



Change Management and Public Sector Reforms in Nigeria

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Abstract

Change management and Public sector reforms in Nigeria, tries to examine change management and the processes involved. There is a focus on the fundamentals of change management in organizational settings as it is associated with the Nigerian Public sector. The author attempts a review of the reforms process in Nigeria from independence till date, and also looks at the problems that have been associated with it. There is an advocacy for change management process that is more in tune with business management, and a drastic approach is recommended. The author recommends change process referred to as Business Process Reengineering. An attempt is made at explaining what Business Process Reengineering is about, and the basic features are outlined. These features are then compared with those of the present day Nigerian public sector in a bid to show the likely benefits of adopting this change management approach

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Background to the Study

Change is generally known to be a pervasive phenomenon. It usually brings about the introduction and implementation of new ideas, concepts, and philosophies, and is characterized by a process or processes of reorganization and restructuring. It can occur out of necessity or simply out of chance. Change can be planned or can be left to take a natural course. It means to make a difference in the state or condition of a thing or to substitute another state or condition. To change is to make a material difference so that the thing is distinctly different from what it was. (dictionary.reference.com, 2014) It is “the process of transforming the manner in which an individual or organization acts from one set of behaviours to another; may be systematic or planned, or may be implemented in a random manner” (Montana and Chanov 1993, p. 301).

A change process within an organization is more complex than that which has to do with an individual. This is because the process has to be carried out with focus on many individuals and activities. But, “ultimately, the goal of change is to improve the organization by altering how work is done.” (Change-management.com, 2014, p. 2) “Organizational change is a structured approach in an organization for ensuring that changes are smoothly and successfully implemented to achieve lasting benefits.”(Wikipedia.org, 2014, p. 2) It is change that has an impact on the way that work is performed and has significant effects on staff.

Organizational change could be brought about by certain forces, which are within and outside of the organization. Some of the internal forces that necessitate change are the need to adjust the power structure of the organization, as well as the demands and needs of the human resource. External changes may be made compelling for an organization due to changes in customer needs or wants; changes in laws and regulation; issues of technology; changing strategies of competition; among others. But generally speaking, the perceived need for change is usually based on the fact that something wrong has been noticed within the system, and thus corrective measures must be taken to remove the problem.

The process of instituting change has been known to be a problematic one. According to Machiavelli, “there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.” There is first and foremost uncertainty in the outcome of change, as well as the difficulty in its implementation. This is because a lot of people resist change, and do not want to depart from sometimes 'the comfortable status quo', and adopt something they are not sure will guarantee their continued comfort; whether it be in their tasks, their positions or their rewards. This then makes proper change management of utmost importance.

Change management is the duty of organizational managers, which attempts to enhance the process of effecting reordering in the activities of members of organizations and the functioning of the different organs and sections of such organizations towards ensuring deviations from negative trends noticed. This is usually done in order to bring about efficiency and effectiveness within such systems. It is “a structured approach for ensuring that changes are thoroughly and smoothly implemented, and that the lasting benefits of change are achieved.” (Mindtool.com, 2014, p. 2) It has to do with the application of tools

and techniques to manage the people-side of change to achieve a required business outcome. The focus is more on the people, and how they, as individuals and teams, move from the current situation to the new one.

Objectives of the Study

The change management process requires the application of certain sequential steps in an attempt to achieve success at bringing about expected change. These include:

- i. Planning for the change
- ii. Managing the change process
- iii. Reinforcing the change

It also “incorporates the organizational tools that can be utilized to help individuals make successful personal transitions resulting in adoption and realization of change.” (Change-management.com, 2014, p. 3) These tools include:

- i. Individual change model
- ii. Communication
- iii. Sponsorship
- iv. Coaching
- v. Training
- vi. Resistance management

These tools have, and can still be used today in organizations, industries, and even sectors of economies; the Nigerian public sector not being an exception.

