Engaging Research for Innovative Governance: A Study of the Delta State Civil Service, 1991 – 2022

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Abstract
Globally, the place of research in achieving innovation to build critical institutional capacities for good governance and development is widely acknowledged. Yet Delta State is today bedevilled with several developmental challenges. Drawing from the perspectives of two theoretical models, rational choice and organizational development, this study interrogated the utilization of research by the state civil service since its inception. Empirical data obtained through questionnaires, interviews and published materials reveal that contrary to widespread beliefs, the bane is the civil service system, not its political leadership. This provided an interesting challenge for civil service management, even as the study found the majority to have a high degree and positive level of perception of research in service delivery. It recommended periodic impact assessment studies and a review of relevant extant rules with in-built provisions for rewards and incentives to stimulate independent research efforts.

Keywords: Governance, innovation, research, precedence, development, institution.

Introduction

It has been the norm in the public service to investigate or examine social problems and provide solutions. In most cases, programs are initiated to address the underlying social problem. This could also require a review of existing or similar programs as can be discerned from the following scenario "Permanent Secretary, the Action Group has started free primary education in the West. The scheme is bad. I want to start a good scheme of free primary education in Lagos. Study it and report. I am going on tour and when I come back in two weeks, I must advise the Government to take a decision with all full implications" (Ola & Imhanlahimi, 2010:491).

The above quote was a directive handed down by Adegoke Adelabu, a first republic politician of the National Council for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and Federal Minister, to his Permanent Secretary on his desire to review the free education policy of the former Western Regional government which was then under the control of a rival political party, the Action Group. The directive shows how much decision-makers in the public service wish to rely on the advice and guidance of top administrators. When the administrator is confronted with such challenges, he is expected to put in his *best* to the satisfaction of the decision maker, who in most cases, is a political appointee, as in the scenario above. But what does this *'best'* imply? Is it merely technical competence? And what is technical competence without thorough investigation or research?

Going by their potential, both evaluation and action research are supposed to be the preoccupation of those saddled with the responsibility of governance. This is because effective and efficient public service delivery is synonymous with good governance. Where this has not been the case for public service to translate into good governance, reforms have been introduced to shore up the missing gap as has been the case in Nigeria at various times. According to Maduabum (2006:433), *"a reform, wherever is anything that brings about positive changes. It involves restructuring, reconciliation, reorganization and re-orientation. In other words, we can look at reforms as innovations*

that ensure continuity in the system." But are these reforms outcomes of research? Where Review Commissions or Committees are set up as the case may be, are they research-based or oriented? What about the recommendations, are they implemented?

There are reasons to believe that certain reforms in the Nigerian public service were outcomes of prolonged and systematic research efforts. For example, the Udoji Review Commission which was set up on 13th September 1972 and submitted its report in September 1974 (2 years) is said to have engaged the services of three Canadian experts to work with it (Ola & Imhanlahimi 2010:503). Yet for another review panel like the Dotun Phillips Study Team which was set up in 1985 as an aftermath of the inadequacies and missed expectations of the civil service purge of 1984, *"there is hardly any official record mentioning its existence"* (Ola & Imhanlahimi, 2010:509) despite the huge public funds sunk into it.

The main business of Government is governance and the Civil Service remains the main instrument through which this business is carried out. As was observed by the June 1995 Review Panel on the Civil Service Reforms on Page 8 of its main report, the basic role of the Civil Service has never been static. Rather, it has always been influenced by the social, political and economic dynamics operating in Nigeria since its emergence as a nation. In the colonial epoch, the government had its major concerns as internal affairs, external affairs, finance and defence. As far as the colonialists were concerned, the principles of good governance were just limited to obedience to constituted authority and maintenance of stability. The implication was that civil servants were restricted to the maintenance of law and order without any orientation about administration for the development and improvement of living standards (Maiyaki 2007).

It was after independence that the National Planning Commission was established and programs were initiated for the enhancement of living standards through the application of science and technology, and by using the research and development (R & D) initiatives of research institutes (Prasad 2002). It is important to observe that it was also during this period in the first republic that the bureaucracy of the regional governments was structured to have departments of planning, research and statistics (DPRS).

Delta State is one of the 36 (thirty-six) states that make up the Nigerian Federation. It has a bureaucracy founded upon the inherited structure and legacies of colonial administration and nurtured under the legislations of the Midwestern Region (after its creation out of the former Western Region), later metamorphosed into Midwest state and subsequent promulgations under the post-civil war military which changed its nomenclature to Bendel State, out of which Delta and Edo states were created (Odigbo & Ugheberio 2007:4). The Department of Planning, Research and Statistics was one of the departments inherited by each ministry from the defunct Western State of Nigeria.

