

# POLICY REFORMS IN NIGERIA: THE IMPERATIVES OF INFORMATION, EQUITY AND EFFICIENT HUMAN RESOURCE

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## ABSTRACT

Within the fulcrum of policy reforms and shifting role of the state, partnership, participation and empowerment have taken the frontal strategies for co-opting the private sector groups, civil society and the local publics as ways of beating down poverty. The core issue in policy reforms is market economy or the Washington consensus variables viz. deregulation, privatisation, trade and financial liberation as well as property rights. The post Washington consensus has shown that market do fail, especially where state has failed to provide appropriate and prudent regulatory compliance measures. State remains the black box of problem-solving capacity in the face of its diminishing dominance in national economy, by creating environment for diverse participation and promotion of balance among all stakeholders. The paper utilizes public policy and development analytical tools, insisting that where information, human and institutional capacities, as well as equity in public participation are adequately integrated as process inputs, reforms will prove to reduce poverty, rather than stagnate it. This sense of equity, it stressed, is the catalytic role of the state. It argued further of the potential negative consequences of incomprehensive reform strategies on the rural and urban publics in Nigerian as economic reforms progresses.

**KEYWORDS:** Development, Policy reforms, Partnership, ownership, empowerment and poverty reduction

## INTRODUCTION

Development is at the heart every state. And with increasing knowledge and disposition to human welfare, the quest for better conditions of living climbs sophisticatedly on top of the ladder, especially in the advanced countries, such as the United States, Japan, Britain, France, Germany, etc. Development is a phenomenon that could be expressed in multidimensional considerations. Within the context of economic development of a state, it can be referred to as the process of improving the quality and conditions of people through qualitative education, efficient health services, standard of living and their environments. Most recent litigations insist that the explanatory variables which underscores fast developing states or developed countries are high per-capita income GDP; opportunities for qualitative and equitable education as well as employment; reliable socio-economic infrastructures such as energy, transportation, good roads, telecommunication, ICT and access to their usage; cleaner safe and more sustainable environment; broader civil and political space, efficient judiciary, rule of law; gender equality and richer cultural life. It is concerned with a country's increased economic efficiency, its productive capacity including technology on a sustainable long-term, and the capacity to adapt variously to exogenic shocks (McClean 1995: 137). In Todaro and Smith's (2003:15) observation, a state could be said to be enjoying a robust economy when the growth rate is perhaps between 5 - 7% or more, by expanding outputs faster than population growth including industrialization, agriculture, rural development and other social indicators, such as high literacy level, health services and housing. The advanced countries of the north are already enjoying a near absolute level of these parameters by setting pace for the countries of the south to follow and, at the same time designing strategies for what is today known as sustained advancement. There is little or no argument to suggest that the developing countries, especially Africa have peculiar models of development that differs overly from those of the West and central Europe by virtue of colonial, neo-colonial and

globalisation experiences. The structures and enabling policies of the developed economies appears to be the "copy-cat" of developing countries, because the sophistry of African traditional political and economic tools seem far less rooted in modern micro-macro and political analytical models. Even the "local content", which is being conceived on the basis of our ecological functional values, as I think, are doubted to have started on models. If there are, such models ( to which politicians often referred ) may only carry us little far, unless we take a mix of both local functional values and western-centric models.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The various sets of systematically related thoughts that underpin this study derive, first and foremost, from what Peter Lawrence called the "Berg Report of the World Bank 1981" in Kirkpatrick et.al. (2002: 52-53), and best known for the phrase "getting the prices right". The state was presumed to be too involved in regulatory processes of the deliveries of welfare services through its bureaucracies and corporations, thereby monopolizing the supply end. The overt inefficiency, corruption social and minimal profit making of public corporations and public institutions are well known. Lack of competition and monopoly status in domestic markets, control of competitive imports coupled with overvalued exchange rates and huge public sector corruption led to deficit financing in the face of increasing government expenditures in Africa. The Bretton Woods agreements with African states of the 1990s, which puts obligation on African to liberalize their economies and stand ready to gain loans and aid from the World Bank to finance those deficits and development, more than anything, is one of the compelling evidence for African states to be integrated into the new mainstreams of public sector innovations. The first experiment was the Structural Adjustment programme (SAP), but failed largely on account of bad governance and corruption on one hand, and the backstage conditionalities of the World Bank on the other. Reforms mean a change to entrepreneurial governments.

which focuses on the willingness to abandon old programmes and methods by seeking innovative strategies through imaginative and creative thinking; by taking risks in money-making rather than budget-busters; by collaborating with private sector and privatising traditional bureaucracies that offers only life-support systems; by being market oriented through performance measurement and rewards for excellence and property rights (Osborne and Gaebler: 1992: 16). Therefore, African countries must embrace market economy and policy reforms to put concrete indicators of developed status on course--a litigation of the World Bank and the need to comply with the bottom-up approach and the involvement of the people in determining the quality and quantity of the services they receive. Besides, reforms have been tested and found to shrink the state from serving parochial interest and cronies. The World Bank has identified corruption as one of the greatest obstacles militating against economic and social development, especially in developing states. Not only do corruption undermined the interest of public good and development, efficiency of public institutions is often foisted by bureaucrats. For example, the recent monumental failure and blackout in Russia causing major economic and social sabotage in May 2005, received a knock by Vladimir Putin (The Russian President), insisting that it was caused by the "failure and incompetence of the corporation chief and monopoly status of the institution" (The Daily Yomui -World 2005:6). Boyne et.al. (2003:3) defined public reform management as "a deliberate change in the arrangements for the design and delivery of public services through the process of reducing organizational hierarchies, system of budgeting, recruitment, management of information and reorganising from the top-down". They insist that it involves a process of doing old things in new ways<sup>1</sup>, down-sizing the often bloated bureaucracies. A reform is a deliberate change in the structure and process of public sector organisations with the objectives of getting them to run better by maximising profit and values of society at reasonable costs. A key element in reform policy is privatisation and deregulation in market-oriented strategies. Privatisation refers to a shift from public to private involvement in economic management and provisions of services to public preferences. It is a way of steering clear from cronies, self-interest group relations in the state, or rent-seeking<sup>2</sup> phenomenon. Rosenbloom and Schwartz (1994:28) admits that privatisation is a process of seeking to use market by government to procure services it provides for citizens in the most cost-effective way and method of reinventing state action and accountability. It is process of removing or minimizing the financial burden that often-thwart weak states<sup>3</sup> in their recurrent expenditures. The main theoretical augment

stems from the thesis that economic performance for responsible citizens' welfare and lifestyles is far more guaranteed under market economy and property rights than public ownership and excessive state interventionist roles. In Panson and Stewart (1994:29) conceptual schemes, public management builds on the frame that distinctions exist between public and private enterprises in a sense that the latter is underscored by efficiency<sup>4</sup> in services delivery; that the new policy reform and privatization is based on management and law, but whose process is often very complex, dogged by fragmentations between bureaucrats and politicians. Further, that there is a need to stem politicians and bureaucrats, who most often seeks to maximize their questionable appetites for self-interests from the public domain, inefficiency and stereotype attitude to change.

