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Emerging Issues in Public Sector Reforms in Africa:

An Assessment of Ghana and Nigeria

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Abstract

Public sector reform (PSR) has been quite popular in Africa and in recent years, several African countries have implemented far-reaching governance and public service reform measures. The aim of this article is to consider the historical development of Public Sector Reform in Africa and the philosophy behind the ubiquitous wave of reform in the continent. The article discovers that those reform measures have so far gone through three different phases to promote and/or accelerate the revitalization of the public service. It identifies some major challenges that account for the monumental failure of PSR. Finally, the paper offers suggestions on how African countries can free themselves from the doldrums of current PSR. This article will not only broaden the frontier of knowledge in the field of public administration but also address the present and on-going reality of public sector reforms in the West African sub region. This study uses a 'Literature Survey' in examining the issue in question.

Keywords: Public Sector Reform, Global South, 'Statism', NPM, Public Service, Ghana, Nigeria.

Introduction

The African continent is geographically vast, culturally heterogeneous, and politically diverse. It consists of authoritarian, hereditary, democratic, and semi democratic political systems (Chatterjee, 2012). The peculiar characteristics of this part of the world informed efforts to reform public sector organizations, which are now far sweeping across the countries in the region. Generally, these reforms are significantly different from those of the immediate post-independence period. The earlier reforms in the region aimed at shaping a public administration that could spearhead national development, albeit in the mould of the colonial age.

In the early 1980s, public sector witnessed the beginning of massive reform in both Northern and Southern part of the world. However, most of the public sector reform initiatives that have taken place in the South during the last three decades were introduced as part of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the World Bank in the 1980s. Since the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) is a neo-liberal inspired programme, it is important to examine the works of Friedman, Harvey & Bond. The rise of neo-liberalism served as impetus for ideological underpinning of the Structural Adjustment Programme. There is no way one can have a thorough examination of SAP without the mention of neo-liberalism. Since the 1980s, the term neo-liberalism has been used primarily by scholars and critics in reference to the resurgence of 19th century ideas associated with *Laissez-Faire*. The rise of Economic Liberalism beginning in the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the emergence of advocates of economic liberalization policies, policies such as privatization, fiscal austerity and deregulation, free trade and reductions in econ government spending in order to enhance the role of private sector in the economy. Liberalism is famously associated with the economic policies introduced by Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States of America. The usage of the term declined in the 1960s but was reintroduced in the 1980s by Augustus Pinochet's economic reforms in Chile (Woode, 1984).

Omoyefa (2008) observed that while the African leaders innocently and ignorantly accepted the externally induced neo-liberal inspired programmes of reform in their public sector institutions as a way of bettering the lives of their citizens, the developed countries that are driving the force of the donor agencies are interested in re-colonizing African countries through the back door. It is a subtle form of neo-colonialism and consequent perpetual slavery. So, the two parties are working at cross-purposes, with different agendas, different minds, different focuses and different motives while operating on the same platform and policies.

In the recent time, reform initiatives have been driven by a combination of economic, social, political and technological factors, which have triggered the quest for efficiency and for ways to cut the cost of delivering public services. The core paradigm in the development of public sector reforms in the 1980s and 1990s under the influence of the New Public Management (NPM), was that public sector provision was inefficient and often ineffective; that it led neither to cost containment nor to quality improvement in the Global South (ECA, 2004).

The article is looking at the foundational existence of PSR through the analysis of some core issues in public sector reform particularly in Africa. The paper starts by looking at PSR in a meaningful context. This is important as the Southern State is said to be over-extended to the point that reductions, refocusing and reengineering of its activities are needed. It also considers the historical development of Public Sector Reform in Africa and the philosophy behind the ubiquitous wave of reform in this part of the world. It examines major challenges that account for the monumental failure of PSR. The final part of the paper offers suggestions on how African countries can free themselves from the doldrums of current PSR.

Conceptual and Theoretical Explanation

Public Sector Reform: Definition and Purpose

Schacter (2000) defines PSR as 'strengthening the way the public sector is managed'. By that simple definition, the presupposition is that things are not properly managed in the public sector, and that unnecessary wastage has crept into the ways the public sector is being run, and that too many people are doing poorly what fewer people can do efficiently. Public service reform is a planned intervention to raise the level of public service performance. It must have carefully defined goals and a strategy to attain these goals. To Schacter (2000), the public sector reform is about strengthening the way that the public sector is managed. Omoyefa (2008) sees it as the total overhauling of the government administrative machinery with the aim of injecting real effectiveness, efficiency, hard core competence, and financial prudence in the running of the public sector. African Development Bank (2005) defines public sector reforms as processes and practices which are concerned with improving capacity of institutions to make policy and service delivery in an efficient, effective and accountable manner. In addition, it also involves the strengthening and management of the public sector. Some of the range of reform measures include:

(i) civil service reform;
(ii) financial and fiscal reform;
(iii) decentralization;
(iv) legal and judicial reform;
(v) privatization and deregulation;
(vi) enhancing accountability; and
(vii) improving corporate regulatory frameworks.

The need to reform Global South administrative structures to ensure efficiency and reduce the likelihood of corruption is obvious. The ultimate aim of the public sector reform in most countries of the Global South is to see remarkable improvement in the public service outputs, such as more effective and responsive service deliveries. This is the driving force behind the public service reform (Tarawa, 2001). Omoyefa (2008) is also of the opinion that PSR was initiated against the background that governments required a departure from the traditional methods of administration and the urgent need for a renewed public sector to propel government in its quest for sustainable socio-economic, political and technological development. So, there was a need for structural re-engineering of the public sector with the infusion of new values of professionalism, accountability, responsiveness and a focused sense of mission for maximum efficiency in the economy. Thus, accountability, transparency and a merit-driven public service are thought to be unachievable except where Public Sector Reform programmes are drawn up. Efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of government to the yearnings of its citizens are likewise seen as only to be gauged through the lenses of Public Sector Reform (Olowu, 2003).