By 1991 when Delta State was created, the nation's bureaucracy had undergone certain changes under the 1988 Civil Service Reforms initiated by Babangida's military administration. The reforms later sought a comprehensive review and rationalization of government ministries and departments; a directive was issued that required each state to have six ministries and six other departments to be called directorates. Among these was the Directorate of Budget, Planning and Statistics (Odigbo & Ugheberio 2007:10-11). Perhaps, the military in its wisdom did not see the need to have research as a function to be carried out by the new directorate.

The Delta State civil service has grown in terms of the size and scope of its activities, a phenomenon which has not been without its fair share of challenges, threats and compromises. From its initial challenges of staff relocation, and inadequate residential and official accommodation, the state has since moved on to tackle several other challenges of development such as the politics of ethnic distrust, activities of oil and gas exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta, issues of unemployment, deprivation and complete absence of basic amenities in the hinterlands. These challenges call for a systematic application of research and innovation in the state's institutions of governance.

The DPRS is one of the mandatory departments in the civil service structure with its assigned functions as stipulated by the 1988 Civil Service Reforms to be those of plan formulation and revision, plan monitoring, conduct of general social/economic studies, conduct/evaluation of feasibility studies, project monitoring, manpower planning, research projects and dissemination of research findings, gathering, analysis and storage of statistical information, and ministerial tenders board.

However, the National Scheme of Service (Published by the Office of Head of Service, May 2000) which specified various personnel and their roles across cadres in the service did not provide for research Officers or Personnel. There are provisions for Administrative Officers, Planning Officers, Statistical Officers, Scientific Officers, Statisticians, Technical Officers, Engineers, Medical Officers, Nurses, Chemists, Forest Officers, and several other cadres. This scheme with its exclusion as observed, has since been adopted by the Delta State civil service as its operational guide. The exclusion seems to imply that any personnel of any cadre can venture into research.

This article is divided into sections. After this background section which takes up the conceptual clarifications of key terms central to the article title, then comes the theoretical framework. The subsequent section spells out the research methods. Following this is a review of relevant literature. Next is the presentation of data obtained from the field. This is followed by the results of the survey data generated from the field on the research variables of 'research utilization' and 'innovation', and concludes after a discussion of the findings.

Objectives

This article is interested in ascertaining the proclivity of the management echelon of the state civil service across diverse professional cadres to apply research or direct the use of research for its service delivery mandate. It is also necessary to determine the extent or degree of innovation that has been imbibed by the service in its history since 1991, innovations which may have emanated from deliberate research efforts. The questions are: has the service been innovative as the years go by? Has research played any role in bringing about innovation? Could the service have been more innovative?

Conceptual Clarifications/Review of Relevant Literature
Research

Research emanates from the word 'Re-search' itself, which means to search again (Selltiz et al. 1976, 2). It involves finding out more about something and subjecting existing phenomena or beliefs to further scrutiny. Research could be about anything around the globe. In the preface to his book 'Social Surveys for Social Planners, Gardner (1978) explains that everything can come under scrutiny including our attitudes, beliefs and opinions, our activities, hopes and fears. Research is a common activity carried out in the natural, social or business world (Agbonifoh & Yomere 1999:3). Its purpose is to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of what is being sought, which is usually, the subject of interest.

Citing Kothari (1990), Eboh (2009) presents "research" as the application of scientific procedures for the discovery of truth which is hidden. It can also be seen as the systematized quest for new knowledge operationalized by exploration, description, diagnosis and experimentation.

Innovation

Innovation refers to the art of introducing or bringing about new things, or new dimension(s) to what already exists. This new dimension usually results in improvement, although this is not always the case (Hartley 2005). Some scholars see innovation as involving the generation or realization of new ideas (Van De Van, 1986, Hartley 2005, Torugsa & Arundel 2015). In the article 'Innovations in Governance', public innovation is defined as "a more or less intentional effort to design, realize, and diffuse new public policies, services, organizations, and procedures that disrupt established practices and conventional thinking in a particular domain" (Moore & Hartley, 2008). According to Sorensen & Torfing (2011), innovation in the public service could mean the same as the concepts of reform and change.

Not much is written about public sector innovation as the existing literature focuses primarily on private sector innovations. According to Moore & Hartley (2008), there are five inter-related characteristics which distinguish public sector innovations from that of the private sector viz:

i. They go beyond organizational boundaries to create net-work based decision-making, financing, decision-making and production systems;
ii. They tap new pools of resources;
iii. Public sector innovations exploit the government's capacity to shape private rights and responsibilities;
iv. They redistribute the right to define and judge values; and
v. They should be evaluated in terms of the degree to which they promote justice and the development of society, efficiency and effectiveness in achieving collectively established goals. Essentially, innovation has been conceived as a collaborative initiative (Yanwei Li, 2019).

Governance

Whichever school of thought one belongs, governance has to do with how a society is managed, and how problems are identified and resolved. It refers to the way people are managed in a society. Thus, the term 'governance' is an indication of the level or degree of involvement of the public in matters of the state (Aghahowa in Iyoha et al., 2003:435). As a political concept, it can be traced to the democratic objectives, principles and practices in the Greek city-states. Although the term itself can be applied to corporate, international, national and local sectors, this political dimension to governance is the concern of this article.

