

# Strategic Management; An Imperative for Public Service Performance in Nigeria

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**Abstract** – The Strategic management is a relatively new discipline that has gradually gained ground. It involves conscious plan of actions for implementation that discourages bureaucratization by ensuring that individual initiative of the subordinates are integrated into organizational goals for optimal maximization of objectives. This paper therefore integrates the concept; Strategic Management, its tenets and roles as a reform initiative that can facilitate the effectiveness of public sector organizations in Nigeria. With reliance on secondary sources of data collection and backed by the analytical approach, the paper observed that a reformed and well focused public service anchored on the tenets of Strategic Management, offers a ready tool for effective public service performance in Nigeria. The paper recommends that the structural barriers and other encumbrances to the implementation of public service reforms should be tackled on a sustainable basis. Also, that appropriate institutional framework that will trench the tenets of strategic thinking across Nigeria’s public service should be encouraged.

**Keywords** – Management, Public Service, Strategic Management.

## I. INTRODUCTION

*“There is no great tradition or heritage for strategic thinking [management] in many organizations; the skill to set and implement strategy is sometimes missing; and there are barriers to strategy ... All this makes strategic thinking and action a tough challenge ...The first step requires finding the motivation to begin...” (Tregoe, Zimmerman, Smith, and Tobia, 1989)*

The bedrock of every organization is in the calibre of the management and administrative mechanism of such organization. Organizations over time have strived for an effective and efficient performance and productivity, thereby placing many expectations from both the management and administrative officers. In Nigeria for instance, the management and administrative officers in public service agrees to the fact that indeed much is expected of them but really, little is being given to them. It thus, leaves one to wonder little over what actually is the reason for the poor performance of the public service across Nigeria.

Beyond the agitations of the public service administrative officers, the management also seems to be in dare state of the popular Nigerian adage of “...monkey is working, Baboo is eating...” This implies that the workers receive little and put in a whole lot of energy to ensure that they meet up with their expected output. A

little look into these perceived problems gave rise to question the managerial architecture of the contemporary public service in Nigeria. From all indications as it was observed, there seems to be a problem. For us, we believed that it all emanates with the ‘will’ to embrace strategic management and de-bureaucratise the public service in Nigeria.

Barlta (2011), noted that the reality of the contemporary economic environment demonstrates that organizations need to adopt highly flexible attitudes in relationship to the market, to investors, business partners and even competition. Frequent re-evaluations of the strategy have become necessary, the key role belonging to the strategic management. By establishing, designing and integrating strategic issues within the general organizational strategy, that shall support strategic results, the leading staff of an organization will be able to correctly assess any change of the strategic direction and correctly decide on the changes necessary for assuring the organization’s integrity and sustainability, the latter concept being defined as a set of structural changes influencing the organization’s strategy and performance.

Also, Luis-Angels (2013) emphasized that, strategic management is a relatively youthful discipline that has steadily matured over the past fifty years. The field has become consolidated over this period, while simultaneously expanding the range of topics analyzed and research methodologies used. Different theories and approaches, addressing different research topics, have been developed to explain the reasons underlying firms’ competitive advantage and success.

Ismet (2014) on the other hand, observed that, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in other transition countries, the importance of strategic planning [management] in public organizations is still not sufficiently studied. A great number of public organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have sufficient knowledge, culture and routine to strategically plan [and manage] their activities. The consequences of such a situation are extremely negative. This is the reason why these problems should be consistently researched, identified and properly addressed, because they imply and multiply many adverse consequences for B & H society and economy.

Going forward, the above notation, emphases and discoveries of researchers showed that the trend of public service performance now gears towards a well thought-out strategic management modality that will engender a high turnaround of the attitudes and morale of the public

servants especially in Nigeria. To advocate for this, this paper intends to review related literatures by; - conceptually defining Management & Administration, - Public service, -Strategic management. Highlight and explain the model of Strategic management. Indicate the issues challenging the Public service in Nigeria and finally recommend ways which the philosophy of the strategic management can induce change in the managerial and operational pattern of Nigeria’s Public service which we hope, will surely bring about high productivity and performance.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Management & Administration*

The concept of management and administration is as old as time. Too many definitions have been proffered but what is indeed a serious debate is the dilemma of acceptance of a general and universal definition. Our intention therefore, is not to bring an end to the unending debate of the concept in the intellectual community but to sharpen our mindset on the deeper understanding of the concept in relation to the strategic thinking in other to help the policy makers and administrators perform better for optimal maximization of the organizational goals.

