

Developing the Vision and Mission of Public Enterprises in Nigeria: Paradigm shift from the Status Quo to Global Best Practices

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Abstract

The paper centres on developing the vision and mission of public enterprises in Nigeria. This becomes imperative because of the ways and manners that public enterprises in Nigeria over the years went about their business without clear focus of the vision and mission by which they were established. The paper has the objective of proffering solutions to the existing problems and challenges that hindered the realization of the set goals of public enterprises in Nigeria. Many literature were reviewed and the paper adopted situational theory as the theoretical foundation of analysis. Content analysis method was used in data collection. The study identified some lapses that vitiated the relevance and justification of public enterprises in Nigeria, among which are: over planning, tribalism, bad leadership, lack of professionalism, corruption etc. and finally, the study suggests possible ways out of the problems such as: change management, crises management, professionalism, strategic planning among others.

Keywords: Vision, Mission, Public Enterprises and Global Best Practices.

Introduction

In most countries of the world, particularly the developing ones, the decades following World War II (particularly, the 1960s and early 1970s) witnessed a massive intervention of government in national economics. (Ezeani, 2006). It therefore becomes one of the ways through which the government intervened in the economies of these countries.

Public enterprises were equally seen as veritable tools achieving national socio-economic development. Thus, since three decades or over, successive governments have used public enterprises as tools of public intervention in the development process.

Public enterprises can be defined as legally constituted bodies operating services of an economic or social character or both on behalf of the government. (Ezeani, 2006). Public enterprises are non-profit oriented organizations that have their objectives among others, the provision of social goods and services and which is either partly owned or fully owned by the government (Okpata, 2004).

According to Adanmolekun (2002:28) A public enterprise is an organization that is set as a corporate body and as part of the governmental apparatus for an entrepreneurial or entrepreneurial- like objectives.

In the words of Onyeishi (1996:36):

Research and statistics provide that public enterprise management assumes significant proportion in response to the increasing needs for the state to widen its areas of intervention into the private lives of citizen.

The above assertion by Onyeishi led credence that what brought about the emergence of public enterprise management in civil society is the necessity to yield to the demands of the social contract theorists. Another reason why government involves in business through the incorporation of its own enterprises is aimed at breaking the myths and monopoly of the private sector economics as well as providing the citizens particularly the common people social and welfare facilities and infrastructure.

In furtherance of the philosophy behind government going into business,

Okpata (2004) explicates that:

- The desire to assure government control over strategic sector of the economy. E. g. central Banking, road construction, broadcasting etc.
- The need to ensure state control of key profitable enterprises with a view to generating revenue to add to available national capital for financing development programmes and projects.
- The desire of some socialist oriented regimes or government to use state control of key profitable enterprises to pursue the objectives of preventing the concentration of wealth in the hands of few individuals.
- The need to provide employment for the citizen especially where private sectors offer few limited employment opportunities.

Since 1980's some development and developing countries have embarked on reforms of their public enterprises to operate in line with the global best practices and to develop strategic vision and mission of their public enterprises. Countries like Britain, the United States, Newzealand etc underwent reforms to achieve a combination of the following:

- To ensure profitability by avoiding trading losses.
- To avoid liquidity crises and rising debts.

- To ensure positive returns on investments in restructured enterprises and improve the managerial and operational performance of those enterprises that will remain in the public sector.
- To encourage wider share ownership, especially among the lower income groups.
- To prevent public enterprises from being an ever increasing burden on the government budget and to facilitate their access to capital market. These are the global best practices of public enterprises. And for these to be obtainable in any public enterprise the world over, there is need for developing the vision and mission of such public enterprise in line with current public sector management in this 21st century and beyond.

Statement of the Problem

The performance of most public enterprises in both developed and developing countries has been generally disappointing. (Zeani, 2006), Most public enterprises operate at a loss and therefore, constitute massive drain government resources through transfers and subsidies, (Obadan 2000).

In Africa, the poor performance of public enterprises attracted a great deal of criticisms particularly, in the 1980's as the macro-economic policy environment arising from the impacts of global economic crisis, became less accommodating to the resulting inefficiency in resource allocation. (Okafor and Udu, 2002).

The abysmal performances of the public enterprises are reflected in corruption, inefficiency, failure to meet intended objectives, poor management and lack of well-articulated vision and mission of organizational statements, In the words of Onah (2008:4)

What sets most successful organizations apart is how they manage their human and material resources, The ability to achieve and sustain competitive advantage lies within the work force.. what keeps some executives up at night are decisions about human resources that are rather difficult and delicate, how to select future leaders, how to motivate workforce for good performance and how to control labour cost while still treating people fairly.