Statement of the Problem

The public sector is usually made up of organizations that exist as part of government machinery for implementation of government policies, decisions and are tasked with the delivery of services that are of value to the citizens. In Nigeria, it is made up of two broad categories: the civil service, and what is generally referred to as the public bureaucracy. It is made up of career staff whose appointment, promotion and discipline are under the control of the federal civil service commission, national assembly service, judiciary, the military, police and paramilitary agencies, employees of parastatals, educational and health institutions, etc. (El-Rufai, 2008, Suleiman 2013). According to El-Rufai (2008) the number of workers in the sector as at 2005 was about 3 million, a number considered to be over bloated. Citing the report of the Public Service Report Team (PSRT) September, 2005 the number of core federal civil servants was put at above 1 million, while the estimated number working for the 36 states and the FCT was put at 2 million. Other initial findings of the PSRT were said to be stunning.

“The civil service was rapidly ageing, mostly untrained and largely under-educated. Their average age then was 42 years and over 60% were over 40 years. Less than less than 12% of the public servant held university degrees or equivalent. Over 70% of the service were of the junior grade 01 – 06, or sub-clerical and equivalent skill. About 20% of the public service employees were “ghost workers” – none existing people on the payroll which goes to staff of

personnel and accounts departments. In the FCT, out of an initial head count of 26,000, we found 3,000 ghosts in the first round of audit. By the time we introduce biometric ID and centralized, computerized payroll, we found nearly 26,000 who failed to show up for documentation.” (Public Service Reform Team findings, 2005, as cited by El-Rufai, 2008, p. 2)

It is a known fact that the Nigerian public sector has been bedeviled with numerous problems in the past and also in recent times. These problems have had negative effects on the level of performance and productivity of the sector. This ineffectiveness which has characterized the sector has also had consequences for the development of the effectiveness of government in terms of the application and execution of its fiscal policies.

“It is both a truism that no nation develops beyond the capacity of its public service, and there is broad consensus amongst Nigerians that our public service is broken and dysfunctional. The quality of public servants and the services they provide to our nation are both below expectations.” (El-Rufai, 2013, p. 1)

It is based on this premise that the Nigerian government has attempted the reform of this sector many times in the past. Several commissions and reform teams have been constituted towards the attainment of this end. According to Ogunrotifa (2012), they include:

1. The Morgan Commission (1966)
2. Elwood Grading Team (1966)
3. The Simeon Adebo Commission (1971)
4. Jerome Udoji Commission (1974)
5. Dotun Phillips Commission (1985)
6. Civil Service Reform Decree No. 43 (1988)
7. Alison Ayida Panel (1994)
8. Bureau of Public Service Reform (BPSR) (2003 - 2007)

These are the notable reforms attempts in the history of the reforms processes in the Nigerian public sector. This however does not mean that there have not been others that have not been as prominent.

The Nigerian civil service and indeed the public sector was under the control of the colonial masters before the country's independence in 1960. It was then up to the first civilian regime to manage thereafter. Then civilians were in charge of the system and the entire political process, making changes as the system evolved until 1966 when the military incursions into governance started. In 1979 the second republic was ushered, and civilians enjoyed a brief stint in power till 1983, when the military struck again. Military rule persisted till 1999, when the third republic came into effect. It has persisted till now. All through this period in of time, several interventions have been attempted in at molding and remolding this vital sector of the Nigerian economy with little to show for it.

There is the view in some quarters that the reason for this failure borders around the lack of effective leadership and political will on the part of the Nigerian leadership. Ini Ekott,

commenting in Premium Times of January 24, 2013 cites the Federal Public Administration Reform Programme, FEPAR, (an agency funded by the British government through its Department for International Development) as saying this in an evaluation report covering 2011.