Themozhi (n.d) defined management in the words of scientific scholars as follows;

**F.W. Taylor** -“*Art of knowing what you want to do and then seeing that it is done the best and cheapest way*”. •**Henry Fayol** –“*To Manage is to forecast, to plan, to organise, to command, to co-ordinate and to control*”. •**Peter F.Drucker** –” *Management is work and as such it has its own skills, its own tools and its own techniques*”. •“*Management is the art of getting things done through and with people*”.

Again, Management is the organizational process that includes strategic planning, setting objectives, managing resources, deploying the human and financial assets needed to achieve objectives, and measuring results. Management also includes recording and storing facts and information for later use or for others within the organization. Management functions are not limited to *managers* and *supervisors*. Every member of the organization has some management and reporting functions as part of their job." (Knowledge Management Terms, 2009).

On the other hands, administration is one concept that has been widely used interchangeably with management. Many times, scholars are in disagreement of the term. Until the advent of the integrationist thinking/school, the terms have been an issue of serious debate. In fact, the words of Pat Carrigan, a former elementary school principal who later became a manager at a General Motors car parts plant, says. "... I’ve never made a part in my life, and I don’t really have any plans to make one. That’s not my job. My job is to create an environment where people who do make them can make them right, can make them at a competitive cost and can do something with sense of responsibility and pride in what they are doing. I don’t have to know how to make a part to do any of those

things...” What Pat was invariably saying was that he was not an administrator, but a manager. But to show the area of synergy in the two concepts, he noted that he is interested in efficiency and productivity which also is the hallmark of administration.

However, Simon, Smithburg & Thompson (1950) defined administration as the activities of groups cooperating to accomplish common goals. Again, Business Dictionary.com (2015), defined administration as the interpretation and implementation of the policy set by an organization's board of directors [management].

## III. PUBLIC SERVICE

The term public service includes the following:

- The Civil Service: the career personnel of the presidency, ministers, Extra Ministerial Departments, the National Assembly and the Judiciary.
- The Armed Forces, the Police, Other Security agencies e.g. Para – Military organizations
- The Parastatals or Public Enterprises.

The meaning of Pubic service is contained in section 277 (91) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1979 now section 169 of the 1999 Constitution as encompassing the civil service (Ministerial departments), statutory corporations or parastatals, judiciary, legislature, educational institutions, financially wholly or principally owned by government at the State, Local and Federal levels, Nigeria Police or Armed Forces and other organizations in which the Federal or state governments owned controlling share or interest. In Nigeria, the Country’s government bureaucracy is the public service. This is because government at whatever level enunciates and implements its policies, programs and projects through the instrumentally of the public service. Most public services are service – oriented.

However, Jide (2013) observed that attempts at defining or conceptualizing public service have not been particularly easy due to semantic distortions or synonymous use of the term with civil service. Okoli and Onah (2002) for instance posited that “the English used the term public service in a broader concept to include the personnel of the central government agencies”. They affirmed further that “in our use of the term “public service”, we exclude the Armed Forces, the quasi-government corporations and statutory Bodies”.

Nevertheless, the unending debate of a universality of definitive acceptance has been a re-occurring decimal in the social science discipline which we do not intend to burg into. The stipulations of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 shall be our acceptable definition for the purpose of this paper.

## IV. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT / ADMINISTRATION

Historically, Denis (n.d) noted that, Strategic management as a term and concept is not. To him, term was first used in the 1970.s, and it meant that a staff of

strategic planners more or less thought up “strategic programs” and then tried to sell them to decision makers. In the 1990.s, the view of strategic planning and strategic management is much different. The concept of strategic management builds on the definition of strategic planning, recognizing that although “planning” is the prelude of strategic management, it is insufficient if not followed by the deployment and implementation of the plan and the evaluation of the plan in action.

