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Public Sector Reforms and Nigeria's Economic Self-Sufficiency

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Abstract

The drive of the study was to find out the impact of public sector reforms on the Nigeria's economic self-sufficiency. The study reviewed the existing literature on the Public Sector Reforms and Nigeria's Economic Self-Sufficiency. Consequently, the concepts of public sector reforms and Nigeria's economic self-sufficiency are critically examined. Grounded on defining implication of public sector reforms and Nigeria's economic self-sufficiency, recommendations on the economic self-sufficiency of Nigerian to keep pace with public sector reforms are highlighted. It is concluded that, if necessary, measures are not put in place Nigeria may be excluded in this process, and reform of poverty rather than prosperity will occur.

Keywords: Public Sector, Reform, Economic Self-Sufficiency, Development

Introduction

The public sector is the machinery used by the state to execute plans, policies and programmes. In response to the demands of economic and environmental dynamics, nations strive to cope with or manage change. In view of this, nations to make things better made them establish certain institutions with a mandate to realize targeted objectives and essentially undertakes some core activities (Ukwandu & Ijere ,2020).

However, in developing countries such as Nigeria with an urgent and pressing need to bring about rapid socio-economic development, public sector reforms have become imperative as public administration is only effective to the extent that it can respond swiftly and efficiently to the ever-changing demands in its environment. Public sector reforms have primarily been driven by the quest to strengthen or enhance the capacity of public administration to achieve national development goals.

Nevertheless, since Nigeria attained independence in 1960, various administrative reforms have been carried out by previous national governments with the aim of increasing the administrative capacity of the public sector to implement development programmes and achieve national development goals.

Ukwandu and Ijere (2020) observed that public sector reform is utilized as the indispensable instrument of change and development in developing countries such as Nigeria, with the urgent and pressing need to bring about rapid fundamental socioeconomic transformation.

In Nigeria for instance, public sector reform has dominated policy design and actions and discourses in the general reform agenda encapsulated in the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the 1980s and 1990s. The exercise is not peculiar to developing countries as the

developed world grappled with it in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Anthony, 2010).
Consequently, in 1999, Nigeria returned to holistic public service reform after a leave between 1993 and 1998. These reforms were well received locally and internationally because they were done at the instance of a democratic dispensation. After a decade and a half of public sector reforms in Nigeria, the outputs and impacts have elicited varying reactions and evaluations (Onodugo, Nwokoye, Ofoegbu, Egbo & Okoyeuzu, 2021).

It is in the light of this that this paper concentrates effort on public sector reforms on the Nigeria's economic self development, identify the opportunities for prosperity development provided by public sector reforms as well, as the problems and macro-economic volatility and instability in the income distribution, inequality and job security.

Concept of Public Sector Reform

Reforms imply a significant change from previous ways of doing things (Fidrmuc & Noury, 2003). Accordingly, advocates of the New Public Management propose public sector reforms to involved adopting private sector principles, and resulted in changes in institutional structures, processes, and behaviour (Omoyefa, 2008). In Africa, such reforms were typically influenced by external forces such as donor agencies who made them part of the conditionality for loans given to the countries (Therkildsen, 2001). Nigeria was not left out of the reform fad as there have been major reforms pre- and post-independence in the different areas of the public sector.

Public Sector Reform (PSR) is an umbrella word those bellies about six major subsets; these include public financial management (PFM) reforms, legal and judicial reforms, civil service reform (CSR), Governance decentralization reforms, revenue management reforms, and anti-corruption (IEG 2008). PSRs are targeted at addressing complex and ill- defined problems within parts or all of the public, which is itself an interdependent system embedded within the wider systems of society and culture. The reforms typically seek to address four main thematic areas: (1) reforms of the role of the state, (2) central government reforms, (3) civil service system reform and (4) reforms to accountability and oversight mechanisms (Scott, 2011).

