

Measuring Service Delivery in Relation to Recruitment Policies

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ABSTRACT Public sector delivery of goods and services has been considered to be weak if not poor in developing countries. In an effort to meet the World Bank Millennium Development Goals aimed at eradicating poverty by the year 2015, many countries (developed and developing) have embarked on several reforms to improve, strengthen and provide quality, efficient and effective services. This paper centres on public service delivery based on a recruitment policies perspective in both the Nigerian and South African contexts. It aims to examine the quality of services provided, the relationship between public service delivery and the capability of the human resources providing the services. The research design is based on secondary data. The findings suggest that though well-intentioned, the current recruitment processes, which are based on socio-political factors or considerations (sentiments), contribute to poor service delivery. Recommendations include modifications to encourage more emphasis on merit-based recruitment processes that will ensure the right candidate for the right job and, thus, lead to effective and efficient service delivery.

INTRODUCTION

The public sector is often the largest employer of labour in many countries because of its paramount role of delivering the policies, programmes and services that government provides. According to Oronsaye (2010: 1), service delivery is the “process of meeting the needs of citizens through prompt and efficient procedures. It presupposes that the interaction between citizens and government results in value creation”. In essence, public service delivery involves the provision and implementation of government policies and programmes that will enable citizens to improve their living conditions. In both developed and developing countries, service delivery faces various challenges in relation to political, social, economic and other

environmental factors. Often, as have been common place in many African countries, such as Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, such challenges to the efficient delivery of services have led to citizen protests or riots, labour unrest, and even direct challenges to the authority of the state and its leadership. On almost all measures of infrastructural coverage, African countries lag behind other countries in the developing world (Yepes et al. 2009). As a result, citizens have increasingly lost trust in their governments and leaders due to weak or deteriorating public service systems and public sector service delivery.

Citizens deserve efficient basic services from their governments with respect to the provision of electricity, accessible roads, clean water, quality education, health facilities, etc. The ability of government to deliver efficient public services contributes not only in creating the context for social and economic development, but also in ensuring steady improvements in the living conditions of citizens – most especially the poor. For example, access to health care, clean water and regular sanitation would help not just in

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controlling the outbreak of diseases and so reduce the mortality rate of people, but also in ensuring the availability of a healthier, more productive workforce that is attractive to investors. By contrast, a poor service environment is more likely to deter or reduce the interest of foreign investors in a country.

With respect to the two countries under study – Nigeria and South Africa — there are strong reasons to consider them to be under-achievers when it comes to the delivery of effective public services. In both countries, there are perceptions that public services are often subsidized for political reasons, with the result that governments in these societies often lack sufficient finances for developing and sustaining efficiently functional public services (Agboluja 2006). Historically, Nigeria had a long period of military rule, which not only distorted the principle of servant leadership, but also rendered its public sector processes weak and unable to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of citizens. With the introduction of the Service Compact with all Nigerians (SERVICOM – “You have the right to be served right”), it was expected that there would be improvements in the quality of services being provided by the Nigerian public sector.

Similarly, South Africa, which had to replace an apartheid-driven policy context that was marked not only by formally constructed structural inequalities in the delivery of public services but also by limited access to opportunities granted to different categories of citizens, has struggled since 1994 to ensure effective service delivery by a post-apartheid bureaucratic system that needs to right historical wrongs. It was for this reason that the Batho Pele (people first) principle was introduced to transform and improve service delivery. Although there have been some improvements in the delivery of services to many of the previously disadvantaged communities, some others have seen virtually no improvements while many of the previously advantaged communities have experienced actual declines in the quality of the services rendered to them. This explains, at least in part, the frequent demonstrations by communities in some provinces across South Africa.

Clearly, the Nigerian and South African examples suggest the need for approaching from other perspectives the issue of effective delivery services. Therefore, this paper aims at mea-

suring service delivery based on the capabilities of the human resources within the public sector as well as on public sector policies and processes of recruitment aimed at achieving quality services. Beyond the introductory section, the paper is divided into six sections. Second, is the section on theoretical concepts, which attempts to situate the discussion within the dominant public service theories. The third section discusses the application of recruitment policies in service delivery. The fourth and fifth sections analyse the concept of service delivery in Nigeria and South Africa, respectively. The next section, which is the sixth section, discusses measures to be taken towards a better public service delivery. Last is the conclusion based on the findings.