Based on the above, the main objectives of PSR are as follows:

(1) To achieve better delivery of the basic public services that affect living standards of the poor (World Bank 2000).

(2) To create a climate conducive to private sector development (World Bank 1997:103).

(3) To make the state or government institutional apparatus market friendly, lean, managerial, decentralized and "customer" friendly, in the hope that it would better meet its societal objectives of good governance as well (Mhone 2003:10).

From the above, we see that PSR aims at institutional restructuring of the public sector, with the application of principles obtainable in the private sector as a basis for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector institutions. Arising from the above notion of how the public sector should be run and managed is that while government organisations must be in service to the people (public interest) it must also be driven by market forces. Thomas (2000) corroborates this view when he says that only government institutions 'associated with higher income growth 'are regarded as efficient and effective. In essence, PSR in Africa is carried out with the mindset of seeing government as a profit-making enterprise rather than in service to the people. In fact, that is why we see African leaders talking about a bloated civil service, which needs to be downsized, and the uncontrollable craze to privatize and commercialize all government enterprises.

Theoretical Framework

A number of theories have emerged which, in one way or another, influenced most of the initiatives implemented under public sector reform in developing countries of the world. However, for the purpose of analysis, the neo-liberal perspective is adopted. This becomes expedient because the ideals of SAP are connected with neo-liberalism. Friedman, a Chicago economist preferred the word 'neoliberal' in 1951 Essay entitled 'Neo-liberalism' and its prospects'. He argued for a 'middleway' between the enemy of collectivism and the excesses of the 19th century liberalism. Friedman called for a new liberalism, seeing himself as the heir to Adam Smith. The work of Harvey is the most significant Marxist theorist of neoliberal era. Harvey's work is a materialist analysis of neo-liberalism, locating it in the shift in capitalists' social relations and crisis of accumulation of the 1970s. He argued that neo-liberalism is achieved through the restoration of class power in the wake of the economic crisis of the 1970s. Neo-liberalism is a distinct and new phenomenon involving an emphatic turn in political-economic practices and thinking. Bond in his 'Elite Transition: from Apartheid to Neo-liberalism' in South Africa traced the evolution and transition of elites in South Africa from Apartheid. He examined the Post-Apartheid era in that country from Mandela's administration to Thabo Mbeki's administration. He examined activities of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programmes (Prashed, 2012). Bond maintained that 'The Structural Adjustment programme in Africa provided only a partial solution to the continent's socio-economic needs. He argued that the reforms promised did not remove serious price distortions but rather placed inadequate attention to the provision of social services. He said as a consequence, only a few countries managed to achieve sustainable higher growth under the SAP programmes. Bond raised some hypothetical questions. First, he said what if SAP represented 'not a partial solution' but instead, reflecting local and global power shift, a profound defeat for genuine African nationalists, workers, peasants, women, children, manufacturing industry and the environment. Second, what if 'promoting reforms' really amounted to the IMF and World Bank imposing their programmes and policies on desperately disempowered African societies including Ghana and Nigeria without references to democratic processes, resistance or diverse local conditions. The third hypothesis Bond raised was what if the removal of 'serious price distortions' really meant the repeal of exchange controls (hence allowing massive capital flight from African countries) and pushing the masses of the people below poverty line. Finally, what if 'inadequate attention' to the provision of social services' in reality meant the opposite excessive attention to applying neo-liberalism not just to the macro economy, but also to health, education, water and other crucial state success (Odeh, 2010).

He assessed the political, social and economic implications of the neo-liberal ideology. He said since the 1970's neo-liberalism has been the predominant ideology especially in Western Europe and North America especially in Argentina, Chile and other Latin American countries. Neo-liberalism first gained momentum in Chile. Neo-Liberalism is an ideology marked by the selling of public goods to private interests, the attack on social provisions, the rise of corporate state organized around privatization, free trade and de-regulation. The celebration of self-interests over social needs; neo-liberalism upholds the notion that the market serves as a model for structuring all social relations; not just the economy, but the governing of all social life (Odeh, 2010).

Neo-liberalism is a particular political, economical and social ideology that not only consolidates class power in the hands of one percent but operates off the assumption that economics can divorce itself from social costs that doesn't have to deal with matters of ethnical and social responsibility. The consequences of neo-liberation policies across the globe have caused massive suffering, misery, and the spread of massive inequalities in wealth, power and income. That neo-liberalism has produced serious mental health crises where a number of people are committing suicide because they have lost their jobs, position and dignity. We have witnessed the attack on the welfare state, privatization of public services, deregulation, self-interest, refusal to tax the rich. It really has created a very bleak emotional and economical landscape for the 99% of the population throughout the world. All these ideologies have been the direct cause of the economic crisis the world is presently experiencing (Wescott, 1999).

During the 1970s and 1980s, many African countries recognized that their civil services were not providing public goods and services in the most cost effective way. Therefore governments sought the assistance of some international donors and creditors in drawing up reform plans. Thus, in particular, the World Bank and IMF helped devise comprehensive strategies for civil service reform. So, the first generation public sector reforms, which were designed for macroeconomic stabilization, were integral part of adjustment strategies (ECA, 2004; Lienert and Modi, 1997).

State Intervention in African Public Sector and Reasons behind it

The terms "state" and the "public sector" have been used synonymously because there can be no strong state without an efficient public sector (African Development Bank, 2005). For purposes of analysis and to contextualize reform of the public sector in Africa (and other developing countries) and understand its processes, dynamics and intricacies, it is pertinent for us to examine the state and state capacity building in the region. This section is therefore devoted to the post-colonial state in the South and efforts made to build its capacity. Herbst quoted in Ayee (2008) noted that the postcolonial state in Africa has attracted interest in three thematic areas: state consolidation; state decline; and state capacity building. *State consolidation*, which came into vogue in the immediate post-independence era, emanated from the underlying assumption that the state was a major means of bringing about societal change and fulfilling economic and social aspirations, with strong integrative and development objectives.