However, there is an abundance of literature on public reforms. Much of this literature focuses on the challenges of effective and efficient government in the developed countries. Politt and Bouckaert (2004) provide a broadly cited review on the experience of public sector reforms in ten OECD countries (USA, UK, Sweden, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Germany, France, Finland, Canada, Australia).

Most of the available literature on PSR agrees that enormous technical and funding resources have been sunk into public service reforms worldwide but that the overall outcome has generally trailed behind expectations. PSR literature is replete with analysis of reforms of all sizes and designs implemented across several climes. The emphasis of these discussions typically centres on the technical designs and methodologies, evaluation indicators, and funding requirements. There is little attempt to explain why these reforms were instituted, what problems they were designed to solve and what theories of change underpin the particular reform design. Where an attempt is made to outline the basis for a reform and the problems and outcomes targeted, a critical analysis of the official rhetoric that seeks to justify the reform to the populace and the reform design often reveals a disconnect with the real target of the reform package. This incongruity results in disappointed expectations among the recipient of reforms, culminating in a loss of credibility and pervasive distrust of the efficacy of such reforms (Omoyefa, 2008).

The study infers that public sector reform is usually a top-down reaction by the political system and raises concerns for fiscal pressures and issues of legitimacy. Employing a framework that portrays the political system as having a triangular relationship with the system of public administration and the market economy, they described the diverse approaches to public sector reforms across the ten countries – a mix of "modernization, minimization, marketization, and maintenance" to use their characterization. Any of these four reform approaches can be a stand-alone reform strategy, though most reform designs are usually a mix of two or more of these approaches.

Concept of Economic Self-Sufficiency

Economic self-sufficiency is defined by independence. It is the ability to think and act without the help or influence of others, the ability to decide what you should be or do. It is one of the bases of effective community development in Nigeria as it is in most of sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, Ojameruaye (2004) defines economics self-sufficiency as that type of development that relies on the human and material resources of the economic unit whose development is the subject of discussion. In other words, it is development that relies on "internal" resources as opposed to development that relies heavily on "external" resources.

Economic self-sufficiency in the context of this research work is defined as an individual, group or collective ability to supply his/her own needs without external assistance. It refers to the amount of income needed to satisfy basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter, without receiving public assistance like food stamps, childcare, public housing or aid from family or friends. As an economic measure, economic self-sufficiency is a measure of one's operating income versus operating expenses. Anyanwu (1992) posits that the widespread acceptance of this concept in the development planning of most African countries has the tendency to give greater stimulus and cohesiveness to community development in these countries. Economic self-sufficiency encourages the need for people to improve their living conditions using home initiatives and resources at their disposal. It is pertinent to note that self-reliant development is not autarky; it should allow for "external" support, however, it is propelled and sustained by "internal" resources (Kim and Ismail, 2013).

Consequently, one general objective discovered in economic plans or blueprints of continental, regional, national and state organizations or governments is "to promote economic self-sufficiency development". This means that in as much as rural and urban economies are encouraged to pursue policies of self-reliance and strive to ensure "autonomy", they should allow for substantial external support.

However, Ojameruaye (2004) contends that in many cases external resources do make a difference and can challenge the independence of the economic unit. Hence, economics self-sufficiency ought to be viewed as a continuum that is bounded on the left-hand side by parasitism and on the right-hand side by autarky but which does not include both boundaries. Thus, we can talk of different degrees or levels of self-sufficiency; the farther an economic unity to the right-hand side of the continuum, the more self-reliant it is. In the similar vein, Ikoku (1980); Mansour (1979) and Bloom (1988) submits that economic self-sufficiency should be seen as a development strategy based on indigenous socio-economic engineering. Its philosophy is improvement from within. This does not imply a return to the past, nor does self-reliance equate to autarky or dismiss some advantages of international relations (Kim and Ismai'il, 2013). It means, rather, the search for and the application of scientific and rational knowledge to the resolution of local problems, within the context of maximum autonomy in decision-making. Ghari (1980) aptly noted that the concept to economic self-sufficiency is closely allied to the principles of self-help and mutual help.