Unfortunately, however, the public enterprises in Nigeria are plagued with what Egonmwan and Ibodje in Onah (2010) called 'Pig Push strategy' aspiring to develop all areas of the organization at the same time without any strategic means mapped out for that. No vision or mission statements are adequately pursued with vigour. (Boxall, 2003)

Government over the years had embarked on reforms in order to revitalize public enterprises in Nigeria, but they have not yielded positive results. For example, since 1980's there were attempts by governments to privatize and commercialize certain key sectors of the economy. But the results obtained were abysmal performances of those sectors privatized or commercialized as most public enterprises operate at losses, and therefore constitute massive drain on government resources through transfers and subsidies (Obadan, 2000:10)

Again, it has been noted by Umezurike (2005:215) that the public enterprises in Nigeria had enjoyed the following transfer in 1998 alone:

• Subsidized foreign exchange	#12.5 Billion
• Import duty waivers	#12.5 Billion
• Tax exemption arrears	#15.0 Billion
• Unremitted revenue	#29.5 Billion
• Loans and guarantees	#16.5 Billion
• Grants/subventions	#35.0 Billion
Total	#108.5 Billion

Further, over \$100 Billion had been sunk in to public enterprises in Nigeria between 1975 and 1995(Umezurike, 2005: 125), But there are no positive results to commensurate or justify the subventions and grants over the years

Furthermore, Nigerian public enterprises have not been immune from cancer of planlessness and lack of ideological focus. If we know that planning precedes every organizations activity, we ought not to toy with it. The relevance of strategic planning in any organization is very imperative that we can safely conclude that any organization that fails to plan has planned to fail. No wonder most public enterprises in Nigeria over the years had sunk into oblivion even at a point of remaining insolvent despite huge amount of funds that are yearly sub-vented to them without any meaningful progress. (Duru and Anigbata, 2015).

Most importantly, is lack of disciplines, vision and mission statements. Organization summarizes their goals and objectives in vision and mission statements. Both of these serve different purposes for an organization. While a vision statement outlines what an organization wants to be in the future, mission statement describes that ways, manners, processes and how the stated vision should be gone about. This is a very serious missing link that has created a heavy Lacuna and Wounds that many organizations the world over and in Nigeria in particular are suffering. Any organization be it private or public that losses focus of these 'prisms' is bound to hit the rock. It is based on the aforementioned anomalies that the need to present a brief paper on the developing the vision and mission of public enterprises becomes imperative.

Theoretical Anchorage

Hardly do we discuss and analyze concepts meaningfully in social sciences without linking them to or understanding them from some theoretical Viewpoint or orientation (Onah, 2008). It is on the basis of this that the study adopts situational theory. The theory was propounded by Fielder .A (1967). It emphasizes the fact that what managers/organizations do in practice depend on given circumstances is situated to situations. It takes cognizance of not only a

given solution on behaviour pattern of an enterprise, but requires that managers/organizations stake into account the realities of a given situation when dealing with problems, applying techniques and other strategic organizational objectives.

The theory rejects the idea that there is no one best way of managerial pattern. The proponents of this school equally see administration and decision making as being influenced by a pendulum in a continuum of internal and external environmental variables. Most importantly is the recognition of the fact that the art of management takes precedence over the science of management in every decision or theoretical applications. Organization's circumstantial dispositions and exigencies should be accorded with due cognizance (Duru and Anigbata, 2015).

Theoretical Justification

The theory was adopted because it treats the variables in the study. Taking full cognizance that management unlike law is not entirely based on precedents. That in this contemporary era, organization should be managed with flexibility, taking note of the environmental variables, challenges, intended and unintended consequences that may characterize decision or mission of that organization. In this era also, application of discretion and managerial acumen remain the answer to dynamic organizational vagaries and exigencies. (Barney, 1995).

Conceptual Explication

We turn from comprehensive, general plans to more focused ones such as contingency plans that define an organizations response to specific situations such as emergencies or setbacks (Sterling, 2011:227). In order to develop a clear mission and vision of an organization there are important things to bear in mind. One of such things is contingency plan. It is good to state a vision, but more important is to develop the mission i.e. ways to achieving the goals (visions) otherwise it becomes a mere fantasy.

