

■ ARTICLE DE RECHERCHE / RESEARCH ARTICLE

Administrative Efficiency and Service Delivery in Public Institutions in Nigeria

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Résumé

Administrative efficiency has become a central concern in contemporary public administration due to its direct influence on the quality and effectiveness of public service delivery. In Nigeria, public institutions serve as the primary vehicles through which government policies and development programmes are implemented. However, the persistent challenges of corruption, bureaucratic bottlenecks, inadequate human resource capacity, poor accountability systems, political interference, and weak institutional structures have significantly affected the performance of public institutions. This study examines the relationship between administrative efficiency and service delivery in Nigerian public institutions. The study adopts a qualitative research approach utilizing documentary sources such as textbooks, scholarly journals, government publications, official reports, and policy documents. Data were analyzed through content analysis. The study is anchored on Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory, which emphasizes hierarchy, specialization, meritocracy, formal rules, and professionalism as prerequisites for administrative effectiveness. Findings revealed that administrative efficiency significantly influences the quality, accessibility, timeliness, and responsiveness of public services. The study further reveals that despite numerous public sector reforms, inefficiency continues to undermine service delivery across various sectors including health, education, infrastructure, security, and local governance. The paper concludes that sustainable improvements in service delivery require comprehensive reforms aimed at strengthening institutional capacity, promoting accountability, enhancing transparency, and adopting modern management practices. The study recommends increased investment in human capital development, digital governance systems, performance-based management, and anti-corruption measures to enhance administrative efficiency and improve service delivery outcomes in Nigeria.

Mots-clés : Administrative Efficiency, Service Delivery, Public Institutions, Governance, Public Administration, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The effectiveness of government institutions in delivering public services has remained one of the most important indicators of good governance across the world. In every society, government exists primarily to provide services that promote the welfare, security, and development of citizens. Public institutions are established to translate government policies and programmes into tangible benefits for the population through the provision of essential services such as healthcare, education, security, transportation, water supply, electricity, and social welfare programmes (Adamolekun, 2020). Consequently, the efficiency with which these institutions perform their responsibilities determines the extent to which citizens enjoy the dividends of governance.

In Nigeria, the issue of administrative efficiency has attracted considerable scholarly and policy attention because of its implications for national development. Since independence in 1960, successive governments have initiated various reforms aimed at strengthening public institutions and improving service delivery. Despite these efforts, many public institutions continue to face significant challenges that undermine their effectiveness. Citizens frequently complain about delays in obtaining public services, poor infrastructure, corruption, inefficiency, lack of accountability, and poor responsiveness by government agencies.

Administrative efficiency refers to the ability of an organization to achieve its objectives through the effective utilization of available resources while minimizing waste, delays, and operational costs. An efficient administrative system ensures that organizational goals are achieved in a timely, transparent, and cost-effective manner. Within the public sector, administrative efficiency facilitates the implementation of government policies, enhances organizational productivity, and improves service delivery outcomes.

Service delivery, on the other hand, represents one of the primary functions of government. It involves the provision of public goods and services designed to meet the needs and expectations of citizens. Effective service delivery requires adequate financial resources, competent personnel, efficient administrative structures, effective leadership, accountability mechanisms, and supportive institutional frameworks.

The Nigerian public sector has experienced numerous challenges that have affected administrative efficiency and

service delivery. These challenges include bureaucratic red tape, corruption, inadequate funding, poor staff motivation, weak monitoring and evaluation systems, political interference, and obsolete administrative procedures. The inability of public institutions to effectively provide basic services has contributed to poverty, unemployment, social unrest, and underdevelopment (Adebayo, 2024).

Recognizing these challenges, the Nigerian government has implemented several reform initiatives such as the Civil Service Reform Programme, the Service Compact with All Nigerians (SERVICOM), the Treasury Single Account (TSA), the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), and various e-governance programmes. These reforms were designed to improve accountability, transparency, efficiency, and service delivery. However, the effectiveness of these reforms remains a subject of scholarly debate.

The significance of administrative efficiency in promoting effective service delivery cannot be overemphasized. Efficient public institutions contribute to economic growth, social development, political stability, and citizen satisfaction. Conversely, inefficient institutions hinder development efforts and erode public trust in government (Drucker, 2017).

