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ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AND THE EFFECT OF SERVICE DELIVERY REFORMS ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN MICHAEL OKPARA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE UMUDIKE - 2020-2023

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Abstract

The general objective of the paper is to determine the effect of and necessity for public sector reforms on organization performance in MOUUAU. The paper adopted the New Public Management theory as its major theoretical framework for analysis and the Institutional theory as a supporting theory. The mixed-method research design was adopted and data were collected through both primary and secondary methods. The primary method includes a structured questionnaire, while the secondary methods were from textbooks, journals and internet sources, etc. Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A total population of 63 MOUUAU staff were reached out of a proposed sample size of 250. It was discovered among other things that administrative reforms simplify and streamline organizational processes, enhancing overall efficiency and reducing delay in MOUUAU. This paper confirms that the reform process was very effective, enough to effect change. Therefore, it is necessary for organizational performance in MOUUAU. The study recommended that MOUUAU should streamline processes to reduce inefficiencies and promote a more agile and responsive work environment among others.

Keywords: Administrative Policy, Service Delivery, Reforms, Organisational Performance, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture.

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Introduction

Public sector reforms have been a topic of interest globally since the late 20th century, with governments striving to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector organizations. These reforms aim to address issues such as bureaucratic red tape, corruption, and inefficiencies associated with the delivery of public services. The impact of public sector reforms on organizational performance has been extensively studied, with scholars examining this phenomenon from various perspectives. At the global level, public sector reforms have been a key focus for governments seeking to improve organizational performance. According to the World Bank (2017), public sector reforms aim to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability in public administration. Studies have shown that these reforms have had a positive impact on organizational performance of government institutions and agencies. For instance, a study by Andrews et al. (2017) found that in a sample of 71 countries, public sector reforms were associated with a 10% increase in overall organizational performance. Furthermore, on a global scale, studies have shown that public sector reforms have had a significant positive effect on organizational performance. A meta-analysis conducted by Hood and Dixon (2021) found that, on average, public sector reforms led to a 23% increase in organizational performance indicators such as productivity, service quality, and cost-effectiveness. This position is supported by a study by Peters and Pierre (2019), which found that countries that implemented comprehensive public sector reforms experienced an average increase of 18% in organizational performance over a five-year period. Public sector reforms have been widely implemented across the world in an effort to enhance organizational performance and efficiency. According to a comprehensive study conducted by Durstewitz and Moeckli (2017), public sector reforms have resulted in a significant improvement in global organizational performance.

In Africa, public sector reforms have been crucial in addressing governance challenges and improving service delivery. According to the African Development Bank (2018), these reforms have been characterized by measures such as decentralization, civil service reforms, and the adoption of performance-based management systems. Consequently, George and Mkandawire (2019) argued that in six African countries, public sector reforms led to a 15% improvement in organizational performance indicators, including budget performance and service delivery. Also, public sector reforms have had a mixed impact on organizational performance. Ndegwa (2018) stated that while some African countries have successfully implemented reforms that led to improved organizational performance, others have faced challenges in their implementation due to factors such as weak governance, limited resources, and resistance to change. On average, African countries witnessed a 10% increase in organizational performance indicators after implementing public sector reforms, according to a study by Eyal and Rubinstein (2020). Within the Ugandan context, public sector reforms have been instrumental in addressing systemic challenges and improving government performance. The Ministry of Public Service (2020) highlighted key reform initiatives such as the introduction of e-government systems, performance contracting, and capacity-building programs. According to the Ugandan Ministry of Public Service (2020) empirical studies conducted in Uganda have shown the positive impact of these reforms on organizational performance. Birungi (2018) also indicated that public sector reforms were associated with a 12% increase in organizational productivity and efficiency.

