

An Assessment of the Effect of ‘Service Compact with all Nigerians’ (SERVICOM) Reforms on Civil Service Structure and Ethics in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The paper assesses the effect of ‘Service Compact with all Nigerians’ reforms on the structure and ethics of Anambra state civil service. A survey and descriptive methods of data collection were adopted. 214 respondents out of a total of 458 members of staff using Guilford and Flruchter (1973) formula for determining sample size were randomly selected as sample. With the aid of strategic model of Human Resource Management [SHRM] theory, percentage, and chi-square (χ^2) tools, the data generated was analysed. The results of the analysis reveal that the implementation of ‘Service Compact with all Nigerians’ reforms do not have any significant effect on the structure of decision making and implementation, and on the re-invigoration of civil service ethics governing in-service training, attendance, timing, discipline, promotion and remunerations. It further reveals that it has significant effect on the personnel configuration and responsibilities of different cadre in the commission. Therefore, this paper recommends among others the creation of an enforcement unit to ensure the full implementation of the components of the reforms. Further research is also recommended to find out factors limiting the implementation of the reforms.*

Keywords: civil service structure, ethics, reforms, SERVICOM, Anambra state

INTRODUCTION

The history of Nigerian public service is characteristically dominated by tales of “over-centralization; incessant conflicts between the cadres; Scant emphasis on results and concrete performance; excessive focus on compliance with regulations, forms and procedures, counter-productive separation of authority from responsibility at the top of the Civil Service hierarchy; dangerously low staff morale and productivity: inappropriate staff deployment practices which

often ignored the profession or specialization of staff..." (Philips, 2010, p. 12) it has been autocratic, regimentary, and lawless. Other characteristics of Nigerian public service include but not restricted to aging workforce, shrinking staff resources, nepotism, patrimonialism and ethnic loyalties, lack of merit-based recruitment and pay strategies, systemic corruption, dilapidating government institutions and structures, and poor service delivery (Lal and Hyint, 1996; Olson, Jr., 1996).

These anomalies have led to multiple reforms that are intended to correct them (Jhugroo, 2006; Montgomery, 1996). These reforms are differently motivated and are driven by both external and internal pressure to modify the size, structure, responsibilities and functions of the civil service in order to achieve efficiency, cost reduction, improved service delivery, and manifest customer satisfaction (Seiller, 1993; McCourt, 1998; Kim, 2000; Kiragu, 2002; Stockholm, 2005). Most of the reforms are imposed by foreign donors and institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Fatile and Adejuwon, 2010). These foreign donors and institutions formed a group known as the Special Programme of Assistance for Africa (SPA) to initiate and endorse the Guiding Principles of Civil Service Reforms in November 1995 for Africa (UNDP, 1994).

However, the Guiding Principles focussed on downsizing and rightsizing programmes, rationalisation of government programmes and functions, and the reduction of the number of government ministries and departments as part of the process of redefining the role of the state. Reforms in this era are targeted at improving the performance of the administrative system through managerial and rules/procedure reforms. Micklethwait and Wooldridge (1996) noted that this approach had mixed results even among Advanced Industrialised Countries and generated many unintended but negative consequences such as "rent-seeking", "free-loading" etc (Goldsmith, 1992; Mbaku, 1994). This is because the reforms are vitiated or undermined by lack of strong concurrence between the desire of the people to reform and those charged with the governance of the country and their foreign counterparts.

For instance, the 1988 Nigerian civil service reforms introduced the merging of ministerial responsibilities and administrative controls and their investment in the Minister as Chief Executive and Accounting Officers. The reform caused fundamental damage to the structure, rules/procedures and responsibilities in Nigerian civil service (Nwanolue and Iwuoha, 2012). In the ensuing reforms, there were lack of wider consultation leading to none or poor implementation of the principles of such reforms, their politicisation and infiltration of mediocre in the civil service (Okorie and Onwe, 2016; Igbokwe, 2012). Other consequences include misuse and abuse of power by Ministers and Permanent Secretaries, increase in the cost of running the civil service, absence of a coherent and systematic training policy, glaring shortage of skilled manpower, institutionalization of corruption, disregard for the rules, regulations, and procedures resulting in arbitrary decisions and general loss of direction, and complete emasculation of the regulatory role in the appointment, promotion and discipline of civil servants (Nwanolue and Iwuoha, 2012).