Early approaches to the subject of governance based on the Western model have tended to label the governance features of liberal democratic states (concentrated in Europe and America) as 'good'. These features or characteristics appear to have set the standards for comparing the performance of state institutions in other parts of the world.

Although what is considered to be 'good governance' can be country-specific, the United Nations spelt out the following eight (8) characteristics of good governance:

i. Consensus Oriented
ii. Participatory
iii. Following the Rule of Law
iv. Effectiveness and Efficiency
v. Accountable
vi. Transparent
vii. Responsive
viii. Equitable and Inclusive

It is the position of this article that for governance to be termed as 'good', it should be characterized by innovative practices through continuous empirical research on public policies and their appropriate implementation strategies, with the UN features serving as checklists.

Organizations

Beyond the mere conception of an organization as an assemblage of persons and equipment, it has been acknowledged by social scientists to be a system of cooperative action which is governed by both rules and actual or planned objectives.

In the opinion of Peter Self (1979), the basic aim of an organization is not survival but growth. A new field of knowledge and practice known as Organizational Development (OD) has emerged to internalize this reality and focus on the 'growth' concern. Apart from OD, there are other neo-modernist approaches to organizational change, namely, the Whole-systems approach, the Assessment Centres and Leadership Development approach, and the Development of Mentoring approach (McAuley et al. 2007). A common feature of neo-modernist approaches is the combination of social science techniques. They also strive to integrate the individual into the organization.

The Place of Research in Organizations and Governance

From the available literature, one of the reasons for carrying out social research is that it provides evidence for the many social, economic and development policies of government. Research can play this crucial role because it provides information through diagnosis and prognosis. While diagnosis involves probing situations and phenomena, prognosis dwells on predicting future developments. Hence Eboh (2009) observed that "for government economic and social policies to be well formulated, they must rely on sound research evidence". By evidence, he means the results, conclusions and recommendations from research. Also, research could become the saving grace in the face of competing policy options. Through its use, therefore, the implications of alternative policies and programmes can be evaluated.

Maduabum (2006:448) notes that reforms are designed to usher in changes but like change, are highly resisted, even by the same powers or authorities who initiated the reform efforts, especially when their interests are threatened. Apart from the implementation of reforms and their regular review, in line with prevailing circumstances, Maduabum advocates the constant evaluation of reforms and their enabling policy framework to ascertain whether the reform objectives are accomplished. Therefore, the use of research to achieve this purpose becomes imperative.

This inevitable place of research in public institutions is further underscored:
Services provided to the citizens should be based on carefully anticipated values and priorities of the citizens as owners and consumers, and the government should conduct voters' value assessments in the establishment of priorities among competing programs (Omisore 2007).

Research, Innovation and the Civil Service

Since independence, the concern expressed especially through the various civil service reforms has been the achievement of a professionalized, efficient, effective, patriotic and dedicated public institution that would ensure sustainable good governance. This concern has meant that except the civil service innovates from time to time, the goals will remain a mere dream.

The need therefore arises, according to Maiyaki (2007:82), for civil servants to be involved in continuous interactions between producers and users of research output through the instrumentalities of their ministries and agencies in the sharing of data and information systems. The outcome of such integrative research efforts will generate innovations which could be commercialized. This calls for intensive research and development (R&D) activities in the civil/public service. According to Maiyaki, research and development comprises all human activities "from basic research to the formulation of policies, and from the development of equipment for quantity production to the development of human capacities to support the use of scientific and technological inventions" (2007:84). R & D activities ought to be directed towards finding solutions to an identified problem, or for the attainment of a stated objective.

Innovations in the Delta State Civil Service

A series of innovative policies, programmes and practices have been recorded in the annals of the Delta State civil service since its inception. Most of these attest to the involvement of the civil service machinery in the conceptualization of projects, including mentoring an agriculture-based youth empowerment programme, the conception of the Asaba Capital Territory Development Authority for which they actively participated in its planning and execution, establishment of the Delta state computer centre for computerising the management of human and material resources of the state, sourcing of funds from Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB) for the procurement of farm machinery and establishment of Tractor Hiring Centres for individual farmers in the state.

The early years of the state's creation were a period of paucity of funds. Thus, rather than build new schools, the Ministry of Education enunciated the policy of expansion of existing schools and facilities. The period also witnessed a devastating spread of the yellow fever epidemic and the health ministry embarked on a policy of upgrading General Hospitals to Central Hospitals. The period also witnessed the establishment of more youth development centres in the state, the establishment of seven

public water schemes in the state by the Ministry of Water Resources, and the establishment of low and medium-income public housing units by the Ministry of Housing.

