



## NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT: A REQUISITE FOR ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

**N**ew Public Management (NPM) is an approach to running public service organizations that is used in government and public service institutions and agencies, at both sub-national and national levels. It involves conscious plan of action for implementation that discourage heavy bureaucratization by ensuring that individuals freedom, initiative and innovation of the subordinates are consciously encouraged and subsequently integrated into the management system to attain the organizational goals for cultivation of optimal maximization of organizational objectives. New Public Management is therefore a departure from the past techniques of traditional management in which important decisions are made solely by top management officials and adopted by the subordinates. This paper therefore integrates the tenets of the New Public Management and its roles as a reform initiative that can facilitate the effective attainment of sustainable development goals in Nigeria. With reliance on secondary sources of data

and backed by analytical approach, the paper observed that a reformed and well focused public service anchored on the tenets of New Public Management offers a readymade tool for

### KEYWORDS:

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effective achievement of the SDGs in Nigeria. The paper recommends that structural barriers and other encumbrances to the implementation of high quality civil service reforms should be so tackled on a sustainable basis. Also, it diagnosed appropriate institutional framework that will enrich the tenets of strategic thinking across Nigeria's public service for the attainment of the sustainable development goals.

### Introduction

**T**he increasing complexities and responsibilities of government within most polities of the world, over the years have created, among others, intellectual excitement and attention about the study of governmental processes and

structures. Thus, the study of public administration as a field of inquiry has homologically gained increasing attention in order to keep pace with the ever expanding administrative and policy functions of government and their accompanying demands on practical administration and practitioners. This in itself has necessitated the need to understand in both theoretical and practical sense the concept of public administration and new ideas (Akindele, 2002). Obi (2002) noted that New Public Management (NPM) was a product of the dis-enchantment of young public administration scholars in the United States with the focus on traditional public administration. The emphasis on the dis-enchantment was basically to usher in a paradigm shift in the obnoxious notions and practices in the field of public administration.

Several issues gave rise to the ideology of the New Public Management. Writers such as Fredrickson (2007) in Obi (2012) have identified these issues as owing to the fact that the conventional or classical public administration raises questions such as;

1. How can we offer more or better services with available resources (efficiency)?
2. How can we maintain our level of service while spending less money (Economy)?
3. Then, New Public Management adds the third question. Do these services enhance social equity?.

Obi (2012) observed that the New Public Management seeks to change those policies and structures that systematically inhibit social equity.

Nevertheless, the New Public Management as it were was a brain-child of numerous conferences and publications prior to its emergence. These conferences were identified by Obi (2012) as follows:

1. The Honey Report on Higher Education for public service, 1967, in the USA.
2. The Philadelphia conference on the theory and practice of public Administration, 1967, in the USA.
3. Publication of Dwight Waldo's Article "Public Administration in a time of Revolution in 1968.
4. The Minnow brook conference, 1968, in the USA.
5. Publication of toward a New Public Administration: The Minnow brook perspective, edited by Frank Marini, 1971.
6. Publication of public administration in a time of Turbulence edited by Dwight Waldo, 1971.
7. Publication of George Fredrickson book New public administration in 1980.

8. Okoye (2004), observed that the Minnow brook conference of 1971 gave the ideology of the New Public Administration its strongest back-up due to Frank Marini's publication in a book titled "Toward a New Public Administration" in 1971. In the book, New Public Administration was meant to address pertinent issues such as:
- i. Relevance
  - ii. Values
  - iii. Social equity
  - iv. Change and
  - v. Client focus

In the same vein, Obi (2012) noted that the leaders of the Minnow brook conference, Dwight Waldo in the same year (1971), emphasized that the New Public Management aims towards three perspectives. These are:

- e. Client-Oriented Bureaucracy
- f. Representative Bureaucracy
- g. People's participation in Administration.

However, in the light of the fore-going trends in administration and the obvious fact that though administration differs from country to country, but remains the same is the fact they work towards the optimum maximization of the individual country's public output. This paper however, attempts to inwardly study the Nigerians Public Administration and how they align with the current advocacies and dimensions in the New Public Administration ideologies. To underscore this, the paper would examine the nature of New Public Administration and Nigerian public administration as well as evaluate scholars view on NPA with the view to interrogating how applicable its propositions would be, to our domestic administration ecology.

#### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

There are blurred lines between policy making and providing services in the New Public Management system. Questions have been raised about the potential politicization of the public service, when executives are hired on contract under pay-for-performance systems. There are concerns that public managers may move away from trying to meet citizens' needs. NPM brings to question integrity and compliance when dealing with incentives for public managers. Questions such as

managers being more or less faithful arise. The public interest is at risk and could undermine the trust in government. Accountability can be a big issue. Issues of sustainable development have become centre stage to economic debates and are now setting the pattern of economic growth and world trade. The conventional agenda of the trans-national businesses is found to be inadequate for sustainable development programs of developing and transitional countries and international institutions are required to implement inter and intra-generational equity and justice in trade pacts. The challenge of changing lifestyles and mode of production would require a technological change towards a just order. Economic growth cannot be translated into economic well being till distribution of costs and benefits of both financial and natural resources in economic policies is accounted for. It has been found that the costs of development are generally borne by the poor and subsistence community but the benefits are always falling into the pockets of the rich.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Public Administration**

Within the disciplinary parameters of social sciences, the concept of public administration like others has not been free from definitional disputations. In fact, the discipline has undergone various metamorphoses in the quest for a definitional unanimity. This has been largely due in part, to the indispensability of the bureaucratic procedures and processes. In spite of these notions, here below are the notions of scholars on what public administration stands for Piriffer & Presthus (1967), describe public administration as a field mainly concerned with the means of implementing political values.

The above definition was given back up by Wilson's (1887) classical conceptualization of public administration as the most obvious part of government and as the government in action. This also explains why Presthus (1975), argued that public administration deals with the study of the institutional framework of government, its socio-economic and political environment and the bureaucratic machine.

Corson & Harris (1963) opined that public administration is the action part of government, the means by which the purposes and goals of government are realized. Waldo & Gaius (1950) conceived public administration as a science that deals with government and how its work is being done. Tomori (1985) opined that

public administration can be described as the apparatus of government, including personnel, equipment and the administration processes designed to assist governmental public policy formation and implementation. Wilson (1887) stresses that the task of public administration is to strengthen the path of government, to make its business less un-business like, to strengthen and purify its organization and to crown its duties with dutifulness .

Summarily, there are lots of definitions in diverse opinions. The obvious facts are that public administration revolves around what the government does. The structures and manner in which countries carry out their own public service differ from environment to environment.

Therefore, a description of the Nigerians public administration becomes pertinent.

### **New Public Management (NPM)**

The opinions of scholars in the field of public administration and writers alike on the impact of new public administration in the study and practices of public administration have been diverse. While some see it as positive, others see it as negative Obi & Nwanegbo (2004).Fredrickson in his article “Toward a New Public Administration” in Albert et al (2007),

acknowledged that

“to affix the label “new” to anything is risky business. The risk is doubled when newness is attributed to ideas, thoughts, concepts, paradigms, theories...” Those who claim new thinking tend to regard previous thoughts as old or jejune or both. In response, the authors of the previous thoughts are defensive and argued that

*“... aside from having packaged earlier thinking in a new vocabulary there is little that is really new in so-called new thinking...”*

The above arguments have really opened up the areas of agreements and disagreements over the old and the new thinking. Herbert Kaufman (1971) in Albert et al (2007), was quick to add that “...the threads of the public administration fabric are well known, that newness is

*in the way the fabric is woven, not necessarily in the threads that are used...”*

Araro (1984) in Obi et al (2012), has listed the important contributions of New Public

Administration thus:

1. Strengthened the policy science perspective.
2. Struck a coup de grace to politics administration dichotomy

3. Intensified the public administration, activism and commitment.
4. Pushed the discipline towards greater relevance
5. Brought the academic field and the profession of public administration closer.
6. Strengthened client-orientation in administration
7. Supported the movement of democratic humanism in public organizations.
8. Produced greater awareness for internal democracy through genuine participation in public systems.