The shift to state decline from the mid-1970s focuses on analyzing what went wrong with the state, and reasons for its weakness, especially the failure of African government to bring about radical change for the ordinary citizens, many of whom were confronted with the problem of poverty and joblessness. The state proved incapable of bringing about intended changes in society. It was considered built on doubtful foundations of legitimacy. The state was variously characterized as 'prismatic', 'soft', 'weak', 'overdeveloped' as a 'pre-capitalist affectation' and 'anti-development' because of its inability to meet the aspirations not only of civil society but also of those who occupied central political institutions (Riggs, 1964; Leys, 1976; Hyden, 1983; Azarya, 1988).

This characterization was a major cause of the economic decline experienced by most developing countries during the 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, it weakened government capacity and effectiveness, which in turn hindered economic revival efforts via structural adjustment. Given the incapacity of the state to implement structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s, the World Bank and other donors moved towards concern with improving state capacity through 'rolling back the state'. This meant restricting the role of the state, while providing greater opportunity for market forces to assert themselves on the development process, and liberalizing the economy with the hope of inducing economic development (Jeffries, 1993; Ayee, 2008).

'Rolling back the state' strategy was partly prompted by the world-wide economic recession of the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, reforms of this period de-emphasised the role of the state in favour of the private sector in the socio-economic life of countries concerned. This phenomenon was referred to as 'rolling back the state', or 'withdrawal of the state' (Ayee, 2008). This approach also involves building administrative capacity as an instrument of the development process, rather than as a spoils system, and the development of more efficient and, in some senses, more autonomous state machines. Various panaceas were suggested, including administrative reform covering areas such as organisational and manpower development, training, and the introduction of management techniques along the lines of the 'New Public Management' school (Schaffer, 1969; Levy, 2004; Haque, 2001).

Public Sector Reforms in African States: Three Phases Discerned

In this segment we shall be looking at how PSR enters the governance of GS countries. The call for comprehensive public sector reform was first articulated in the World Bank's 1981 report entitled Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (also known as the Berg Report). The focus of the Berg Report is economic growth and development in Africa. The report noted that African economies were witnessing retrogression rather than accelerated growth, and then identified four problem areas that were obstacles to economic growth in Africa (Mhone, 2003). The first problem area, according to Mhone, was poor macroeconomic management in the form of persistent fiscal deficits, negative interest rates, price inflation, and controlled exchange rates. The second problem concerned an over-bloated public sector in which ubiquitous parastatals (such as the then marketing boards, nationalized import substitution industries and so on) were seen to be inefficient entities that squandered resources, while also distorting prices insofar as they had the mandate to control and regulate certain markets seen as strategic by governments. The third set of problems related to management of the trade regime, which was seen to militate against free trade internationally through high rates of protection and exchange rates that overvalued local currencies. A fourth set of problems concerned the fact that many governments that claimed to be socialist were spending too much money on public service itself as a guarantor of employment, on social services and other consumption-related expenditures, which were seen as unsuitable in the long term, especially when the prospects of the growth were dim in the global environment at the time (Mhone, 2003).

Reforming the public sector in Africa is divided into three phases, namely:

(i) the reforms from the 1980s to early 1990s, which focused mainly on macro-economic stability and were mainly "quantitative;"

(ii) the reforms of the mid-1990s to 2000, which focused on performance and civil service management; and

(iii) reforms from 2000, which focused on service delivery as a result of the publication of the World Development Report 1997. Also, these reforms can be categorized into political, administrative, fiscal and institutional.

During the last decade, the winds of democratic movements and reforms have blown around the southern part of the world. Thus, in this region democratic decentralization has spread widely and most governments have embraced decentralization programmes. "Some 95 percent of democracies (from both North and South) now have elected sub national governments, and countries everywhere – large and small, rich and poor – are devolving political, fiscal, and administrative powers to sub national tiers of government (Katorobo, 2007).

Many Latin American countries have undergone democratic reforms and most of them have carried out democratic decentralization programmes, from large countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, to smaller states such as Bolivia and Venezuela. In Africa, democratic decentralization has been undertaken in Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, Togo, South Africa and Uganda, among other countries of the south (Katorobo, 2007). Decentralization involves the transfer of political, administrative and fiscal authority from the central government to sub national governments and authorities. The transfer takes place down a hierarchy of levels of sub-national authority. Typically, there are then three tiers of government – at central, state and local levels. Three forms of decentralization have been identified: decentralization by de-concentration, decentralization by delegation, and decentralization by devolution (Rondinelli and Cheema, 1983).

Reforms in Phase One (1980s to Early 1990s)

Large scale donor-funded civil service or public sector reform programmes really began in Africa with the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) of the 1980s. Between independence and the late 1970s, the main focus had been Africanisation of the small inherited colonial civil services combined with rapid expansion (particularly of education services), a process aided by the former colonial powers mainly through training and technical assistance. The SAP loans of the 1980s were primarily aimed at stabilizing macro-economic crises of balance of payments and fiscal deficits, runaway inflation and currency overvaluations. For this reason, the civil service reform packages which frequently accompanied SAP loans were mainly concerned to reduce the cost of public sector employment, which was regarded as self-evidently excessive or bloated. It is estimated that in Anglophone Africa, public sector wages declined 80% in real terms between the early 1970s and 1980s (paralleling the general decline in GDP per capita (Vande Walle, 2001:134). For instance, Ghana in 1984, a top Principal Secretary earned only 2.5 times the salary of a basic clerk, although, of course, there were substantial non pay benefits (Nunberg, 1996:146).