Theoretical Concepts

Human existence depends on basic things, such as food, water, shelter and sanitation. According to Marxists, Weberians and some other schools of thought, human beings would cease to exist in the absence of such basic needs and amenities (Sexton 2008). Not surprisingly, governments are often obligated, and judged by their capacity, to provide or ensure the availability of the basic needs of their citizens. Thus, the creation of an enabling environment for meeting the basic needs of citizens is one of the central pillars of good and effective governance. The fact that so many governments fall short of ensuring such access is indicative of the seriousness of the challenges they face in providing basic needs and amenities.

In the pursuit of delivering efficient and effective services, many countries are embarking on different levels of public service reform. Most of these reforms can be linked to “new public management” (NPM), which came into existence in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The emergence of new public management was characterized by the changed role of the state and the growing demands for good governance practices worldwide (Sharma 2007: 4). Within this context, Mongkol (2011: 36) defined NPM as “a set of particular management approaches and techniques which are mainly borrowed from the private sector and applied in the public sector”. NPM is not a precise set of guidelines or a standard package that should be followed entirely; instead, it is a combination of approaches and

techniques that could be applied collectively or partially according to each country's situation and needs (Mongkol 2011: 36). NPM captures management approaches and techniques such as efficiency, effectiveness, delivery, flexibility, measurement, output and equitability (Osborne 2010: 3; Shah and Shah 2006: 6). Though NPM is borrowed from the private sector, the defining goal is the application of its principles in the public sector with the intention of ensuring better services.

However, the application of the concept of new public management and human resource management and recruitment policies in the public sector would ensure the use of the economic market as a model for political and more flexible employment relationships. The resultant effect is a government (probably democratic) that ensures not only that public policies are carried out efficiently, but also responds appropriately to the needs of citizens. Thus, in its conceptualization of effective service, new public management theory is a relentless movement in the direction of greater transparency and accountability in governance (Smith 2008). It is the understanding of effectiveness necessitating greater transparency and accountability in governance that informs the thrust of this paper with respect to the recruitment of human resources for public service delivery in Nigeria and South Africa.

Application of Recruitment Policies in Service Delivery

According to Cole and Kelly (2011: 196), "policies are statements of conduct-principles designed to influence decisions and shape actions". Policies are also seen as the outcomes of government activity (Denhardt 2008: 112). For this reason, policy formulation and policy implementation are presumed to be central to the political process. Policies are drawn up within the context of the organization and its internal and external environment. In the same way, recruitment policies for human resources – whether in small, medium or multinational organizations – are drawn up within the context of the organization and its environment. Recruitment policy defines "the objective of the recruitment and also provides a framework for the implementation of the recruitment program" (Richards 2011: 1). Such a framework includes affirmative action covering mostly ethnicity and religion in

the case of Nigeria, while in South Africa, affirmative action mostly targets gender, race and disability. Taking these factors into account, it is of utmost importance that for any public or private organization to achieve its goals there is the "need to devise certain strategies including the one involving employee recruitment of competent workforce" (Gberevbie 2010: 1448).

Many African countries have spent and are still spending billions of dollars on public service reforms aimed at providing the delivery of quality services to their citizens. Such reforms include the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) introduced by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) with the key aim of rationalizing and standardizing the costs and efficiency of government and governance. In practice, however, governments have found the reform programmes difficult to implement and achieve as a result not only of the socio-political and economic burdens it imposes on the middle and lower classes, but also because of the attendant unintended consequences, such as the social and political instability associated with massive job losses in de-regulated market environments in which local producers are often uncompetitive. Quite central to this lack of competitiveness is not only the fact that foreign producers entering local African markets come armed with huge financial and technological superiority, but also that they come with workforces that are highly skilled and productive. In part, this is because Africa continues to lag behind other regions in terms of its investments in education and talent production. As noted by Saasa (2007: 3), the comparatively low talent output affects the public sector very severely: "The public sector on the African continent has been unable to recruit and retain the needed well-trained and skilled human resource". Perhaps, this is because the public sector is out-competed for talent by foreign companies, which tend to pay better. Further, local firms are also more competitive when it comes to hiring skilled local staff, which further reduces the number of capable people available for recruitment in the public sector. Given that the ability to build a competent public workforce contributes immensely to effective service delivery and poverty alleviation, the scarcity of talent has the net effect of constraining or impeding the capacity of the state to deliver on its mandate and objectives. The inadequacy of talent in the public sector (along

with the general lack of opportunities in the private sector) has contributed over time to a legacy of bloated government departments and systemic inefficiency in many African countries. Given that the large sizes and big staffing budgets of government bureaucracies have not produced commensurate results in the delivery of quality services, the rationalization of the public sector has been a key feature of government reform agendas in many African countries. The reform programmes are focusing on the following:

