

SERVICOM POLICY INTERVENTION: IMPROVING SERVICE QUALITY IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

F. O. OGUNRIN AND A. E. O. ERHIJAKPOR

(Received 22, January 2009; Revision Accepted 20, April 2009)

ABSTRACT

In this case study we examine the *raison d'être* and implementation of a policy intervention, which was promulgated in 2005 for the purpose of eradicating inefficiency and corruption, and inculcating customer orientation in the Nigerian public sector. The policy goes by the acronym 'SERVICOM' -'service compact with all Nigerians'. We draw on existing information in describing workplace behaviours in the Nigerian public sector that necessitated this policy intervention, the extent of its implementation, and in enumerating related interventions that are being implemented concurrently with SERVICOM. Our findings suggest that the objectives and delivery mechanisms of SERVICOM are appropriate remedies for poor service delivery in the Nigerian public sector. SERVICOM units are being established in government departments, workers are being trained, among other strategies for achieving the aims of the intervention. Other actions, however, must be taken to achieve the desired improvements. For instance, improvements in physical infrastructure must be undertaken, since changed work attitudes cannot substitute for inadequate infrastructure. A properly functioning public service is indispensable to good governance, institutional capacity building, and private sector development. SERVICOM policy must be sustained, alongside other related initiatives, until Nigerian public life is truly transformed. Continued support of the international community will really help.

KEYWORDS: SERVICOM, Nigerian Public Services, Quality.

INTRODUCTION

In every human society, the production and consumption of goods and services are integral to daily living. Our focus in this paper is on the quality of government services in Nigeria. The public sector is the shopping floor for these services (The SERVICOM Book, 2006). SERVICOM policy is Nigerian government's latest effort at instilling quality into government services. The initiative is best regarded as a policy intervention since it comprises a set of programmes and measures, having the same general goal- improving service delivery in the public sector, whose implementation is unconstrained by a time schedule (Sheikh and Steiber, 2002).

This paper is a case study of the SERVICOM policy, in which we examine

descriptively the nature and implementation process of the policy, against a theoretical background depicting the nature of public services, quality and quality improvement, problems in the Nigerian public sector, earlier policy prescriptions for an efficiently functioning service, and an enumeration of related reforms that are being implemented alongside the SERVICOM Policy. We draw upon existing data in the popular press, academic literature, and SERVICOM's virtual library. Our interest in the public sector derives from its relevance to good governance, institutional capacity building, and private sector development (Thoburn, 2000).

The context in which SERVICOM operates

Nature of public services: Services in general refer to intangible benefits provided to individuals or organisations through the

F. O. Ogunrin, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

A. E. O. Erhijakpor, Department of Accounting, Banking and Finance, Delta State University, Asaba Campus, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria.

performance of a variety of activities or the provision of physical facilities or products (Inegbenebor, 2006); while civil service in the present context refers to government workers collectively referred to as civil servants or public servants, who work in government departments or agencies (Dictionary by LaborLawTalk, 2006_(a)). Public services then refer to services provided by a government to its citizens, either directly through the public sector or by financing and regulating private provision of services (Dictionary by LaborlawTalk, 2006_(b)). Since most public services are performed by civil servants the concepts 'public service' and 'civil service' are often interchanged, and in this paper we use 'service' in place of either concept.

According to existing literature, one of the oldest examples of a civil service is the Chinese bureaucracy, which is believed to have influenced the creation of civil services in Europe, from where the system spread to the United Kingdom in 1854 and later to the United States (Dictionary by LaborlawTalk, 2006_(a)). The civil service system gradually diffused to other places, Nigeria inclusive, through the influence of colonialism. One major problem with public services in developing countries, however, is that these services are often subsidised for political reasons, with the result that governments in these societies often lack sufficient finances for developing and sustaining efficiently functioning public services (Dictionary by LaborLawTalk, 2006_(b); Agboluaje, 2006).

Quality in service delivery: The concept 'quality' intuitively conjures pictures of a thing that is "exceptionally good among its kind" (Answers.com, 2006). In management quality refers to the features of a product or service that bears on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs (Van Fleet, 1991); or reliability of performance, ease of use, value for money, speedy delivery, and so on (Johns, 1996). While some people believe that quality does not fit in with how government works, others insist that until quality is ingrained into government services, government will continue to lose the respect and trust of its citizens (Quality Digest, 2001). Regarding public services in Nigeria such as health care and electricity, quality would mean availability, efficiency, reliability, not giving preferential treatment to any private organisation/individual; and absence of hidden costs, that is, corruption.