In terms of operational framework, modalities and work environment of the civil service itself, there was the restructuring of ministries and the creation/merging of directorates, and the practice of inter-cadre transfer of public servants on a point-to-point basis was jettisoned. The later years also saw the straightening of the expenditure pattern and the authority to incur expenditure for Commissioners and the Permanent Secretaries, abolishing the payment of touring advances and replacing it with the payment of travelling allowances as the former required 'retirement' of expenses, a process that became very cumbersome. There was also the centralization of training to enable the civil service to prioritize and spread training opportunities, and the introduction of the principle of self-accounting to all departments. This was because a lack of authority to approve expenditure was slowing down the civil service machinery, especially in the Governor's Office. Another major innovation was the move from project approach to programme approach in the implementation of budgets as well as in project monitoring from project inception to project delivery.

In the Year 2003, the Songhai-Delta Amukpe project, a project which received inputs from various ministries but was coordinated by the SSG Office was established. It was the first of its kind in Nigeria, an integrated poverty alleviation project, incorporating an incubation of skills acquisition, leadership and entrepreneurial training, backed by a strong philosophy of discipline and the appreciation of the dignity of labour (Odigbo & Ugheberio, 2007:98).

Apart from the Songhai-Delta initiative, a private-public partnership programme for the training of youths in agro-based activities was put in place, with the Universal Investment and Development Company (UIDC). Also in this direction was a capacity-building programme for rural women through collaboration with an NGO, the Girls Power Initiative (GPI).

The health ministry also championed the introduction of a drug revolving fund scheme to solve the problem of acute shortage of drugs. The scheme was computerized to ensure easy tracking of drugs.

Of significance is the use of Community Development Committees (CDCs) to achieve peace in the crisis-torn areas among the Ijaws, Itsekiri and Urhobos. To further this objective was the establishment of the Office of the Honourable Commissioner for Inter-Ethnic Relations and Conflict Resolution.

The Okowa administration launched a Job and Wealth Creation Scheme in mid-2015 and established the Bureau for Wealth and Job Creation. The scheme sought 'to imbue participants with life skills, develop their leadership qualities, increase their effectiveness and harness their productive potentials' through the following programmes:

- Youth Agricultural Entrepreneurs Programme (YAGEP);
- Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Programme (STEP);
- Microcredit;
- Development of Agro Industries.

The scheme was not just reinventing the wheel or going through the same old motions that met with partial success and sometimes outright failure in the past. A lot of planned innovations brought unique features that made the difference; it had a selection process which depended more on merit cum ability and less on the typical 'man-know-man' syndrome, a comprehensive module of training and development which targets change in the mindset of our youths, a curriculum that exposes participants to theoretical instruction on the one hand, and hands-on practical exposure on the other, and imparting vocational, leadership and entrepreneurial skills in the process, as well as a very strong mentoring, monitoring and tracking component and for which the Governor specially created a Directorate of Youth Mentoring and Monitoring. On successful completion, graduates of the programme are equipped with starter packs which comprise operating facilities or equipment, shop rent, and an initial or start-up capital corresponding to the enterprise, skill or trade. The alumni of YAGEP are branded YAGEPreneurs while those of STEP are STEPreneurs.

While the YAGEP programme has enterprises such as poultry, piggery, fishery and crop production, STEP enterprises include Computer Hardware Repairs, Catering and Confectionery, Bead Making, Electrical Installation and Repairs, Decoration and Event Management, Barbing, Hair Dressing/Makeover, Fashion Design/Tailoring, Tiling, Plaster of Paris (POP), Block Moulding, Cosmetology, and more recently, skills in Audio-Visual Services, ICT, Plumbing, Shoe Making, Upholstery, Welding and Fabrication. According to Professor Eboh, the first Chief Job Creation Officer of the State, the programme 'is based on standard training modules prepared by practitioners and strictly implemented through daily activity logbooks maintained in every training centre. While the training modules ensure quality assurance by trainers/training centres, the daily activity logbook is the tool for ensuring discipline among the beneficiaries, preventing truancy/absenteeism and upholding the quality of training'.

The 2017 Cycle saw the introduction of another category branded the BROWN-STEP Trainee programme. This programme sought to address the plight of Deltans who have trained themselves either through personal or family efforts, but lack the wherewithal to establish their enterprises. When selected through the administration of proficiency tests, they are re-trained for a shorter period and given starter packs by the State Government.

Also, structures have been in place to link up the youth entrepreneurs with off-takers who will buy off their harvested produce, invest in their farm businesses for expansion, and also create a growing export market through the Delta State Export Initiative, another innovation by the Governor that is coordinated by the Job Creation Office. The Delta State example goes far beyond skill acquisition to full-scale entrepreneurship. A lot of university graduates and other non-graduates have benefited from this scheme. However, an impact assessment study of this and previous innovative programmes will need to be conducted to ascertain their true impact.