In practice some form of "external" assistance is usually required for an individual to improve himself. For example, you may need to read a self-help book (written by somebody else) to be able to fix a problem (e.g. electrical or plumbing) by yourself. This is why economists take a more robust view of self-help as "helping poor and disadvantaged people to help themselves". In other words, it is "assisted self-help" or "autonomy-respecting help" (Eade, 1997). It is recognized that poor and disadvantaged people find it extremely difficult to improve the condition of living without outside help. Sometimes they even become "complacent with poverty" (Kim and Isma'il, 2013). In such a situation, external help or support can serve as a catalyst or provide the push for action against poverty or to improve condition of living and even to sustain improvement actions.

Economic self-sufficiency is a key factor in national development which demands that people apply their knowledge and skills to their sources at their disposal. This is in perfect accord with Anyanwu (1992) observations that the development of related skills and attitude of a people can enable them to satisfy their basic needs, to grow self-sufficiency and to minimize precarious dependence on agencies external to their communities. There is no doubt that the current situation in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries calls for the read option of economic self-sufficiency approach to development if we are to overcome some of the current maladies in Nigeria sugar sub-sector.

Thus, in developing countries such as Nigeria with an urgent and pressing need to bring about accelerated or rapid socioeconomic development, public sector reforms have become imperative as public administration is only effective to the extent that it can respond swiftly and efficiently to the ever-changing demands from its environment. Public sector reforms have primarily been driven by the quest to strengthen or enhance the capacity of public administration to achieve national development goals.

Review of Empirical Literature

Ukwandu and Ijere, (2020) conducted study in Nigeria to examines public sector reforms and national development: A situational analysis of post-independent Nigeria. The work centered on the need to keep up with the growing demands of governance and the best way to improve efficiency and productivity in the Nigerian public service. In response to the demands of environmental dynamics, organisations strive to cope with or manage change. The authors also highlighted that public sector reforms in Nigeria have largely failed to bring about the desired reinvention of the public service. This lack of desired impact has occurred because the reforms were not radical and comprehensive enough in terms of the envisaged changes.

Onodugo, et al, (2012) in their study Empirical Assessment of Public Sector Reform in Nigeria: A Trend Analysis between 2000 And 2015 argued that the impact of reforms on Human Resources Management and Corporate Social Responsibility were largely marginal. The positives of the reforms are mainly in the areas of improvement in salaries and functionality of pension and retirement benefits by making it contributory. These improvements in emoluments narrowed the incentives between public and private sectors and tend to attract skilled hands to the public sector that otherwise would not have been the case. The study found that policy initiatives that were aimed at ensuring effective and efficient use of scarce resources, transparency and accountability by civil servants were not implemented successfully. Due to poor incentives and lack of promotion by merit at various stages of policy. The study concludes by recommending for full implementation of reform policy.

Another Nigerian based study by Ekeocha (2009) investigates the Evaluation of the effectiveness of industrial policy reforms in Nigeria 1999-2003: A computable general equilibrium simulation. The study aim was to establish on the success of industrial policy reform in Nigeria using Telecommunication sector as a case study. The study employed primary information for the research that was sourced through the use of structured questionnaire gathered from 95 respondents, and personal observation and interviews in the study area (targeted groups of respondents were telecommunication experts, academician, contractors, public servant and ICT project managers. Additionally, the study gathered secondary from published and unpublished sources. However, the study findings were presented in descriptive and inferential form using frequencies, percentages, tables, mean and chi-square analytical techniques. Consequently, findings from the study revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that policy reform in the telecommunication sector was success in Nigeria. With the recommendation that professional in the telecommunication sector should possess understanding of improving more on service delivery alongside the knowledge of project management techniques and its importance in successful industrial policy reform.