Improving quality or quality management

Different philosophies and techniques have been conceived for improving product and/or service quality, including Zero Defects, Six Sigma,

Quality Circles and so on (Answers.com, 2006). One quality improvement philosophy that has endured is **Total Quality Management (TQM)**. This concept refers to a systematic attempt to achieve continuous improvement in the quality of an organisation's products and/or services (Johns, 1996), and is of interest to us in this paper because the SERVICOM initiative appears to be built around it. Implementing a TQM approach for service quality improvement can be conceived of as a series of activities: the service provider uses the voice of the customer (customer complaints) to initiate a quality improvement activity, collects data to determine the extent of the problem and to identify its sources, seeks the opinions of employees to identify the root cause of customers' concern, and finally implements a long-term fix to prevent future reoccurrence. Finally, top management must provide leadership and support for all quality initiatives (Johns, 1996; Quality Digest, 2001). In the next section, we examine what has been said about the Nigerian public service in the popular press and in the academic literature, as regard its initial state (when the level of efficiency was deemed commendable), its latter state (when service delivery had become grossly inefficient), and factors responsible for this regretful transition.

Nigerian civil service

Early era: Prior to independence in 1960, the British colonial administration in Nigeria put in place an administrative system (public service) for governing the country. As the country's independence became imminent, Nigerians were gradually recruited to replace expatriates in senior positions in the service (Adebayo, 2005). In the civil service of the immediate post-independence era, the Permanent Secretary, the most senior public officer, was the chief accounting officer, while the political head of a ministry was just a chief executive. It is said that misappropriation of public funds was difficult and very rare during that era, and that the service was very efficient, and greatly contributed to the formulation and implementation of public policies (Adamolekun, 2006).

Onset of malfunction in the civil service: Over time, inefficiency and corruption became rife in the Nigerian civil service. The onset of these ills has been traced to various events. Some writers trace it to civil service reforms implemented in 1987. One major element of the reforms is the change in designation of the office of Permanent Secretary to Director General, which is believed to have elevated political expediency

above rationalism and made the service vulnerable, as senior positions became political and lost their erstwhile career status (Hamalai, 1999; Enogholas, 2006; Vanguard Newspaper, 2006_(c)). The political head of a department/ministry thereafter functioned as the chief accounting officer without recourse to the Director General (Fanimu, 2006). Another perceived precipitating event is the integration of the federal character clause into the 1979 constitution, by which considerations of ethnic balancing/representation were given equal (if not greater) importance as merit and qualification in the distribution of public offices and privileges (Hamalai, 1999; Enogholas, 2006).

The advent of military rule in the country in 1966, and its dominance of governance thereafter for the next thirty-three years, albeit with a brief period of democratic governance from 1979 to 1983, has also been blamed for the ills in the civil service (Adamolekun, 2006). The popular opinion is that most of the leaders who governed the country during those years lacked the levels of experience and education that were crucial for effective state leadership. The overall effects of these types of ill-advised governance systems were the institutionalisation of mediocrity, subjectivity, corruption and inefficiency (Fanimu, 2006).

Symptoms of the malfunctioning: It is possible to treat the malfunctioning in the Nigerian public service sub-sector by sub-sector. For our purpose however, it suffices to say that the problem manifests as corrupt practices and service failure across the entire public sector (Daily Independent, 2006; Vanguard Newspaper, 2006_(b)); low quality expectations and trust in public services on the part of consumers, and ultimately, in the failure of government programmes and institutional development (Akerle, 1990; Adamolekun, 2006; Fanimu, 2006).

With particular reference to corruption, the problem is usually conceived of as fraudulent misappropriation of public funds by public officers (Ulayi, 2006). Those who hold this view further assert that as lower-cadre civil servants watched the political class misappropriate public funds, they too began commercialising whatever they work with, keeping the proceeds for themselves; or poaching office hours to pursue private economic activities. The overall result then is that hardly is any public service rendered free without a consideration of something in return (Sanusi, 2006). Over time, Nigerians were typified as a people averse to rules and proper procedure (Jason, 2006). Having taken a macro-level view of

the problems of the Nigerian public sector drawing from the popular press, we now take a micro-level view of work attitudes and behaviours of Nigerian civil servants as described in the academic literature.

