



## **Effective Management of Public Organization in Nigeria: A Pragmatic Approach**

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### ***Abstract***

The current level of ineffectiveness of public organizations in Nigeria dampens on the support and trust for the government of the day. The general public perceives the so-called public organizations as caricature and self-image of inactiveness and poor performances. This is because the basic amenities that are supposed to be serving people in one way or the other are in state of coma- electricity supply, education, water, health care, good road among others. In order to change the narrative of performances and service delivery in public organizations, this paper advocates for effective management of public organizations through the use of human relation theory so as to address perennial problems hampering on efficiency and effectiveness of public organizations. In line with scholars and researchers in the field of public management and administration, the paper suggests a pragmatic approach to the management of public organizations in Nigeria. Stressing further that changes in its approach will go in long way to inject workable ideas, policies and programmes for enhancement of service delivery. To this end, the paper concludes that integration of skills of human relation theory will enable the managers of public organizations to improve on their performances and render optimal services to the public. It is therefore recommended that government and managers of public

organizations should look into issues affecting workers, such as timely payment of salaries and other benefits, provision of welfare, regular promotion and room for advancement, and above all key into the skills of human relation theory so as to ensure good public service delivery in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Public, management, organization, governance, pragmatic approach

## Introduction

In the recent times, public organizations in Nigeria have been criticized for not fulfilling the expectations placed on them. In fact, scholars, researchers and studies in the public domain reveal that many public organizations have not been effectively managed (Austin, 2015). Needless to say issues related to external environment, internal management, enterprise' culture, human resources, enterprise-government interface, and the role of managers towards attainment of organizational objectives are nothing to write home about. In one hand, Owoyemi (2012) observed that public organizations and their governments are very close and often very complex, and the fact that a public organization has to interact with many separate agents and agencies of government further adds to the complexity. Also, every public organization has its own

set of intrinsic objectives and it is an intrinsic objective of each public organization to perform its task in an efficient way without wasting of material, capital, human resources and with due regard to the public organization's environment. On the other hand, each government has its own set of objectives intending to achieve through its public organization (Fayoshin, 2015). That is, government's objectives are superimposed objectives in contrast to the own objectives characterizing its intrinsic business.

The statement above explains why some superimposed objectives include employment creation or employment maintenance, price stabilization, and the regeneration of economically depressed regions. This further shows why some public organizations have the superimposed objectives of administering subsidies for target

groups, or acting as buyer-of-last-resort in order to maintain incomes. In addition, Onokola (2014) affirmed that objectives of a public organization include what the organization should not do such as non-engagement in predatory practices nor exploit monopolistic advantages. For this author, it is in the nature of public organizations to have superimposed as well as own objectives so as to provide relevant services for the populace. In other words, the objectives of public organization emanated from superimposed objectives which were drawn by the government for better service delivery for citizenry. Little wonder, several studies have been made regarding the appropriate or best approach to effective management of public organization in order to promote good governance and ensure quality service delivery. For scholars like Owoyemi (2014), scientific approach is necessary to bring out the best in employees and achieve organizational goals; while Kuye (2015) posited that a combination of different approaches might be more suitable in managerial quest of productivity and excellence. However, the introduction of these approaches to African countries, especially Nigeria, has proved problematic because of difference in culture and values of Nigerians relative to the western countries where these approaches developed. Onokola (2014) also asserted that environmental and socio-cultural factors contribute significantly to the differences in the workability of these approaches. For Hick and Gullet (2018), managerial functions are fundamentally alike in any organization and at every organizational stratum in terms of planning, organizing, motivating, leading, staffing and controlling. For these authors, all managers basically do the same thing, irrespective of the type of organization or position within the organization.