Still in the context of Nigeria road construction sector Anazodo, Okoye, and Chukwuemeka (2012) assess the relevance of Civil service reforms in Nigeria: The journey so far in service delivery. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 150 respondents (different civil servant across the six geopolitical zones). Data obtained through the use of structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, mean and percentage). The result showed that Civil service reforms in Nigeria is very relevance when it comes to road government engaging in governance activities, however, it was discovered that there need to inculcate the in the minds of civil servants' professionalism. It was therefore concluded that civil service reform is incomplete without making the service more transparent to enhance performance.

Similarly, Adewunmi (2012) evaluated Public Sector Reforms in Africa: Nigerian Perspectives. The study views public sector reform based on an integrated performance evaluation framework model specifically for private sector involvement in government activities. The study objective is to find out the effect of public sector reform as an integrated performance evaluation framework for government in Nigeria. Population for the study comprises of active public and civil servant in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Kano and Abuja. Quantitative data collected from the 100 randomly selected respondents were analyzed using principal component analysis and the exploratory factor analysis method. Findings showed that the public and civil servant are not keen to public sector reform in government.

Government's Efforts to Achieve Economic Self Sufficiency in Nigeria

Political leaders have always appreciated the need for Nigeria to be economically self-reliant (Osazua, 2012). Consequently, over the years, Nigerian governments have evolved well-articulated policies and programmes aimed at achieving economic self-reliance in Nigeria. This is succinctly captured by Imhonopi and Urim (2010); Kim and Isma'il (2013) as follow:

First, the Operation Feed the Nation and the Green Revolution Programs of General Olusegun Obasanjo in the 1976 and President Shehu Shagari in 1979-1983 respectively were party the self-sufficiency respectively. Prior to the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities in the mid-fifties, agriculture was the basis of the national economy. Thus, the programs were intended specifically to revitalize agriculture in the country so that the country could have stability and self-sufficiency in food production. Second, the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) of the Babangida administration was in reaction to the paradigm shift from a public sector dependent economy to a private sector-led enterprise and to a certain extent forced on the country by the steady drop in its revenue profile (Adamu, 2006). The objective of the program was to: reform and diversify the productive base of the economy, with the aim of lessening dependence on the oil sector and imports toward self-sufficiency.
Third, the Olusegun Obasanjo civilian administration on May 29, 2004, launched the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy, (NEEDS) to address the development challenges of Nigeria and lay a solid foundation for sustainable poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation and value reorientation. The same programme was launched at the state and local government levels were known as State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS) and Local Government Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDS) respectively. NEEDS rested on the following pillars, which were; forming the way government and its institutions worked, boosting the private sector, implementing a social charter for the people and reorienting people's values. NEEDS was strongly supported by the federal government with comprehensive reforms in the public sector. Most especially, the banking consolidation, where twenty-five mega banks emerged each with a minimum capital base of 25 billionaire. The banks were barely enough to support private initiatives and entrepreneurship. Subsequent to the NEEDS were also Millennium Development Goals to be actualized by the year 2015 (Imhonopi, 2010).

However, in 2007 President Umaru Yar'adua seven-point agenda? The major policy thrust of this administration, otherwise referred to as the 7-point agenda are focusing on infrastructure, Niger delta, food security, human capital development, land tenure and home ownership, national security and intelligence, wealth creation (FMIC,2007). This laudable programme was short live do to demise of President Yar'adua In 2010. 2007.

Between year 2011 to 2015 when the government of Goodluck Jonathan was elected, he introduces the Transformation Agenda, as he did not continue with the seven-point agenda but came up with the transformation agenda. The objectives of the agenda are to reduce poverty, create employment opportunities, encourage agribusiness, promote small and medium enterprises, tackling insecurities, and fighting corruption at all levels of government. The major hurdles of successful transformation agenda comprised of many corruption allegations and insecurity, which are considered to be the main reasons for overthrowing Jonathan's administration in 2015.

The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2017-2020) was adopted by President Muhammadu Buhari to accelerate development and reinstate growth. When the country entered a recession in 2016 the government developed ERGP to get to grips with factors responsible for the recession. Other objectives of the ERGP include economic transformation, social inclusion, improved human capital, job creation, investing in infrastructure, improving the environment, providing digital-led growth, achieving the utmost welfare for the citizens, ensuring food, and security.

The Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu general objectives is to expand agriculture, industry, transport, housing, health facilities, education, and power electricity. With the agenda, it was projected that by 2050, Nigeria would have made momentous progress towards achieving structural economic change and having a more diversified and inclusive economy.

Impact of Public Sector Reforms on The Nigeria's Economic Self-Sufficiency Development

The history of public sector reforms in Nigeria has been a long and chequered one dating back to the 1930s. The reforms are usually designed as interventions directed at the structure, operations and procedures of the different arms of the public service with the purpose of transforming it to a multi-facetted agent of change as well as an instrument of national cohesion and socio-economic development. The reforms can be in the form of organizational restructuring of the public sector, public personnel management, public sector work place relations, Salary and remuneration reforms, employment/service reforms, and management and operational practices (Ojameruaye, 2004).

In terms of evolution, structure and features, a country's public sector is largely influenced by its socio-political, cultural, and historical experience. For any nation, the structure and features result from a complex interplay of its socio-economic aspirations, development objectives, cultural influences, political considerations, and the evolution of public service administration. For Nigeria, the public sector, including its structure and features, evolved from the country's colonial history being a former appendage of the British Empire. In the early colonial period (1914-1946), the system operated as a centralized military-civil-service type with British military field officers as the principal personnel. It also had an admixture of indigenous traditional and British values. Later constitutional and political developments influenced the outlook of the sector as it became decentralized between 1946 and 1966 with the emergence of Federal and Regional organs. From the period after independence the public sector in Nigeria dealt with a variety of governments and governance systems. These are civil, military, parliamentary, presidential, quasi-federal and semi-military. The military and quasi-federal has had the longest period and the most profound impact on the sector (Ojameruaye, 2004).

It is important to note that the history of reforms in Nigeria did not begin with the Obasanjo reform of the public sector (1999-2007). The sector had, on different occasions, been declared inefficient, wasteful and ineffective and fraught with political and bureaucratic abuses, thus necessitating the reforms. In its history, the country has made well over 15 reform attempts both major and minor. Some major ones include the 1988 National Planning Commission led reform that expanded government ministries and departments to the extent that government expenditure expanded from 29 per cent to about 50 per cent of GDP (Monye-Emina, 2012); the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) 1986 -1993, that led to massive retrenchment of civil servants and injurious downsizing of the government, and Obasanjo National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS), and Local Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDS) reforms (1999-2007), President Umaru Yar'adua seven-point agenda, Goodluck Jonathan Transformation Agenda, Buhari, 2015-2023-The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2017-2020), Tinubu - The Renewed Hope Agenda (2023) that includes the Fuel subsidy removal, foreign exchange liberalization, tax reforms, bank recapitalization, insurance sector recapitalizations

Most of the reforms were offshoots of the reports of committees and commissions set up to examine the way the sector operated or were designed and implemented as wholesale reform agenda (mostly from external promoters). Most focused-on salaries and wages with a few giving attentions to the transformation of the public sector into a performance-oriented entity. Yet, others were set up to deal with complaints arising from some of the earlier reforms and sometimes ended up reversing earlier reform measures.