During this period the reforms then was familiar problems of moonlighting and absenteeism, low morale, corruption and politicization of recruitment emerged. There is little doubt that in many countries the capacity of ministries including finance ministries to fulfil even basic tasks virtually collapsed. Solutions offered by the 1980s civil service reform programmes (CSRPs) were relatively crude. In line with neoliberal economic policies aiming to drastically reduce the role of the state in the economy, they focused on:

(i) downsizing-retrenchments, mergers and recruitment freezes, eliminating ghost workers; and
(ii) decompressing wage scales, trying to use savings on recruitment to pay higher salaries to higher level managers with scarce skills.

Large amounts of aid money were allocated for this purpose. From 1981 to 1991, the World Bank included civil service reform programmes in loan/credit facilities worldwide, of which were to African countries, either SAP or Technical Assistance loans. They totalled $2131million (Nunberg, 1996: 122).

Phase Two Reforms (Mid-1990s to 2000)

The phase two reforms of the mid-1990s to 2000 focused on performance and civil service management. The phase two reforms of the 1990s to some extent emerged from limited recognition that downsizing and pay restructuring alone were not producing the desired results. Net reductions in numbers were not great, except perhaps in the former SOE sector. Overall salary expenditure was actually rising. One authoritative World Bank study found that the idea that retrenchments and de-compressions would produce savings, which would fund real improvements in salary rates for skilled staff, had not worked (McCourt, 1998; Dia, 1996).

This phase retained the assumption that the civil service needed to be reduced in size. But it was accompanied with much more ambitious attempts to totally restructure the civil services, focusing on management systems, performance management and budget or financial management, as well as marketisation of service delivery. As Batley (1996) has shown about the changing role of government, this period of reform was nothing less than an attempt to transfer to African and other developing countries the techniques of public sector reform, which in the developed, particularly the English speaking countries, had come to be known as New Public Management.

The main problems of African public services before SAP have been summarised as follows:

- Norms about hiring and firing were rarely enforced.
- Resources tied for specific purposes were often diverted to meet urgent needs in other sectors.
- Attitudes towards both planning and scheduling were flexible and it was generally assumed that nothing occurs quite as arranged.
- Organisations tended to lack capacity for organisational intelligence, ability to learn from past mistakes is limited, decision-making techniques remain personal to the managers.
- Large-scale organisations tended to be divided into micro-organisations controlled by individual top managers.
- There was an erosion of real wage levels caused by massive inflation and the effects of import controls and compression of wage differentials.
- There was excessive expansion in the numbers of low level and poorly qualified employees, particularly in unproductive state owned enterprises and 'parastatal' agencies.
- Managers showed a marked ambivalence about technical matters (Hyden, 1983: 145-7; Olowu, 1999: 1-4).

The typical mechanisms for designing and implementing these reforms were the creation of high level reform agencies usually located in the presidential or prime ministerial offices, deliberately intended to bypass the mainstream ministries and backed up by teams of foreign consultants and technical assistance personnel. At the same time, foreign aid flows to African countries continued to increase massively, increasing the direct role of donors and their agents in government programmes especially public sector reform.

Phase Three Reforms (2000 to Present)

The phase three reforms, following publication of the World Development Report 1997, focused on service delivery. Phase three reforms only emerged since the end of the 1990s, following from the World Bank's recognition that an effective, responsive and legitimate state was crucial for sustaining an effective market economy. New generation programmes since the millennium, although still falling very much within the NPM paradigm, have tended to focus on the improvement, responsiveness and effectiveness of service delivery to citizens. They are normally specifically linked to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans, which have become a new conditionality for loans to Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), the majority of which are located in Africa. These programmes attempt to involve public servants and officers taking into consideration the opinions and demands of their clients – the public or users – and designing their own Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs), which involve service delivery standards, monitored by both responsible managers and citizen user groups. The UK Department for International Development (DfID) is funding such programmes in, for example, Tanzania, Uganda and Ghana (World Bank 1997).

In fact, the Ghanaian Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme (CSPIP) started in 1996. This programme involved staff in targeted agencies engaging in 'self appraisal' exercises, in which they were supposed to confront and discuss public clients' feelings about the quality of their service; and come up with PIPs, which would then form the basis of a 'performance agreement' with their chief director and the government. PIPs should include measurable targets. After twenty-four or more years, the general consensus in both consultants' reports and in academic literature is that the results or achievements of the public service have been extremely limited. In some instances, they have even been negative. Table 1 below gives a quick bird eye-view of the objectives, assumptions, strategies, achievements and the challenges of the PSR implementation in the three phases identified above.

Table 1: Phases of Public Sector Reform in Africa

Indicators	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Period	1980s to early 1990s	Mid-1990s to 2000	2000 to date
Objectives	Achievement of macroeconomic stability	Performance and civil service management	Effective and efficient service delivery
Assumptions	Problems of service provision were the result of price distortion emanating from widespread government subsidies	Shifted emphasis from the quantity of employees to their quality. To make public sector employment more attractive and decrease the size of the government	(i)Improve service delivery to citizens, making it more responsive and effective; (ii) Effective, responsive and legitimate state is crucial for sustaining marker economy
Features / strategies	Reducing size of state, cost-cutting, retrenchment, cost-recovery, privatization	Features of NPM: remuneration& promotion policies to reward performance; incentives, skills, motivation, contracting out, public-private partnerships, agencification such as the executive authority model	Provision of basic services through organizational pluralism, participation & Decentralization and beneficiary surveys, self-appraisal exercises, performance customer friendly, improvement plans by public servants;
Achievements	Marginal reduction in size of public sector, even though it is debatable; cut back on equipment, services and development expenditure	Marginal improvement in conditions of service	Improved participation of civil society and other stakeholders in some public policies such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans; improved consultative process; marginal improvement in quality of service
Challenges / problems	(i) Ignored the historical evidence about the origin of the public sector problem in Africa. Low productivity and inefficiency originated from the economic crisis of the 1970s; (ii) reforms ignored a basic fact about people and organisations: people make organisations work; therefore, motivated workers are a	(i) there was One-size-fits-all approach that ignored country-specific aspects of public organisations; (ii) it created a quagmire for employees, e.g. reduction in government requires that salaries and no-wage benefits remain low; due hiring freezes, the underpaid and poorly motivated workers were being admonished to assume additional	Performance improvement Plans and beneficiary surveys have not been properly organised; provision of services for the poor still a far cry; in spite of participation, Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans have not achieved their objectives; quality of service not improved