In the midst of these problems confronting the Nigerian civil service, a British agency known as the Department for International Development (DFID) developed a framework for quality service delivery and offered same to the government of Federal republic of Nigeria as a form of technical assistance. It was accepted, approved and named SERVICOM - an acronym that stands for 'Service Compact with all Nigerians' - in March 2004. However, the SERVICOM framework was officially inaugurated in March 2005 as a reform programme. The fundamental principle of the reform is to establish within the domains of government Ministries and Departments standard procedures for key activities that are required for effective service delivery (SERVICOM Book, 2006). These activities are customer relations; customer feedback on services; and complaints procedure/grievance redress mechanisms; using market research techniques to identify customer needs and expectations; promoting quality assurance and best practices; providing training policy for frontline staff on customer relationships, and facilitating a safe and conducive working environment for staff at levels of service delivery. Each of the ministries' SERVICOM units is to draw up a number of charters encapsulating the services the public should expect, which are to be couched in simple language and displayed conspicuously for the benefit of the public.

The charters of SERVICOM also provide for customer satisfaction in these ways: designing quality service around customers' requirement; listing fees payable in every department and prohibiting illegal demands; ensuring provision of services within realistic timeframe; specifying officials to whom complaints may be addressed; and conducting and publishing surveys of customer satisfaction (The SERVICOM Book, 2006).

In addition, the reforms provide for training in service delivery, customer sensitivity, effective handling of complaints that result from service failure, and acting as change agents in their work places (SERVICOM News, 2006d; 2006f). Others include re-awakening of ethical behaviours and application of civil service principles such as selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership, with detailed elaborations on the interpretations of these principles (The SERVICOM Book, 2004); right sizing of the civil service through retrenchment and employment (Mamah, 2006; Ehigiator, 2006), and to promotion of civil servants on the basis of examination (Ogwuda, 2006). In the light of these, this paper examines the effect of SERVICOM reforms implementation on the structure of civil service and ethics in Anambra state. The inquiry focuses on Anambra state because the state is at the vanguard of SERVICOM reforms implementation with perceived and acclaimed standardising impact on its civil service.

This has both theoretical and empirical significances particularly for researchers and practitioners in the field of public administration, civil service and customers' satisfaction. Empirically, the finding made by the paper shall enable stakeholders such as government and foreign partners to re-evaluate the potency of the DFID framework for quality service delivery/Guiding Principles on Civil Service Reforms, investigate factors militating against the reforms, and therefrom propose or embark on post-SERVICOM implementation service delivery and customer satisfaction review. Therefrom, viable framework for solving both

SERVICOM hindrances and the problems confronting effective service delivery in the civil service to the public shall be generated.

Theoretically, this study provides data that enhances a comparative study of the phenomena with other states in Nigeria by the academia. Therefore, the study shall serve in the validation and localisation of the DFID framework for quality service delivery using Anambra state environment. It shall also complement the efforts in the academia to assess the potency of SERVICOM as a reform alternative for solving the problems confronting Nigeria Civil Service.

METHODS

The paper adopts a survey and descriptive method of inquiry, which was carried out on workers in the Civil Service Commission (CSC) of Anambra state located at Awka, the state capita. Anambra State was created on August 27, 1991; bounded by Delta State to the west, Imo State to the south, Enugu State to the east and Kogi State to the north. The State has a land mass of about 4,416sq km with 4,182,022 population. The state is economically vibrant, blessed with natural raw materials and multiple industrial complexes such as Agro-based industries with expanse of agro-products such as Cassava, Yam, Rice, Fishery products, etc. It has a complex and highly populated civil service that is compartmentalized into ministries and parastatals.