Current paradigm follows from what Olowu and Sako (2002:14) referred to as "the retreat of communism" and the emergence of renewed eco-political structure of liberalism, correction of democratic and market failures through good governance. The East Asian financial crisis of the 1990s had sufficiently informed that market does fail and that rolling back the state entirely from economic performance, indeed, could result in fatalistic end to market pragmatism. (Hayami 2003:14-15). As Nigeria, one of the richest in natural resources in Africa, but a weak state embarks on market economy and policy reforms under the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), it faces a number of discontents and dilemmas, which, unless resolved, the reforms are only a bundle of tricks that will empower old order rather than reform it.

#### Analytical models

There are three relevance models to this analysis. Policy reform is more than 100 years old. For example, the call for the abolition of the notorious spoil system<sup>5</sup> in 1883 through the "Pendleton Act" in the USA was in fact, the first generous call for policy reforms, which today, we refer to as public sector reform. On the basis of theoretical and practical insights, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) stated that policy reform is a magic of information sharing among the stakeholders. Other factors such as resource sharing, joint-action or collaboration may be undervalued compared to information in the difficult task of policy change. Information sharing has proved to be the deterministic factor. As indicated, the risks of failure in policy reform are low where information sharing among the stakeholders is high. Where resource sharing or joint-action is available, without information, the risk of reforms is essentially high or medium high. These are shown in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> columns.( Table 1)

Table 1: Co-ordination for policy implementation

TYPE OF CO-ORDINATION	THREAT OF AUTONOMY	LACK OF TASK CONSENSUS	VERTICAL/HORIZONTAL CONSENSUS
INFORMATION-SHARING 1 <sup>st</sup>	LOW (L)	MEDIUM/HIGH (M/H)	LOW (L)
RESOURCE-SHARING 2 <sup>nd</sup>	MEDIUM/HIGH (M/H)	MEDIUM (M)	MEDIUM (M)
JOINT-ACTION 3 <sup>rd</sup>	MEDIUM/HIGH (M/H)	HIGH (H)	HIGH (H)

SOURCE: Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002), p 123.

Perhaps, in what seems to be more precise expository dimension, Sabatier (2003: 218) calls "the role of information and perception" - a newer contribution to policy theory, especially the advocacy-coalition model suggesting that policy process must be treated as an integral part of evaluation stage, insisting that information is regarded as a tool for "persuasion", built on the paradigms and assumptions that:

- (1) All participants (the government and the governed) are important in the ways which changes reforms are required, (that is, why, for whom, when and how?);
- (2) That there is need to provide information that are transparent, persuasive and of course, convincing enough to counter resistance, old belief and stereotype behaviour; and
- (3) That ordinarily, information regarding reforms has effect on the participants, especially the ordinary citizens and local publics on the way it will impact on their lives, their participatory strategies and empowerment, since the main focus of reform is to reform old order and property rights.

This is also the view of the ongoing review of the neo-liberal perspectives from the angle of Good Governance (GG). Inequities may take the centre-stage rolling back the state because market will fail to allocate resources efficiently to public preferences. Any meaningful development reform strategy must lurk in on the government to provide policy space and balance among all stakeholders and to ensure adequate investment in poor people for the purpose of empowerment.

The second model relates to the political economy of interest group relations or embedded interest (Williams 2003), Lowi (1979), Grindle (1999), Savas (2000) etc Policy change processes can vitiate and subvert democratic distributions welfare largess to the majority who ought to be winners. Williams (2003:10), for example, argued that "there is ugly possibilities for market economy and policy reforms to benefit the most powerful people in society; we have since been made very conscious that it matters a lot how privatisation is done. We have noted that it can be highly corrupt process that transfer assets to privileged elite for a fraction of their true value, but the evidence is that it brings benefit when properly regulated".

Similarly, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (1bid) underscores a tradition that most governments everywhere tends to rely upon a particular societal groups, usually the most powerful for support to remain in power, by creating policy regimes that favour these groups. Savas insists that the fear of unprecedented rise in future prices, loss of power of patronage and empires by bureaucrats are some of the oppositions to policy reforms. Kearney and Berman (1999:95-96) also provided an insight to the bureaucratic rigidities to reform or a parsimonious attitude to provide financial supports for a reform. They argued that resistance to reform by bureaucrats can be explained from their conservative and stereotype idiosyncrasies; such as lack of innovativeness, oppositions to external changer and fear of losing subordinates' trust and confidence. Certainly, the revised neoliberal submission insists that good governance is the baseline for reform and services delivery. It underscores the implications of capacity building, human resource renewal, continuous training and development on new public management.

The third model is the capacity-building and inclusion paradigm. The sustainability of the indicators of development is only possible with efficient and sustainable human capacities.

For the new public sector reforms argument, Grindle (1999) vividly states "effective government performance has become a central definition of the role of states in development,

including its ability to create institutional capacities for market-oriented economies, secured in productive population and democratic political system". This is illustrated in Figure 1.

The thematic focus of the model is that many countries may want to embark on Good Governance (GG) and policy reforms but in the absence of requisite human capacities, reform could be very problematic, insisting, "Capacity is the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently and sustainably". Public sector reform requires an efficient bureaucracy to function including new technical and professional skills. As the OECD (1995:53) observed, "strategic human resource reformed capacities are needed to support a reform; such reform are driven by a variety of factors and the recognition of organizational effectiveness, performance efficiency, accountability, reward and motivation, justice and equity. Reform requires bureaucrats that work not on tribal sentiments or political influence". Simai (1999:8) has indicated that, "managing reforms thrives not only on a government or regime that is, itself, driven by democratic standards, it also need a new neutral and professional civil service workers".