Work attitude and behaviour of Nigerian civil servants

Generally speaking, behaviours observed at work pertain to absenteeism, commitment, creativity, lying, cheating, work motivation, workplace accident proneness, leadership, and personal discipline (Furnham and Heaven, 1999). Specifically, the Nigerian civil servant has been described as lazy and nonchalant (Odiaka, 1991); tardy; unwilling to put in a day's job for a day's pay; driven by a mindset that takes high work performance as unattainable and an unnecessary bother, among other traits, all of which are reducible to lack of work commitment (Akerle, 1986). As is expected, these writers usually apply one theoretical framework or another in explaining the 'whys' of these attitudes/behaviours. Although there is an overall agreement in organisational behaviour literature that work behaviour is determined by individual and situational factors, the work attitudes/behaviours of Nigerian civil servants have been explained more in terms of situational factors. In this regard, Maduabum (1990) attributes the problem of low productivity to high rates of absenteeism, which the author then links to poor pay, lack of equity and stagnation on the job - all of which compel workers to seek extra incomes from private businesses.

Davis and Luthans' Social Learning Theory has also been applied in explaining undesirable work-place behaviours of the Nigerian civil servant. According to the theory, as expatiated in Odiaka (1991), employees who are new to a workplace learn the work culture of the organisation from older workers rather than comply with prescribed work practices. Factors within the larger society have similarly been applied in explaining the work behaviours of the Nigerian worker. For instance, it is said that a collectivist value system wherein every worker is related to every other worker through various social relations, could constrain a superior in duly reprimanding a subordinate for undesirable behaviours at work (Odiaka, 1991; Adebayo, 2005).

Exceptional Nigerian workers: It has however been argued that these poor attitudes/behaviours should not be construed as indicating a general dislike for work among Nigerians, given that Nigerians in non-industrial occupations do exhibit a high level of work ethic

that differs only in form but not in substance from Weber's Protestant Work Ethic (Akerle, 1986; Odiaka, 1991). Indeed, there are innumerable hard working, efficient and honest Nigerian workers within and outside Nigeria, and many have distinguished themselves internationally (Vanguard Newspaper, 2006_(a)). Anytime the nation chooses a qualified individual as Director General of any public agency without recourse to ethnic, religious or gender balancing, the agency involved records commendable work performance (Adinuba, 2006), thus buttressing the supposition that factors that determine the poor work habits of Nigerian civil servants are largely situational.

Attitude Change and Resistance to Change

Changing employees' work attitude/behaviour is a necessity for organisational success. A number of factors determine the success or otherwise of attempts at changing people's attitude. These factors include, among others: extremity of message, with evidence suggesting that the more extreme the attitude change being advocated, the greater the actual attitude change that takes place. Again, encouraging people to commit themselves publicly to a change in attitude has been found to be an effective procedure, commonly used in religious revivalist groups, hence the name 'the Billy Graham Effect' (Arnold, Cooper and Robertson, 1995). Employees however tend to resist attempts at changing the way things are done and how they are supposed to behave in their work organisations. A number of tactics are commonly employed in dealing with such resistance. These tactics include among others, educating employees about the logic of the change and involving them in decisions pertaining to the change (Robbins, 1997).

Civil service reforms recommended by the World Bank and the IMF

In the 1980s, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund recommended structural adjustment programmes (SAP) for African nations, Nigeria inclusive, to aid their recovery from the economic crises of that era, with policy prescriptions that encompass reforms in the civil service, the financial sector, and government parastatal corporations (Harvey, 1996). According to these international financial institutions (IFIs), the basic problem with civil service employment in many African countries is that wages are too low while employment levels are too high. Civil

servants consequently are compelled to seek additional income in private businesses and governments end up with large civil services which deliver few services (Harvey, 1996).

African governments were advised, therefore, to drastically reduce the size of their respective civil services, and to pay the remaining workforce a wage that would enable them do their civil service jobs full-time. The author cites findings of experiments in which \$130 a month was sufficient to procure fulltime work attendance from samples of African civil servants (Harvey, 1996). At an exchange rate of ₦130 (Nigerian naira) to US\$1, this experimental wage amounts to ₦16,900 a month. As at 2006 the Nigerian national minimum wage for federal civil servants was ₦7,500 (US\$57.69/month), with many state governments paying civil servants in their states far less (Akinyemi, 2006); though one or two states pay more than this minimum. Going by the discussion above as cited in Harvey (1996), Nigeria should actually aim at about ₦17,000/month as national minimum wage.