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Administrative Efficiency

Administrative efficiency is a multidimensional concept that has attracted significant attention in public administration literature. It generally refers to the ability of an organization to achieve predetermined objectives through the optimal utilization of available resources. Efficiency emphasizes productivity, effectiveness, accountability, responsiveness, and prudent management of resources.

Within the context of public administration, administrative efficiency involves the effective coordination of human, financial, material, and technological resources to facilitate the implementation of government policies and programmes. It encompasses planning, organizing, directing, supervising, controlling, and evaluating organizational activities in a manner that promotes productivity and accountability.

Administrative efficiency is reflected in the speed and quality of decision-making processes, the competence of

personnel, the effectiveness of communication systems, adherence to established procedures, and the capacity of institutions to achieve desired outcomes.

Administrative efficiency also involves minimizing bureaucratic delays, eliminating waste, reducing corruption, and improving institutional performance. In modern public administration, efficiency has become increasingly associated with innovation, technology adoption, citizen-centered governance, and performance management systems.

2.2 Service Delivery

Service delivery refers to the process through which public institutions provide services to citizens in fulfillment of their statutory responsibilities. It encompasses all activities involved in planning, producing, distributing, and evaluating public services. Effective service delivery ensures that government programmes and policies produce intended outcomes and positively impact citizens' welfare.

Public service delivery covers a broad range of sectors including healthcare, education, security, transportation, agriculture, housing, electricity, sanitation, and social protection. The quality of service delivery is often measured by factors such as accessibility, affordability, responsiveness, reliability, efficiency, and citizen satisfaction.

Effective service delivery is a fundamental component of democratic governance because it demonstrates the capacity of government institutions to respond to citizens' needs. Where service delivery is poor, public confidence in government declines, thereby undermining legitimacy and governance effectiveness.

2.3 Public Institutions

Public institutions are government-owned organizations established to implement public policies and provide services to the public. These institutions operate at federal, state, and local government levels and perform various administrative, regulatory, and developmental functions.

Examples of public institutions in Nigeria include ministries, departments, agencies, commissions, parastatals, public universities, hospitals, local government councils, and regulatory authorities. The effectiveness of public institutions depends largely on their administrative capacity, leadership quality, organizational structures, resource availability, and accountability mechanisms.

3. Theoretical Framework: Bureaucratic Theory

This study is anchored on the Bureaucratic Theory developed by German sociologist Max Weber in 1947. Weber's theory remains one of the most influential frameworks for understanding administrative organization and efficiency in public institutions. According to Weber, bureaucracy represents the most rational and efficient form of organizational structure. He argued that organizations can achieve maximum efficiency through clearly defined hierarchies, division of labour, formal rules and procedures, merit-based recruitment, professionalism, and impersonal decision-making.

Weber identified hierarchy as a fundamental characteristic of bureaucracy. In a hierarchical system, authority flows from higher levels of administration to lower levels, thereby facilitating supervision, coordination, and accountability. The principle of specialization is equally important. By assigning tasks according to expertise and competence, organizations can improve productivity and service quality.

Formal rules and procedures constitute another essential feature of bureaucracy. These rules provide consistency, predictability, and fairness in administrative operations. Merit-based recruitment emphasizes competence and qualifications in personnel selection, enhancing professionalism and reducing nepotism within public institutions.

The relevance of Bureaucratic Theory to this study lies in its emphasis on efficiency, accountability, professionalism, and organizational effectiveness. Many of the challenges facing Nigerian public institutions can be attributed to deviations from Weberian principles. Corruption, political interference, weak accountability, and poor staff competence undermine bureaucratic efficiency and negatively affect service delivery.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative documentary research design. Documentary research is particularly suitable because it enables the researcher to examine existing literature, policy documents, official reports, and scholarly publications relating to administrative efficiency and service delivery in Nigeria.

Data for the study were collected from documentary sources including academic textbooks, peer-reviewed

journals, government publications, official reports, conference proceedings, policy documents, and publications from international organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, and African Development Bank.