Theoretical Framework

This study is driven by insights from the two theoretical models of Rationalism (Rational Choice) and Organizational Development (OD). First, the decision to deploy research into the affairs of governance has to be a rational one where the decision makers (top public officers) are expected to have a good knowledge background about alternative policies as well as the intelligence to correctly ascertain the cost-benefits of these policy alternatives. Second, the theory of Organizational Development is chosen because the entire state civil service is perceived as an organization, which needs to be grown through research-inspired innovative practices. Organizational Development Theory therefore provides a framework for interrogating the change process in the Delta state civil service and the degree of application of behavioural science technologies, research and theory (Action Research).

Rational Choice Model

The model looks at public policies in terms of efficient goal achievement. Thus, a rational public policy is designed to maximize the achievement of society's net value. Hence Dye (1981:31) conceives the definition of rationality as being interchangeable with the concept of efficiency. This model assumes that society's entire value preferences can be known and weighted, an assumption that also requires a complete understanding of society's values. In the words of Dye (1981), policymakers must know all the society's value preferences and their relative weights, know all the policy alternatives available, know all the consequences of each policy alternative, calculate the ratio of achieved to sacrificed societal values for each policy alternative, and select the most efficient policy alternative.

The keywords here are 'information' about alternative policies, 'predictive' capacity to foresee the consequences of alternative policies, and 'intelligence' to correctly calculate the cost-benefit ratio. The decision maker is perceived as a rational actor who makes decisions rationally in order to achieve net benefit (Ikelegbe 2005:42). Although this model has been faulted on grounds that societal values are conflicting and usually not agreed upon, and again that these many conflicting values cannot be weighted or compared (Dye 1981:32; Ikelegbe 2005:43), it has remained an important analytical model

as it helps to identify existing barriers to rational policy making. These barriers can (in most cases) be overcome through extensive and intensive policy research.

Organizational Development (OD)

The theory of Organizational Development (OD) is an aspect of organizational theory. It is a neo-modernist organizational theory, a field of knowledge that is relatively new, dating back to the 1950s and '60s.

With OD, there is no unifying theory, just models of practice. It is a strategy for the improvement of organizations, and in a bid to make the organization more functional, it is focused on total change of the organization's system. OD is action-oriented, seeking to achieve results through planned activities on aspects of the organization's structure, strategy, task design, performance, leadership style, innovations and marketing.

Methodology

This article employed both quantitative and qualitative strategies. The units of analysis are individuals serving as officials in the top management cadre of the state civil service since they are the ones who make decisions for the utilization of research and the deployment of innovative systems and practices. Consequently, primary data was collected through questionnaires and oral interviews with these classes of people.

As a research article which targeted a specified sample population (top civil servants), the purposive sample technique was employed. Consequently, a questionnaire was administered to Permanent Secretaries, Directors of Planning, Research and Statistics (DPRS) in mainline ministries, and some Heads of Departments on Salary Grade Levels 15 – 17 serving in the ministries, departments and agencies in Delta State. The State has a total of 35 mainline Ministries and Directorates. An oral Interview of 30 minutes duration was conducted in person with the chief accounting officers (Permanent Secretaries) of strategic offices such as the Head of Service, Directorate of Government House and Protocol, Ministry of Economic Planning, Office of the Secretary to the State Government, Directorate of Establishments and Pensions, and the Civil Service Commission, as key participants in policy making and implementation.

It is to be understood that if a probability sample were to be used, this would have required drawing a list of participants in all the MDAs, making a random selection of respondents and compelling them to answer the questionnaires distributed. In practice, this is difficult, if not impossible and even unethical. Purposive sampling, according to Eboh is a method that 'draws a sample to illustrate or represent some particular characteristic in the population……A purposive sample can be based on the capacity of the respondent to supply the required information (Eboh, 2009:74).

Based on the capacity of the category of respondents to provide answers to the information required, this sampling method was chosen. We must therefore contend with the problem of bias arising from self-selection.

Data Presentation
Quantitative Data Presentation

This survey used data generated from responses to questionnaires and interviews. A total of 72 questionnaires were distributed across 26 Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), mostly Main Line Ministries that supervise other Agencies and Departments.

The questionnaire has a total of 27 questions, divided into 4 sub-sections A, B1, B2 and B3. Whereas Section A established the bio-data of the respondents in the areas of an official designation, rank, cadre, sex, age and educational attainment, the questions in Section B1 measured the perception or attitude which Delta civil servants have about research and the extent to which research is put into use and the factors that may be responsible for these. Sub-section B2 sought to measure innovation as a variable, while section B3 probed the relationship between research, innovation and service delivery or Governance

in the Delta state civil service. The interview questions were crafted specifically to further validate or invalidate the responses received from the four sub-sections of the questionnaire, and where necessary to either elicit details to further buttress the responses to the questionnaire, or highlight divergence.