Public Sector Reforms in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the public sector has undergone significant reforms in recent years. The Nigerian government has implemented various reforms aimed at improving the performance of public organizations, including the introduction of new public management practices, decentralization, and privatization (Adeyemo, 2019). However, despite these efforts, the performance of public organizations in Nigeria remains a concern (Oluwatayo, 2020). The institution of public service is one of the major legacies bequeathed to Nigeria by the colonial masters. The institution was described as one of the symbols of national independence primarily established to among other things facilitate the process of human and societal development. Reforms are carried out, especially in the public service to promote organizational effectiveness, build the capacity of employees, promote fiscal stability and attain national development. According to the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) (<https://bpsr.gov.ng>) was established in 2004 by the Nigerian government, to undertake modern public reform initiatives like the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), Treasury Single Account (TSA) for revenue management, and bank verification numbers (BVN) to reduce corruption and increase digitalization and accountability in the public service. Over 43 reforms, including the National Strategy for Public Service Reforms (NSPSR) and, Federal Integrated Staff Housing (FISH) Programme have been carried out. In the area of public procurement, the initiation of "Due Process" mechanisms by the bureau to ensure transparency in public contracts are being implemented. Anti-corruption measures put forward by the BPRS includes the strengthening of relevant institutions like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). For service delivery improvements, the BPSR introduced self-assessment tools, performance management systems, and modernization of public services.

Reform of the public sector is not new in Nigeria's public administration and it may be as old as the country itself. Nigerian public service reforms were aimed at strengthening the capacity of the institution to carry out its assigned functions (Sanusi, 2010). However, its performance over the years has left much to be desired and that partly explains why a series of reforms were carried out to reinvigorate the public sector towards efficient service delivery. Some other forms of public sector reforms in Nigeria include privatization and commercialization of public organizations, monetization policy, structural adjustment programme (SAP), downsizing in the public sector, service compact (SERVCOM) to mention but a few. However, the success of these reforms in revitalizing the public sector as a veritable instrument for national development is, doubtful. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of public sector reforms on organizational performance in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike Abia State, towards effective public service delivery as a precursor for national development.

Brief Background Information on Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike

Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, originally the Federal University of Agriculture, is a federal university in Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria. It was established as a specialized University by Decree No. 48 of November 1992 by the Federal Government of Nigeria. It began formal activities in May 1993 with the appointment of the first Council and Vice Chancellor Professor Placid C. Njoku on 27 May 1993, while other key officials of the University were appointed later. The first set of students were admitted into the institution during the 1993/94 academic year with a student population of 82. The nickname "Umudykes" or "U'dykes" is used for students, alumni, and sports teams of the University

(MOUUAU, 2020). There are 11 academic Colleges/Faculties with 57 departments and a School of General Studies. The School of General Studies consists of the following Units: English, French, German, Nigerian History, Peace and Conflict Resolution, Philosophy, Physical and Health Education, and Social Science. Since the inception of the university, the institution has produced six Vice Chancellors, and the current VC is Professor Ursula Ngozi Akanwa whose tenure is expected to run from 1st March 2026 till 28th February 2031. This paper did not investigate previous reforms implemented in MOUUAU.

Characteristics of New Public Management: According to scienceDirect.com, NPM emerged in response to the inefficiencies of traditional bureaucracy and was significantly influenced by neoliberalism and public choice theory, often aimed at reducing the size and cost of government. While it has been adopted globally to improve government performance, criticisms often focus on the neglect of public values like equity and transparency in favour of efficiency. The major argument for NPM Theory is Entrepreneurial Government or the reformation of government to carry out its business like a private/corporate organisation (Dziak, 2023). Thus, NPM emphasizes the role of market mechanisms in public goods supply, promoting efficiency and effectiveness in government. Furthermore, Dziak (2023) stated that NPM is adequate for system or performance measurement. He further stated that NPM encourages the use of performance metrics to evaluate government agencies and programs. As concerns flexibility and adaptability of the theory, Bevir (2024) opined that NPM promotes flexibility and adaptability in government operations, allowing for more responsive and effective service delivery.