The study utilizes content analysis as the method of data analysis. Content analysis involves the systematic examination, interpretation, and synthesis of textual information obtained from documentary sources. Through this method, recurring themes, patterns, arguments, and findings relating to administrative efficiency and service delivery were identified and analyzed.

5. Administrative Efficiency and Service Delivery in Nigeria

Administrative efficiency and service delivery are inseparable components of effective governance. The ability of public institutions to provide quality services depends largely on the efficiency of their administrative systems. In Nigeria, public institutions are entrusted with the responsibility of implementing government policies and delivering essential services to citizens (Ezeani, 2016).

The relationship between administrative efficiency and service delivery is particularly evident in sectors such as healthcare, education, transportation, agriculture, and public infrastructure. Where administrative systems are efficient, services are delivered promptly, resources are utilized effectively, and citizens experience greater satisfaction. The healthcare sector provides a useful illustration: efficient administration contributes to timely procurement of medical supplies, effective management of healthcare personnel, and improved patient care. However, administrative inefficiencies such as corruption, inadequate planning, and poor resource management often undermine healthcare service delivery in many public hospitals across Nigeria.

5.1 Human Resource Capacity and Service Delivery

Human resource capacity constitutes one of the most critical determinants of effective service delivery in public institutions. The success or failure of any organization depends largely on the quality, competence, motivation, and commitment of its workforce. Well-trained and competent personnel are better equipped to perform administrative duties, solve organizational problems, adapt to changing environments, and deliver quality services to the public (Ikeanyibe, 2023).

One of the major challenges confronting public institutions in Nigeria is the inadequacy of skilled and competent personnel. Many government agencies experience shortages of qualified professionals due to weak recruitment systems, political patronage, inadequate training opportunities, and brain drain. In some instances, appointments and promotions are influenced by political considerations rather than merit, leading to the placement of unqualified individuals in positions that require specialized expertise.

Training and development are essential components of human resource capacity building. Continuous training enables employees to acquire new knowledge, improve existing skills, and adapt to emerging administrative challenges. Unfortunately, many public organizations in Nigeria allocate insufficient resources to staff training and development (Olaopa, 2022).

Employee motivation also plays a crucial role in determining service delivery performance. Factors such as adequate remuneration, job security, career advancement opportunities, recognition, and conducive working conditions contribute significantly to employee motivation. However, low salaries, delayed promotions, poor working environments, and inadequate welfare packages have continued to affect the morale of many public servants in Nigeria (Olowu, 2022).

The emergence of information and communication technology (ICT) has further highlighted the importance of human resource capacity in public administration. Modern governance increasingly relies on digital technologies for service delivery, record management, communication, and decision-making. Consequently, public servants must possess adequate digital literacy and technological competencies (Yamamoto, 2023).

Ethical conduct and professionalism are fundamental elements of human resource capacity. Public servants are expected to uphold integrity, accountability, transparency, and commitment to public interest. However, corruption, favoritism, and abuse of office continue to undermine professionalism in some public organizations (Pollitt, 2024).

6. Conclusion

Administrative efficiency remains a critical determinant of service delivery in Nigerian public institutions. The effectiveness of government agencies in meeting citizens' needs depends largely on their ability to manage resources

efficiently, maintain accountability, and implement policies effectively. Despite numerous reforms, challenges such as corruption, bureaucratic bottlenecks, inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity, and political interference continue to undermine service delivery. Strengthening administrative efficiency through human resource development, technological innovation, transparency, and institutional reforms is essential for improving governance outcomes and promoting sustainable national development.

7. Recommendations

- Government should strengthen merit-based recruitment and promotion systems in public institutions.
- Continuous training and capacity-building programs should be provided for public servants.
- Anti-corruption agencies should be empowered to investigate and prosecute corrupt practices effectively.
- Public institutions should adopt modern ICT systems to improve efficiency and transparency.
- Adequate funding should be provided to enable institutions to perform their responsibilities effectively.
- Bureaucratic procedures should be simplified to reduce delays and improve service accessibility.
- Performance evaluation systems should be strengthened to ensure accountability and productivity.
- Citizens should be encouraged to participate in monitoring public service delivery.
- Government should ensure policy consistency and institutional stability.
- Public sector reforms should be regularly reviewed and updated to address emerging challenges.

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