Earlier initiatives for improving service delivery

In addition to policy prescriptions by the IFIs, writers who have examined the problems of inefficiency in the Nigerian public sector have made several policy prescriptions, including training civil servants in entrepreneurial orientation: customer focus; long-term involvement; among other traits (Akerle, 1990). Further, previous Nigerian leadership have commissioned special agencies to serve as standard watchdogs. The Consumer Protection Council (CPC) for example, was established to ensure that Nigerians enjoy quality in products and services, through surveillance and enforcement, and by educating the public about the eight universal rights of the consumer. But the CPC had only one office- its headquarters, hence its services were largely inaccessible to the consuming public (Nwokocha, 2006; Duruoha, 2006). More recently, in the 2000s two agencies were established - the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), to fight corruption in Nigerian public life (Sanusi, 2006; Amalu, 2006). Additionally, the 'Due Process' initiative was enacted with a focus on re-instating proper procedure in the award of public contracts through open bidding and adoption of internationally accepted price benchmarks (This Day, 2006).

SERVICOM: history and implementation modalities

History: SERVICOM is an acronym for 'Service Compact with all Nigerians'. The vision for SERVICOM crystallised in December 2003, when the immediate past Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo (May 1999-May 2007), commissioned a team of consultants to examine the functioning of the country's public sector and make appropriate recommendations for improvements (SERVICOM History, 2006). The presentation of the commission's report was the subject of a 'Special Presidential Retreat on Service Delivery', held from March 19th to 21st, 2004, at which the Executive arm asserted full ownership of the SERVICOM initiative. It is noteworthy that the President reports to the executive council on the achievements and challenges of SERVICOM, thus underscoring government's commitment to this initiative (Memorandum, 2005).

More specifically, the SERVICOM initiative was necessitated by the need to eradicate inefficiency and corruption from Nigerian civil service and incorporate quality into government services. In the context of SERVICOM, poor or 'bad' services mean, in practical terms, that "someone has done what should not be done, or... left undone what should have been done" (The SERVICOM Book, 2006: 7). Specific problems identified by the President pertain to consumers having to struggle for public services, by exerting influence through important individuals within the system and budgeting time and money to pursue services from desk to desk through entire service chains in a bid to procure due service. The overall effect then was that consumers lost faith in public services in Nigeria (The SERVICOM Book, 2006). In other words, the key motivators of the SERVICOM policy intervention are the needs and rights of Nigerians to quality services delivered in a timely, fair, honest, effective and transparent manner, and the vision that national development is underpinned by an efficient civil service (The SERVICOM Book, 2006).

Implementation modalities: The SERVICOM policy is to be implemented, effective from March, 2005, through establishment of a SERVICOM Unit (SU) in every ministry (MSU), extra-ministerial departments (EMSU), and parastatal (PSU). These units are to establish within their domains, procedures for the key activities entailed in service delivery: customer relations; customer feedback on services; and

complaints procedure/grievance redress mechanisms; using market research techniques to identify customer needs and expectations; promoting quality assurance and best practices; providing training policy for frontline staff on customer relationships, and facilitating a safe and conducive working environment for staff at levels of service delivery (The SERVICOM Book, 2006). In other words, SERVICOM seeks to incorporate quality into government services, using basically the TQM philosophy.

Each MSU is expected to draw up a number of charters encapsulating the services the public should expect, which are to be couched in simple language and displayed conspicuously for the benefit of the public (The SERVICOM Book, 2006). The charters provide for customer satisfaction in these ways: designing quality service around customers' requirement; listing fees payable in a department and prohibiting illegal demands; ensuring provision of services within realistic timeframe; specifying officials to whom complaints may be addressed; and conducting and publishing surveys of customer satisfaction (The SERVICOM Book, 2006). The day-to-day responsibilities of SERVICOM units therefore entail the implementation of these charters.