## JUSTIFICATION AND DISCUSSIONS

At the very least, the indicators of development have well been demonstrated in the introduction. Although there are improvements in the extent to which democratic norms and public institutions are able to provide, safety and security<sup>6</sup> to public preferences (Valley 2005:5; Chongkittavorn 2005:11), but its impacts on the citizens are very insignificant and infinitesimal to generate legitimacy<sup>7</sup>, trust and confidence<sup>8</sup>. Nigeria lacks good tracks of any of those indicators. Its GDP per capita is among the lowest in the world. For example, its current GDP per capita is \$1000 compared to Japan nearly \$29,000 with no resources (World Fact Book 2004). Its current growth rate is only about 3.5% except that the oil windfall has forced it to move up slightly in recent times, bearing in mind the instabilities in the prices of oil-the and as the main stay of its economy. The level of unemployment remains yet alarming, the literacy level, rule of law, adequate political space and participation are low, and cannot be endorsed as phenomena that deserve sustainability. The human development index (HDI 2003) shows that gender inequality is very high with only 3.3% in public office. Basic socio-economic infrastructures, such as energy, good roads, transportation, ICT and telecommunication access are grossly below anything that can be admitted into the so-called "sustainable development" because the present infrastructures and capacities does not meet the needs of the present generation as its defining characteristics of sustainable development indicates. As a consequence, it is yet to attain the status of being admitted into the economies of sustainable development.

The comparative development indicators between Japan and Nigeria as demonstrated more ten years ago (1994) have not improved or proved better for Nigeria in the present circumstance. Instead, life expectancy, for example, is only little above 52 years in 1995 by 4years addition in 2005 (US Department of State-Bureau for African Affairs 2005:1).

From the standpoint of the World Bank, the economic litigation for policy reforms and the central thesis, (market-economy) is simple and clear. The style of bureaucracies and public institutions that emerged in the industrial era is no longer able to support the present demands and emerging complexities as excessive corruption<sup>9</sup> has overtaken them. In the advanced countries, it slowed down access and empowerment. In Africa (Nigeria), it did not only slow down access and empowerment, it dispossessed, deprived and impoverished the local and urban publics by distorting their powers, capacity, and

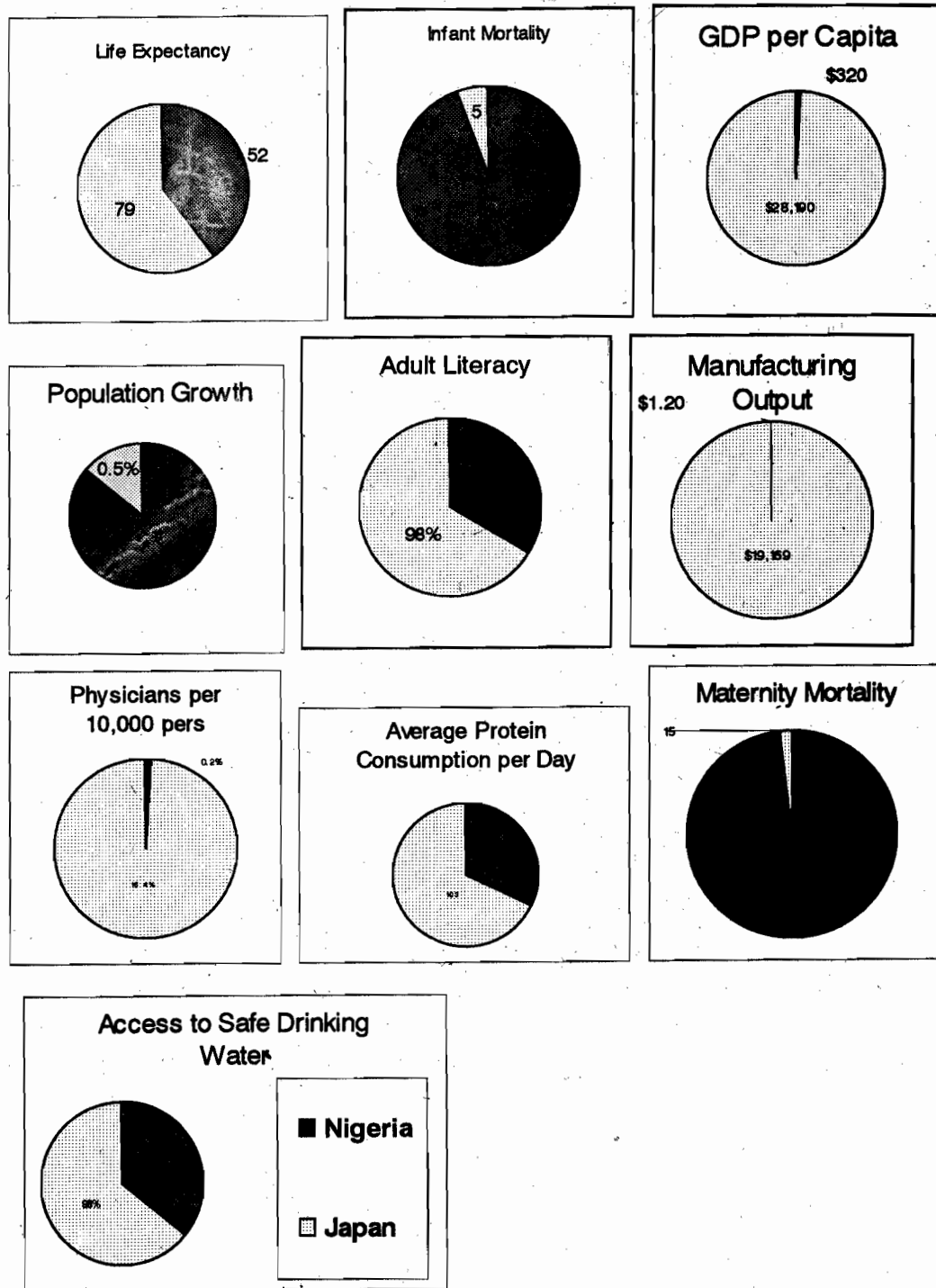


Figure 1: A comparative development indicators between Japan and Nigeria 1994  
 Source: World Bank Report (1994), in Rourke (1995), page 516

capabilities to get services. Policy reforms have, therefore, become the searchlight for development. What are the shortfalls in the reform?

The first omission relates to the absence of information and mobilization. Empirical evidence has shown that policy change is associated with some overt and covert forms of disagreements among stakeholders. In the first place and on the basis of efficient reform, policies have to shift from the dominant selfish-interest of the few privileged elites, politician and recalcitrant bureaucrats on one hands, and from the right to protect employment by the trade unions on the other.

