursue purposeful public service reforms that will restructure public organizations to make them smaller, stronger, better skilled, and more efficient at delivering essential services. This is evidenced in the fact the number of government jobs has not declined, and the cost of running the government apparently has not reduced and quality of services of government agencies has not significantly improved. This has resulted to incoherence, poor policy communication, poor policy institutionalization and lack of technovation components.

3. Over ambitious policy

Another factor that constitutes an obstacle for the professional service delivery is the ambitious nature of some public policies in Nigeria (Ganzallo, n.d). Some policies tend to be over-ambitious, sweeping, and overly fundamental (Mankinde, 2005). To him, the formulation of some ambitious policies is not borne out of a genuine or sincere effort to bring about rapid and radical development but to satisfy the ego of the political leaders. Examples of such policies are free education or free health services for all citizens or the total eradication of poverty amongst the citizens as we have in Nigeria and yet, a look at health sector Nigeria leaves nothing to be desired. For such policies, there are usually inadequate resources (men and materials) for the public bureaucracy to effectively implement them.

4. Moral Laxity and Corruption

This is another challenge facing professional service delivery in Nigeria's public administration. Nigerian society is morally bedridden and nationalistically handicapped. As a result, society celebrates corruption to its detriment. No one wants to question the policy formulation process or the role of the citizenry in it. No one wants to question the ineffective implementation of formulated policies. Every individual in

society wallows in ignorance and fear, pretending that public policy does not affect them, even though it is intended to reflect their welfare. How will their interests be incorporated into a policy when they do not even strive to partake? When this is the case, society has not only accepted but has also approved corrupt practices in Nigerian public policy practice. Sagay (2016) in Okpata, Edeh, Udu & Nwakamma (2019) neatly captures the consequences of corruption in the following words: The consequences of looting the common wealth of the country could be such level of deprivation in our social and economic services that peoples' lives could be affected like women who may not get ante-natal care, hospitals that are not well staffed and not well funded; roads that are not constructed, people could have accident and die. I am wary that an accused person may not have thought of the final consequences it have on people.

Inability to mainstream policies from research outcomes

Policy development across Nigeria's public administration is not driven by research outcomes and thus widens the gap between public policy and professional service delivery. To break the jinx of there has to be conscious efforts towards ensuring that public policies are products of research outcomes. An examination of previous policies of government shows that shows gaps between what we have as public policy and what we desire to solve society problems in real time. The recent attention to COVID-19 management

and treatment in Nigeria gave credence to this.

8. Theoretical perspectives

The Strategic management theory was found appropriate for this study because, It is said to be a supposition, proposition or a system of ideas intended to explain the origin, evolution, principles and applications of strategic management. The theory stem mainly from the systems perspective, contingency approach and information technology approach to corporate management. In the light of this background, following David (2005) ^[30] and Mohd Khairuddin Hashim (2005), among the common strategic management theories noted and applicable to modern industrial and governmental organizations are;

- The profit-maximizing and competition-based theory,
- Resource-based theory,
- Survival-based theory,
- Human resource based theory,
- Agency theory and
- Contingency theory.
- The profit-maximizing and competition-based theory is based on the notion that a business organization's main objective is to maximize long term profit and developing sustainable competitive advantage over competitive rivals in the external market place.

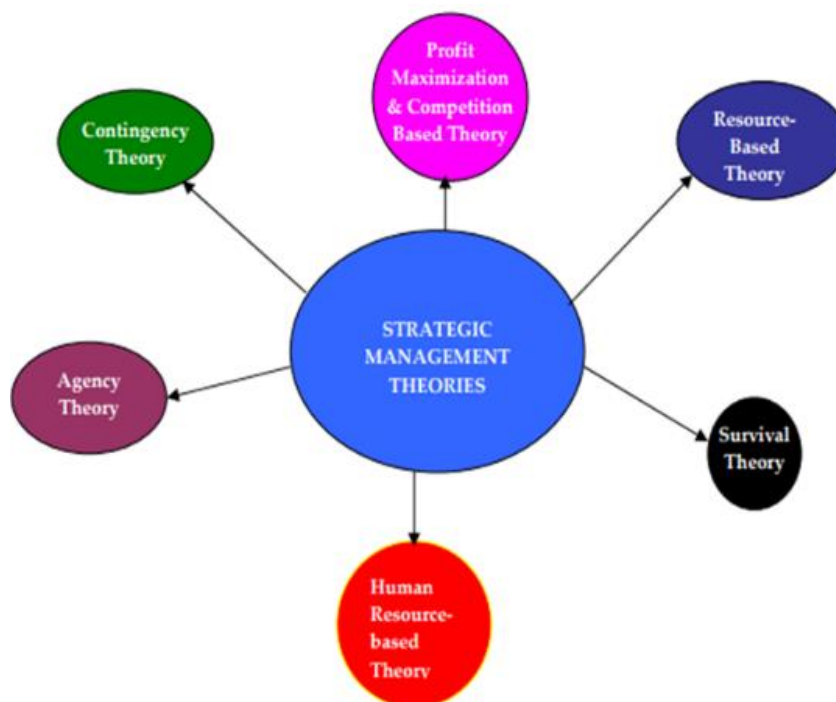


Fig 1: Strategic Management Theories (Adapted from David, 2005; Mohd Khairuddin Hashim, 2005) ^[30]