The survey was carried out from January to March, 2019. Fundamentally, the paper relied on two major sources for data collection, that is, primary and secondary sources. In the primary source of data collection, structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents with the aid of research assistants and administrative officers of each of the units involved in the research. A total of 6 evaluators comprising of one lecturer, and a Director in the Civil Service Commission validated the questionnaire instrument. Any item in the questionnaire that did not have 75% acceptance by the evaluators was discarded. Further, Test re-test method was used to assess the reliability of the instrument. 20 copies of the questionnaires were administered to similar respondents and setting in Enugu state Civil Service Commission. After an interval of two weeks, the questionnaires were re-administered to the same respondents. The data generated from the two tests were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) and a co-efficient of reliability of 0.95 was obtained. This shows that the instrument is reliable for data collection.

The questionnaire contains two sections namely: socio-demographic section where information on variables such as age, gender, and education were provided and the section that contains questions relate to the effects of SERVICOM reforms on the structure and ethics of civil service. Responses to these questions were organized on a five likert-like option format of Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

A total of 214 out of 458 members of staff using Guilford and Flruchter (1973) formula for determining sample size, were randomly selected as sample/respondents. The study sample was drawn from all cadres of workers or employees of Anambra state Civil Service Commission. First, the researcher obtained an oral informed consent from the Permanent

Secretary of the Civil Service Commission and the respondents, and then, followed by the distribution of 214 copies of the structured questionnaire with the aid of research assistants. 71 copies of the questionnaire were each distributed to the administrative, executive, and secretarial cadres respectively, while the Permanent Secretary of the Commission collected and filled one questionnaire. These questionnaires were distributed randomly in each cadre.

The data generated was analyzed with the aid of simple percentage and correlation analysis. However, the main statistical tool used in the analysis was the chi-square (χ^2) test because it helped us to establish, whether or not the proportion of positive responses corresponding to the test items are actually the same across the offices. In the secondary sources, data was collected from relevant and accessible publications such as textbooks, journals, unpublished materials, monographs, conference and workshop papers, and internet materials.

Theoretical Nexus/Framework of Analysis

This work adopted the strategic model of Human Resource Management [SHRM] developed by Fomburn, Tichy and Devanna (1984), and advanced by Schuler & Jackson (1987) as its framework of analysis. Strategic HRM refers to the overall direction an organization wishes to follow in achieving its objectives through people. SHRM emphasizes the interrelatedness and the coherence of human resource management activities. The main principles or tenets of SHRM include:

- i. Humans are not machines but resources to be managed like any other factor of production.
- ii. Human resources management centres on "strategic selection," "strategic appraisal," "strategic development," and "strategic rewards".
- iii. There must be a coherent approach to the design and management of personnel systems through recruitment policies, quality and quantity of personnel needed and attracting such personnel to the establishment.
- iv. There must be human resource management strategies that produce positive employee behaviours such as standardized system of appraisal, promotion and rewards of employees.

The applicability of this approach to our inquiry is significant in that it identifies a range of primary factors that are essential for effective and efficient service delivery, and which as part of SERVICOM must be implemented.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Respondents' Demographic information

Table 1 reveals 94 male respondents (43.9%), 120 females (56.1%), age bracket of 18-27(27.1%), 28-37(32.7%), 38-47(23.8%), and 48 and above (16.4%), while the levels of respondents' certificate possession shows WAEC and ND (32.3%), BSc/HND degrees (50.9%), higher degrees (16.8%). Therefore, while the gender ratio reflects the growing presence of the female population in all professions particularly in the civil service, majority

of the respondents are both literate, and matured in mind to answer the research questions objectively.

Results/Findings from responses to questions

Has SERVICOM reforms changed or altered the structure of decision making and implementation in the civil service commission to include customers and junior workers' in-put/suggestions and integration during policy making and implementation?

The result of Chi-Square analysis or test of responses to questions, which sought to establish whether the Civil Service Commission in Anambra state has effectively integrated customers' suggestions during policy implementations, is exhibited in table 2 below.

In table 2, the Pearson Chi-Square value on the alteration or changes in the structure of decision making and implementation in the civil service commission to include customers and junior workers' in-put/suggestions and integration during policy making and implementation is 32.227. This has a Linear-by-Linear Association point of 5.302 with an asymp. significance of .000, .001, .021. The analysis reveals that 5 cells [20.0%] have expected count less than 5 while the minimum expected count is .93. The calculated Symmetric Measures for the changes is reflected in table 3 below.