“The Federal Public Administration Programme, FEPAR, said its efforts at assisting with the reforms across government ministries and departments in Nigeria were not backed by sufficient “political and managerial leadership”. Effective political leadership is critical to the success of the programme, as is the political for transforming the public service...Effective cooperation among the central agencies, key ministries and the presidency to coordinate the reform may not materialize due to resistance from vested interests, and those that benefit from the current situation”. (premiumtimesng.com, 2013, p. 1)

Some of the evidence cited by FEPAR is the unnecessary delays the National Planning Commission was causing, and the attempts by some civil servants to frustrate the new reforms that had been initiated. There is also the issue of corruption, ethnicity, and the over bloated nature of the system. Anazodo et al note that

“Corruption still rears its ugly head again after many years of military exit from governance. There is weak national consciousness, due to the earlier introduction of the nationalization and regionalization policies that encouraged ethnicity and sectionalism in the rank and file of the service. There is the multiplicity of classes and grades which brought about over bloating of the number of the civil servants in high recurrent expenditure to the peril of infrastructural development”. (Anazodo, et al, 2012, p. 24)

However, aside from these issues that have been said to be the militating factors against the success of the reform programmes in Nigeria, Olaopa (2012) opines that the public service is one with complex structures, and that this makes the behaviour of people and even outcomes within it unpredictable. This presents a fundamental challenge to reformers. Given this understanding, Olaopa, (2012) puts it, makes it obvious as to what the nature of public sector entails. It is the author's perspective that the staple slogan of the public service all over the world today is that of reinvention, the focus of which is a fundamental shift from the traditional administrative frame work to that of management tactics that is of an enterprise culture. This translates to being able to get things done quickly, cheaply and effectively using an efficient work force. This can only entail deliberate changes to the structure and processes of organizations within this sector in an attempt to make them perform better. It entails a change management process.

If the outlook of the Nigerian public sector should be that of management that is more enterprise in nature, then the structures and mind set of the work force needs to be reordered. If the sector is to be geared toward more efficiency and effectiveness, then things must be done quicker and cheaper, thereby eliminating waste in both time and resources. If all these are to be accomplished, then the system's process needs to be reengineered. And

what other change management process can be as appropriate as “Business Process Reengineering” (BPR).

The Conceptual Framework

The researcher will in this paper attempt to explain the term “Business Process Reengineering”, analyze its features and objectives, as well as, implementation methodology. The important changes that usually characterize organizations that have employed Business Process Reengineering will then be analyzed in the context of the present day Nigerian Public sector organizations. This will be done in a bid to show the likely benefits that could have been accruable had it been applied in the reforms of the Nigerian public sector.

What Business Process Reengineering (BPR)

Globalization of the economy and the liberalization of the trade markets created new conditions in the market place which were characterized by instability and aggressive competition in the business environment. Competition had since been growing steadily with regards to price, quality, and service promptness and delivery (Zigiaris, 2000). This has created the need for organizations to increase efficiency in the application of organizational resources towards meeting the goals of profitability through meticulous organizational procedures that reduce cost and at the same time, the increase quality of products and services rendered to the consuming public. The primary idea it promotes is that sometimes radical redesign and reorganization of an enterprise is necessary to lower costs and increase quality of services and that information technology is the key enabler for that radical change. The literature on re-engineering employs the term processes. Sometimes it is a synonym for activities. Sometimes it refers to activities or sets of activities that cut across organizational units.

Business process re-engineering is also known as business process redesign, business transformation, or business process change management. It can be defined as “the analysis and redesign of workflows within and between enterprises in order to optimize end-to-end processes and automate non-value-added tasks.” (Rouse, 2014, p. 1) It is the “use of scientific methods, models, and tools to bring about the radical restructuring of an enterprise that result in significant improvement in performance.” (Zigiaris, 2000, p. 1) BPR seeks to help companies radically restructure their organizations by focusing on the ground-up design of their business processes. BPR emphasizes a holistic focus on business objectives and how processes relate to them, encouraging full-scale recreation of processes rather than iterative optimization of sub-processes.

Reengineering starts with a high-level assessment of the organization's mission, strategic goals, and customer needs. Basic questions are asked, such as "Does our mission need to be redefined? Are our strategic goals aligned with our mission? Who are our customers?" An organization may find that it is operating on questionable assumptions, particularly in terms of the wants and needs of its customers. Only after the organization rethinks what it should be doing, does it go on to decide how best to do it.