At intervals every service frontline in each government department is to be assessed for SERVICOM compliance; in other words, for the quality of services being rendered, and hence, customer satisfaction. A service frontline in the SERVICOM context refers to a point where service is being rendered with clear identification of the service and the clientele being served. As depicted in the table below, customer satisfaction hinges on a number of 'drivers' (determinants). Each driver in itself is made up of critical elements; and each critical element is made up of a number of criteria. The criteria are scored and summed up for SERVICOM Compliance. The summated score gives the SERVICOM Index for a government agency. Each criterion is to be rated on a scale ranging from 0 to 4. A score of 0 means nothing has been done to satisfy the particular requirement, while a score of 4 means all aspects of the criterion being evaluated have been satisfactorily covered. A criterion is not to be scored above 0 without supporting evidence such as survey reports, discussion with customers, and evaluators' observations (The SERVICOM Book, 2006).

Table 1: Drivers of customer satisfaction

DRIVER	WEIGHT OF IMPORTANCE
Service Delivery	30
Timeliness	24
Information	18
Professionalism	16
Staff Attitude	12
TOTAL	100%

Source: The SERVICOM Book, 2006: 17-19

Assessment of SERVICOM'S performance

In this section we outline the achievements of SERVICOM over the first two years of its promulgation. Three additional issues are discussed which are pertinent to the broader policy environment within which the intervention is being implemented, and to the attainment of its goals. These issues pertain to staff retrenchment, reforms within state civil services, and some evidence of resistance to change.

Establishment of SERVICOM units: At the top right corner of virtually every article on SERVICOM'S web site is the announcement "coordinating 31 Federal Ministries, Extra-Ministerial Departments, and Agencies" – MDAs (SERVICOM News, 2006_(c)). This claim gives an idea of the extent to which ministerial SERVICOM units, commonly referred to as MSUs, have been established. Official speeches at inauguration ceremonies of MSUs reveal how different MDAs intend to translate SERVICOM's mandates into improved service delivery within their domain (Egwuata, 2006). To cite an example, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the apex regulatory body in the capital market, inaugurated its SERVICOM unit on Tuesday November 14, 2006. In line with SERVICOM'S service improvement drive, the SEC declared an intention to investigate reported cases of rule breaches in the capital market within two weeks, among other improvement efforts (Egwuata, 2006). Further, SERVICOM nodal officers in institutions under the health ministry have gone a step further in initiating a novel quarterly networking meeting toward adopting a uniform approach to improving health-care service delivery (SERVICOM News, 2006_(b)).

Training in service delivery: In 2006, senior civil servants working with various MSUs were trained in customer sensitivity, effective handling of complaints that result from service failure, and acting as change agents in their work places (SERVICOM News, 2006_(d); 2006_(f)). Further, the SERVICOM Office has established a Service Delivery Institute, with the assistance of the British Department for International

Development (DFID). The Institute is to develop training courses on various aspects of service delivery and adapt these for different user groups (SERVICOM News, 2006_(e)).

Award of SERVICOM index: In May 2006, SERVICOM evaluated 19 MDAs to determine their level of service delivery (SERVICOM compliance). Of the 19 MDAs evaluated, the Corporate Affairs Commission had the best rating of 2.9 out of 4 (72.5%). The Nigerian Police Force, the Motor Traffic Division of the Ministry of Police Affairs, and Power Holding Company of Nigeria (for electricity provisioning) had the lowest ratings that ranged from 0.6 to 1 (SERVICOM News, 2006_(g)).

Ministerial code of conduct: The SERVICOM Initiative has re-awakened the need for political office holders to be ethically upright in the discharge of their duties, through a renewed emphasis on a ministerial code of conduct for members of the federal executive council and special advisers to the president. The code stipulates seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership, with detailed elaborations on the interpretations of these principles (The SERVICOM Book, 2004).

Other related events

Several reforms are being implemented within the federal as well as state civil services alongside the SERVICOM initiative. We cite here three events that are closely related to SERVICOM'S objective of improvement in public service delivery.

Retrenchment in the service: Many government departments have embarked on staff retrenchment although we did not come across any official statement linking the SERVICOM initiative to this measure. What has been disclosed is the planned retrenchment of 33,000 civil servants (Mamah, 2006). Several government departments have implemented this measure within their domain. To cite an example, the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) in 2006 retrenched 20% or 1,000 of about 5,000 personnel (Ehigiator,

2006). The retrenchment was attributed to the need to reposition the agency for improved service delivery. It can be deduced then, that Nigerian government is implementing the recommendations of the IFIs in respect of civil service reforms, as cited in Harvey (1996), especially when we call to mind other public sector reforms embarked upon since 2003 (banking sector reforms and privatisation of parastatals), including frequent upward review of wages in the public sector since the late 1990s.