	sine qua non for organisational efficiency. It therefore failed to address livelihood concerns of public sector employees. (iii) lack of ownership of reform; (iv) real downsizing not achieved	responsibility to improve efficiency. (iii) issue of relativities not addressed; (iv) brain drain continued; (v) lack of ownership

Source: Ayee (2008)

Reform Implementation in Some African States and Their Outcomes

Many problems of performance in poor countries (many of which are in Global South) are due to the inherently difficult developmental tasks (Paul, 1982). Central to the implementation of public sector reform in Africa are some questions which need to be asked to really know whether the reform is achieving its aims and objectives. These questions revolve around major problems facing public sector performance (i.e. inefficient, corruption, over bloated size of workforce and problems facing other core activities like health, education, *etc)* generally in Global South Nations and in particular in African countries. Out 76 public service reform programmes initiated by the World Bank between 1981 and 1991, 47 were in Africa. Thus, in this segment, looking at how implementation of public sector reform was done in two African countries which include Ghana and Nigeria, the following questions were addressed:

- Has the size of government employment changed since the mid-1980s?
- Have government functions become more focused on core activities, such as health and education, during this period?
- Have real wage levels changed?
- Has accountability improved?

So, the next segment of this paper analyzes some of the issues in reform implementation in the light of the above raised questions. The analysis covers four selected countries (as mentioned above) and attempt to provide the same type of information for each case. This includes overall economic trends, changes in government employment, trends in resource allocation, restructuring measures and changes in service provision. Some contextual information is also provided to illustrate various aspects of the reform process.

Ghana

Ghana, like Nigeria, is a country with diverse cultural backgrounds, with an estimated population size of about 25million. According to Nti (1978), the public service in Ghana was once described as 'the finest, the most relevant and performance oriented institution in the continent of Africa. Public sector reforms in Ghana predates the period between 1987-1990, this era witnessed a major downsizing of the public service in order to reduce high expenditure outlays in the public sector and enhance economic stability in the country. The reason for downsizing was also to reduce the over bloated public sector wage bill in that country. All these were part of the World's Bank sponsored economic reform agenda for African countries. Reforms in Africa has always been in the interest of the conservative international financial institutions who are merely interested in globalizing the neo-liberal economic orthodoxy for the interest of promoting global capital and not the promotion of autonomous development and progress in Africa.

Successive governments have made efforts to tackle the problems of the Ghanaian public service. For various reasons, previous attempts to effectively reform the public sector were cosmetic, and most of the recommendations by various commissions and committees were either shelved or only partially implemented. The result of the debilitating features of the civil service was that the PNDC's SAP was introduced in an administrative environment of severe constraints and handicaps that needed to be addressed if the SAP was to be successfully implemented. This situation however, appeared not to have caught the attention of the designers and financiers of Ghana's SAP until the late 1986. So, in 1987 the government incorporated the Civil Service Reform Programme (CSRP) as a key component of SAP which was funded by the Overseas Development Agency (ODA), now called Department for International Development (DfID) (Ayee, 1999).

In the case of Ghana, the public service reform programme, begun in 1986, accomplished in its first four years three censuses, recruitment cutbacks, a 3 per cent per annum reduction of total civil service employees, better levels of pay, less compression of pay scales, a review of the job classification system, and a more effective central civil service management agency.

Ghana's economic collapse in the early 1980s precipitated an intensive period of structural adjustment and engagement with the IMF and World Bank throughout the remainder of the decade. By the late 1980s, attention began to turn to the dysfunction and malaise within Ghana's public administration. Initial reforms, such as the 1987 Civil Service Reform Programme, were relatively modest in scale and did not suffer from over-conceptualization. Neither did they produce dramatic results. By the early 1990s, frustration with the slow pace of progress, a desire for a longer-term planning horizon, and the realization that gaps in one area adversely affected another led to the establishment of an ambitious, comprehensive PSR program, the ill-fated National Institutional Renewal Programme (NIRP). When NIRP was finally terminated in 2003, it was and remains widely regarded as a failure. Since then, the delivery of PSR has followed a less ambitious, more measured pace. The table below attempts to organize the jumble of PSR programs over the last 20 years under their respective PSR component.