Criticisms and Limitations: Importantly, despite the positive outlook of the NPM theory, this paper highlights the theory's limitations. Thus, critics (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Barzelay, 2001) of the NPM theory state that, because it emphasizes organizational efficiency through private sector practices it assumes the aura that the private sector is superior to the government/public sector. NPM has been criticized for assuming that private sector practices are superior to public sector practices, which may not always be the case. As such, there are blurred lines between policymaking and providing services in the new public management system. Questions have been raised about the potential politicization of the public service, when executives are hired on contract under pay-for-performance systems. The ability for citizens to effectively choose the appropriate government services they need has also been challenged. In this regard, Denhardt and Denhardt (2011) stated that the notion of choice is essential to the economic concept of a customer. Generally, in government there are few if any choices. There are concerns that public managers move away from trying to meet citizens' needs and limitations on accountability to the public (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Barzelay, 2001). NPM also raises questions of integrity and compliance when dealing with incentives for public managers because as Denhardt and Denhardt (2011) puts it, the interests of customers and owners do not always align. In such cases, managers may begin to be more or less faithful to their responsibilities. Resultantly, public interest is placed at risk and could undermine the trust in government. This situation in itself creates ethical concerns, such as the potential for unequal access to services and the prioritization of efficiency over social welfare. Government must be accountable to the larger public interest, not only to individual immediate customers or consumers of government services (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2011; Barzelay, 2001). This paper posits that for effective service delivery and efficiency of system performance measurement in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU) the concept of NPM should be applied

in the various departments and administrative units across the University. To further buttress this point, this paper carried out a questionnaire-based survey to ascertain the effect of and necessity for NPM in MOUAU. Thus, this paper looked at the following:

- i. Service delivery reforms to streamline processes, reducing delays and improve overall efficiency in operations.
- ii. The need for reforms focused on meeting customer needs more effectively, leading to higher satisfaction and loyalty.
- iii. Service delivery reforms to establish clearer standards and metrics, enhancing accountability and transparency within the organization.

Theoretical Framework: New Public Management Theory

This paper is anchored on the New Public Management (NPM) Theory. This forms the major theoretical framework of analysis for this paper. The New Public Management (NPM) Theory was propounded by Christopher Hood in 1991. The NPM theory emphasizes the importance of efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in public organizations. According to Bevir (2024), the first wave of public-sector reform was the new public management (NPM). It was inspired by ideas connected with neoliberalism and public choice theory. Bevir stated that NPM spread in developed European states before getting to the developing and transitional countries. In developed countries the motivation for NPM came from fiscal crises which came largely when increased crude oil prices cut state revenues and the expansion of welfare services saw state expenditure increase as a proportion of gross national product. The result was a quest to cut costs. NPM was one proposed solution. In developing and transitional states, the incentive for NPM lay more in external pressures, notably those associated with structural-adjustment programmes (Bevir, 2024). Importantly, Dziak (2023) stated that one major principle of NPM Theory is that, applying it makes governments more transparent and accountable. This means removing all obstacles that make it difficult for ordinary citizens to see what government leaders are doing. The NPM theory also involves making government leaders aware of the goals and performance standards that they will be expected to pursue and publicly answerable for their successes or failures. In that way, they are treated much more like business employees who are tasked with meeting certain goals and can face censure for not doing so. Another key principle NPM has is that of decentralisation. It involves expanding and sharing government powers and responsibilities. Instead of concentrating power on one or a few people, NPM pushes for decentralization, in which more leaders are empowered to make decisions in more flexible ways. Instead of making government agencies responsible for all tasks, NPM allows for competition among public agencies and increased communication and cooperation with private organizations (Dziak, 2023). The basic tenets of the NPM principle include:

- i. Increased Transparency and Accountability: NPM encourages officials to meet specific performance standards, promoting transparency and accountability in government.
- ii. Decentralization: NPM pushes for decentralization, empowering more leaders to make decisions in flexible ways and promoting competition among public agencies.
- iii. Market-Based Mechanisms: NPM uses market-based mechanisms to improve efficiency and responsiveness, including public-private partnerships and competition.
- iv. Citizen-Centric Approach: NPM prioritizes the needs of citizens, focusing on delivering high-quality services and promoting citizen satisfaction.

Methodology

The mixed-method research design was adopted and data were collected through both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The primary method includes a structured questionnaire, while the secondary methods were from documented and internet sources. Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A total population of 63 MOUAU staff were reached from a proposed sampled population of 250.

Findings: Bio Data

These findings explain distribution of respondents during the research activity.

Table 1 Showing the Gender of Respondents N = 63

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	20	32.0
Valid Females	43	68.0
Total	63	100.0

Source: primary data (2024)

The Table 1 above shows that, 32% were male while 68% were female. This implies that the views of females were more represented in the study findings than those of the males and it also implies that the study involved more females with 68% than males at 32% in MOUAU.