- 1) Making the public sector efficient and responsive to national needs;
- 2) Enhancing public sector capacity to design and implement appropriate policies for national development;
- 3) Rationalizing public service structure and expenditure in order to meet the government's fiscal objectives (Saasa 2007: 12).

In essence, African governments are seeking to respond to the challenges associated with the imperatives of improving on effective service delivery and development, by working to re-organize their governance systems in a way that will enhance the recruitment of competent and responsive workforces. This entails the implementation of systems and processes for recruitment and retaining the right candidates for the right positions.

Public Sector Service Delivery in Nigeria

The Nigerian civil service is a product of its former British colonial masters, created to implement government policies and programmes. Akinusi (1991), highlighted in Budhwar and Debrah (2001: 176), argues that during colonial rule, the indigenous workers lacked the academic qualifications, training and experience to influence decisions, which were mostly taken by the expatriate staff. Prior to independence in 1960, the outgoing British colonial administration did little to prepare the local population for the management activities and responsibilities that faced them at independence. Furthermore, there was little or no development of the infrastructure needed to train individuals who would manage medium- and high-level bureaucratic positions after the departure of the expatriates. Political independence in 1960 led to the replacement of foreign staff by mainly ill-equipped local employees. In 2012, this pattern is still reflected in

the human resource management and services provided by the different tiers of the Nigerian government. This is despite efforts by various post-independence Nigerian governments to effect changes that would shift the bureaucracy away from its undesirable colonial patterns.

Following a couple of decades of poor results and underachieving political economies, the need for reform of national public sectors across much of the continent has become a regional imperative in Africa with the adoption of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This is bolstered by global initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Motivated in part by the global and regional initiatives and pressures, Nigeria has launched a number of national public service delivery initiatives such as its poverty reduction strategy – the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) – which was introduced by the second administration of former president Olusegun Obasanjo, covering the period 2005-2007. Another national initiative is the Nigerian Vision 20: 2020, which was approved in October 2009, and intends to position Nigeria amongst the first 20 leading economies in the world by 2020. The framework for the Nigerian Vision 20: 2020 was based on the late President Umar Yar' Adua's seven-point agenda, namely: macroeconomic management; improved infrastructure, particularly roads and power; agricultural development; human development; anti-corruption; human security; and peace in the Niger Delta (USAID 2010: 3).

It is important to underscore that public service reform initiatives that seek to achieve better delivery of quality services are not new to Nigerian government officials. Going back decades, national reform initiatives have sought to address a range of issues associated with making government responsive to citizen needs and national imperatives. For instance, a number of public service reform commissions such as the Margan Commission (1963), the Adebo Commission (1971), the Udoji Commission (1972-74), and a study group headed by the Dotun Philips Panel (1985) assessed public service delivery and proffered formal recommendations on budget reforms, public procurement reforms, accounting and audit reforms, tax reforms, introduction of e-government, ports and customs reforms, judicial reforms, pension reforms, public service human resource management/opera-

tions and systems/ value re-orientation and ethics reforms. Moreover, there have been other initiatives since the turn of the 21st century to address what many have come to regard as the bane of Nigeria's public service failures – severe corruption. The resulting anti-corruption reforms saw the establishment of agencies such as the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), the Economic Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Consumer Protection Council (CPC). The idea behind the establishment of CPC was to ensure that quality products and services are provided to all Nigerians (Duruoha 2006: 24 and Nwokocha 2006: 27). In 2004, a new reform project, SERVICOM (Service Compact with all Nigerians), was launched and mandated with key underpinning principles: commitment, prompt and efficient service, dedication, and attention to citizen needs and the right to social and economic advancement. (Servicom Handbook 2006). To drive the point home, the SERVICOM pact is duly displayed in all government ministries and departments.