Reforms at state level: Besides SERVICOM and related public sector interventions like Due Process which are being enacted at the Federal level, some state governments have instituted measures with the overall objective of improving service delivery at state level. This suggests that government has realised the need for coordinating policy formulation and implementation among the three tiers of government (federal, state and local government levels). To cite an example, Abia State is conducting a manpower survey toward the objective of deploying civil servants to duties for which they are best suited (Okoli, 2006).

Resistance to change: Implementing the SERVICOM policy entails introducing major changes into the Nigerian civil service (SERVICOM News, 2006_(a)), and as such, there is bound to be opposition to those changes. Already, there has been stiff opposition to attempts at checking fraudulent admission practices in the nation's tertiary institutions (Shaibu, 2006), and to promotion of civil servants on the basis of examination (Ogwuda, 2006).

DISCUSSION/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

From available data on the implementation of SERVICOM thus far, it is easy to enthuse about government's commitment to the success of the initiative, and by inference, to integrating quality into service delivery in the Nigerian public sector. The core components of a service improvement programme that is anchored on the TQM philosophy have been integrated into the implementation of SERVICOM. These include commissioning experts to diagnose the problems of service delivery and make appropriate recommendation, securing top leadership commitment, establishing MSUs within individual government departments thereby bringing consumer protection services closer to the consuming public, building service improvements around customer needs, and training employees on service delivery. In addition the initiative benefits from international funding and technical

assistance. Certain gaps however need to be bridged to ensure full achievement of SERVICOM's aims.

To start with, since TQM begins with utilising customers' voice (complaints) in initiating quality improvement, it is necessary to raise public awareness about the right of consumers to demand proper service. Consumers must discard the prevailing mindset of low quality expectations, whereby they resignedly attribute service failure to the 'Nigerian factor' - a phrase that connotes that in Nigeria nobody expects anything to work. In this vein, the implementation of SERVICOM policy seems better grounded within the health care sub-sector. Consumers of health services seem to be taking advantage of SERVICOM charters on customer complaints, in reporting numerous cases of dereliction of duty by healthcare providers, and getting the Ministry of Health to take remedial measures (Daily Independent, 2006). This active participation of consumers might be linked to the relative ease in establishing performance criteria in this sub-sector vis-à-vis indices like mortality rates, waiting time, and so on (Ogundipe, 2006). Other MSUs must also clarify performance criteria for service frontlines, so that consumers would be well informed and hence, be in a position of strength to refuse poor service delivery.

At the moment, those who have been trained under the initiative are senior staff. It is important to stress that all categories of staff including contract staff, must be trained about SERVICOM principles and operational requirements, about the logic and benefits of the planned improvements in service delivery, and they must be involved in decisions pertaining to the changes encapsulated in the policy. All this should be done with emphasis on the desired attitudinal change. This is crucial in view of previous research findings which suggest that poor work attitudes are more prevalent among junior civil servants (Maduabum, 1990). In the same vein, upward review of salaries which appears integral to the wider civil service reforms being implemented should be generous to the lower cadres in order to correct an insidious correlation of pay size with the level of work commitment being expected from employees.

Proper synchronisation of the SERVICOM initiative with earlier, as well as recent improvement efforts will facilitate achievement of envisioned improvements in the quality of government services (Sunday Vanguard, 2006). The illusion of paying nothing or at the most, paying highly subsidised prices for government services has to be discarded, if the physical goods

(infrastructure) that are central to quality assurance in service delivery systems must be maintained and expanded (Dictionary by LaborLawTalk, 2006_(b); Agboluaje, 2006). No amount of customer relation can substitute for inadequate electrical power generation, for example. Most importantly, enabling legal instruments should be put in place that will permanently entrench the initiative in the nation's institutional processes.