On the other hand, Sapru (2008) in Obikeze et al (2012) believes that a short coming of the New public management is that it failed to develop a coherent intellectual framework that could gather widespread support on the issue of advancing equity, which is a core motive of New public administration. Golembiewski (1977) describes New Public Administration as a revolution or radicalism on words and at best status-quo in skills or technologies, and at best a partial success and perhaps only a cruel reminder of the gap in the field between aspiration and performance. More sarcastically, he considers it a temporary or transitional phenomenon and thought that wisdom to further fade away.

Obi (2012) affirmed that New Public Management since its emergence has raised a genuine questions for values, ethics and social equity in our temporary public administrative system.

The question pertinent therefore is how practicable are the notions of these thoughts.

### **Sustainable Development**

This is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend. The desired result is a state of society where living conditions and resource use continue to meet human needs without undermining the integrity and stability of the natural systems (Sharker, 2015). While the modern concept of sustainable development is derived mostly from the 1987 Brundtland Report, it is also rooted in earlier ideas about sustainable forest management and twentieth century environmental concerns. As the concept developed, it has shifted to focus more on economic development, social development and environmental protection for

future generations. It has been suggested that "the term "sustainability" should be viewed as humanity's target goal of human-ecosystem equilibrium (homeostasis), while "sustainable development" refers to the holistic approach and temporal processes that lead us to the end point of sustainability" (Sharka, 2015).

The concept of sustainable development has been - and still is - subject to criticism. What, exactly, is to be sustained in sustainable development? It has been argued that there is no such thing as a sustainable use of a non-renewable resource, since any positive rate of exploitation will eventually lead to the exhaustion of earth's finite stock. This perspective renders the industrial revolution as a whole unsustainable. It has also been argued that the meaning of the concept has opportunistically been stretched from "conservation management" to "economic development", and that the Brundtland Report promoted nothing but a business as usual strategy for world development, with an ambiguous and insubstantial concept attached as a public relations slogan. Lynn, Kahle, Eda Gurel-Atay, (2014) noted that, Sustainability can be defined as the practice of maintaining processes of productivity indefinitely - natural or human made - by replacing resources used with resources of equal or greater value without degrading or endangering natural biotic systems. Sustainable development ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social, political, and economic challenges faced by humanity. Sustainability science is the study of the concepts of sustainable development and environmental science. There is an additional focus on the present generations' responsibility to regenerate, maintain and improve planetary resources for use by future generations (Finn, Donovan, 2009).

## **Attaining the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria via the New Public Management Philosophy**

### **What are the SDGs?**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations. The broad goals are interrelated though each has its own targets to achieve.

The total number of targets is 169. The SDGs cover a broad range of social and economic development issues. These include poverty, hunger, health, education, climate change, gender equality, water, sanitation, energy, environment and social justice. The SDGs are also known as "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" or Agenda 2030 in short. The goals were

developed to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which ended in 2015. Unlike the MDGs, the SDG framework does not distinguish between "developed" and "developing" nations. Instead, the goals apply to all countries Paragraph 54 United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015 contains the goals and targets. The UN-led process involved its 193 Member States and global civil society.

The resolution is a broad inter-governmental agreement that acts as the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The SDGs build on the principles agreed upon in Resolution A/RES/66/288, entitled "The Future We Want". This was a non-binding document released as a result of Rio+20 Conference held in 2012. Ban Ki-Moon, the United Nations Secretary-General from 2007 to 2016, has stated that: "We don't have plan B because there is no planet B." This thought has guided the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda began in January 2015 and ended in August 2015. A final document was adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015 in New York, USA. On 25 September 2015, the 193 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Development Agenda titled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". This agenda has 92 paragraphs. Paragraph 51 outlines the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the associated 169 targets. UN agencies which are part of the United Nations Development Group decided to support an independent campaign to communicate the new SDGs to a wider audience. This campaign, "Project Everyone," had the support of corporate institutions and other international organizations.