The assertion above gives credence to the concept of universality of management; and since management functions are universal, it consequently follows that such functions are transferable from organization to organization, and from one country to another; especially when researchers and scholars in the field are saddled with the responsibility to search for the most suitable approach in running public organizations. This explains why the search for most appropriate management approach and its practice in Nigeria have attracted divergent interest within the scholars in the field. For researchers like Osuntokun (2015), the adoption and inclusion of foreign approaches to management make public organizations in Nigeria struggle to thrive while

others affirmed that the consistent reliance on western management approaches have impeded the growth of indigenous management approaches (Fashoyin, 2015). In any case, effective management of public organization is the only way to ensure accomplishment of its stated objectives; and what the citizens want is the ability of public organizations to deliver on their mandate.

Austin (2017) averred that management of public organization is also known as public management whereby the successful management of departments and agencies is an important factor for success of public policies and programmes as well as policy implementation and evaluation. To this end, management of public organization applies managerial approaches to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public services. Since public organization is established for the generality of citizenry, then its effective management aids attainment of its intended objectives. Perhaps this explains why George (2015) described public organization as the principal actor in macro socio-economic policy making infrastructure and an architect of an enabling environment for national development. In this sense, management of public organization covers productivity management, and management of human, financial and material resources.

In support of this, Olawale (2016) maintained that effective management of public organization involves an array of activities ranging from planning, formulation and implementation of policies, programmes and projects for the delivery of goods and services to the nation through a number of government and quasi-government institutional arrangements. Therefore, as a measure of effective management of public organization, it is imperative that the structures, policies and operations of public organization respond adequately to the socio-economic needs of Nigeria and global challenges as well. It is against this backdrop that the current write-up examines intersectionalism of pragmatic approach to management of public organization in Nigeria so as to achieve the objectives of such organizations.

## **Methodology**

This study is based on a qualitative approach and it is analyzed and synthesized using a narrative method that leans more towards the humanistic approach rather than the scientific approach. This approach is predicated on the

assumption that better human relation will guarantee realization of objectives of organizational setup. According to the proponent of this theory, the fundamental problem in public organization can be addressed by developing and maintaining dynamic and harmonious relationships with workers (Mary Follet, 1968-1933). However, the search for effective management approach ought to be demonstrated with a workable theory such as Human Relation Theory. It is on this basis the so-called pragmatic approach can only be justified and measured by its flexibility and applicability in any public enterprises. As the centrality of this paper is to suggest workable approach to public organization management in Nigeria context, then the theory that places workers at the centre of attainment of organizational goals seems to be more relevant and pragmatic in this direction. The analysis and synthesis from literatures subscribed to the fact that better treatment of workers will go in long way to remediate ineffectiveness of public organizations in Nigeria.

### **Underpinning Theory**

Human Relation Approach also known as Human Side of Administration could be better described as a reactionary approach to organizational management. Unlike scientific theory that dehumanizes workers by comparing human beings with machines for optimal productivity. For Follet, human feelings, needs and satisfaction in organizational setup should be prioritized for the attainment of organizational goal. Stressing on individual development and self-actualization through better organization of human relationships and welfare packages are essential in every public organization. Simply put, human factors should be addressed towards effective functioning of the organization. Besides, administration should be considered a shared responsibility and organizational structures should permit a free interplay of ideas in order to minimize the rigidity of hierarchical structures.

In light of the above, humanistic idea has some implications for effective management of public organization such as; priority to democratic leadership style, better welfare for workers, advocate of good conditions of services and incentives in order to promote workers' efficiency, support the manager to relate with workers individually and collectively with a view to finding out their problems and seeking avenues to help them, ensuring effective channel of

communication between manager and organizational workers, emphasizing on recognition of workers ability both as individual and group; as well as encouragement, acknowledgement and reinforcement of individual and group contributions. By implication, every public organization could achieve their set objectives provided attention is given to issues pertaining to workers' welfare, which is sine qua non to organizational productivity.