The fact that a number of Nigerian governments introduced a plethora of national reform initiatives over a period three or four decades is appropriately suggestive of the ineffectiveness of such efforts thus far. Clearly, most of the reforms have come and gone with little or no results to show for the efforts. According to Nwanolue and Iwuoha (2012: 12), most of the reforms share a common problem of inefficiency. An example is the inaccessibility of the services of the Consumer Protection Council. With only one office, its services were rendered difficult and beyond the reach of most of the masses it was envisioned to protect.

Despite abundant natural and human resources and a public sector that serves as the biggest employer of labour in the country, Nigeria's public sector has a massive reputation for gross incompetence across a range of services that directly affect the quality of life of Nigerian citizens. A United Kingdom-led team, which took a diagnostic audit of service delivery in Nigeria with assistance from the Department for International Development (DFID) Nigeria, concluded that government "services are not serving people well. Mainly, they are inaccessible, poor quality and indifferent to customer needs" (Thomson 2005: 1). In 2010, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID 2010:

2) noted that Nigeria's basic education and primary health care systems simply do not deliver acceptable services to their clients. The USAID cited examples:

- 1) The Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), which has not been able to meet the electricity requirements of citizens in terms of quantity and quality; yet, PHCN insists that citizens must pay electricity bills or face disconnection;
- 2) The Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), which has not been able to supply petroleum products regularly despite billions in support outlays; NNPC makes up for its incompetence by importing refined products regularly to meet the petroleum product requirements of citizens;
- 3) The Federal Ministry of Water Resources has not been able to provide adequate potable water; consequently, citizens with the means are often forced to pay for private boreholes or to purchase water from commercial tankers;
- 4) Nigeria's transport system, most especially the road infrastructure, is in a dire state, with the road posing a direct threat to many users;
- 5) The education system is in tatters with poorly maintained facilities and inadequately remunerated and monitored staff; and
- 6) The health care facilities are in deplorable conditions.

Moreover, despite the establishment of anti-corruption agencies, corruption has escalated all the more. To support this contention, a recent report by Transparency International on corruption perceptions in 183 countries surveyed in 2011, Nigeria was ranked 143rd. In 2010, Nigeria was ranked 134th out of 178 countries surveyed, which means it dropped nine places in a year. This ranking was based on perceptions of public sector corruption considering parameters such as bribery of public officials, kickbacks in public procurement processes, embezzlement of public funds, and the effectiveness of public sector anti-corruption efforts. This drop in ranking between 2010 and 2011 shows that all the efforts in curbing corruption in the public sector were not effective (Akosile 2011).

Achieving the objective of vision 20: 2020 will require a high level of bureaucratic professionalism in the area of service delivery. Affir-

mative action within the Nigerian civil service is geared towards representation based on ethnicity. Known as “Federal Character,” the principle, according to the Constitutional Drafting Committee’s report of 1977, refers to:

“the distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, culture, language or religion which may exist and which it is their desire to nourish, harness to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria” (CDC 1977: 1).

In section 14, subsection 3, of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979, the emphasis on balanced representation and power sharing was given formal constitutional backing under the “Federal Character Principle”. According to Babaru (2003: 2), the federal character principle is “a quota allocation to ensure fair representation of every state, region or ethnic group”. The recruitment policies, on the other hand, emphasize three factors:

- 1) The existence of a vacancy;
- 2) The qualifications of an applicant; and
- 3) The application of the federal character principle.

Although the Ayida Review Panel of 1994 had recommended that: “Recruitment into the Federal Civil Service should be based on a combination of merit and Federal Character Principle, but further progression should be based on merit” (Amua 2011). However, this has remained a dream. Indeed, studies have shown that recruitment processes in the Nigerian public sector are mostly influenced by factors such as nepotism, the quota system/ethnicity or federal character principle (and other political considerations), socio-cultural diversity of Nigeria (which includes reliance on culture, language, religion, gender), and merit (educational qualifications, skills and knowledge acquisition) (See Inyang 2011; Fajana et al 2011; Gberevbie 2010; McOliver 2005). However, as noted by Briggs (2007), the recruitment process in the Nigerian public sector has tended to emphasize the federal character principle rather than merit (educational qualification, skills and knowledge acquisition) or any other factor. In addition, the constant interference of the government in the daily operations of the civil service – especially through changes of top officials and massive purges –

has meant that political factors rather than merit alone play a major role in the civil service (Odeniga 2007).