Of the 72 questionnaires administered, 58 representing 80.56 per cent were completed and returned, leaving 14 questionnaires or 19.44 per cent not returned. The summary of the profile of respondents as obtained from the questionnaire bio-data is presented in Table 1:

CATEGORIES RESPONDENTS	SEX		AGE		QUALIFICATION				CADRE					EDUCATIONAL
	Male	Female	40-50	51-60	Bachelors	Masters	PhD	PGD	Information	Administration	Statistician	Agricultural Cadre	Medical	Management
PS - 15	13	2	0	15	2	10	0	3	1	13	0	0	1	0
DPRS – 11	8	3	3	8	4	7	0	0	0	8	0	1	1	1
DA – 23	16	7	7	16	12	10	1	0	0	23	0	0	0	0
OTHERS – 9	5	4	6	3	1	6	1	1	0	6	3	0	0	0
TOTALS – 58	42	16	16	42	19	33	2	4	1	50	3	1	2	1

Table 1: Profile of Respondents' Bio-Data
Source: Author's fieldwork

Analysis of data is presented under the following sub-headings:

Perception of Research and Utilization in the Delta State Civil Service
16 questions captured under Section B1 of the questionnaire provided data for measuring the perception of research and its utilization among Delta State civil servants. From the high percentages recorded in the responses to Questions 1 and 2 in particular (94.83% and 93.10% respectively), the civil servants in Delta State cannot be said to have a poor perception of research and its utilization in governance. Rather, the perception is very high and positive.

However, it was not readily agreeable that the system itself, the civil service encourages research (Question 3) as the YES and NO responses were 50-50 (48.28% each).

From the responses to Question 5, it is not 'Always' that policymakers would want to use research. This position is further strengthened by the responses to Question 10 which indicates further that it is 'Sometimes' that civil servants receive academic research materials relevant to their area of specialization, cite other research from academic documents, and adapt academic research for use in drafting policy. In most cases, it depends on 'the type of issues involved (51.72%). Thus the situation that warrants the use of research is 'when the issues are complex' (46.88% - Question 6). It is important to point out that Question 6 allowed multiple responses.

On the reasons why civil servants may not always use research (Question 4), more respondents (39.66%) agree that 'responding to urgent day-to-day issues take precedence over long-term thinking'. This is closely followed by the reason that 'policy-making is driven by budget' (24.13%), as the budget already provides for detailed pre-determined courses of action.

The survey also indicates that all segments of the study population are very knowledgeable about electronic online research materials (Question 7) and have the ability to access them (87.93%). Likewise, for written documents or hard copies (Question 14), the ability to use both recorded 70.69%. But again, it is not often that these research materials are utilized. (Question 15) recorded a high 67.24% for 'Sometimes'. In terms of difficulties experienced in accessing research materials, this could prove to be a hindrance (Question 8); and the responses here were 50-50 for those who experienced difficulties and those who did not (49.02% each). But even among those respondents that experience difficulties, most of them (96%) experience difficulties only 'Sometimes'.

The adequacy of research materials/resources within the state civil service was investigated (Question 11). Apart from the Internet facility which was fairly adequate with a percentage of 43.10% relative to others, funding and library resources (textbooks, newspapers, magazines, journals) recorded equal higher percentages of 60.34% each for 'Inadequacy'.

On whether the political leadership of the civil service can be considered as a barrier or not to the conduct of research (Question 16), only 25.86 per cent saw them as barriers while a greater 68.97 per cent did not share this viewpoint.

Innovations in Delta State Governance Processes

Innovation is all about changes brought about in policies, structures, processes and procedures. It is also about bringing in new ideas and imbibing or adopting emerging paradigm shifts in the contemporary world. The data obtained shows that civil servants do not often use the internet to carry out research; only 32.76% use it 'Always' while a greater majority of 58.62% use the internet 'Sometimes'.

Likewise, the majority visit the library 'Sometimes' to perform their advisory roles (70.69%). Only very few (6.90%) visit the library 'Always'.

The spirit of innovation has not been brought to bear in the registry and registry practices in the MDAs. Almost every registry has continued to operate manually (94.83%). Only a paltry 1.72% is digitalized.

In terms of changes in organizational structure, 39.66% have changed while 56.90% recorded their MDAs as remaining intact. It is necessary to state here that this Question allowed for multiple responses, from the MDAs that have undertaken changes in their organizational structure, 56.52% of respondents informed that the changes were on the existing structure, 52.17% stated that the changes emanated from the creation of new or additional structure, while 13.04% of respondents informed that the changes involved the merging of existing structures.

The details of these changes in policies (Question 19) and changes in organizational structure (Questions 21, 22 and 23) and the reasons advanced for these changes were contained in responses to the open-ended questions.

Measuring the Impact of Research Utilization on Innovation and Service Delivery Processes.

It was the view of 77.59 per cent of top civil servants covered in this study that research is a necessity that should precede the formulation and implementation of government policies, while 22.41 per cent admitted that research is a necessity 'Sometimes'. It is significant for this study to point out that no one respondent ever saw research as a non-necessity.