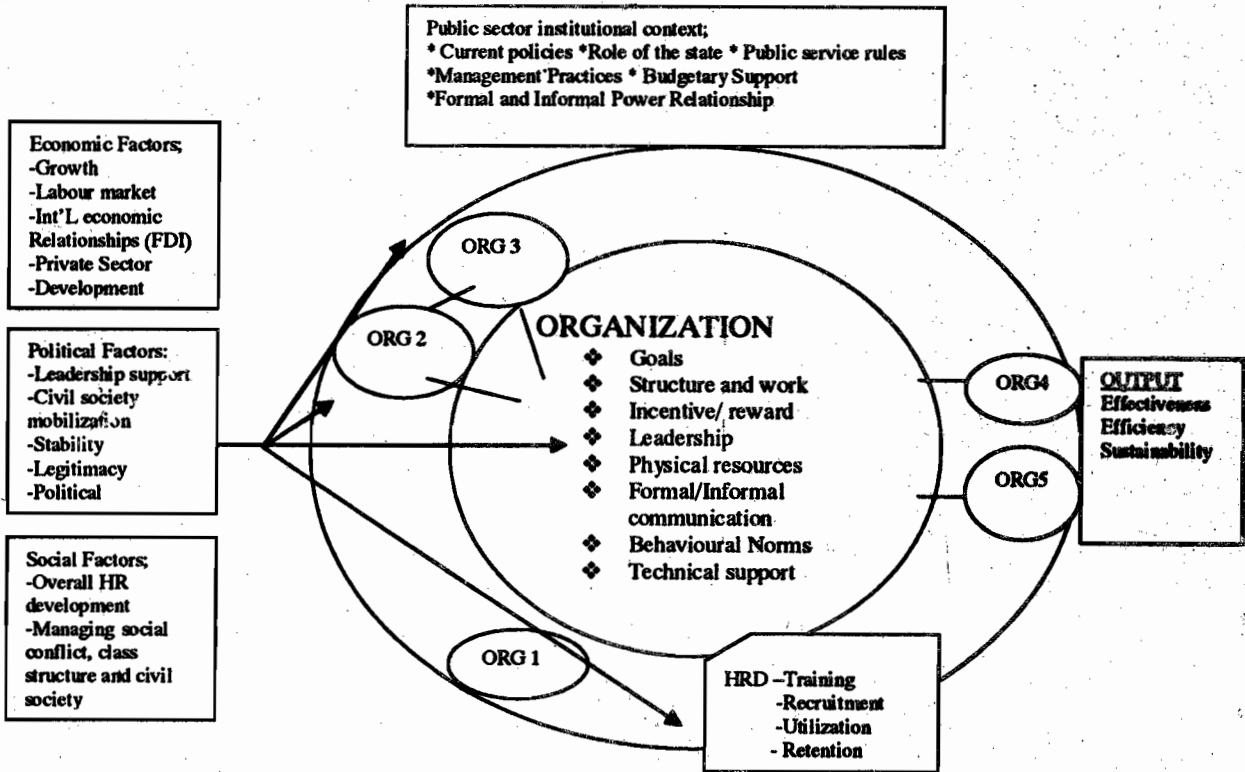
Of course, such policy change is expected to tilt towards the inclusion of the groups that were previously neglected and trapped in poverty for the purpose of participation, empowerment and ownership. In fact, it for this philosophy and groups more than anything else, that policy reforms is now a tool in the engine of the new public management. As the implementation of reform commences, the poor rural and urban publics do not represent any comprehensive strategic priorities in the policy change.

The process of participation, empowerment and ownership are blurring, and leaves a hypothetical inference

that the rural public would potentially be worse off as reform eats deep into implementation. As evident in the Nigerian rural life today, the local publics have never the social contract between them and the government. They are mere voters in the annual rituals of election; especially in local government elections. They have not been involved in the covert struggles over who gets what and how either. They have no iota of information about the changing role of the government as the

sole services provider. In Japan where the literacy level is very high, for example, the economic and fiscal planning minister has been very modest visiting high school pupils and locals and interest groups with information about the privatisation processes of strategic institutions that seemed anathema. ("Japan Times" March 16, 2004, p14).

Most people, fundamentally, are not well informed about the new public management (NPM) litigation in Nigeria. Instead,



Source: Grindle M. (1999). Getting Good Government; Capacity-Building in the Public Sector in Developing Countries (ed); New York; Harvard International Development. P36

Fig. 2.

the mass citizenry still waits endlessly for governments at all levels to fulfil their mandates and promises to provide electricity, water, food etc at highly subsidized prices or no costs at all. The recent increase in the prices of bed spaces in the Nigerian universities may, perhaps, be part of the commencement of policy reforms in the highest education sub-sector. Yet the government lacks the initiative, policy strategy and conviction to inform the public and the students about its goals. Consensus - building and mobilisation are critical to the reality of any reform. True, past governments and its institutions have been irresponsible to the citizens, but so far as the new public management has become the frontal service delivery strategy, the government must, in the new sense of democratic governance, equity and inclusiveness initiate comprehensive strategies to inform, co-opt and mobilise the public towards a direction that has become an inevitable global strategy. Governance means linkages and networking processes of institutions, actors and stakeholders into an inclusive collaborative participation, empowerment via information that are strategically shared, often transparent, and accessible to transcend any confidence of deceit. The Nigerian university students' body threatened to stage a protest against the hike because it has no confidence as much as it lacks

information. The main antithesis of the reform is that the rural publics who had suffered neglect in the Nigerian political economy and development are not in the comprehensive process of being empowered. To minimise conflict, to legitimise accountability, mobilise consciousness, participation, poverty reduction and empowerment in the interest of democratic governance, the NEEDS deserves to be recrafted. Otherwise, NEEDS is but a spurious framework for exterminating poverty in Nigeria. Policy reform is about moving away significantly from political domain to management domain. The purpose of information sharing is for policy change to benefit all stakeholders- the government, the private sector groups, and the local publics as shown in the interface in fig 3 below.