What then are vision and mission development? They are the adoption of means, steps, strategies, ways and formats of pursuing already stated objectives (vision). A mission statement talks about the present leading to its future. The means of achieving the goals with set out strategies. Vision is your set goals, i.e. organizations set goals that it wants to actualize. It lists where you/ organization wants to see itself in the near future. A mission may change but the vision remains sacrosanct. In developing a statement (vision/mission) these pertinent questions should be borne in mind: what do we do today to achieve target? For whom do we do it? What are the benefits and challenges that are likely to surface? When do we want to reach a stated stage? What are the Purpose and values of the organization? What are the responsibilities of the organization towards the clients? Etc. If an organization is able to develop strategies and plans of

tackling these vital problems, it will sustain the interests of their customers and clients and also maintain competitive advantage. According to Boxall (2002), the mission statement guides the day-to-day operations and decision making of the organization. It helps in tactical planning and "rallying the troops" around a common near-to medium term goal. The mission statement helps members of the organization get on the same page on what they should do and how they should do it. The vision statement is, in a sense loftier. It outlines the worldview of the organization and why it exists. It attracts people not just employees but also customers and vendors who believe in the vision of the organization.

In the words of Armstrong (2009: 403):

The formulation of corporate strategy and vivid vision and mission statement is best described as a process for developing a sense of direction, making best use of resources and ensuring strategic fit.

One of the major mistakes many managers make in developing company's organization strategy is basing their assumptions on the questionable manner, that the future will always resemble the past to Heller (1972). This is a fallacy. Strategy formulation is not necessarily a deterministic, rational and continuous process, as was pointed out by Mintzberg (1987) He argued that rather than being consciously and systematically developed, strategy reorientation happen in what he calls 'brief quantum loop'.

Development of vision and mission of public enterprises is largely about integration and adaptation. It concern is to ensure that:

1. Human Resource Management is fully integrated with strategic needs of the firm.
2. Human Resource policies cohere both across policy areas and across hierarchies.
3. Human Resource practices are constantly adjusted, accepted and used by line managers and employees as part of their everyday work.

More importantly, the resources and capabilities of a firm are central considerations in developing vision and mission: they are the "primary constants" upon which a firm can establish identity and frame its strategy and they are primary sources of organizations profitability and competitiveness (Grant, 1991).

Pitfalls of Public Enterprises in Nigeria

Public Enterprises in Nigeria are bed evil by so many challenges and institutional weaknesses. Some of these pitfalls and short comings will be enumerated hereunder:

1. **Trying to do too much:** According to Sterling (2011), it is easy to be impressed by the scope of a problem and to want to solve it all at once. Yet an incremental approach,

although not as intellectually pleasing as a comprehensive approach, may be more realistic to implement. Public Enterprises in Nigeria do make bogus plans, trying to solve and accommodate all vagaries and problems at a time. In planning, there are rooms for emergencies, exigencies and unforeseen circumstances. There is no way a plan can solve all existing problems at a time. But during the planning, execution or evaluation, some possible problems may emerge which will be taken note of and the problems will be integrated in the subsequent alternatives. In the words of Egonwan and Ibodje (2001) Public Enterprises in Nigeria are often over-ambitious, trying to accomplish too many objectives at once without considering the conflicting and competing priorities.

2. **Expecting Continuance of the Status Quo:** Duru and Anigbata (2015) submit that management unlike law is not entirely based on precedent. What happened in the past and was solved by any means may not likely be solved by the same means or measures. Circumstantial dispositions vary. And you cannot expect the problem to be solved in similar way by different managers. Unfortunately in the context of Nigeria's Public enterprises managers and executives do maintain status quo in taking decisions and in application of organizational policies and techniques. A typical Nigerian manager in Public enterprises often shun the use of discretion, he often looks at the predecessors decisions and apply them to the present organization even if the organizational circumstantial dispositions are quite different. This is a pitfall!
3. **Over Planning:** Planning is the most basic and essential function of management. This is because other functions like: organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, controlling etc draw their relevance and are predicated on it. (Duru and Anigbata, 2015). It can be affirmed that no rational decision making could result devoid of planning. In fact, planning as a managerial function is so basic, fundamental and exhaustive that it can safely be concluded that any organization that fails to plan, has planned to fail.

However, it is equally important to take precaution in order to avoid over planning. When you over plan, you make nonsense of all the plans. This is a fundamental problem in Nigerian public enterprise. Planning has steps and they are pre-arranged sequentially in order of precedence and priority. The planner must take into account that he/she is planning under dynamic, unstable and unreliable circumstances. Most important is the candid recognition that planning is futuristic and as such, flexibility, adjustment and dynamism should be introduced into the plan (Master plan) so that in any situation the organization finds itself, it may surmount the turbulence and tempest with some degree of certitude.