The majority also responded that research has influenced their recommendations at one time or the other (87.93%) as against a paltry 12.07 per cent whose recommendations were never influenced by research outcomes.

Table 2: Impact of Research Utilization on Innovation and Service Delivery

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	YES (%)	SOMETIMES (%)	NO (%)	NIL RESPONSE (%)
Research is a necessity for the formulation of Government Policies	77.59	22.41	0	0
Research has ever Influenced my recommendations	87.93	Not Applicable	12.07	0
Research was conducted to handle Terms of Reference (TOR)	36.20	Not Applicable	29.31	34.48

Source: Author's fieldwork

Table 3: Involvement in Research-oriented Activities

Activity	Percentage Respondents Involved
Committees/Commissions of Enquiry	72.41
Feasibility Studies/Viability Reports	29.31
Audit Report	12.07
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	10.34
Investigation into Work Processes or Methods of Operation	29.31
Education Reform	10.34

Source: Author's fieldwork

Qualitative Data Presentation

Structured interviews were conducted with Permanent Secretaries or their equivalents managing selected MDAs, as these are the foremost category of civil servants to recommend the use of research, make decisions about its use and direct its deployment. Although the questions were structured, respondents were asked other follow-up questions that emanated from their responses. The interview sample consisted of this category of personnel in key or strategic MDAs who have the mandate to supervise other MDAs and coordinate their activities. A total of 6 (six) such MDAs were involved.

The interview schedule consisted of 9 (nine) structured questions that elicited their views on sub-themes covering perception, research benefits, innovations in the civil service, technologies and measures put in place to improve accountability and efficiency, the political leadership of the service and its proclivity to the use of research, and the various ways the federal civil service may have influenced the Delta State civil service (the external environment).

All the respondents saw research as a necessity, not only in carrying out their functions but also in any organization worth its salt. They also unanimously agreed that research brings benefits to an organization. In the words of one of the respondents, '*Development trends in other climes justify it. Research holds the key to progress in service*' (Interview, Asaba civil servant).

The respondents also agreed that even when there is a manifesto for the government to execute, there should be measures put in place for research to be undertaken. To buttress this further, a respondent cited the State government's policy on technical and vocational education as one policy that was enunciated after thorough research. He explained that this new policy was the outcome of a recommendation from the Transition Committee set up at the onset of the Okowa administration to chart its course. This Committee brought together practitioners from diverse sectors of academia, the public and private sectors.

On what factors could discourage the use of research, a respondent mentioned the human agency while several others spoke about the civil service system. When asked to elaborate further on the latter, one of them simply retorted *"The civil service is not based on merit. Seniority and precedence get priority considerations."* The view was that certain innovations which could move the service forward have been perceived as 'rocking the boat' or as usurping the existing age-long tradition.

However, an interviewee pointed out that one innovation that came as a product of internal research efforts was the introduction of an electronic database of civil servants, which has gone a long way to improve efficiency and accountability. According to him, *"leveraging on ICT now makes it easier to inform retiring civil servants on time – this has reduced the incidence of continuing to pay salaries after retirement, thereby saving funds for Government. The e-archiving protects documents and files from fire, theft or flood incidents while giving room for speedy retrieval. Also, the e-recruitment policy"* (Interview, Asaba Civil Servant). One other cited the current use of biometric clocking devices across all MDAs which have tremendously improved work attendance, reduced the falsification of records and almost eliminated the 'ghost workers' syndrome. Another respondent

mentioned the annual submission of well-researched papers on various issues of governance to the State Government by the 'College of Retired Permanent Secretaries'.

Interview responses also revealed that the state civil service has, over the years, benefited from changes initiated by the Federal Civil Service. More recently, these included the new Contributory Pension Scheme and its associated processes of computerized pension payments, the establishment of a Delta State Procurement Commission, as well as the abrogation of the B.SC/HND dichotomy which is subject to essential provisions in the scheme of service.

Results/Discussions

The results of this survey have shown that top civil servants in Delta State have very high (94.83%) and positive perceptions about research and its utilization in the affairs of governance (93.10%). This is in line with previous empirical studies of researchers like Lester (1993), Amara, Ouimet, and Landry (2004) in which a sizable number of respondents reported high value and use of academic research.

The second finding is that research has had a practical influence on decision-making and policy advice (87.93%). This is significant as bureaucracies such as the European Commission (2010), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2013), and Productivity Commission (2010), and even Politicians as captured in O'Malley (2014) are reported to have expressed interest in the increased use of research evidence in making policy decisions and for more popular and sustained policy outcomes.

However, the civil service system itself might not have been very supportive (48.28%). Surprisingly, as can be gleaned from the data, the drawback does not come from the political leadership of the service (25.86%). Whereas in the survey research carried out by Newman, Cherney & Head (2015) in Australia, the influence of politicians and political considerations overrode research evidence when policy decisions were made.