The survival-based theory centers on the concept that organizations need to continuously adapt to its competitive environment in order to survive. This differs from the human resource-based theory, which emphasizes the importance of the human element in the process of strategy development of organizations. In addition, the agency theory stresses the underlying important relationship between the shareholders (or company owners) and the agents (or company managers) in ensuring the success of the organizations. Finally, the contingency theory draws the idea that there is no one or

single best way or approach to manage organizations. Organizations should then develop appropriate managerial strategy based on the situation and condition they are experiencing.

In short, during the process of strategy development, implementation and evaluation, these main strategic management theories will be applicable to management of organizations as tools to assist them in making strategic and guided managerial decision for improved professional service delivery.

9. Policy options for Nigeria

The challenges of professional service delivery in Nigeria's public administration have become hydra-headed. Extant literature indicates a need for an urgent institutional surgery if the situation will have a remedy. Thus, we prescribe the following strategies for Nigeria;

10. Institutional restructuring;

For Nigeria to make an inroad in efficient professional service delivery, it requires both the leadership and the political will to drive changes as well as institutionalized medium to sustain consistent action over years because institutions outlive those that establish them. Driving administrative reforms requires a relatively permanent pattern of reform with some level of legitimacy and acceptability and an institutional medium of coordination. This calls to relevance the institutional theory of administrative reform. While Nigeria tried to fulfill this necessity by establishing the Bureau of Public Service Reforms in 2004 as a coordinating agency of public services reform, there was no clear definition and legitimization of roles and power of this agency. There was also no consistent reform policy with some force of law. Each administration relied on introducing a personal development and reform plan that provided room for inconsistencies and the opportunity for career administrators to resist changes that would affect them.

11. Ensure Electoral Integrity and Political recruitment process

Voting at the local, state, and federal levels for instance, is the foundation of American democracy. Citizens trust the systems, processes and outcomes of the electoral process in order to trust government. Currently, the lack of nationwide standardization and other public administration implementation issues such as endemic institutional failures and politically-driven disruptions have created a number of voting and distrust issues that need to be addressed and corrected in the future to restore public values the will engender professionalism in public service delivery.

12. Modernize and Reinvigorate technology Driven Public Service

Governments are increasingly faced with the task of solving complex, interagency problems. Many problems like; retirees, inflexible salaries, a cumbersome hiring process, and promotion policies that prioritize time over talent, left some public organizations without adequate staff. For graduates looking for a challenge, tackling public administration problems can involve helping government agencies grow to meet new goals by enabling the next generation of to use technology to raise the standards of practice in the public sector influence.

13. Develop New Approaches to Public Governance and Engagement

Today, no major problem falls under the purview of a single government agency. Problem solving in public administration generally requires all levels of government; Federal, state and local governments work together successfully. In addition, government often has to work in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors. The ability to work with all of these actors needs to be nurtured and developed to improve government effectiveness.

14. Advancing democratic principles

In order to improve the quality of public service delivery in Nigeria, government service provision in all sectors of the economy should be based on collective as well as articulated and shared interests of the citizens. This can be achieved by deliberate and concerted efforts in involving the citizens in policy and programmes designed for socioeconomic development. This will give them a sense of belonging and make them copartners and stakeholders in service provision. By extension, they will see the need to cooperate and support governments' initiatives in respect to policy and decisions taken to provide efficient services.

Decision making within public administration should mirror democratic principle, in order to pave ways for innovative, creativity and a sense of belonging for workers. This is further buttressed by Marx in his theory of social production that, whenever the production relationship is that of master-subordinate, with master exploiting the subordinates, the outcome in such organization is instability and lukewarm attitude to duty (Marx, 1978).

15. Foster Social Equity and Evolve Policy Continuity

Countries like the US and most European countries have made great strides in providing opportunities for all citizens. There is still a long way to go before Nigeria starts emulating these countries to take its place in world history as Africa's big brother. There are still significant differences in terms of race, gender, economic status and geography, among others. Government has an important role to play in both creating new policies and enforcing existing policies to promote social equality, by providing citizens with the resources and opportunities to succeed, regardless of background or situation.

The Nigerian government should avoid selective judgment and double treatment in its fight against corrupt practices in the public sector. Experience in Nigeria has shown that there are sacred cows that should not be touched despite allegations of corruption. This unconventional practice needs to stop. According to the law, those found guilty of corruption must be taken seriously, as this is the only way for the government to demonstrate its commitment to cleansing the public sector of corrupt practices.

Policy continuity should be ensured at all costs. Every succeeding government should evaluate the preceding government's policies, adopt, implement, and sustain the positive ones, and repeal the negative ones. This will discourage the continuity deficiency syndrome of Nigerian public policies.

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