Given this context, recruitment processes often result in the employment of candidates who lack the competency, skills and know-how they need to carry out effectively the tasks for which they have been appointed. The net result of such policy focus, according to the Nigerian Pilot (2012: 2), is:

Low quality expectations and trust in public services on the part of consumers and ultimately, the failure of government programmes and institutional development. Though there have been some improvements here and there, there are still a lot of shortcomings which need to be addressed to meet emerging challenges.

To support this, President Goodluck Jonathan noted that “the developmental challenges Nigeria faces today is inextricably tied to the capacity of Nigeria’s public service to deliver promptly and efficiently the public goods that Nigeria needs to achieve evident accelerated development” (NigeriaFirst 2011: 2).

In conclusion, the Nigerian civil service system remains characterized by its inefficiency and ineffectiveness in planning, implementing and monitoring the delivery of basic social services. This is despite several national commissions and review panel reports and recommendations regarding the review of the Nigerian public service. Although the government of President Goodluck Jonathan is currently awaiting the outcome of yet another report from a presidential committee on public service delivery, many Nigerians view the exercise as another fruitless endeavour. This lack of confidence in the ability of government to deliver on promises and policy has become an endemic feature of the relationship between the governors and the governed within the Nigerian state. Citizens have resorted to self-provision of basic services. However, the recourse to self-provision of public services cannot obviate the responsibility of the state to take on such tasks, especially given that more than 70% of Nigeria’s over 150 million citizens who are poor and live below \$1 a day cannot pave their own roads, secure modern health care, purchase generators, and ensure their own security. In many ways, this lack of confidence has also contributed immensely in shaping the existing socio-political distortions that have given not only a dysfunctional character

to the Nigerian political economy but also forestalls the achievement of service delivery and meaningful and sustained development of the country.

Public Sector Service Delivery in South Africa

The public sector context in South Africa has been fundamentally shaped by the struggle for freedom and the country's apartheid legacy. As such, the African National Congress (ANC) government has been engaged nationally in public service transformation since coming into power on 27th April 1994. The first step taken by the democratic government was the introduction of the Public Service Act, No. 103 of 1994 (Batho Pele Handbook 1997: 17). The act was enacted to modify the bureaucratic system inherited from the preceding apartheid governments into a unified national public service capable of delivering efficient and effective services to all communities in South Africa. It was later amended and modified by legislation as set out in the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (the Batho Pele white paper, 1997). Batho Pele is a Sesotho phrase that means 'People First'. A political initiative first introduced by former President Nelson Mandela on 1st October 1997, the initiative was aimed at transforming the public service into a citizen-oriented organization. The eight principles that underpin the Batho Pele approach are: consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress, and value for money (Batho Pele Handbook 1997: 8).

However, to ensure efficient service delivery and the realization of the government's transformational objectives, the recruitment and selection processes in the public service must comply with the national norms and standards as contained in the Public Service Commission (PSC) Toolkit. Recruitment processes in the South African public sector are guided by:

- 1) Employment Equity Act, 1998 which ensures equal opportunity and fair treatment in the workplace by eliminating unfair discrimination and implementing affirmative action to redress the disadvantaged groups.
- 2) White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997) provides a policy framework that will facilitate the development of human resource practices for efficient and effective public service. In

terms of recruitment, the policy will attract candidates from all sections of the population and maximize recruitment among historically disadvantaged groups. Merit must be defined within the context of employment equity.

- 3) Public Service Regulations, 2001, provides that employment practices shall ensure employment equity, fairness and efficiency and the achievement of a representative public service (Republic of South Africa PSC 2008: 7-11).