Where the local publics have no access to information through the mass media, the states and local government must be required to disseminate information via simple procedures such as megaphone announcement/broadcast in local languages and dialects, hand bills, hotline telephoning question and answers, assisted by community based organisations and NGOs on their strategies of participation. Illiterate Nigerians have the right to be informed of how national assets are being reformed to regenerate services

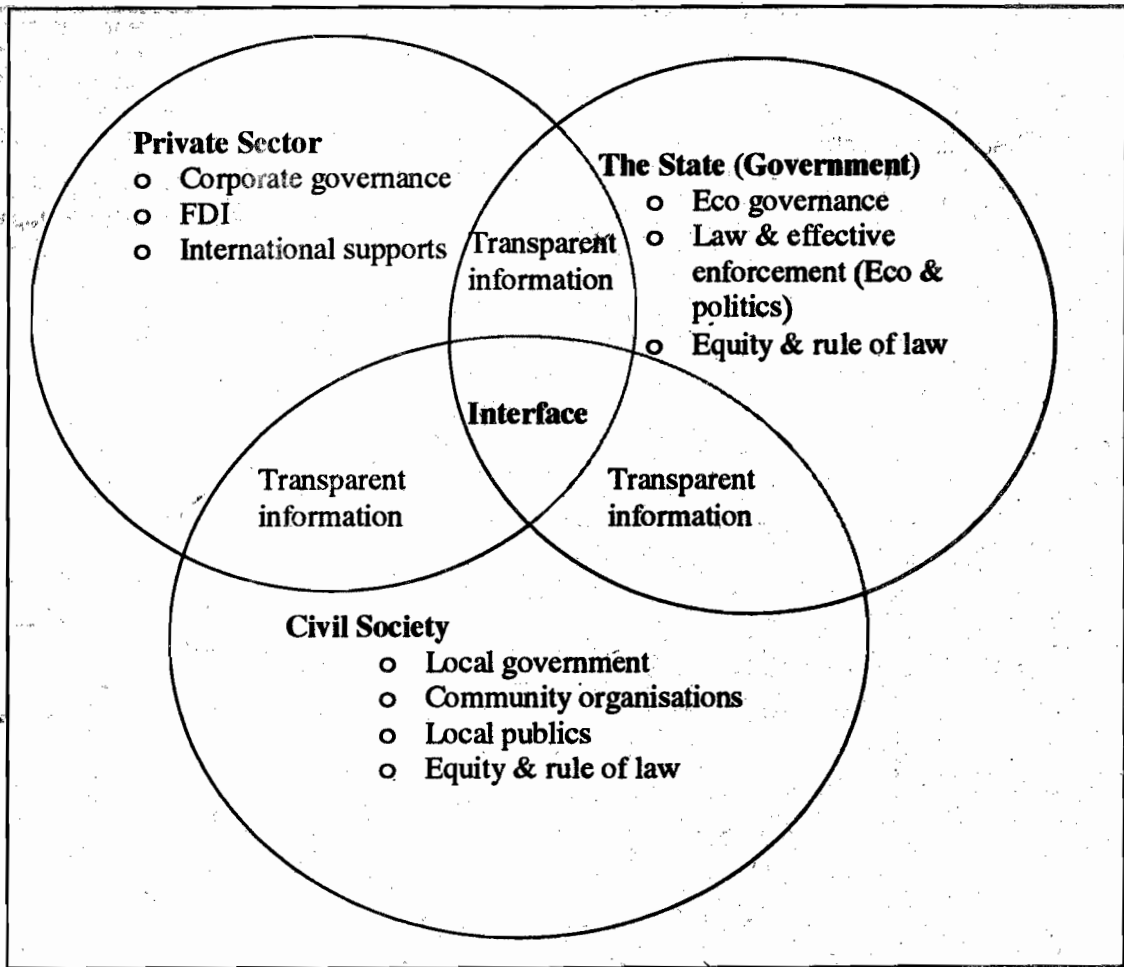


Figure 3: Interface among Government, Civil Society, and Private sector

deliveries. Of course local governments, NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) would support the dissemination of information if they have knowledge of what is to be done. Unfortunately, these agencies do not have the understanding of the implementation window and how it is to benefit the rural publics.

As Bardach (1998) noted, policy reforms is a process of "interagency collaboration that builds on mutual trust among all the actors". The role of the government is facilitating common ground, a forerunner, and promoter as well as baking out sanctions against saboteurs or potential incidence of sabotage. Stated differently, the state is expected to provide check and balances by treating policies and economic management to the strict discipline of domestic and international participations, and with itself subject to no unnecessary discretions, except sensitive "assets of national security. All stakeholders' inclusiveness, adequate and enabling information are necessary.

Nolan (2001) buttresses this point, "a basic characteristic of re-engineering and public policy reforms is that information and communication technology plays a primary and enabling role, not just by supporting new design options, but especially, by creating awareness of the capabilities or process". - Insisting that the Australian reforms proved result-oriented on information sharing. Information-sharing serves to keep the actors informed by providing legitimacy for government on the part of the public-whom services are expected to serve better. Examples are written materials through official documents,

newspapers, magazines, handbills, local government offices, press conferences, radio and TV broadcasts, establishments of comprehensive websites, opinion surveys and hotline telephoning calls, in question and answer programmes; clarifying private participation, defined in terms of foreign direct investment (FDI) by diffusing the often shrouded risks of doing business. Information encourages international partnerships/donors' by clarifying the need to willingly give aid, perhaps, against the backdrop that expected economic returns on investment (EERI) are sure and assured. On the part of the domestic citizens, it clarifies for them the choices of the government and how such choices could impact positively or negatively on them. In a number of countries where economic reforms and development have successfully taken place in East Asia, such as Malaysia, Thailand etc, information sharing and inclusion strategies provided the enabling or the supportive framework. The Bulgaria reforms (1996), the Chile reforms (1994) etc are often cited as examples where USAID successfully nurtured the private, public and the rural sector synergies based on information sharing and inclusion among the stakeholders. Similarly, the South African Transportation and Communication (SSTCC 1994) reforms succeeded on the collaborative trust and confidence of stakeholders based on information sharing. Conversely, The Madagascar environmental reforms (1995) failed as a result of absence of information sharing, trust and inclusion. The Republic of Mali's reforms in natural resources failed as a result of absence of inclusion, adequate information and participation of the interested stakeholders (Brinkerhoff and Crosby: ibid 119-151).

A multi-ethnic and complex society as Nigeria with diverse network of actors and stakeholders, adequate information sharing is required to build trust and confidence, or minimise conflicts now and in the future. Privatising the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), the Ajeokuta Steel (ASRM) etc. for examples, without building the interest of all Nigerian stakeholders as process inputs, defined in terms of federalist equity inclusion of the states, local public involvement in the ownerships, future responses to policy change is potentially susceptible to crisis. As North (1999:11) submitted in his thesis, "we usually observe co-operative behaviour of stakeholders in reforms when they repeatedly interact, and when they have great deal of information about each other players".

The second point relates to what Boyne et. al: *ibid*: 6-21) describes as the unchanging desire of public officers to maintain the status-quo for their personal benefits. Turning public institutions to management institutions will minimise mediocrity and malfunctioning that hitherto scorched public institutions into inefficient service providers. "Public choice theory suggests that if appropriate market structures are created in the public sectors, then the behaviour of bureaucrats will be steered towards the general welfare of the society rather than their own selfish interests", they argued.