In practical sense of it, management as a discipline rests on two major components- theory and practice (Alfred, 2012). According to Stoner (2018), any manager who wants to remain relevant in management practice must adopt inclusive precept in running day-to-day activities of their organization. In support of this, Richard (2016) opined that management theory is interested in facts and sound principles, which prescribe what to do to achieve desired outcome in the organization. In other words, management theory serves as a guide to organizational practice; as management theory provides the basis for management practice, and the practice in turn helps to reinforce the development of management theory. By and large, management practice involves the translation of existing management knowledge and theories into action that will result in the achievement of the dual goals of organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, in-depth knowledge of human relation theory is required for effective management of public organization.

### **Conceptual Clarifications:**

This review paper will be constrained to dissect, analyze and synthesize the concept of management, public organization, and overview of management of public organization in Nigeria as well as pragmatic approach to management of public organization in Nigeria with emphasis on relevance of humanistic approach.

### **Concept of Management**

There are different definitions of management depending on the author. Indeed, the term management is broadly used in everyday language and even in the organizational world and is applied to fields as different as data or anger management. For instance, Boddy (2017b) conceived management as a universal human activity in domestic, social and political settings as well as in

organization. By implication, management cuts across all human endeavors and it is mostly seen as the act or manner of handling, directing or controlling a specific affair. For different views and definitions from various scholars, see table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Definitions of Management

| <b>S/N</b> | <b>Author's Name</b>         | <b>Year</b> | <b>Perception</b>   |
|------------|------------------------------|-------------|---|
| 1.         | Kinicki and Williamms        | 2018        | Management is conceived as the pursuit of organizational goals efficiently and effectively by integrating the work of people through planning, organizing, leading, and controlling the organizational resources. |
| 2.         | Jones and George             | 2018        | Management is the planning, organizing, leading, and controlling of human and other resources to achieve organizational goals efficiently and effectively.  |
| 3.         | Williams                     | 2018        | Management is getting work done through others.   |
| 4.         | Bateman, Snell and Konopaske | 2018        | Management is the process of working with people and resources to accomplish organizational goals.  |
| 5.         | Gulati, Mayo and Nohrian     | 2017        | Management is the act of working with and through a group of people to accomplish a desired goal or objective in an efficient and effective manner.   |
| 6.         | Boddy                        | 2017a       | Management is the activity of getting things done with the aid of people and other resources.   |
| 7.         | Boddy                        | 2017b       | Management is a universal human activity in domestic, social and political settings as well as in organization.   |
| 8.         | Robbins and Coulter          | 2016        | Management is the process of coordinating and overseeing the activities of others to  |

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|-----|-----------------|------|---|
|     |                 |      | ensure that their activities are completed efficiently and effectively.   |
| 9.  | Daft            | 2016 | Management is the attainment of organizational goals in an effective and efficient manner through planning, organizing, leading, and controlling organizational resources.  |
| 10. | Certo and Certo | 2016 | Management is the process of reaching organizational goals by working with and through people and other organizational resources.   |
| 11. | Cole and Kelly  | 2015 | Management is the coordinated activities involving forecasting, planning, organizing, deciding, commanding, directing and controlling human and organizational resources.   |
| 12. | Griffin         | 2013 | Management is a set of activities (including planning and decision making, organizing, leading, and controlling) directed at organizational resources (human, financial, physical, and information), with the aim of achieving organizational goals in an efficient and effective manner. |

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**Source:** Field Study, 2023.

From the table above, three key elements continue to reoccur in most of the definitions. The first one is Henry Fayol’s (1916) task catalog of planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling (with ‘commanding’ being replaced with ‘leading’). This shows that Fayol’s conception of management, in many ways still remains valid even after almost a century and has only been alluded to by the recent writers (Cole & Kelly, 2015). The second element is the use of resources (human and material), this further validates Follett’s conception of management as the art of getting things done through people (human resources); whereas the third element mentioned by most of the



scholars is that management aims to achieve results or goals. In line with the aforementioned three elements, this paper conceives management as concerted efforts of a person or a group of persons geared towards organizing, handling, directing, commanding and controlling human and material resources within the organization so as to achieve desired organizational objectives.