However, in the quest to accelerate public service delivery, the South African government identified two alternative service delivery models based on the philosophy of value for money and customer satisfaction. The first model is a public-private partnership (PPP) model which is integral to building and strengthening effective, efficient and prompt procurement of desired service. Anchored on the "value for money" principle, the public-private partnership model focuses on the quick and efficient resolution of service delivery hurdles. The second one is the "shared service delivery" model (SSDM), which is basically about the "sharing" of a service within an organization or group (Kanyane 2010: 90). In other words, the arrangement refers to the provision of a public service by one part of a public body or organization to other parts of the public body or organization that previously handled the same service (APSE 2007: 3). The model allows for the sharing of funding and/or resourcing of a particular service and allowing the providing department to serve, in effect, as an internal service provider. SSDMs are often found in the form of multi-purpose community centres accommodating mobile shared services such as mobile social services, mobile home affairs, or clinics.

The introduction of Batho Pele, PPP and SSDM, appear to have resulted, ostensibly, in significant improvements in the quality of public service deliveries in South Africa as suggested by the now former Home Affairs Minister, Nkosizana Dlamini-Zuma, who claimed that "85% of households had electricity, 74% had access to potable water and 84% had access to sanitation" (News 24 2012: 1). In addition, the long queues usually seen in the Home Affairs offices waiting for services have reduced. Speaking at the national conference of the South African Local Government Association in Septem-

ber of 2012, President Jacob Zuma identified the economic and developmental achievements of democratic South Africa since 1994. They include the following:

- 1) “Over two and half million houses have been built for the poor giving shelter to over ten million people.
- 2) Six million households have gained access to clean water since 1994 and electricity has been connected to nearly five million homes.
- 3) In 1994, only 62% of households had access to clean drinking water, today 93% do.
- 4) In 1994, only 50% of households had access to decent sanitation, today 77% do.
- 5) In 1994, only 36% of South Africans had access to electricity – today 84% do. Today the majority of our people are provided free basic services in water and electricity;
- 6) By 2010, close to 15 million people were receiving social grants. Of those, nine point five million are children aged under 14 years, compared with just 2.4 million in 1996. This has contributed immensely to reducing poverty levels in many households.
- 7) Our programmes have opened the doors of learning. More than eight million children at primary and secondary schools benefit from school-feeding schemes” (The Presidency 2012: 2).

However, with this level of achievement, the question that then arises is: why are there frequent service delivery protests across the provinces? As one researcher noted aptly: “Government attempts to improve service delivery have not been sufficient to assuage the frustration and anger of poor people in South Africa” (Alexander 2012: 1). Dlamini-Zuma’s view is that “sometimes success puts pressure on government. That means that those who do not have electricity become very impatient” (News 24 2012: 1). In addition, President Jacob Zuma pointed out that “Government has achieved exceptionally well in only 18 years of freedom and democracy, and that apartheid is to be blamed for the backlogs and the social ills that South Africa has to reverse. The legacy of colonialism and apartheid cannot be reversed in only 18 years” (The Presidency 2012: 2). Moreover, scholars have cited various reasons for the protests as follows: backlogs and management application problems, dissatisfaction with the de-

livery of basic municipal services such as running water, electricity and toilets (especially in informal settlements), unemployment (officially at around 24%), high levels of poverty, poor infrastructure, the lack of houses, allegations of rampant corruption associated with the alternative service delivery models (PPP and SSD), maladministration, perception of incompetence, disorganization, nepotism within local government structures, and the deployment of ANC ‘comrades’ to positions for which they are not qualified (See Kanyane 2010: 90; Burger 2009: 1; Fourie and de Jager 2005: 230). But as Alexander (2012: 2) underscores: “From press reports and our own research, it is clear that although service-delivery demands provide the principal focus for unrest incidents, many other issues are being raised, notably a lack of jobs.” Alexander argues that while poverty appears to be a common feature of service delivery protests, the link is contextual:

It is notable that the three poorer provinces, which are also the most rural—Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal—have a lower propensity towards unrest incidents than other provinces. The implication, reflected in other studies, is that the rebellion cannot be explained in terms of poverty as such. It is mainly a movement within urban areas, but within those areas most participants and leaders can be regarded as poor and a high proportion come from informal settlements, where services are especially weak (Alexander 2012: 2).

Service delivery protests have a tendency to be violent, destructive of property, and corrosive of a needed sense of cohesion and partnership between citizens and government. Also, violent protests tend to erode investor confidence, which may impact negatively on the ability of the state to secure vital resources for future investments in infrastructure development and job creation activities. Indeed, looking at the plethora of service delivery protests and the latest police statistics, which show that service delivery protests continue unabated in South Africa, Alexander (2012: 2) stated pointedly that “South Africa can reasonably be described as the ‘protest capital of the world’”.