But in the public enterprises here in Nigeria, the managers are very good in making bogus plan to accommodate 'everything and anything' so to speak! Whenever a plan lacks the very ingredients that serve as shocks absorber, the applicability and effectiveness of such plan/planning must surely be in doubt.

4. **Getting emotionally involved:** planning should be devoid of sentimentalism. It (emotion) should be removed from any planning because it blinds and mortgage the future of any plan. This is because, when managers get emotionally involved in their plan, they resist changes in it. This emotional sentiments and the likelihood have dealt with public enterprises in Nigeria and have bound them captives of: ethnocentricity, parochialism, nepotism, tribalism, statism and 'Nigerianism'. For any plan to see the light of the day and achieve the set goals and purposes for which it was made, this canker worm must be eliminated.
5. **Tribalism/Statism:** Tribalism or statism can be defined operationally as giving undue advantage to a particular person(s) because he/she comes from a named tribe or state. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-tribal, multi-lingual and multi-cultural nation. There are lots of gaps in culture and religion as well as avalanche of psychological distances between the various ethnic groups in the country. Giving by this development, if a person from tribe or state happens to be in a helm of affair in any public enterprise, he/she often recourse to recruiting, employing and promoting the people from his tribe or state even if these people are not qualified to be promoted or employed. This is a very serious issue that calls for urgent national address. People are endowed with potentials and unique talents. But they are left untapped due to tribalism. There is no way public enterprises can thrive in an atmosphere of rancour, suspicion and parochialism. This is a shortcoming.
6. **Frequent Change in Government Policies:** According to Onah (2010). the frequent and unpredictable changes in government, especially during the military reginmes created rooms for uncertainty in the public enterprises. Oladapo (2004) X-rays the problem and terms it as \$institutional/structural inconsistencies and discontinuity". The culture of continuity of government programmes or policy is neither demonstrated nor sustained. There are lot of abandoned projects and programmes in the public sector due to policy in consistency. Punctuality and consistency are the very backbone of any business and as such when they are not there, the gap that they close must be left for all to stare.
7. **Bad Leadership:** Achebe (1983) in his submission opines thus:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmarks of the leadership...the above assertion applies to political and managerial leaderships. Hence it can be safely concluded that the leadership problem in Nigeria is systemic...

This assertion was equally supported by another renowned scholar, Orife (2001:80) as he aptly captures the decay and indiscipline in the Nigerian public enterprises in the following words:

The right type of leadership that can propel these enterprises for the moment and navigate the future efficiency must think globally, anticipate opportunity, create shared vision,

develop and empower people, appreciate cultural diversity, build team work and partnership, embrace changes, apply technological savvy, encourage constructive challenges, ensures customer satisfaction, achieve competitive advantage, demonstrate personal mastery, share leadership and values.

Regrettably and quite unfortunately, these qualities have taken flight from Nigerian public enterprises.

- 8. Corruption and Indiscipline:** The level of corruption been perpetrated by some heads of Nigerian's public enterprises can be measured with 'geometric ruler of corruption'. The type of corruption in Nigerian public enterprises is systemic corruption. In fact, it can be safely adduced that it is endemic and pandemic in the public enterprises in the country. Billions of naira had been sunk by successive governments to revamp and revitalize the entire system of public enterprises, but unfortunately, the management and the top echelon of the public enterprises often liaise with some corrupt politicians to siphon the public funds that are sub-vented or appropriated for the betterment of the (corporations) public enterprises. For the vision and mission of public enterprises in Nigeria to thrive, corruption must be fought head on and those indicted sent to dance the tune of the law so that anybody that plans to siphon public fund will have are-think.
- 9. Ignoring Unintended Consequences:** According to Sterling (2011), public policy experts have aptly named the disjunction between intentions or purposes of public administrators and the outcomes of public policy as 'unintended consequences'. This is true because one cannot predict with any exactitude or certitude what the reaction to ones actions will be. Why? It is because planning accommodates bargaining, alternatives and compromise among many participants with various interests, values, and degrees of influence. Therefore, predicting how all these participants will behave or interact is, to say the least difficult. For example, an action in a plan may contain good intentioned projects that will help to restore the dignity of the citizens say, a community. If that community happens to take pride in masquerade and it happens that the project will disorganize their values, it becomes a problem to the inhabitants of that village despite the fact that the project will alleviate their plights.