CONCLUSION

The changes envisioned by the SERVICOM policy will likely take some time in getting accomplished, simply because the reforms touch upon the core of public sector malfunctioning in Nigeria - poor work performance. A lot of political will is required to tackle this pervasive and longstanding problem. Moreover the problem is accompanied by much buck passing between the government and workers. But studies by Nigerian academic and international economists strongly suggest that the problem lies with the government, which must put in place merit-based and transparent governance systems, including adequate reward systems, to motivate civil servants to put in utmost efforts into their jobs. The right steps however have been taken in the conceptualisation of the intervention. With continued support from international donor agencies, the country will likely sustain the SERVICOM initiative. Empirical studies that investigate detailed implementation of SERVICOM and its impact within particular departments will further enhance our understanding of the relevance of this initiative.

REFERENCES

- Adamolekun, L., 2006. Toward educational excellence: lessons from western Nigeria experience. Vanguard Newspaper, Thursday November 30, pp.34-35.
- Adebayo, A., 2005. White Man in Black Skin. Spectrum Books, Ibadan, Nigeria, 127pp.
- Adinuba, C. D., 2006. Akunyili and Nigeria's development crisis. Vanguard Newspaper, Wednesday September 13, p.39.
- Agboluaje, A., 2006. Good riddance to Father Christmas FGN (2). Vanguard Newspaper, November 15, p. 39.
- Akerele, A., 1986. An instrument for measuring the attitudes of workers toward work. Nigerian Journal of Business Administration, 2(1): 8-22.
- Akerele, A., 1990. Entrepreneurship in the civil service. Nigerian Management Review 5(3 & 4): 321-330.
- Akinyemi, D., 2006. NLC tasks Saraki on minimum wage. Vanguard Newspaper, Wednesday July 5, p.13.
- Amalu, C., 2006. EFCC moves to fix all Nigerians in the fight against corruption. Vanguard Newspaper, Friday October 27, p.56.
- Answers.com 2006. Definition of quality. Answers.com <http://www.answers.com/library/dictionary-cid-379649457>, pp.1-9.
- Arnold, J., Cooper, C.L., and Robertson, I.T., 1995. Work Psychology: Understanding Human Behaviour in the Workplace, 2nd ed., Pitman Publishing, London, 524pp.
- Daily Independent 2006. Baby Eniola: FG sacks LUTH chief medical director, four others. Daily Independent, <http://www.independentngonline.com>, Thursday August 3, 3(1026): A1-A2.
- Dictionary by LaborLawTalk 2006a. Definition of civil service. Dictionary by LaborLawTalk <http://www.dictionary.laborlawtalk.com/civilservice>, pp.1-2.
- Dictionary by LaborLawTalk 2006b. Definition of public service. Dictionary by LaborLawTalk <http://www.dictionary.laborlawtalk.com/publicservice>, pp.1-2.
- Duruoha, F., 2006. CPC takes enlightenment campaign to Lagos fair. Vanguard Newspaper, Wednesday November 8, p.24.
- Egwuata, P., 2006. Minister confirms SEC's compliance with SERVICOM. Vanguard Newspaper, Wednesday November 15, p.21.
- Ehigiator, K., 2006. FAAN sacks 20% workforce. Vanguard Newspaper, Tuesday August 22, p.6.