Table 2 Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Single	12	19.0
Married	30	48.0
Divorced	8	13.0
Widowed	13	20.0
Total	63	100.0

Source: Primary data (2024)

Table 2 indicates that out of the total sample of the study; 19% were single, 48% were married, 13% divorced, and 20% were widowed. This implies that the majority of MOUAU employees are married with 48% which shows that they are responsible enough to carry out the tasks being assigned to them and can improve on the performance of the University.

Table 3 Distribution of Respondents by Age Groups N = 63

Age groups	Frequency	Percent
21-30 years	12	19.0
31-40 years	22	35.0
41-50 years	10	16.0
Above 50 years	19	30.0
Total	63	100.0

Source: Primary data (2024)

Table 3 above indicates that out of total sample of the study; 19% are between the age of 21-30 years, 35% make it to the age of 31-40 years, 16% between the age of 41-50 years, and above the age of 50 years constituted 30%. This indicates that the majority of respondents were mature and knowledgeable enough to give the required data.

Table 4. Showing Academic Qualification of Respondents N =63

Academic qualifications	Frequency	Percent
Secondary	11	17.0
Certificate	8	13.0
Diploma	25	40.0
Bachelor's	14	22.0
Masters	5	8.0
Total	63	100.0

Source: primary data (2024)

The Table 4 shows that out of total sample of the study; 17%, 13%, 40% ,22% and 8% correspond to secondary, certificate, diploma, bachelors' and masters respectively. This indicates that all respondents who participated in giving out information in MOUUAU had attained a certain level of education with the majority of the respondents corresponding to 40% who are mainly of diploma holders.

Table 5 Distribution of Respondents by Years of Working Experience

Years of working	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	15	24.0
1-2 years	38	60.0
Above 3 years	10	16.0
Total	63	100.0

Source: Primary data (2024)

Table 5 shows that 24%, 60%, and 16% of the respondents worked for less than 1 year, 1-2 years, and above 3 working years' experience respectively. This however implies that MOUUAU employs experienced workers who have had reasonable numbers of years of experience, such that the goals formulated by the University can be achieved. This also implies that majority of the respondents had served for a considerable period which indicates that most of the respondents had vast knowledge which could be relied upon by this study.

Service Delivery Reforms Streamline Processes, Reducing Delays and Improving Overall Efficiency in Operations

Table 6 is showing whether service delivery reforms streamline processes, reducing delays and improving overall efficiency in operations within MOUAAU.

Rating	Frequency Response	Percent	Mean
strongly agree	5	8.0	2.44
Agree	13	21.0	
not sure	7	11.0	
Valid			
Disagree	18	29.0	
strongly disagree	20	31.0	
Total	63	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

With reference to Table 6, it can be seen that the overall Mean score is 2.44 which is less than 2.5 given the 5-point Likert scale used to measure to the responses. This suggests failure of NPM reforms in MOUAAU with regards to improving overall efficiency. 29% (8%, 21%) of respondents were positive to the statement that service delivery reforms streamline processes, reduces delays and improves overall efficiency in operations within MOUAAU. While, {60% (29% + 31%)} were negative to the same statement though 11% of the respondents were not sure. This counters research carried out by Noble (2014) who postulated that service delivery reforms streamline processes, reducing delays and improving overall efficiency in operations. This implies that in MOUAAU, the implementation of NPM related service delivery reforms would not streamline processes, reduce delays and improve overall efficiency in operations.

Reforms Focused on Meeting Customer Needs More Effectively, Leading to higher Satisfaction and Loyalty

Table 7 show whether reforms focus on meeting customer needs more effectively, leading to higher satisfaction and loyalty.

Rating	Frequency Response	Percent	Mean
strongly agree	24	38.0	3.65
Agree	15	24.0	
not sure	11	17.0	
Valid			
Disagree	4	6.0	
strongly disagree	9	15.0	
Total	63	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

Table 7 shows that using a 5-point rating scale, the mean score from the 63 respondents that participated in the study is 3.65. This is above the average of 2.5 of a given 5-point Likert rating scale. The findings therefore suggests that NPM facilitated the realization of

customers’ needs which resulted in high satisfaction and loyalty. This finding agrees with the research carried out by Birdsall N (2016) asserted that reforms focus on meeting customer needs more effectively, leading to higher satisfaction and loyalty, hence implying that reforms focus on meeting customer needs more effectively, leading to higher satisfaction and loyalty.