BPR aims to make the structure of an organization serve the flow of products/services and result in the production of leaner and fitter organizations. A typical BPR project consists of the following main stages:

- i. Identify business processes
- ii. Review, update & analyze as-is business processes
- iii. Design to-be business processes
- iv. Test & implement to-be business processes

BPR projects involve modern methodologies, notations and technologies (i.e. modeling tools), that are designed to facilitate, maximize expected results, enabling process maintenance and adjustment, while the organization and its business environment change over time. Such projects can also address any horizontal (department) or vertical (end-to-end process) subset of an organization, according to business goals. Furthermore, they can extend to IT implementations (i.e. Business Process Management) and/or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) definition and monitoring. (relational.gr, 2014).

Objectives of BPR

On application of BPR to an organization, the focus is usually on the following objectives:

1. Focus is on the customer
2. Dramatic reduction in the time use to complete tasks (speed)
3. Cutting major tasks of cost and capital, throughout the value chain (compression)
4. Obsession for superior services and value to the customer (quality)
5. The use of adaptive processes and structures to changing conditions and competition (flexibility)
6. Leadership through imaginative change, which provides competitive advantage to the organization (innovation)
7. Drastically improving efficiency and effectiveness (productivity)

Implementation Methodology for BPR

Business process reengineering is the objectives of a technique used to attain objectives which generally aim at drastically increasing quality and productivity, while at the same time focusing on the customer. In order to be able to achieve this, the project implementation stage must follow some methodology. This has to do with the application of certain important actions within the organization. According to Zigiari, 2000, these include:

1. Selection of strategic processes that require redesign
2. Simplify new processes (minimize steps, optimize efficiency)
3. Organize employee for each stage of the implementation, and designate a project coordinator
4. Organize the workflow (documents transfer and control)
5. Assign responsibilities and roles for each process
6. Automate processes using information technology
7. Train the project team to efficiently manage and operate the new process
8. Introduce the redesigned process into the organizational structure

Zigiaris (2000) also points out that success or failure depends on the existence of an effective and actionable vision. Vision here refers to a clear articulation of future state of the organization after implementation.

Basic Features of Business Process Reengineering

In any organization where BPR is implemented, the following would usually characterize its operations:

1. Several jobs are combined into one
2. Decision making become part of the job of employees (employee empowerment)
3. Steps in the process are performed in normal order, and several jobs get done simultaneously
4. Processes have multiple versions
5. Work is done where there is the most sense
6. Controls and checks and other none value added work are minimized
7. Reconciliation is minimized
8. A single point of contact is provided to costumers
9. A hybrid centralized/decentralized operation is used

According to zigiaris, 2000, in order to be able to reflect these features and thus bring BPR to bear in an organization, it is assumed that all current processes applied in running a business are inapplicable, and it is suggested that new processes be implemented. This because BPR usually focuses on very ambitious outcomes, and would require very sophisticated supporting information systems, as well as a transformation from the traditional organizational structure to a network type organization.

BPR Features and the Nigerian Public Sector

The features of BPR will definitely be reflected on an organization whose processes have been reengineered. If the operational processes of the Nigerian public sector had been reengineered, it would definitely bear the feature of BPR as listed above. These features are analyzed, showing how they would reflect on the Nigerian public sector thus:

1. Several Jobs are Combined into one

This is a feature that is not found in the Nigerian public sector. It is a known fact that Nigerian public sector organizations are over bloated. This is a statement attributed to the Federal Public Administration Reform Programme Evaluation of 2011. This has obvious implications for the system. There is bound to be huge amounts of money spent on the payment of wages for services that could have been performed by fewer people, thereby constituting inefficiency in the application of scares funds. El-Rufai (2013) refers to the report of the 2005 Public Service Reform Team report as saying that most states in Nigeria spend as much as 50% of the annual budgets on payment of salaries.