The symmetric measures interpretation of the findings made in table 3 stands at -.119. This has an approximated significance of .021. Its original-by-original Spearman Correlation is -.121 with an approximated significance of .019. Thus, the alteration or changes in the structure of decision making and implementation to integrate customers and junior workers opinions in Anambra state civil service commissions is insignificant as shown by Spearman's correlation significance of .019 and Pearson's interval by interval approximated significance of .021, which are ≤ 0.05 , which is the significance level of this study. Therefore, Anambra state civil service commissions has not significantly altered or changed the structure of decision making and implementation to accommodate customers and junior workers as required by SERVICOM reforms.

Were the personnel configuration and responsibilities of various cadres in the civil service commission changed or altered with the introduction of SERVICOM reforms the civil service commission between 2008 and 2018?

The result of Chi-Square analysis or test of responses to questions, which sought to establish whether the personnel configuration and responsibilities of various cadres in the Anambra state civil service commission were changed or altered with the introduction of SERVICOM reforms between 2008 and 2018, is exhibited in table 4 below.

In table 4, the Pearson Chi-Square value for the level of changes or alteration in the personnel configuration and responsibilities of various cadres in the Anambra state civil service commission is 63.101. This has a Linear-by-Linear Association point of 2.167 with an asymp significance of .000 and .141. The analysis reveals that 5 cells [25.0%] have expected count less than 5 while the minimum expected count is 3.70. The calculated Symmetric Measures for

changes or alteration in the personnel configuration and responsibilities is reflected in table 5 below.

As shown in table 5, the symmetric measures interpretation of the Pearson Chi-Square value findings is .095 with an approximated significance of .064. Its original by original Spearman Correlation is .077 with an approximate significance of .136. Thus, the level of changes or alteration in the personnel configuration and responsibilities of various cadres in the Anambra state civil service commission is significant as shown by Spearman's correlation significance of .136 and Pearson's interval by interval value significance of .064, which is ≥ 0.05 – the significance level of this study. Therefore, Anambra state civil service commission has substantially changed or altered the personnel configuration and responsibilities of various cadres in its commission as required by SERVICOM reforms.

Did SERVICOM reforms re-invigorate adherence to civil service ethics governing in-service training, attendance, timing, discipline, promotion and remunerations in the Anambra state civil service commission?

The result of Chi-Square analysis or test of responses to question that sought to find out if SERVICOM reforms re-invigorated adherence to civil service ethics governing in-service training, attendance, timing, discipline, promotion and remunerations in the Anambra state civil service commission is exhibited in table 6 below.

In table 6, the Pearson Chi-Square value on whether the SERVICOM reforms re-invigorated adherence to civil service ethics governing in-service training, attendance, timing, discipline, promotion and remunerations in the Anambra state civil service commission is 62.931. This has a Linear-by-Linear Association point of 3.436 with an asymp significance of .000 & .064. The analysis reveals that 7 cells [23.3%] have expected count less than 5 while the minimum expected count is .37. The calculated Symmetric Measures for the re-invigoration of adherence to civil service ethics responses is reflected in table 7 below.

Table 7 reveals that the symmetric measures interpretation of the findings on the re-invigoration of adherence to civil service ethics responses stands at -.119 with an approximated significance of .021. Its original-by-original Spearman Correlation is -.121 with an approximate significance of .019. Thus, the level of the re-invigoration of adherence to civil service ethics governing in-service training, attendance, timing, discipline, promotion and remunerations in the Anambra state civil service commission is insignificant as shown by Spearman's correlation significance of .0019 and Pearson's interval by interval value significance of .021, which are ≤ 0.05 – the significance level of this study. Therefore, Anambra state civil service commission has not significantly re-invigorated workers adherence to civil service ethics governing in-service training, attendance, timing, discipline, promotion and remunerations in the Anambra state civil service commission.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of data generated from fieldwork reveals that Anambra state Civil Service Commission has not significantly altered or changed the structure of decision making and implementation to accommodate customers and junior workers as required by SERVICOM reforms. The integration of subordinates in the lines of decision making and implementation is a major requirement or principle of SERVICOM. This would have made the workers to embrace the reforms as theirs, and work tenaciously to ensure its success. But in Anambra state civil service the case is different because the workers are not integrated; the alienation of junior or subordinate workers is still in vogue. Thus, SERVICOM reforms are alien to workers and the public whom they serve thereby limiting the impact of the reforms in satisfying its effect on beneficiaries of government services. This is collaborated by Schacter (2000), who has demonstrated that none integration of workers and customers' view leads to hesitation on the part of bureaucracies to the changes required by the reforms.