### **Public Organization**

Public organization also known as public enterprise is established for a designated function, intended to serve the general public. Established, handled and funded by the government, public organizations provide services deemed essential for the governed. In support of this, Hood (2018) described public organization as the public sector that focused on goods and services that are intended to benefit the general public and society at large. In other words, public organizations are owned and operated by the government as well as being funded through the government in the form of taxes (Fagbemi, 2016). For this author, there are four (4) basic features of a public organization:-

- i. Public organization employers and agencies do not aim to make a profit from the goods and services they provide. These services are provided for the good of the public.
- ii. Funding is usually generated in the form of taxes and fees, rather than through private investment. In some cases, funding can be generated in other ways, but the government is always either the sole owner or majority shareholder of a public organization.
- iii. Public organization seems not to be competitive with other companies that render similar services unlike private organization where competition for profit drives changes and adaptations.
- iv. The focus of public organization is on infrastructure and essential services for the public such as provision of education, portable water, electricity, security of life and property and so on (Fagbemi, 2016). In this sense, public organization provides some of the most vital services in society thereby ensuring that the populace get quality education, access good health service delivery, make other utilities available at no or subsidized cost, and upgrade as well as maintenance of infrastructures.

For scholars like Kozuch (2017), public organizations are entities of the public sector under the federal, state or local government institutions and their organizational units implementing public tasks. This explains why the objectives of public organization make them stand out within the locality as they ensure the proper functioning of the state, security, environmental protection, health, the state economy control, implementation of public tasks by way of meeting collective needs of local communities (Wytrazek, 2011). Evidently, public organizations are often conceived as government administration bodies, state control and law protection bodies whose duties among others are regulated by legal provisions (Johnson, 2013). Besides, it is important to note that public organizations implement several goals at the same time, therefore their structure is complex. Perhaps, this explains why there are government structural processes for service delivery whereby entire citizens are reached through same procedure for equity and fairness in public management. Hence, the management of public organization involves lawful delegation of authority and external control over the exercise of delegated authority.

### **Management of Public Organization in Nigeria: An Overview**

Again, management of public organization has become a subject of interest to scholars and researchers in the field of public administration and management due to its international scope and multifarious contents. For scholars like Okotoni (2017), the layman sense of management of public organization underscores the role of public managers- men and women with the temperament and skills to organize, motivate, and direct the actions of others in and out of establishment towards the creation and achievement of goals that warrant the use of public offices. This perception of management of public organization obscures issues that have been at the heart of public management from its inception as a field of study and practice. By implication, effective management of public organization is a sole responsibility of the manager without considering whether or not there are sufficient resources and tools to organize, motivate and monitor the efforts needed to accomplish desired objectives of the organization.

However, Scott (2018) described management of public organization as an essential structure of governance. That is, a constitutionally appropriate

formalization of managerial discretion intended to enable government to effect the will of the people. Little wonder, Olowu (2017) conceived management of public organization as a craft; that is, as skilled practice by individuals performing managerial roles. For this author, a successful public organization manager is assumed to have practiced their craft responsibly in terms of respect to constitutional restraints and routinely evince values that are widely held to be legitimate and appropriate (rather than narrowly partisan or self regarding). This explains why management of public organization becomes an institution of constitutional governance (Weimer, 2015). Needless to say management of public organization as an institution observes rules of practice. Put differently, de facto restraints on or guides to behaviour that ensure their legitimacy within a constitutional or de jure regime. Simply put, management of public organization could be construed in terms of structure, craft, and institution whereby management or manager is seen as responsible practice geared towards effective discharge of public services to enrich human lives.

The assertion above gives credence to the phrase ‘Management of public organization is also known as public management’. That is, the successful management of departments and agencies is an important factor for success of public policies and programmes, of policy making, implementation and evaluation (Agagu, 2018). By implication, management of public organization is meant to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public services by creating and using the existing public organizations. Obviously, among others, the main objective of manager of public organization is to provide theoretical and empirical foundations for addressing issues surrounding organizing and carrying out managerial responsibilities in government departments, bureaus, and offices.