Towards Efficient Service Delivery in Nigeria and South Africa

As previously mentioned the overarching objective of civil service reform by the Nigerian Federal Government is to enhance civil service

efficiency and improved service delivery. According to Oronsaye (2010: 14), civil service reforms aim at the following: attracting new sets of young, bright personnel to be recruited; professional and specialist skills to rejuvenate the service; a more strategic and innovative approach to policy; organizing Government around problems, and not problems around Government; and a sector driven by best practices.

It must be underscored that public service reforms in Nigeria have not been as ineffectual as public perceptions and opinions would suggest. The reforms led to the establishment of the Bureau for Public Sector Reform in 2004 with the core responsibility for coordinating and managing reform processes of the public service. Between 1999 and 2006, “the administrative reform resulted in the removal of about 41,000 inadequate and redundant officers from Civil Service and 38,000 from parastatals, establishment of Servicom institute to train public servants on service delivery of which a total of about 79,000 have been given pre-retirement training” (Oronsaye 2010: 2). Salaries were increased and the structure simplified with most allowances being incorporated in the basic salary payment. A payroll data base was created, which resulted not only in improvements in the control of payroll spending but also in a reduction in the incidents of fraud. Government introduced a value for money audit and promoted an open tender process that allows competitive bidding for government contracts (African Development Bank 2009: 4).

Between the year 1999 and 2007, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy was developed and adopted, there were improvements in the public service management system. For instance, a number of changes were implemented: tariff reform, introduction of the Cash Management Committee, bank consolidation, an ambitious privatization/concessioning programme, and the fight against corruption. Privatization led to deregulation in telecommunications, power and downstream petroleum sectors. In the telecommunications sector, more mobile operators were licensed, which dramatically increased access to mobile telephone lines, lower delivery prices and qualitative improvements in services. Improvements in financial governance also enabled Nigeria to negotiate successfully its exit from the Paris and London Clubs of creditors (African Development Bank

2009: 3-9). The National Strategic Health Development Plan (NSHDP), 2010-14 was endorsed. The plan prioritized primary health care interventions – including maternal and child health, reproductive health, family planning, and the prevention and treatment of diseases that affect women and children - and provided budget figures, indicators, and targets for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (USAID 2010: 3). Furthermore, successes were evident in a reduction of host workers and savings to the Federal Government amounting to N100 billion in salaries; putting an end to the use of the civil service as an employer of the last resort; the reorganization and privatization of some services that were being poorly performed by government agencies; and putting in place systems of performance monitoring for the civil service (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2010: 38; Aminu and Aderinko 2006: 1).

The successes notwithstanding, Nigerians generally believe that there are visible gaps between the policy intentions of the government and policy implementation; thus, the consensus appears to be that service delivery is still at a very low ebb. Despite some successes such as the dramatic changes in the telecommunications sector, most of the reforms did not make a significant impact with respect to perceptible improvements in the quality of service delivery. Citizens are not satisfied due to government detachment from the daily realities of citizen experiences, the inaccessibility of service providers, poor quality services, lack of capability/competence, and poor service attitudes by members of the workforce (Oronsaye 2010: 2). Clearly, the range of public service and macroeconomic policy reforms implemented by various Nigerian governments has yet to register a significant impact on the daily lives of ordinary Nigerians. The lack of transparency, accountability, and fiscal responsibility in the management of government revenues at all levels, and the weak institutional capacity to handle substantial revenues from oil exports and provide needed public services have set economic development back by decades (USAID 2010: 1).

With regard to South Africa, Nkosizana Dlamini-Zuma has identified steps taken by the government to improve service delivery and governance. They include the following:

- 1) As many as 80% of municipalities had established public accounts committees and

- 4,773 officials had received administration training at service delivery points;
- 2) Government was in the process of reviewing about 300 sections of legislation that it believed might be hampering service delivery;
 - 3) With a view to improving infrastructure, R47bn was earmarked for targeted spending over three years in South Africa's 12 major cities;
 - 4) 23 districts encompassing 108 priority municipalities with the highest backlogs in basic services, the biggest financial woes, and highest number of informal settlements had been identified for targeted support and focus" (News 24 2012).
- According to a report from The Presidency (2012: 2),
- 5) The Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, situated in the President's office, is tasked both with the tracking of progress and implementing interventions where necessary;
 - 6) The department of Public Service and Administration is responsible for human resource policy-making in areas such as the training of personnel, remuneration, conditions of service, and labour relations.