Key PAR-Related Programs in Ghana

PSR Component	Reform
Comprehensive	▪ National Institutional Renewal Program (1994-2003)
Civil Service Reform	▪ Civil Service Reform Programme (1987) ▪ Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme (1995) ▪ Public Sector Reform Programme (2004)
Administrative Reform	▪ Decentralization Initiative (1988) ▪ Public Sector and Reinvention and Modernization Strategy (1997) ▪ Public Sector Management Reform Programme (1999) ▪ Sub-Vented Agency Reform (1999) ▪ Decentralization Plan of Action (2004) ▪ Public Sector Reform Programme (2004)
Policy Management Reform	▪ Central Management Agencies component of NIRP (1994) ▪ Ghana Central Governance Program (2003)
Public finance reform	▪ Public Financial Management Reform Programme (1996) [DFID supported the MTEF and the IPPD (payroll system) components] ▪ Multi-Donor Budget Support (2003) ▪ Short-Term Action Plan for Public Financial Reform (2006)

Source: Adapted from Evans, 2008

Evaluations of Ghana's PAR-related support dating back to the late 1980s reveal a repeating and unsatisfactory pattern. Virtually all interventions were assessed as less than satisfactory and prone to the same problems: insufficient ownership; low capacity; implementation delays/failures; and consultant-driven. The following observations typify evaluators' conclusions concerning the broader reform effort:

The reform has proceeded according to plan with its diagnostic/design work, but progress with implementation has been considerably less impressive. For instance, the 1998–2001 Country Assistance Plan...failed to anticipate the weak implementation of key reforms by the Government, most notably on decentralization, public sector reform and public expenditure management (DFID CAP, 2003). Governments go along with donor-supported reform programmes, doing enough to support claims that they are nationally owned, while carefully controlling implementation and avoiding the politically tough decisions that genuine reform would necessitate (Killick, T. *et al.,* 2005). A World Bank analysis comparing three critical PSR drivers in Tanzania, Zambia and Ghana assigned the lowest rankings to Ghana (Stevens and Teggemann 2004).

A number of features of Ghana's civil service have been identified as debilitating to its performance. They include:

(i) substantial overstaffing, especially at junior levels – lack of manpower planning;

(ii) deterioration of real salaries/wages plus a high degree of wage compression;

(iii) lack of morale or motivation – incentives problems;

(iv) inability of major institutions involved in civil service management to provide policy guidance, direction, and supervision to sectoral/departmental units – defective managerial competence;

(v) over-centralization and over-concentration of powers and functions at the national level;

(vi) poor physical work environment and poor facilities – logistical problems;

(vii) excessive bureaucratization and red tape (*e.g.,* of promotions and appointments to key posts);

(viii) lack of political direction and commitment, leading to apathy and inertia;

(ix) serious deficiencies in training institutions and programmes;

(x) obsolete and rigid rules and regulations, resulting from an outdated Civil Service Act (Ayee, 1999; Woode, 1984; Nkrumah, 1992).

Public sector reforms in Ghana are perceived as efficient means of public resource utilization and quality service delivery in that country. The public sector introduced performance improvement strategies to enhance employee performance, for instance, the Civil Service Performance Improvement Programme was launched to promote institutional and administrative capacity for good governance. All ministries, departments and agencies developed performance improvement plans. Other public sector reforms in the country include: total restructuring of the civil service, restructuring of the training programme of the service. The reform also introduced the development of human resource framework for the public service. The pay reform was introduced and this was followed up by the introduction of four wages and salary commission to ensure a fair, transparent and consistent implementation of government policy. Job description, analysis and evaluations were to be the entire public service.

A comprehensive pension structure was introduced with the contributions toward an enhanced pension shared between government, the individual and the respective public sector organizations. Another focus of public sector reforms in the country was to establish an effective and pragmatic approach to decentralization through the establishment and streamlining of an institutional framework for local government service distinct from the civil service, provides government logistics and infrastructural financial support for new local service, *etc.* Other reforms intervention includes the establishment of a Client Service Unit at all public service institutions. The capacity of the ministry of public sector reform was strengthened to monitor and coordinate improvements in service delivery. The key objective of the public reforms in Ghana was to improve public service delivery through the development and implementation of a cultural programme aimed at attitude change.

All the reforms introduced were supposed to strengthen and position the Ghanaian public service, but this was not to be because of certain negative practices inherent in Ghana at that period in time.

Nigeria

The Nigerian Public Sector has undergone several organizational and structural reforms, both before and after independence, yet there is no tremendous improvement in the quality of service provided to the citizenry. Corruption still rears its ugly head again after many years of military exit in governance. There is weak national consciousness due to earlier introduction of the Nigerianization and regionalization policies that encouraged ethnicity and sectionalism in the rank and file of staffers in the service. There is multiplicity of classes and grades which brought about over bloating of the number of Civil Servants resulting to high re-current expenditure to the peril of infrastructural development. There is still a uniform centralized control of the Civil Service as was put in place by the colonial masters. In this twenty-first century, there is disillusionment with the uniform centralized control of the Civil Service management. Such 'controls' according to experts was to assure impartial application of personnel policies to professionalize the Civil Service cadres and to root out corruption and patronage. But it is obviously clear today that these variables have not been dealt with; therefore a decentralized civil service will, to some extent, provide a panacea to the problem of development in Nigeria.

These reforms starting from the Morgan Commission of 1963 to the Allison Ayida Panel of 1994, tried quiet a lot at improving the public sector in Nigeria. But by 2005, it was obvious that a result oriented Civil Service had not emerged in Nigeria. The quality of the Civil Service was severely hampered by cultural, structural, institutional and other management defects. The main focus of public sector reforms in Nigeria includes:

- Public service restructuring with focus on efficiency.
- Responsive service delivery.
- Accelerated privatisation and liberalisation.
- Rebuilding physical and social infrastructure.
- Reform of financial/fiscal management.
- Right-size the sector and eliminate ghost workers.
- Restore the professionalism of the civil service.
- Rationalise, restructure and strengthen institutions.
- Privatise and liberalise the sector.
- Tackle corruption and improve transparency in government accounts, accounts of government agencies and joint venture oil companies.

- Reduce waste and improve efficiency of government expenditures.
- Enhance economic co-ordination.
- Peculiar need for true ownership of reforms.
- Depth of adjustment required – large and significant – hence the need for true ownership (Monye-Emina, 2012:13).