The reform experience in Nigeria, though often showing marked deviation from stated objectives, has recorded some landmark achievements that provide important fundamentals upon which future reform efforts can build on for success. These include the deregulation of the banking and telecom sectors which has led to growth hitherto unimagined for the sectors, such that Nigerian firms in these sectors now play in the global arena. Deregulation of the downstream sector of the petroleum industry and the power sector reforms. Other gains are the passing of freedom of information bill which helps to hold public servants more accountable, as well as the Petroleum Industry Act just to mention a few. The generalized systemic reforms may have fallen short of expectations in Nigeria, but its paths are littered with pockets of landmark gains which hold out great promise for future reforms. Such as the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) of the Central Bank of Nigeria, disbursed more than 800 billion Naira to more than 4 million smallholder farmers of 23 different commodities (including Rice, Wheat, Maize, Cotton, Cassava, Poultry, Soybeans, 27 Groundnut, Fish), cultivating over 5 million hectares of farmland between 2017 and 2022, and The National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), Integrated Farm Estates/Settlements in each of the 109 Senatorial Districts in the country (Monye-Emina, 2012).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper deals with the concept of public sector reforms the opportunities opened by carrying out public sector reforms in Nigeria and identifies it impact on the Nigeria's economic self-sufficiency. The merit of public sector reforms in addressing complex and ill- defined problems within parts or all of the publiclies. In the case of Nigeria employing a framework that represents the political system as having a triangular relationship with the system of public administration and the market economy. At the same time as a capacity for wealth creation through export-led growth and the benefit of expanded international trade of goods, services, and access to new products and designed in the global markets.

However, it has been observed that public sector reforms, despite the opportunities provided, is associated with serious problem that has to be managed in appropriate ways using appropriate fiscal policies. For instance, the case Nigeria as an African nations, such reforms were typically influenced by external forces such as donor agencies who made them part of the conditionality for loans given to the countries (Therkildsen, 2001).

Globalization gives rise to macro-economy instability that had characterized Nigeria government. This problem shows that Nigerian economic development may remain only a dream and difficult to actualise. A highly globalise and integrated financial market spread rapidly across counties financial shocks and loss of confidence that affect exchange rate, interest rate, assets prices with the resultant effect on output and employment and ultimately adverse social effects.

Public Sector Reform provides opportunity to bring about better legal and judicial reforms, civil service reform (CSR), Governance decentralization reforms, revenue management reforms, and anti-corruption. And this gives rise to support macro-economy stability that had characterized Nigeria government. Public Sector Reform are targeted at addressing complex and ill- defined problems within parts or all of the public, which is itself an interdependent system embedded within the wider systems of society and culture. This problem shows that Nigeria needs public sector reforms to actualise economic self-sufficiency.

It is therefore, suggested by (Omoyefa, 2008), that if public sector reform is to impact Nigeria's economic self-sufficiency successfully, designed to solve and what theories of change underpin the particular reform design. Hence, it must improve the life of the people. Furthermore, for public sector reform to thrive it must also deliver the rights economic self-sufficiency results economic prosperity and enhanced living conditions for the Nigerian people. This is why Onodugo, et al, (2012) observes that much as we are enthused about public sector reform, we must not as Nigerians, forget that ensuring effective and efficient use of scarce resources, transparency and accountability. In spite of public sector reform for example, Nigeria, according to Anazodo, Okoye, and Chukwuemeka (2012) reform is incomplete without making the civil service more transparent to enhance performance.

Public sector reform should not be driven by influenced by external forces such as donor agencies who made them part of the conditionality for loans given to the countries. This is because Nigeria is part of the global world that cannot not left out of the reform fad as there have been major reforms pre- and post-independence in the different areas of the public sector.

Adewunmi (2012) claimed that Public Sector Reforms in Africa public and civil servant are not keen to public sector reform in government. And this made Ukwandu and Ijere, (2020) to opined that public sector reforms in Nigeria have largely failed to bring about the desired reinvention of the public service. Due to lack of desired impact, hence the reforms were not radical and comprehensive enough in terms of the envisaged changes.

Finally, collective action is needed to safeguard public sector reform in especially as a, developing countries like Nigeria. There is an urgent and pressing need to bring about accelerated or rapid socioeconomic development, public sector reforms have become imperative for economic self-sufficiency in Nigeria. Yet economic self-sufficiency is a key factor in national development which demands that people apply their knowledge and skills to their sources at their disposal. Hence, public sector reforms is set primarily to drive Nigeria's quest economic self-sufficiency and strengthen the capacity of public administration to achieve national development goals such economic self-sufficiency.

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