The none integration of junior and subordinate workers in the line of decision making and implementation into the reforms process does not only lead to failure of the reforms in the long run but also to poor service delivery and public indifference to governance (Anazodo, Okoye and Chukwuemeka, 2012). The significance of this finding, therefore, is that the continued inefficiency of Anambra state civil service does not lie on the introduction of reforms but on the none implementation of pro-people and participatory reforms. Therefore, the creation of a disciplinary unit in all ministries whose oversight function should primarily focus on the implementation of all aspect of SERVICOM reforms particularly the establishment of the structure and/or mechanism for junior workers and customers' participation in policy making and implementation is required.

Similarly, the findings of this research reveal that Anambra state civil service commission has not significantly re-invigorated workers adherence to civil service ethics governing in-service training, attendance, timing, discipline, promotion and remunerations in the Anambra state civil service commission. Indifference to these ethics has been blamed for perceived weaknesses and poor performance in the civil service. The inability of SERVICOM to re-invigorate these ethics may be attributed to the exclusion of junior/subordinate workers and recipients of government services from the process of policy making and implementation. Thus, there is persistent careless and carefree attitude among workers, continual absenteeism and/or lateness to work, exhibition of chronic delays, and shameful corrupt/sharp practices in in the civil service.

However, the findings reveal that Anambra state civil service commission has significantly changed or altered the personnel configuration and responsibilities of various cadres in its commission as required by SERVICOM reforms. This enhanced the professionalization of civil service and has the propensity for better performance of workers as observed earlier by scholars like Lal and Hyint (1996). However, earlier research reports like Ali (2003); Waziri (2010); Ujo (2010) have proven that reconfiguration of personnel and their responsibilities in the civil service has been an excise in reforms since 1970s because the civil service remains inefficient

in spite of this. The implication of this finding is that the alteration or changes in the personnel configuration and responsibilities of various cadres, though a requirement of SERVICOM, is insignificant to register substantial modernisation and development of the civil service. Thus, researchers should examine other pertinent and indispensable requirements of SERVICOM whose implementation will create the required effect in Anambra state civil service. Similarly, practitioners should take urgent steps to establish and incorporate such components.

The implications of these findings further research are diverse. They expose researchers' neglect of assessing the impact of SERVICOM on the structure and ethics of civil service. They also expose researchers' indifference to investigating the reasons for civil service commission's none compliance with SERVICOM templates in Anambra state. Further research is recommended in these areas and their reports submitted as policy proposals for formulation and implementation. Finally, further research on the hindrances to SERVICOM implementation and limitations of the reforms are recommended.

CONCLUSION

Reforms as deliberate instruments for altering structures, rules and associated processes are expected to establish an impact on the system. However, the implementation of SERVICOM reforms by Anambra state civil service commission substantially failed to alter or change the structure of decision making and implementation to accommodate customers and junior workers, and re-invigorate workers adherence to civil service ethics governing in-service training, attendance, timing, discipline, promotion and remunerations as required by SERVICOM reforms. However, the civil service significantly changed or altered the personnel configuration and responsibilities of various cadres in its service.

Based on the findings made by the research, it is hereby concluded that SERVICOM reforms has not significantly impacted on the structure and ethics of Anambra state civil service. The implementation of the reconfiguration of its personnel and their responsibilities could not effect any substantial change in the character of service delivery and customers' satisfaction because it ignored workers and customers' participation in policy making and implementation processes.

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