The Nigerian public sector was said to be large, inefficient, wasteful and underperforming, with evidence of political and bureaucratic abuses. Politicians, military and civil, who claimed to be motivated to serve public interest, ended up serving themselves. The sector operated as a 'no man's business'. This, by implication, meant that there was 'government failure'. Its reform was therefore considered imperative to allow market forces to allocate resources and then enthrone efficiency. This required a restructuring/reform of norms, rules and institutions operating in the sector such that market forces will allocate resources efficiently in order to promote individual self-interest for the good of the society.

So far, the programme's implementation entails a lot and has several defining features and implications. First is that public sector reform from available evidence has entailed commercialisation, privatisation and liquidation as government and public sector organs are said to be unable to provide services effectively and efficiently (Adeyemo 2005). Public institutions having the character of 'national monument' and 'national identity' have been privatised or marked for the purpose. Utility provider institutions, including producers of public goods such as electricity, potable water and even transport and communications have already been privatized and liberalised or are on the verge. At the heart of and driving this exercise is a newly established institution for the purpose – National Council on Privatisation (NCP). This provides the policy framework for the Technical Committee on Privatisation and Commercialisation now known as Bureau of Public Enterprises which implements the privatisation policies. Public sector reform in Nigeria has also entailed large-scale worker retrenchment under the euphemisms of 'down-sizing', 'right-sizing', 'reorganisation' and 'restructuring'. In other words, a sizable proportion of the work force in the public sector has been disengaged. This is either by induced retirement or outright lay-off. Some of these lay-offs have also resulted from 'restructuring' and/or 're-organisation' in the privatised and commercialised public institutions. The programme has also implied removal of key government parastatals from mainstream public service and their establishment as autonomous institutions with distinctive features and incentives. The Nigerian Perspective market-driven performance criteria have also been developed for their mining state bureaucracy. This has seen the emergence of the phenomenon of 'contracting-out', 'out-sourcing' and 'user charges' for public utilities. The emphasis now is on budget and management performance as against procedures and input control.

The exercise also implies the reform of financial/fiscal management and has necessitated the introduction of a number of measures. These include the principle of due process, monetisation of the benefits of public servants and public procurement reform which aims to enthrone transparency in public sector transactions among other things.

The reform exercise has witnessed the sale of government properties such as houses and motor vehicles in questionable circumstances and usually to cronies of the political and bureaucratic elite. A complement of this is monetisation which is a key element of the reform programme. With monetisation, public servants are paid for supposedly lost benefits from the reform exercise like official vehicles and quarters, chauffeurs, domestic servants and so on. This was considered desirable in order to reduce government expenditure through reduction in money expended on the maintenance and servicing of such benefits and properties.

The education sector is also receiving its own dose of the reform pill. Secondary schools set up for pursuing the goal of national unity has been earmarked for sale to private sector bidders. The development in this instance has caused further deterioration in the funding of public education institutions while private individuals and organizations are encouraged to become major players. In this regard, nearly thirty private operators have been granted licenses to open universities since the reform commenced with renewed vigour. The interesting point to note here is that the number is almost matching that of similar public institutions owned by the federal and state governments combined. This development is without regard to the standards and quality in these institutions. The implications of this for human capital development are obvious.

The reform of the Nigerian public sector is currently said to have recorded remarkable achievements. There is however question begging for answer. These bother on the propriety of its theoretical foundation, for instance, in the light of the general reform experience of developing countries, beginning with the Structural Adjustment

Programme vis-à-vis the features of the economies – Nigeria's in particular. There are also issues concerning the general welfare impact of the reform programme.

In Nigeria, as in other developing countries like Ghana, several constraints which may not guarantee allocative efficiency exist. The implication of this is that the public sector reform programme in the country may not yield the expected result while there is nothing to suggest that resources will be allocated efficiently. Also, the decline in the performance of public institutions prior to the reform can, in one way, be attributed to the uncontrolled quest for the pursuit of self-interest which the New Public Management advocates. In fact, as noted in some quarters, the society's affluence in privately produced and owned goods is the cause of crisis in the supply of public goods. Unfortunately, this crisis, which is traceable to selfish and unguarded accumulation of wealth by the individual at the expense of the public and the larger society, is erroneously interpreted to mean inefficiency of the public sector; that is, 'government failure'. The public sector reform programme has turned out more or less to be the final onslaught on the state capitalist model of accumulation. With the principle of market forces, the programme aims to supplant the extant.

Public sector reforms in the country have amounted to challenging public collective culture. This is evidenced by the incidence of privatisation and sale of public institutions and properties. There is yet no evidence or proof of superiority in terms of performance of private to public agencies, as the former are not known to be better managed than their latter counterparts in Nigeria. As Aluko argues, "much of the claimed successes recorded by the private sector in Nigeria are not due to efficient operation and increased productivity. They are more due to 'profit' made from inflated contracts, patronage and corruption, among other factors" (See Adeyemo 2005). Thus privatisation, a major cornerstone of the reform programme, may not lead to the attainment of the goal of efficient resource allocation (Monye-Emina, 2012: 20).

In addition to the above, as Obadan *et al*., (2004) have observed:

> *The benefits of privatisation and liberalisation have been reaped only by local elites and this has further worsened income/wealth inequalities and subjugated social objectives. Moreover, this has led to the fear of greater private sector exploitation due to market failures and evidence of poor evaluation; explain the concern and resistance to this aspect of the public sector reform in Nigeria. The public sector reform also requires that the*

> *remaining public sector employees should do more and receive less pay. In other words, implicitly inherent in the reform programme is wage freeze which itself is accompanied by increased taxation. This development, in addition to privatisation and the consequent payment of economic fee for services hitherto provided by public agencies, have precipitated a rise in the cost of living which has adverse implications for the standard of living and general welfare of the populace. There is, very importantly, the matter of the implication of public sector reform in combating poverty and the attainment of the Millennium. This as a result of the existing incidence of poverty and the added implication of unemployment arising from the retrenchment generated by the 'down-sizing' and 'right-sizing' and so on of the public sector. This particular point also puts a question mark on the sincerity of donor agencies and the developed world in their commitment to the pursuit of the MDGs in the developing countries. This is against the backdrop of their insistence on public sector reform with the obvious adverse attendant implications in the less developed countries* (Obadan, *et al.,* 2004).