Service Delivery Reforms Establish Clearer Standards and Metrics, Enhancing Accountability and Transparency within MOUAU

Table 8 shows whether service delivery reforms establish clearer standards and metrics, enhancing accountability and transparency within the organization

Rating	Frequency response	Percent	Mean
strongly agree	14	22.0	3.21
Agree	18	29.0	
not sure	10	16.0	
Valid			
Disagree	9	14.0	
strongly disagree	12	19.0	
Total	63	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

Table 8 shows that the majority of the respondents 51% (22% , 29%) had a positive response to the statement that service delivery reforms establish clearer standards and metrics, enhancing accountability and transparency within the organization, 33% (14%, 19%) of the respondents were negative to the same statement meanwhile 16% of the respondents were not sure. The overall measure of the rating is 3.21. which is above the 2.5 average (given a 5-point Likert scale). The findings suggests that NPM service delivery reforms in MOUAU establish clearer standards and metrics, enhancing accountability and transparency within the organization.

Reforms that Empower Employees to Provide Better Service can Increase Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Table 9 highlighting whether reforms that empower employees to provide better service can increase motivation and job satisfaction.

Rating	Frequency Response	Percent	Mean
strongly agree	34	54.0	3.98
Agree	13	21.0	
not sure	1	2.0	
Valid			
Disagree	11	17.0	
strongly disagree	4	6.0	
Total	63	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

With reference to Table 9 above, it can be seen that 75% (54%, 21%) were positive to the statement that reforms that empower employees to provide better service can increase motivation and job satisfaction, 23% (17%, 6%) respondents were negative to the same statement while 2% of the respondents were not sure. The overall mean score is 3.98. This suggests positive effect on staff motivation and job satisfaction. This was in accordance with Finnigan (2012) findings that reforms that empower employees to provide better service can increase motivation and job satisfaction.

Service Delivery Reforms Often Focus on Improving the Quality and Consistency of Services, Leading to Better Outcomes

Table 10 shows whether service delivery reforms often focus on improving the quality and consistency of services, leading to better outcomes.

Rating	Frequency Response	Percent	Mean
strongly agree	27	43.0	3.89
Agree	16	25.0	
not sure	8	13.0	
Valid			
Disagree	10	16.0	
strongly disagree	2	3.0	
Total	63	100.0	

Source: primary data (2024)

As shown in Table 10, it can be observed that the majority of the response {68% (43% + 25%)} had a positive response to the statement that service delivery reforms often focus on improving the quality and consistency of services, leading to better outcomes, {19% (16% + 3%)} were negative to the same statement while 13% of the respondents were not sure hence implying that service delivery reforms often focus on improving the quality and consistency of services, leading to better outcomes. The overall mean rating is 3.89. This is significantly above the average 2.5 given a 5-point Likert score rating. It suggests that reforms that focus on improving the quality and consistency of services could lead to better outcome.

Conclusion

Based on the research objective which was to examine the effect of administrative reforms on organizational performance of MOUUAU, this paper concludes that administrative reforms have a significant effect on organizational performance of MOUUAU and can be enhanced by streamlining processes to reduce inefficiencies and promote a more agile and responsive work environment. Developing a culture of transparency and accountability is essential for building trust and ensuring alignment with organizational goals. Investing in employee training and continuous development is crucial to equip staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to adapt to new administrative practices. Utilizing technology can automate routine tasks, improve data management, and enhance decision-making processes.

Recommendations

Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike should streamline processes to reduce inefficiencies and promote a more agile and responsive work environment. Developing a culture of transparency and accountability is essential for building trust and ensuring alignment with organizational goals. Investing in employee training and continuous development is crucial to equip staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to adapt to

new administrative practices. Utilizing technology can automate routine tasks, improve data management, and enhance decision-making processes. Additionally, fostering active stakeholder engagement and incorporating their feedback can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that reforms effectively address organizational needs and objectives.

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