Unfortunately, plans in Nigerians public enterprises do not accommodate or create dynamism or shocks absorbers for these unintended consequences. Even as government tries to build any infrastructure in any community, there should be (EIA) Environmental Impact Assessment of such infrastructure, during when they will identify these unintended consequences and provide means of solving any problems that may rise from them (Kanter, 1984).

Lack of Professionalism (Technocracy): If there is anything that needed urgent address in Nigerian public enterprises, it is professionalization. Professionalism demand that an accountant

should head accounts department; a seasoned a bureaucrat should supervise administration section and a medical practitioner oversees the affairs of medical department. But in Nigerian context, the reverse is the case. A situation whereby an animal scientist heads an engineering department; and a medical practitioner oversees accounts department is an absurdity. It is what Asogwa (2001) called 'transcendental absurdity or intellectual absurdity of euphoric dimension'. One needs no prophet to tell one that there is no way such organization can thrive. Thus it amounts to putting a square peg in a round hole or putting the cart before the horse what a monumental tragedy? (Barney, 1995).

Way Forward

There is no problem that has no solution. The first step to solving a problem is problem identification. Thus, there are various short comings that bedevil the successes and goal of the public enterprises in Nigeria. They have been highlighted. The second step is putting the solutions into action. Therefore, the following measures or strategies can be used to sanitize the entire public enterprises in Nigeria.

Below are some of the Measures:

- a. Making use of contingency plans:** Contingency plans define very clearly organizations responses to specific situations such as emergencies or setbacks. It accommodates the vagaries of any unforeseen circumstances that may hinder the organizations set goals. These contingency plans also take care of unintended consequences in plan-thereby preventing organizations from sudden shocks due to reactions from the master plan. Public enterprises in Nigeria should key into this measure so that heir set goals and objectives will be realized.
- b. Change Management and Crisis Management Planning:** In every planning, there should room for managing change and crises. Change is the only thing that is permanent on earth. If the public enterprises in Nigeria can carve a niche for accommodating changes and develop management of crises apparatus, sky will be their limit. Every organization undergoes mutation (change). There is no static organization and because of this, plans and planning should be carefully mapped out for such organization's circumstantial dispositions (Ndubuisi, 2000).
- c. Application of Professionalism in the Public Enterprises Affairs:** In today's modern world and which has now become a global village, professionalism is the key point to opening doors of business opportunities and achieving a well-deserved competitive advantages over other firms. If the public enterprises in the country can shun tribalism, nepotism and sentimentalism in their selection, promotion and service delivery, they must definitely make head way. But a situation where bunch of mediocrities and 'nonentities' are engaged to be in the helm of affair because of their political/religious connection or affiliation calls for urgent address.

- d. Planning and Strategies Management:** Duru and Anigbata (2015) define strategic management as proactive management of the human and material resources of an organization to achieve predetermined objectives. Planning on the other hand is deciding in advance organizational course of actions as regards to the what, how, when and by whom (Billy, 2004). When an organization plans very well, it will survive the tides and turbulences of the dynamic and unstable environment of business, It will take into account the challenges of the future, present and weigh them with the past antecedents and produce results that will help to guide the organization, Any organization that lacks this fundamental and basic fact of business acumen is bound to wind up.
- e. Good Leadership or Responsible Leadership:** There is nexus between good leadership and organizational goal achievement. If the leadership is good, it will reflect in the entire organization, but if it is bad, it will equally showcase in the entire system, There should be leadership by example or what is called responsible leadership. Leaders who will take responsibility of their action and inaction and take the blame without passing the buck. Good leadership also demands that corruption and corruptive tendencies should be eliminated and transparency, accountability and probity should reign; thereby giving no room for profligacy and prodigality in company's financial management.

Conclusion

The paper has examined the challenges that public enterprises are facing in Nigeria especially as they regard to vitiating the vision and mission of public enterprises. The prisms upon which any business organization be it government or private is viewed is the vision and mission of that organization. When any organization that has in its vision or mission to achieve certain goals does not realize them, it can be safely adduced that such organization has failed in realizing its vision or mission. We believe that if all gaps identified in this paper are adequately filled, the purpose of existence and creation of public enterprises in Nigeria will be realized. This is vision and mission of every responsible organization set to realize in order to remain competitive in the global business in the contemporary era in which global best practices are sought by all organizations the world over.

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