The laying-off of workers in the public sector actually limits the capacity of implementing the reform and of the public institutions performing their functions. The matter of performance in this regard is with respect to efficiency and effectiveness. Indeed, as observed, liberalisation of the economy may have provided opportunity of empowerment to Nigerians; this is at the expense of the nation's institutional capability and capacity to produce and deliver essential public goods, especially in sectors with human capital development implications. These are education and health (Monye-Emina, 2012:23).

The implementation of Public sector reforms in Nigeria shows evidence of a hastily designed programme; perhaps in line with the dictates of international donor institutions and agencies. The result is that there are already hints and indications of revision of some of the reform measures for obvious reasons. For instance, in the early part of the reform exercise, all the vehicles in the pool of 'Conference Visitors' Unit' (CVU) were sold to members of the public. This is believed to be one way of reducing government expenditure. However, the government spent more on vehicles to meet the CVU and other needs than it spent on servicing same in the hitherto existing pool. There are insinuations and indications that the government may reintroduce the pool. This is also followed closely by that of the sale of 'Legislators' Quarters' in Abuja, for which the new administration was about affecting a return to the status quo. In addition, the sale of the refinery at Port Harcourt to private operators has been reversed with hints of government building new ones.

Public sector reform in Nigeria lacks political backing and supporting its implementation with respect to general acceptability. In other words, it neither commands general acceptability nor enjoys the needed support. Every aspect of the programme, especially privatisation, has been greeted with complaints, condemnation and general outcry. This is for the simple reason that its principles negate the acceptable norm of collective ownership of public goods and the consequent sharing of responsibilities and benefits. This is in addition to the fact that it has further compounded the poverty situation in the country (Monye-Emina, 2012: 24).

Challenges facing PSRs in Africa

- PSRs in Africa and other developing countries are based on the wrong premises – on the idea of "affordable public services rather than required public services" dictated by the logic of a democratic developmental state (Olowu, 1999).
- PSRs are based on poor diagnosis that public services are over-bloated – a fact that cannot be empirically established for the totality of the African civil service profile. These civil services are poorly structured and concentrated. They have surpluses at the base but substantial shortages at the professional levels. Skilled personnel are also not well distributed in space, as there is a tendency of over-concentration at the centre;
- PSRs constitute a wrong prognosis; they represent the application of a wrong prescription to the problem confronting African countries (Omoyefa, 2008);
- PSRs have tended to be generally minimally participatory, often excluding the key stakeholders, the civil servants. It was feared that involvement of the stakeholders might slow down the implementation of retrenchment programmes in the civil service (Olowu, 2003).

- PSRs have tended to focus on the short term gains rather than the long term, because donors, who have provided the impetus for most reform efforts, must come up with immediate results to appease their domestic constituents (Wescott, 1999);
- PSRs are largely disconnected from other political and economic reforms taking place in the countries. With the exception of a few countries like Uganda and Ghana, they do not include critical public sector reform issues such as decentralization, strengthening accountability and improving transparency, which are all cornerstones of reform in the political and economic realms (AfDB, 2005);
- PSRs involve changes not only in structures but also in organizational behaviour. Changing behaviour takes time to bear fruit, for which some observers have suggested a period of 10 to 15 years. But the donors who provide funds for reform need to show quick results to convince their domestic constituencies. Hence even though African ownership is stressed, the reality of most reform initiatives is the dominance of external time tables and immediate results (Ayee, 2008).

Conclusion

The following policy recommendations are put forward by this article:

First, Public Sector reforms should always be used as tools for the implementation of developmental goals and objectives by government in developing countries, especially in Nigeria and Ghana. It should be used as mechanisms for sustainable growth and development. Reforms in Africa should be done in the interest of the citizens and not in the interest of foreign businessmen or their international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. There is the need to indigenize the public sector reform in the continent because the current public sector reforms in Africa are still largely anti-people because they are completely detached from the people which the reforms are meant for. Their minds must be reformed. African leaders must be re-oriented; the African leaders should be purposeful and selfless before considering issues on public sector reforms. Greater energy should be expended by those leaders to ensure that the reform process is successful. There is the need to evolve an African

Public sector reforms and not an externally imposed reforms on the people. The reform process, designing and implementation of the reform must be made to have significant bearing on the cultural values and disposition of Africans.

African government should organize on a regular basis sensitization workshops on strategies for the smooth implementation of reforms in Africa. The workshops will serve as the ultimate strategy for repositioning the public service for the realization of good governance, sustainable democracy and accelerated socio-economic and political transformation and the enhancement of sound ethnical culture in Africa Public Sector.

The future direction of reforms in Africa should be targeted at making the public sector creative, information based and productive. The reform should make the service modern and efficient, people-oriented rather self-serving, innovative rather than rule-bound. Public sector reforms should be reviewed in order to bring them in line with the current trend in governance. It should be done to conform with the current trend of procurement practices globally. The main objective of public sector reform should be ensuring that the fundamental issues in the public service, such as transparency, accountability, justice, equity are not only entrenched but also that due process in the management of government business in Africa is well adopted. In order to achieve successful implementation of public sector reforms in Africa, reforms must take into cognizance the behavioural pattern, the social context as well as cultural milieu of the people, which the reform is meant for. This means that there is the need to exploit indigenous knowledge in carrying out any required reform in the public sector.

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