Pearce & Robinson (2003) thus, defined it as the set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a company’s objectives. To him, it comprises of the nine critical tasks;

- i. Formulate the company’s mission, including broad statements about its purpose, philosophy, and goals.
- ii. Conduct an analysis that reflects the company’s internal conditions and capabilities.
- iii. Assess the company’s external environment, including both the competitive and the general contextual factors.
- iv. Analyze the company’s options by matching its resources with the external environment.
- v. Identify the most desirable options by evaluating each option in light of the company’s mission.
- vi. Select a set of long-term objectives and grand strategies that will achieve the most desirable options.
- vii. Develop annual objectives and short-term strategies that are compatible with the selected set of long-term objectives and grand strategies.
- viii. Implement the strategic choices by means of budgeted resource allocations in which the matching of tasks, people, structures, technologies, and reward systems is emphasised.
- ix. Evaluate the success of the strategic process as an input for the future decision making.

As these nine tasks indicate, strategic management involves the planning, directing, organizing and controlling of an organizations strategy-related decisions and actions.

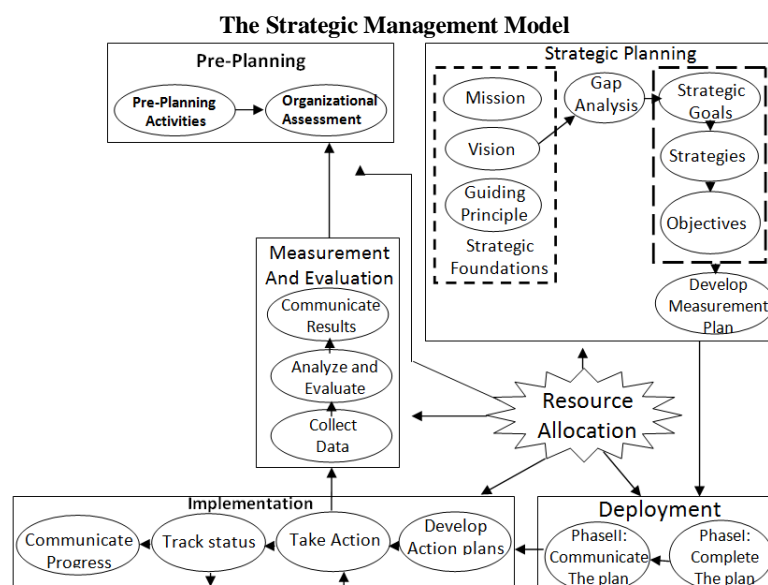
Also, Ole & Paul (1998) in Balta (n.d) noted that strategic management are considered the main business strategies supporting the whole activity of the organization. Technically, they are structural elements of the strategic planning activity, in the sense that the organization’s strategic vision is based on a series of strategic issues. The strategic issues are also called “*the pillars of excellence*” in the specialized literature, and they define the organization’s strategic reactions in its attempt to achieve its vision in its main domains, as follows:

- Financial
- Beneficiaries/Customers
- Internal processes
- Organizational capacity

To Rumelt et al (1994), Strategic management has been regarded as a fundamental issue that explains the success or failure of firms.

Again, Ismet (2014) observed that Strategic planning [management] focuses attention on the important issues and challenges in organizational forms and helps key decision-makers to find the ways to address them. Strategic management induces effective planning and can, therefore, help organizations to define their strategic goals and to make today’s decisions in the light of their future consequences. Organizations that use strategic planning pay more attention to major organizational issues and are prepared to respond to internal and external demands and pressures, efficiently dealing with the consequences of all changes. Strategic management directly benefit employees of an organisation, enabling those who create policies and make key decisions to work more effectively and fulfil their obligations. It also helps them build teamwork and expertise.

From the foregoing, we see Strategic management as a conscious plan of actions for implementation that discourages bureaucratization by ensuring that individual initiative of the subordinates are integrated into organizational goals for optimal maximization of objectives.



Sources: Denis. L.W. “Strategic Management for Senior Leaders: A Handbook for Implementation”

The model above illustrates that the first stage of the strategic management starts from the Pre-Planning stage where the activities and organizational assessment are considered. The Strategic Planning takes the next stage which involved the organizational foundations, guiding principles, organizational vision and mission. When that is done, we have the gap analysis where we put into consideration all the available options and then we marshal out the strategic goals, the strategies, and objectives and then develop measurement for its actualization.

Deployment of personnel becomes the next stage with the plan completion in phase 1 and its communication in phase 2. Then we have development of action plans into actions. This involves ensuring that the right calibre of people is doing what they are set out to do and that's invariably the implementation stage. The measurement and evaluation stage which also very critical and involves the data collection, analyses and evaluations, results communications are taking into consideration and that's the final stage.