Although these measures have been adopted in compliance with the Acts mentioned earlier, the public employment system in South Africa has become heavily politicized as a result of increasing political interference in the administrative processes (Van der Westhuizen 2008: 12). Moreover, in a report by the Public Service Commission, (2008: 21) on an audit of selection processes in selected departments at national and provincial levels, it was found that five out of nine provinces did not comply with the national norms and standards or did not apply best practice in the final selection of the recruitment process as outlined in the PSC Toolkit on recruitment and selection. The resultant effect of such non-compliance reflects in the quality of services provided to the citizens. In the view of Kanye (2010: 81), quality public service delivery will be achieved provided that technical governance mechanisms such as accountability, administrative capacity, and internal operations are well structured and in place to meet the challenges. Administrative capacity is viewed as the recruitment of a capable and competent workforce, which is likely to be achieved by employing the right candidate for the right job.

Thus, government is a complex interaction of systems and people. It will not work effectively if people in the public service do not have the right combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes, and if there is no structured system in place for the regulation of interaction (Saasa 2007: 15). Given this context, it is important to tackle service delivery from another perspective, such as merit principles that will ensure that the right candidates are in the right positions. Clearly, this imperative is complicated significantly by South Africa's jaded apartheid history and legacy, which requires dedicated attention if past injustices are not to be further encased in the social fabric of the South African political economy. Indeed, affirmative action and employment equity policies and associated programmes aimed at empowering previously disadvantaged groups, such as Blacks and White women have their place. Yet, such necessary measures were not intended to blunt the need to ensure that those who access employment or opportunities do so on merit, and will be able to deliver as expected by policy. This will improve not only the quality of services being offered to citizens, but also will smooth social relations by providing a more level playing field for all South Africans.

CONCLUSION

The primary focus of this paper is to highlight the importance of a merit-based recruitment process for better quality service delivery. It is without doubt that organizations cannot perform with absolute professionalism in the absence of qualified and well-motivated personnel. The quality of services provided by government is determined not only by the financial resources available to the state for such tasks, but also by the capability of the employees who must implement relevant policies.

In both Nigeria and South Africa, the public sectors have been affected negatively by severe challenges and limitations in the ability of the state to deliver effectively needed public services. In part, such dysfunctional arrangements have been the net outcome of the efforts by both governments to redress issues of ethnic or racial injustices and social inequality within their countries. Though desirable, the policies have been affected in the implementation pro-

cess by political and other parochial factors that have weakened policy effectiveness, which, in turn, have created obvious public discontent with government performance in both countries.

However, the two publics have reacted a bit differently to their public service delivery experiences. Whereas the Nigerian public has largely responded by resorting to self-help mechanisms such as providing some of the services themselves – for example, provision of wells and borehole water as an alternative to government pipe-borne water, use of generators for supplying electricity, hiring of private security to ensure their safety – South African citizens have resorted to demonstrations and strikes to communicate their displeasure over poor service delivery. Clearly, both types of responses and coping mechanisms for citizens have limited utility in terms of their long-term desirability and sustainability. Given this context, improving the quality of public services is an enduring challenge facing developing countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the quest to achieve developmental goals, African states need transformed public services which are representative, coherent, transparent, efficient, effective, accountable and responsive to the needs of the citizens. Good quality public service will result in improved economic potential, increased growth, and progress in transforming Africa towards achieving the Millennium Developmental Goals.

This paper has drawn on the existing literature on service delivery in developing countries. It is of paramount importance that governments should provide efficient and effective service delivery to their citizens. Efficiency is a key factor in measuring the success (or failure) of public or private organizations; therefore, policies for recruitment and selection are vital for the efficient functioning of the public sector. There is the need for adherence to recruitment policies and processes that emphasize merit-based principles in the recruitment of personnel to ensure that qualified and capable candidates are hired to deliver efficient, quality and timely services. This remains relevant even in complicated contexts such as Nigeria and South Africa, where affirmative actions and social justice imperatives must be factored into government policies on staff recruitment.

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