2. Decision making become part of the job of employees (employee empowerment)

This is totally none existent in the Nigerian public sector. The sector is modelled towards bureaucracy. According to Degem (2013), bureaucracy applies a system which characterized

by rules and procedures, impersonal relations, fairly rigid hierarchy of authority, responsibility and relationship aimed at achieving control and coordination. In large organizations. Employees are given the orientation of following instructions from superiors strictly, and decision making is an exclusive preserve of the different levels of the management cadre. On application of BPR processes are not only compressed *horizontally*, but *vertically* as well. This being so, workers do not have to refer to a manager for decisions; workers are able to make the decision themselves. Decision making becomes part of the work.

3. Steps in the process are Performed in normal order, and several jobs get done Simultaneously

In re-engineered processes, work is sequenced in terms of what needs to follow what, not in an artificially imposed straight-line sequence. This allows for concurrent processing, reducing the time a process takes to complete. This is not a trait in the Nigerian public sector as again the bureaucracy does not permit this. Every protocol is ordered, and is according to pre-designed format.

4. Processes have Multiple Versions

This enables the economies of scale that result from mass production, yet allows customization of products and services. Re-engineered processes are geared towards being able to meet industrial scale standardization, while also taking care of multiple customers at the same time. What this translates to is being able to produce at large scale, maintaining quality that is unique, and delivering service that required by different clients and markets. What is therefore required is multiple versions of the same process, which can serve the purpose of the consumer, which is in the case of the public sector, the government and the general public. Public sector organizations in Nigeria have one and the same process for every activity and situation. For example, there are laid down procedures for handling financial issues (financial regulations), and many other regulations which spell out in strict terms how things are to be done.

5. Work is done where there is the most sense

This implies that work is shifted across organizational boundaries. Functional specialization is broken down. The need to integrate related pieces of work performed by separate organizational units is minimized. This done allows many section of the system to be able to handle similar matters at the same time. It is a norm with the Nigerian public sector organizations to have designated units that handle specific tasks or duties.

6. Controls and checks and other none value added work are Minimized

Re-engineered processes use controls only where it makes economic sense to do so. Aggregated or deferred controls are used. Control is used to working against patterns of events, rather than individual instances. This serves time, and also reduces the number of personnel needed in the control chain. This is not the case with Nigerian public sector organizations. Due to the nature of its bureaucracy, procedure must be followed as required by laid down regulations.

7. Reconciliation is Minimized

This is done by cutting back on the number of external contact points that each process has. This serves to reduce the chances of inconsistency in data collection and processing, which could lead to poor decision making. The implication of this is that as much as possible all processes of the done by the organization should be carried out from within the organization and by members. In this regard, organizations in the Nigerian public sector, due to their nature, structure and bureaucracy carry out their work processes to a large extent, independent of contact outside their system. They are organizations that have different departments and units within them that can handle and specialize in many different activities.

8. A Single Point of Contact is provided to Costumers

A reengineered organization should have a single point of contact for customers. This serves to provide information and other enquiries of the customers. The importance of having a single contact is that tendency for the costumer to be miss informed ism reduces as the contact point is furnished with all the information that should be given to the costumer. Unnecessary information does not get out, and the organization gets to limit the number of personnel put to the task. Nigerian public sector organizations have no such arrangement. One can work into virtually any office to make enquires. This can live room for misinformation and can also distract workers from routine their tasks.

9. A Hybrid Centralized/decentralized Operation is used

Information technology, which is a necessity in BPR, enables organizations to operate as though the units were fully autonomous, whilst drawing on the benefits of centralization (improved coordination, governance and economies of scale). This is not the case with public sector organizations in Nigeria. They are generally very backward when it comes to the understanding and application of information technology to their work processes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is no reason why the Nigerian Public sector cannot be a functional, efficient and effective system capable of serving the needs of the country for which it was established. What it takes is the political will to see some of the changes that are required through to logical conclusions. The changes required are drastic ones, but they are achievable. It was recommends that change process referred to as Business Process Reengineering. An attempt is made at explaining what Business Process Reengineering is about, and the basic features are outlined.

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