### **The 17 Sustainable Development Goals**

There are 169 targets for the 17 goals. Each target has 1-3 indicators used to measure progress toward reaching the targets. In total, there are 304 indicators that will measure compliance. The United Nations Development Program has been tasked to provide easy to understand lists of targets and facts and figures for each of the 17 SDGs. The 17 goals listed below as sub-headings use the 2-4 word phrases that identify each goal. The 17 SDG are given below; -

**Goal 1: No Poverty - "End poverty in all its forms everywhere.**

**Goal 2: Zero Hunger - End Hunger, achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition and promote sustainable Agriculture."**

**Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being - Ensure healthy lives and Promote well-being for all at all Ages**

**Goal 4: Quality Education - Ensure inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and promote lifelong learning Opportunities for all.**

**Goal 5: Gender Equality - Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls**

**Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation - Ensure availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for all.**

**Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy - Ensure access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for all.**

**Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth - Promote Sustained, inclusive and sustainable Economic growth, full and Productive Employment and decent work for all.**

**Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure - Build resilient Infrastructure, Promote inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization and foster Innovation.**

**Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities - Reduce income Inequality within and among Countries.**

**Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities - Make cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable.**

**Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production - Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns**

**Goal 13: Climate Change - Take urgent action to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts by Regulating Emissions and Promoting Developments in Renewable Energy of the UN discussions,**

**Goal 14: Life Below Water - Conserve and Sustainably use the Oceans, seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development.**

**Goal 15: Life on Land - Protect, Restore and Promote Sustainable use of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Sustainably Manage Forests, Combat Decertification, and halt and Reverse Land Degradation and halt Biodiversity loss.**

**Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions - Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, Provide Access to Justice for all and build Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions at all levels.**

**Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals - Strengthen the means of Implementation and Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development**

### **The New Public Management, a Preferred Alternative**

The New Public Management presents a radical new philosophy for a tumultuous time. Okoye (1997), acknowledged that undoubtedly, the administrative

apparatus inherited at the time of independence by our colonialist remains an “important article” .This observation no doubt shows that our administration is purely a product of the colonial constructs and thoughts. The question is, are we ready to change with change? Considering the intents of the new thinking, how are we going to imbibe the thoughts of newness into our administrative practices? The structures of the Nigeria's public administrative system at present is still highly bureaucratic which is against the concerns of the New Public Management viz-a-viz the “New thinking' that welcomes neo-classical thoughts and projects “social equity” as a sine-quo-non to the bureaucratic emancipation. There is no doubt that Bureaucracy is good, its characteristics and principles are marvelous but it is important to note that the dividends would be better appreciated in a country or system where it is optimally observed. With the level of sycophancy and corruption in Nigeria's public administrative system today, pretence has taken over and that is why we should internalize the advocacies of the New Public Administration. New Public Management thoughts should be made to function in our government agencies, parastatals, Ministries etc. This is because of its emphases on equitable distribution of government services without sentiment which would however make our system more efficient and better the economy in the long-run. Fredrickson (2007) noted that authority hierarchies are the primary means by which the work of persons in publicly administered organizations is coordinated.

New Public Management (NPM) and the modification of hierarchic systems Fredrickson (2007) explained that there are steps involved in modifying traditional hierarchies the first is the “Project” or “Matrix” technique (PT or MT). The project is by definition; temporal. The project manager and his staff are a team which attempts to utilize the services of regularly established hierarchies in an ongoing organization. For the duration of the project, the manager must get his technical services from the technical hierarchy of the organization, his personal services from the personal agency, his budgeting services from the personnel department and so forth.

Other ways of modification, of traditional hierarchies as enumerated by Frederickson (1971) are;

- i. Group-decision-making model
- ii. Link pin function
- iii. Dialectical organization and
- iv. True decentralization

### **Conclusion**

It is hereby concluded that the adoption of these tenets would greatly enhance our domestic administrative system.

### **Recommendations**

With reliance on secondary sources of data and backed by analytical approach, the paper observed that a reformed and well focused public service anchored on the tenets of New Public Management, offers a readymade tool for effective public service performance in Nigeria .Hence;

- i. It is my view that, structural barriers and other encumbrances to the implementation of high quality civil service reforms should be so tackled on a sustainable basis.
- ii. Also, it diagnosed appropriate institutional framework that will enrich the tenets of strategic thinking across Nigeria's public service

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