Unlike Nigeria, global revolutionary wave alongside with series of methods and techniques have been witnessed in the governmental system in developed countries since early 2000s. That is, in an attempt to make the public organization efficient, economical and effective the use of management concepts and techniques has been applauded by the developed countries of world (Schacter, 2014). In Nigeria, it is not surprising that public organization management is still permeated with the principle of bureaucracy, while other countries have underscored inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the principle to

the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of public services in line with the scarce resources and numerous challenges confronting the modern society (Thovoethin, 2013). Perhaps this explains why Olaopa (2018) affirmed that public organization in both the developed and developing countries plays a vital role in providing public goods and services such as defence, public order, property rights, macro-economic management, basic education, public health, disaster relief, protection of environment, and coordinating other government activities. In this wise, de-emphasizing bureaucratic process in Nigeria context cannot be over-estimated. In one hand, a viable public organization is essential for creating a favourable investment climate and facilitating people participation in economic life. On the other hand, as countries get more globalized, governments face increasingly complex and cross-cutting issues that demand urgent decision for economic volatility, climate change and migration (Arora, 2013). Hence, the managers of public organization need to respond not only to changes in the global environment but also to the demands of an active citizenry.

The statement above aligns with the fact that formulating integrated policies and their effective implementation require an adaptable and efficient public organization that can anticipate emerging challenges and ensure that potential strategies are informed by better understanding of future contexts. Perhaps Kaulu (2014) was right to have asserted that management of public organization in practice is concerned with the effective and efficient implementation of government policies. For this author, weak, inefficiency and ineffective public organizations are thus a recipe for failure as many managers of public organizations in Nigeria are actively involved in corrupt practices and self-servicing at the detriment of the supposedly beneficiaries of such organizations. Obviously, lack of practicable and relevant theory seems to have caused ineffective management thereby resulting to poor performance of public organizations in Nigeria. Under the past administrations, the Nigerian governments have been attempting to improve on management of its public organizations so as to stimulate the effective and efficiency in terms of service delivery to Nigerian citizens.

Public service delivery has acquired new dimensions as governments need to respond not only to changes in the

global environment but also to the demands of an active citizenry. Formulating integrated policies and their effective implementation would require an adaptable and efficient public service that can anticipate emerging challenges and ensure that potential strategies are informed by better understanding of future contexts. Public administration in practice is concerned with the effective and efficient implementation of government policies. A weak, inefficiency and ineffective public service are thus a recipe for failure and there are excessive corruption and self-serving agenda in Nigeria since the advent of military rule.

### **Effective Management of Public Organization: The Pragmatic Approach**

At this juncture, it must be emphasized that Nigeria must be on the same page with the developed countries of the world in terms of methodological approach to the management of public organizations. As said earlier, human relation approach seems to be relevant to Nigeria environment where the managers of public organizations use unnecessary bureaucratic procedures to delay or deny citizens certain things. In some cases, nepotism and connection rather than equity and rule of law provide safety umbrella for injustices in the land. Little wonder, scholars like Olowo (2017) observed that wide dissemination of information that allows citizens to monitor public organizations service delivery and public expenditure can have a powerful positive on the attitudes and behaviour of public officials. For Otobo and Okotoni (2017), experience in Nigeria with service delivery surveys revealed that information flows can set in motion an uncontrollable dynamic promoting more accountable and better performing public organizations. In essence, there is every need for pragmatic approach to the management of public organizations in such that better working environment will be provided and service delivery would be improved.