If policy reforms are forms of reorganisations that are predisposed to empower the poor and co-opt, especially the rural publics against the backdrop that they had since been neglected with pulverised environment and economic power, it makes a thorough, knowledge-based and well crafted policy reform only if these rural publics are considered in every step of the reform processes. A good strategy in development agenda for the 21st century is the one that is implementable, result-oriented, and retained for sustainable development. Otherwise, the process of reforms are only a repetition of the

old order, in which case, majority who ought to have their way by democratic principles, and who lives in the rural areas, will continue to be entangled in perpetual poverty. In those explications, the New partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Millennium Development Goals, (MDGs) in Nigeria are susceptible to monumental failures. This is what Chambers (1995) called "deprivation trap", as in the figure 3. There are a number of negative possibilities that poor people could face in this phenomenon. Poverty causes physical weakness, and deprivation constitutes the strongest determinants of the other variables. Poverty means lack of food on the table defined in terms of the desired calorie, health services etc. Physical weakness can also cause poverty vice versa. Isolation can cause powerlessness as much as powerlessness can cause isolation. The same can be said of physical weakness and vulnerability. Altogether, there are sixteen (16) negative possibilities in terms of cause and effects as the arrows indicate in figure 4.

These are the dilemmas to which policy reforms in Nigeria potentially face. The isolated rural publics in Nigeria are the constituencies that have no access to qualitative educational, access and government-supported programmes. The work of Ikiowak on the federal government neglects of the Nigerian rural public in (Asmeron et. al. 1992 ed.) supports this. For the Nigerian rural publics, services do not reach them on account of remoteness and national politicians whose interests have hijacked local government activities. The interest of the local government chairmen lurks in the same direction. The local publics cannot read complex information about the economy. Adequate and simple information as well as comprehensive strategy is needed to get the Nigerian reforms agenda delivered. The so-called NEEDS appear to be a mere normative policy that speaks about the use of private sectors NGOs, CBOs etc, but could prove a reliable and dependable

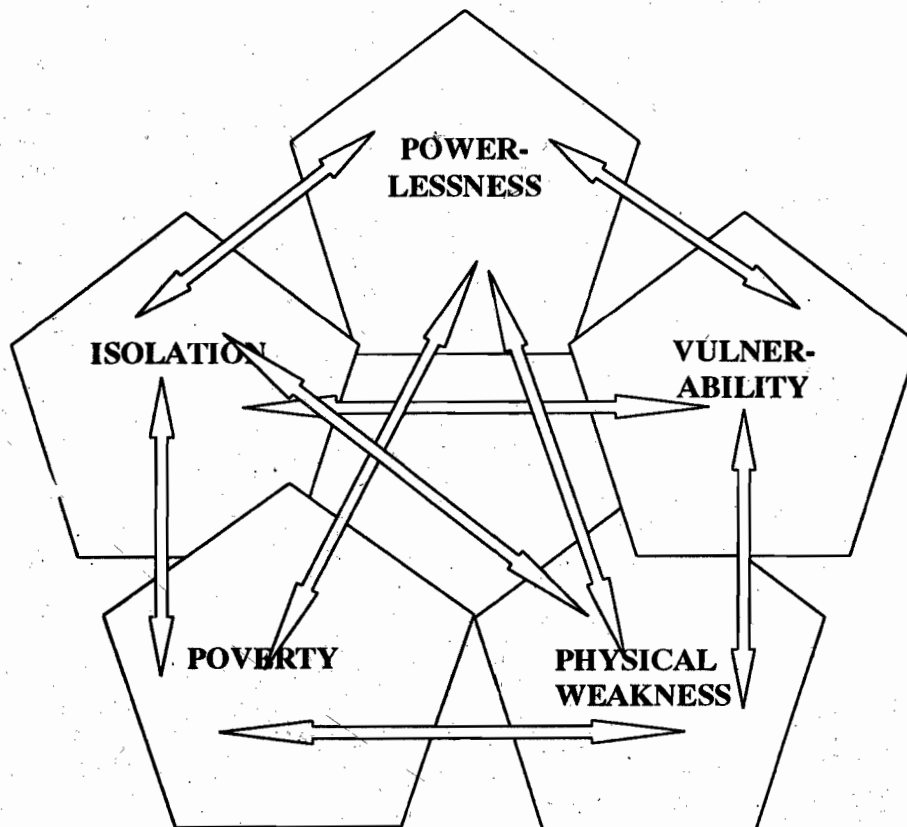


Figure 4: The Deprivation Trap, adapted from Chambers (1995) p112

model with a sense of comprehensiveness. Stiglitz (2003:188) stated the importance of result-oriented strategy and comprehensive model on policy reforms. Russian reforms suffer a potential failure because of the absence of strategy and comprehensive approach-based on model. In his words, "I was struck by the absence of strategy either for attacking poverty and enhancing growth in Russia; the W/Bank discussed scaling back on its programmes in the rural sector. This made sense for the WB given the problems that its previous programmes in this area had caused, but made no sense for Russia, given that its poverty-stricken population lay in the rural areas". As much as there is a justified global outcry that the countries of the north must listen to the weak or poor countries of the south by redesigning globalization frameworks to empower the weak poor countries, so also should policy reforms in weak states be designed to empower the deprived and alienated rural and local publics. Otherwise new public management (NPM) will fail as much as the structural adjustment programmes (SAP). Participation, empowerment and ownership have come to the forefront of policy dialogue and policy agenda deliveries. Participation and ownership ought not to be strongly defined only in terms of central government support and approval as the World Bank envisioned ownership. In this era when the mass majority of the world population is gripped with poverty in the face of global agenda of poverty reduction, empowerment could only make good judgment if bottom-up approach becomes inclusive in the definition of ownership. As Killick (1998) submitted, "where the local ownership is complete, the government is taking the main decisions about what changes should be made and when; local goals and priorities dominate and the motivation for implementation seems to be more vigorously stronger". Perhaps, nothing could better convey and portrays the meaning of ownership in development studies and actions if it is not to be conjured in the empowerment of, especially the poor local publics, but with approval and enabling environment by the central government.