Very important to note is the fact the resource allocation, which is actually at the centre is related to all the units and activities of the description cycle. The implication is that resources are very important to the strategic management. Basically without resources both material and non-material resources, the entire processes are of no effect.

## V. BENEFITS OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Using the strategic management approach, organizations at all levels of the firm interact in planning and implementing. As a result, the behavioural consequences of strategic management are similar to those of participative decision making. Its benefits include the following:

**Conflict prevention:** The strategic management through its formulation processes enhances organizations ability to prevent internal conflicts. The reason is because of its integration processes which ensure that the subordinates are carried along in the organizational planning.

**Variety of Strategic Options:** The process involves making available several strategic options for managers. The reason for this is because by bringing the subordinates into planning, opinions and ideas would obviously maximize.

**Improves understanding:** The involvement of employees in strategy formulation improves their understanding of the productivity - reward relationship in every strategic plan and thus heightens their motivation.

**Reduction of Overlaps of Functions:** Gaps and overlaps in units and departments functions are reduced to the barest minimum. The activities of various units are clearly spelt out as participation in formulation clarifies differences in roles.

**Resistance to Change is reduced:** Though the participants in strategy formulation may be no more pleased with their own decisions than they would be with

authoritarian decisions, their greater awareness of the parameters that limit the available options makes them more likely to accept those decisions.

## VI. INTEGRATING THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT THINKING INTO NIGERIA'S PUBLIC SERVICE

The Public service in Nigeria is one that has generally thrived in ineptitude, corruption and indiscriminate operational functions (Obi, 2011). Anazodo (2014) also observed that the Nigeria's public service is bedevilled by apparent lethargy, procrastination, and general inefficiency.

To Iwuoha (2012), the manifestations of deepening attitudinal decay, mindful abuse of official codes and principles and hysterical stealing riddles the public service of today. He further added that, many of the over-dozed reforms and the enforcement of multifarious disciplinary regimes have not appreciably shielded a public service from the vagaries of her own undoing.

Also, Onah (2000) noted that the Public Service in Nigeria is informed by unusual political setting, dominated by militarism, epileptic economic fortunes and misfortunes, the octopuses of ethnic consciousness, the inadequate technical competence of career persons and other environmental variables as religion, population etc. For him, the ideal pattern of managing public service is elusive and neglected either by omission or commission thus to the detriment of its efficiency.

However, Denis (n.d) observed that, when an organization is practicing strategic management, thinking becomes more visionary, which is it gives room for a breakthrough in thinking about the future; organizational boundaries made are more flexible; a shift in focus from the inputs that are used to run the business to the outputs and outcomes the organization desires to achieve; a focus on optimizing organizational performance and process quality as keys to delivering quality products and services; a move toward an organizational culture that adapts easily to change.

The above assertions of scholars especially from Onah indicated that there is an urgent exigency to inject the strategic management philosophy in the management of the Public Service in Nigeria. This is because despite the amount of financial resources that has been invested into it, the system still underperforms. For instance, a newly elected member of the National Assembly in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, Ben Bruce noted that the Nigerian Television Authority for instance has one of the World Best Coverage Cameras and equipment worth over 1 Billion Naira that are capable of transmitting any live programme from any part of the World; - The Stadiums across Nigeria according to him, can take over 150,000 people which worth over 1 Billion US Dollars but they are all in bad conditions today. The real reason for these circumstances is nothing other than bad governance.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Nigeria's Public service to thrive, through the philosophy of Strategic Management, we recommend as follows;

The government have to first and foremost show the way by rising to her responsibilities of ensuring at least a near corrupt free society. The countries public corporations, enterprises, military and paramilitary agencies constitute over 40% of Nigeria's workforce. The model of strategic management cannot thrive under a corrupt environment.

The structural barriers and other encumbrances to the implementation of public service reforms should be tackled on a sustainable basis. An appropriate institutional framework that will entrench the tenets of Strategic management thinking across Nigeria's public service should be encouraged.

The strategic management philosophy requires discreet managers. Individuals that are endowed with the pre-requisite dexterities to turn around an approach and consciously follow up such, in a manner that an organizational goal will be achieved. Such individuals must be corrupt free. To do that, our environment has to be taken consideration. We must be able to do away with the primordial sentiments of ethnicity (Ananti & Madubueze, 2014).

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