To this end, this review paper aligns with the five (5) human relation skills for effective management of public organizations in Nigeria as suggested by management study guide (see [managementstudyguide.com](http://managementstudyguide.com), 2023). Of course, it is expected that managers of public organizations should have a vast array of skills, especially the following are essential to successful human relations:-

1. **Communication:** Open lines of communication are essential to any workplace, but this is especially vital for managers practicing human relations management. Effective communication helps ensure that all workers not only are on the same page, but also feel motivated and valued in their work. This must not be limited to but include in-person conversations as well as written communication such as emails and social media. As a manager in a public organization, one should be able to adapt his/her language to various situations by modifying choice of words and formality for high level executives versus the customer base. One useful communication technique is mirroring the other person's approach- people are more likely to respond well to those similar to them. Finding common interests with them and matching their tone of voice or physical stance are great ways to subtly connect with conversational partner.
2. **Multitasking:** There is no doubt that managers in public organizations are faced with countless tasks, questions and issues to solve on a daily basis. They are responsible for not only themselves, but the success of their team, which means time spent checking in with their team and ensuring things are moving smoothly. In other words, it is expected of managers of public organizations should be able to manage multiple and competing priorities at once, without missing deadlines. Another important aspect of multitasking is flexibility; as a manager, one must adapt to policy or workplace changes that affect your workers' daily workflow.
3. **Negotiation:** There is no doubt that the need for negotiation occurs regularly in the workplace whether there is an employment offer to navigate, an agreement to establish between stakeholders and the company or just opposing viewpoints. Therefore, strong negotiation skills are key to keeping the peace between two parties while reaching an agreement where all parties are satisfied. Again, effective communication techniques such as mirroring and adapting your language to your audience are essentially needed in negotiations.
4. **Conflict resolution:** In managing individuals with differing personality types, worldviews and goals can make universal agreement incredibly

difficult, if not impossible to achieve. Therefore, manager must be comfortable and well-versed in conflict resolution. Thus manager should help his/her team work together in a civil manner, even if they don't agree with each other on certain things, to ensure the work gets done in a timely manner. For instance, a good manager ought to take individual perspectives into account and make each person feel heard and understood whenever dissent arises. Moreover, s/he should be able to synthesize the presented information and work with all parties to come up with a solution where everyone feels comfortable moving forward. While it is impossible to make everyone happy 100% of the time, good conflict resolution skills can maintain or restore team harmony in the face of disagreement.

5. Organization: It is most important human relations skill, as it impacts all other areas of work. A good manager must keep physical workspace as well as workflow process highly organized. This is especially important when one is filing paperwork or employee records because everything must be completed correctly and on time. Hence, staying organized is also a key part of time management and an efficient workflow. In fact, as a manager, one must work efficiently and manage time appropriately especially when tackling multiple and often time-sensitive priorities, which is only possible when there is an organized process.

In this wise, it is suggested that management of public organizations in Nigeria should adapt the human relation skills explained above for successful management of public organizations and better service delivery from these organizations. As observed by Agboola and Lamidi (2017) that application of human relation theory to organizational management is meant to strengthen the way the organization is managed. For instance, public organization may be over-extended in attempting to do much with too few resources; it may be poorly organized; its decision-making processes may be irrational; staff may be mismanaged; accountability may be weak; public programmes may be poorly designed and public services poorly delivered, thus employing a pragmatic approach would provide opportunity of rectifying perennial challenges

associated with management of public organization in Nigeria in order to ensure prompt and efficient service delivery.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

The current situation of ineffective productivity from public organizations has denied citizens benefits of government of the day. In fact, in Nigeria today is as if there are no public institutions saddled with the responsibility of delivering public services simply because they are not well-managed to deliver desired objectives for its intended beneficiaries. Therefore, injection of another strategy may help remediate the situation though human relation approach; is not a blanket solution to all of the challenges of management of public organization but if workers are given better treatment, there would be turnaround changes in terms of productivity and enhanced service delivery. To this end, government and managers of public organizations in Nigeria should look into issues affecting workers, such as timely payment of salaries and other benefits, provision of welfare, regular promotion and room for advancement, etc; and above all key into the skills suggested above so as to ensure good public service delivery in Nigeria.

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