Participation and ownership for empowerment is when majority of the poor public passes through it and possess it. Democracy is when majority have their way meaningfully. This majority lives in the rural areas and urban slums. The governments could only hold claim to sense fairness if the mandate of the majority votes, which they claimed brought them to office, are treated to the largesse and ownership of public assets in the reformed process. This presupposes a limitation of the specified investment individuals can make as done in Britain (Boyne et al. *ibid*). In as much as private investors (national or international) needs to be empowered in the reforms, states, local governments, small village organizations and workers also needs to be empowered to be part of investors in public assets. These strategies are certainly not in the NEEDS, except, perhaps, those of the political, ex-military, international investors, domestic economic and bureaucratic-elites. Thinking policy reforms and thinking well about it has partly been explained by (Kooiman 1993) in Newman (2001:15). There appears to be a shift away from more traditional patterns in which governing was basically seen as one way traffic' from those governing to those governed, towards a "two way traffic" model in which aspects, qualities, problems and opportunities of both the governing system and the system to be governed are taken into consideration. The gap between confidence, trust and reality is the neglect of theories. The Nigerian government in this regard must listen to important policy reforms theories and the bottom-up approach<sup>10</sup>.

The third issue relates to the problem of capacity building as a key factor in policy reforms and development. Reform is not only about cutting back bloated bureaucracy, rolling back the state, or putting the state at the centre of the peripheries, as market does fail<sup>11</sup>, but also include building human resource

competence into reform management. Competence in that sense is not just the mental skill and capacity to perform a job, but also the attitude to do it rightly without aberrations. Unless human resource is redefined to include the right attitude to work without deviation from the ethical standards, policy reforms and development is, perhaps, prone to failures, especially in developing countries. For example, the World Bank evaluation report of the SAP in Africa (1994) showed clearly that lack of appropriate human capacities in public institutions, weak infrastructures, leaderships, and absence of good governance as well as corruption were bane to its success. It suggests to saying, perhaps, that human capacities could also be said to be qualitative with high ethical work value, not just the requisite or "abundant human resources" on which an economy such as Nigeria often parade itself. Reforms also mean reforming our value system. Bassey Okon (2003) reporting Okonjo Iweala, and Aniele Douglas, in his comments on governance and culture respectively underscored the need for mental revolution in Nigeria by having a new vision about public office.

For a society to have the leverage to abandon corruption there must be access, participation or opportunities for citizens to aspire to the highest status of their choice within the ambit of law without intimidation, ethnically arranged deprivation or opportunities.

As Agere's (2000) suggested "appropriate human capacity" is a new paradigm for doing old things in new ways. Although Grindle's mode of capacity building for attaining Good Governance informatively indicate that the quality of human resource inputs are central to performance output, defined in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, "capacity-building through institutional reforms would involve initiatives such as the development of effective legal system, policy regimes, mechanisms for accountability, regulatory framework and monitoring system that transmit information about the structure of performance of markets, governments and public officers". That Japan is developed and, by far richer than Nigeria, is on account of well developed human capacities of skills and ethical work value supported by ICT. Otherwise, Japan has relatively no resources compared to Nigeria, except that it has a homogenous society that builds on common resolutions and group consensus as against Nigeria's difficult plural society. Human resource application to work is the systematic use of the right calibre of skills, the right ethics of work and with, very little or no aberrations. As Asmeron et al. observed in their advocacy for bureaucratic innovation, "bureaucracy requires capabilities of many kinds viz (a) intellectual capabilities centred on science and technology, (b) sociological capabilities to identify social problems, and promote leadership, (c) financial capabilities, (d) managerial capabilities and (e) political capabilities". Where the last two variables are strong, other capabilities would naturally follow visible success. In what seemed to have derailed the effectiveness of public sector performance in Africa, McCourt and Minogue (2001) points to the clashes of modernity and tradition. "There is an overwhelming importance of ethnic, tribal and family support system that encourages partiality and nepotism". It is anti-development to retain a system that impoverished it for more than forty years. Policy reforms suggest that the hitherto angle of vision deserved to be changed.

## CONCLUSION

Institutional reforms and market economy have taken the front rôle in the litigation to get services to the poor, tame corruption and stimulate vibrant economy, especially in developing countries. The World Bank is the central promoter, while national governments are the enforcers/implementers. In order



to be integrated into this global economic network, Nigeria has commenced with its policy reforms within the framework of the national economic empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS) to empower the people, get them to participate and ignite non-artificial sense of poverty reduction by implication. Good Governance is central to this thesis. Good Governance refers to absence of corruption, low political terror scale (PTS) or abuse of personal integrity, low regulatory burden, low military expenditures, transparency, predictability, accountability<sup>12</sup>, human rights, and democracy. In that wise, the role of government in evolving policy responses backed by political will to redistribute resources and take development to the rural publics (who are in majority) for the purpose of empowerment, would underscore the success of policy change in Nigeria. This depends on, of course, on the information and transparency of the change processes. However, the policy reform faces potential failure on account spurious model and clearly crafted strategy. That the National Economic Empowerment and Development strategy (NEEDS) exist does not suggest that the policy reforms are clear to Nigerians; neither does it portend a successful reform. This is because inclusive strategies of how it will empower Nigerians, mobilize, and reach their empowerment above other things, especially the rural publics who are in majority, are fraught with scepticisms. Many have underscored the complexities trailing privatisation process in Nigeria. These complexities, no doubt, relates to absence of adequate information and non-inclusion of the primary stakeholders (the Nigerian masses). The thematic focus of this article is not to suggest a total exclusion of the Nigerian cronies, but to make the priority of rural populations in Nigeria the centre-point of policy reforms by co-opting its plights significantly into the implementation window. Although the structures of decentralisation are present in Nigeria for the reforms to permeate services deliveries, there is scepticism because most local government chairmen represent not the wishes of the electorate. Besides, national politicians in the form of "backward integration" have since hijacked the activities of local government system and it is difficult for development to trickle down to the roots. In fact, the phrase "local government chairman" is non-developmental; it is outmoded as much as it shows arrogance and timidity of "Nigerian politician". It needs to be substituted with Council Manager<sup>13</sup>; - a council administration system based on expertise, management and accountability, rather than the present that are exploited by public thieves and failed professionals who seeks other avenues to make-up their failures. The following policy options are, therefore, suggested:

- The present local government system should be reversed to the "council managerial system". Experts and professionals are needed as managers of policy reforms. Unless this is done the NEEDS success and its sustainability is potentially problematic. In that order, Managers will be chosen/selected based on merit, qualifications, and expertise by assembly of elected councillors -supported by states manpower boards. The function of the manpower board is to screen the applicants who must have a minimum of upper division in the order of social sciences, management and engineering including a master's degree.
- Information, education and strategy of local inclusion in the ownership of assets reform for the purpose of citizens' empowerment<sup>14</sup> and democratic governance are absolutely necessary. Therefore, the NEEDS deserve to be redesigned to meet the global objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) contrary to the failed MAMSER and DFRRI of the 1980s and 1990s. The millennium development goals (MDGs) seek model that works for a particular

environment, sustained, as well as subject to replications.