- Enogholas, G., 2006. Commissioner denies claim of sacrificing merit for mediocrity. Vanguard Newspaper, Wednesday October 4, p.9.
- Fanimu, D., 2006. Path to civil service rebirth, by stakeholders. The Guardian Newspaper, Thursday June 29, p.29.
- Furnharm, A. and Heaven, P., 1999. Personality and Social Behaviour. Arnold Publishers, London, 352pp.
- Hamalai, L.A., 1999. Government-Business Relations and Economic Liberalisation in Nigeria. Baraka Press and Publisher, Kaduna, 439pp.
- Harvey, C., 1996. Constraints on sustained recovery from economic disasters in Africa. In C. Harvey (Editor) Constraints on the Success of Structural Adjustments Programmes in Africa, Macmillan Press Ltd, London, pp. 130-151.
- Inegbenebor, A. U., 2006. Elements of service operations. In A.U Inegbenebor (Editor) The Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, Malthouse Press, Lagos, pp.164-174.
- Jason, P. 2006. Flickers of light in darkness. Vanguard Newspaper, Friday September, 29, p.20.
- Johns G., 1996. Organisational Behaviour: Understanding and Managing Life at Work. HarperCollins College Publishers, New York, 656pp.
- Maduabum, C. P., 1990. Causes and effects of absenteeism in the Nigerian civil service. Nigerian Management Review 5(3 & 4): 359-366.
- Mamah, E., 2006. Sultan appeals to FG on retrenchment. Vanguard Newspaper, Tuesday August 22, p.13.
- Memorandum by the President 2005. Report on the establishment of ministerial SERVICOM units. Memorandum by the President <http://www.servenigeria.com>, May 20, pp.1-2.
- Nwokocha, J., 2006. Consumers should insist on value for money spent. Vanguard Newspaper, Sunday August 27, p.37.
- Odiaka, B. I., 1991. Nigerian workers attitude to work. Management in Nigeria, March-April, pp.8-11 & 17.
- Ogundipe, S. 2006. Free healthcare is necessary to address poverty – Idris. Vanguard Newspaper, Tuesday August 22, p.36.
- Ogwuda, A., 2006. Workers flogged in Delta for disobeying stay-at-home order. Vanguard Newspaper, Tuesday December 5, p.14.
- Okoli, A., 2006. Reforms: Abia conducts manpower survey. Vanguard Newspaper, Monday September 11, p.10.
- Quality Digest 2001. Definition of quality. Quality Digest <http://www.qualitydigest.com/currentmag/current.html>, pp.1-15.
- Robbins, S.P., 1997. Essentials of Organisational Behaviour. (5th ed.) Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 324pp.
- Sanusi, M., 2006. Corruption as national culture. Vanguard Newspaper, Friday October 13, p.18.
- SERVICOM History 2006. History. SERVICOM History <http://www.servenigeria.com>, pp.1-6.
- SERVICOM News 2006a. SERVICOM coordinator canvasses fundamental management changes. SERVICOM News <http://www.servenigeria.com>, pp.1-2.
- SERVICOM News 2006b. Networking on the SERVICOM initiative takes root in the health sector. SERVICOM News <http://www.servenigeria.com>, p.1.
- SERVICOM News 2006c. Power and steel ministry joins the SERVICOM train. SERVICOM News <http://www.servenigeria.com>, Tuesday October 10, p.1.
- SERVICOM News 2006d. 300 public officers receive training under ASCON, SERVICOM partnership. SERVICOM

- News <http://www.servenigeria.com>, Friday September 15, p.1.
- SERVICOM News 2006e. Service delivery institute takes off in Abuja. SERVICOM News <http://www.servenigeria.com>, p.1.
- SERVICOM News 2006f. Participants laud SERVICOM training on customer relations. SERVICOM News <http://www.servenigeria.com>, p.1.
- SERVICOM News 2006g. SERVICOM evaluates examination bodies on service delivery. SERVICOM News <http://www.servenigeria.com>, Thursday July 27, pp.1-12.
- Shaibu I., 2006. House committee condemns post-UME screening exercise. Vanguard Newspaper, Thursday August 24, p.14.
- Sheikh, S. and Steiber, N., 2002. Evaluating actions and measures promoting female entrepreneurship- a guide. Austrian Institute for Small Business Research (IFGH), <http://www.ifgh.ac.at>, pp.1-55.
- Sunday Vanguard 2006. Consumer protection boss lauds SON, urges collaboration standards enforcement. Sunday Vanguard, July 9, p.8.
- The SERVICOM Book 2004. Code of ethics: ministerial code of conduct. The SERVICOM Book <http://www.servenigeria.com>, pp.1-10.
- The SERVICOM Book 2006. Service compact with all Nigerians. The SERVICOM Book, <http://www.servenigeria.com>, pp.1-40.
- This Day 2006. Nigeria: restricted due process. This Day <http://www.allAfrica.com>, December 18, pp.1-2.
- Thoburn, J., 2000. Finding the right track for industry in Africa- some policy issues and options. United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) Discussion Paper, <http://www.unido.org/doc/4812>, pp.1-28.
- Ulayi, E., 2006. N5.5bn fraud uncovered in NITEL. Vanguard Newspaper, Wednesday July 5, p.13.
- Van Fleet, D.C., 1991. Contemporary Management 2nd ed., Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 672pp.
- Vanguard Newspaper 2006a. Level of honesty in Nigeria surprises Briton. Vanguard Newspaper, Thursday July 6, p.5.
- Vanguard Newspaper 2006b. Mowe residents send SOS to PHCN. Vanguard Newspaper, Tuesday August 22, p.6.
- Vanguard Newspaper 2006c. Blame government for civil service woes. Vanguard Newspaper, Sunday October 15, p.12.