The reform requires a workforce that has the right attitude and ethical and moral work value. This is the foundation to the new public management (NPM) litigation. Of course, to attain this, professionalism, e-governance and retraining are the starting-point, but not all.

Policy reform as a transition to an advanced socio-economic and political status requires supportive technologies, such as ICT, telecommunication etc. E-governance and vending technologies are the backbone of minimising corruption; and only well educated and empowered local and urban publics can adapt to these changes. A continuously deprived poor people, without resources and information will not be in the right physical, mental and moral capacities to adapt to policy reforms or new ways of doing thing. The Russian and Chinese Economies remain transitioning economies because its rural publics are poor. The Indian general election, May 2004, overturned Vajpyee and his BJP because its rural public suffers poverty. These sectors are often considered as the last that and also less significant. This very last sector must be put first for policy reform to have any meaning, and for poverty and for sustainable development to evolve in Nigeria.

#### End Notes

1. Doing old things in new qualitative ways is the central definition of reforms. "No self-respecting government can afford to ignore it". It involves moving away from political domain to management and accountable government processes. (See, for example, Wright (1997) *The Paradoxes of Administrative Reform* in Boyne. Et al. (2003:1)
2. The term and usage of Rent-seeking has become a commonplace in development studies because development failed largely in developing states as a result rent-seeking - a phenomenon which Fukuyama (2004:16) said involves "the use of public sector to allocate property rights to the benefits of particular interest, persons, tribe, family, region or ethnic group" as against the Weberian formalism and rationality.
3. Weak state is a state that commands far less influence in the comity of nations on account of its economic and institutional weaknesses. Hence a preponderance of weak population. A weak state is near a "failed state". Chesterman et. al. (2005:15) inferring from William Zartman (1995), used failed state to mean that which is unable to perform the basic functions of a state or under threats of domestic instabilities, civil wars, weak and corrupt public institutions. The basic functions of the state is now rooted in "human security" (see, for example, Thomas 2000:6)-implying that basic material and non-material needs in sufficient quality and quantity, such as health, education, food, shelter, human dignity, political space, freedom and rule of law are guaranteed and citizens adequately empowered.
4. Efficiency refers to the capacity of outputs to meet set goals more than proportionate. It is "the match between inputs and outputs that meets public preferences" (Boyne et.al 2003) It involves "gaining the most output for a given level of input", (see, for example, Stone (1989) in Birkland T. (2001: 154) *An introduction to Policy Process*: New York, M.E.Sharpe.

5. Andrew Jackson in the USA introduced the "Spoil system". It was based on political patronage and promoting bureaucratic corruption and cronyism. It was replaced with the merit system in 1883
6. Thomas C. (2000:6) *Global Governance and Sustainable Development and Human Security*: London: Pluto Press, used the term "safety and security" as a distinction from the neoliberal sense of competitive and possessive individualism to mean a situation of guaranteed material and non-material needs of citizens, such as qualitative and quantitative food, shelter, education, health, human dignity, rule of law, safety and qualitative environments. (See also Gareth Evans (2002) in EU-UNU "Governance Across Borders; National, regional and Global Report.. Tokyo: UNU.
7. Legitimacy is the degree to which a state enjoy stability, and to which citizens accepts, supports and approves of their governments on the basis that such governments have the attitude to conform to public preferences. (See, for example, McLean: 1996).
8. Trust and Confidence is the ability to remove fear and scepticisms between two or more parties in a collaborative relationship. Bardach (1998) says that Trust is the Confidence that "the trustworthiness of another party is adequate to justify remaining in a condition of vulnerability".
9. A deliberate deviation from the moral standards of the society including its legal provisions is said to be corrupt acts or practices. Nye (1967) in his Thesis on "Corruption and Political Development' in Sub-Saharan Africa", observed that it is associated with a set of aberrations from the moral standards of the society; or behaviour, which deviates from normal duties of public roles.
10. The Bottom-up approach to development is fast gaining grounds in policy and development management literature. The structural adjustment programmes failed monumentally in Africa and series of reactions followed that it was teleologically driven and insufficiently tailored to the inputs of the recipient states. Thus participation and ownership have emerged as new frontal strategies. In the new public management litigation we are arguing that ownership should not be defined in terms of central government approval of aid alone. Ownership and participation should be defined in terms of the categories that actually fall in the realities of poverty; that is the rural population who are preponderance, but so deprived in his environment, dignity and human personality (See, for example, Akiyama T. et. al. 2003: *International Development Assistance: Evolution and prospects*: Tokyo, FASID; also Griffin 2000).
11. It is not true that market has always been successful in allocating resources in the society efficiently or that the state alone is capable in this regard. Re-inventing government in the US and Britain in the neoliberal arguments and the fall of communism is sweeping on the global terrains. Role Back the State and allow market to take the frontal seat in economic management drive informs from the angles that rent seeking or corruption is high. The market can allocate resources better as well as guarantee participation and property rights. The East Asian financial debacle revealed that state is still relevant in the scheme of economic efficiency. Good governance is the new argument that can correct market failure. It is often referred to as "Post Washington Consensus" (See, for examples, Stiglitz 1996, 2003; North 1990; Hayami and Akiyama 2003).
12. Accountability and Predictability are some of the basic defining variables of good governance. Agere (2000) *Promoting Good Governance: Principles, Practices and Perspectives*: London; Commonwealth;- observed that it is relationship between government and the citizens in a sense that government officials must be accountable to those on behalf they possess mandate not only on resources, but also in allowing their voice to reflect fundamentally in input-output decisions, such that they are able to predict governance processes.
13. I used the Council managerial System to imply a system of emerged type of local government administration, especially in advanced countries that replaced the often politicised, corrupt and inefficient local administration. The emerged system is based on management of resources and accountability. Goal-achievement oriented managers lead the local council and stay in touch with the peoples' demand rather than the egoistic politicians who plays to the galleries with no action (See, for example, Brugue Q. and Valles J. *New Style Council, New Style Councillors: From local Government to local Governance in Governance-An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions*: Vol. 18 Number 2, April 2005 Pp 197-225.
14. Citizens' empowerment is not about providing jobs in the federal, state or local government levels, but creating enabling environment for people to create jobs for themselves. How? Provide uninterrupted electricity, water, good roads, access to rural farms areas and equitable usage, opportunities for people to be rewarded adequately for jobs well done, protection against injustice and dispensation of justice, justifiable property rights as against crude struggle of power against the poor. Voice in public decision-making (See, for example DFID (2004) "Making Government Work for poor People." London: DFID.

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