The explanation for the high degree of perception as well as the know-how on research materials/resources (87.93%) is not far-fetched. The basic qualification for a civil servant to attain the zenith of his career is a first degree. But here the data shows a significant population of top civil servants acquiring higher degrees, especially Master's degrees (56.89%) in relevant areas of specialization (see Table 1). It is not surprising therefore that very high value is accorded to research and its benefits. With this finding, the ground is set for the deployment of research in the state service in line with the rationalist model which assumes that the top leaders of MDAs need to have the intelligence to calculate the cost-benefit ratio and the predictive ability to see the consequences of alternative actions after collecting adequate information about alternative policies.

However, the data reveal that a good number – about half of these top civil servants (49.02%) experience difficulties, particularly in accessing electronic research materials, and that this difficulty is experienced very often. This is a sharp contrast to the result of a similar survey carried out on the Australian public service wherein the majority of respondents 'reported using electronic databases in addition to Google to download academic research, with only 30 per cent reporting that they always or usually experience difficulty in accessing full-text versions of academic articles' (Newman et al., 2015:27).

Again, Table 1 shows that a greater proportion of the top civil servants are older – falling between the age brackets of 51-60 (72.41%). Could this therefore be responsible for reluctance to learn new ways of doing things which is associated with old age? Nevertheless, the reported difficulties, no doubt, call for the need for training in electronic research methods. Closely related to this, is another cause for worry that the survey has thrown up; the perception is high, and the level of utilization or readiness to apply research where and when necessary is high, but there is an evident inadequacy of research materials and resources (60.34%).

For sure, the Delta State civil service has gone through a lot of innovations as has been attested by the results of this survey in terms of policy changes, structural re-organizations and re-alignments in the recent past. Also, in a publication *The Substance of Governance*, Odigbo & Ugheberio (2007)

chronicled the series of changes that have been introduced since the inception of the state. These changes cut across policies and programmes, to the creation/restructuring of MDAs during the military and post-military dispensation when some Directorates were transformed into full-fledged Ministries, viz: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Environment, Housing, Lands/Survey/Urban Development, Energy, Youths, Sports, and the Ministry of Water Resources Development. However, there are few cases from the results of this survey which can be cited as products or outcomes of internal research efforts. Most were influenced by the external environment of the state's public service. Whether research is carried out in its classical form or through Committees/Commissions of Enquiry, it is difficult from interactions with respondents during interviews to state as a matter of fact, that every research outcome is utilized.

Conclusion/Recommendations

This study has shown that the managers of the civil service in Delta State have high value for research. They view research as a necessity and are inclined to deploy it to a large extent, for policy making and programme implementation. Despite the inadequacy of research materials, they have the capacity to utilize these materials but this capacity is inadequate, particularly in the area of electronic research methods. The availability of research potentials among the practitioners notwithstanding, the civil service system, not its political leadership constitutes a hindrance to the application of research and its utilization. The study has also shown that research outcomes are sometimes utilized, but how much of it is utilized depends on the preferences and choices of the political leadership. To a large extent too, the civil service has been innovative but more out of the influence of the external environment than from the impact of research. Moreover, innovation has not caught up with the registries of the various MDAs. Internal innovation can be attained over time using the model of organizational development (OD) employed as one of the theoretical frameworks of this paper. Resistance will be highly minimized as OD is an approach that is adaptive in planning and implementing change (Cummings & Worley, 2001), as opposed to an approach that prescribes a blueprint on how to get things done.

Although the level of readiness to apply research may be high, the survey shows that the strongest reason research may not be applied is the preoccupation with urgent day-to-day issues which takes precedence over long-term and time-consuming thinking. This is the constraint of every top civil servant, the same as the fate of the Permanent Secretary in the introduction of this paper who received what looked like a riot act to undertake a study of the Western Region's Free Education Policy and report to his politician boss within two weeks. Usually, the approach will be for the Permanent Secretary to set up a study group or constitute a committee or commission of enquiry as the case may be.

It is therefore obvious that civil servants may or may not carry out research in its classical form, but they surely engage in certain research-related activities oftentimes, as this study has shown the high degree of involvement of the management echelon of Delta civil service in such research-related activities.

Although a lot of studies have been carried out on the Nigerian civil service system, not much has been found to focus on the utilization of research efforts to bring about innovations in the delivery of public goods and services. This article which specifically focuses on the civil service in Delta State, Nigeria has been primarily concerned with how good governance can be ensured through the utilization of research and the application of innovative practices. Prompted by these findings and the resultant indictment of the system in the civil service, the article makes the following recommendations:

i. Even with externally influenced innovations, the service could do better with further impact assessment studies undertaken periodically, especially in the area of new policies and programmes;

ii. The State Government should make available relevant research materials/resources. Every MDA should have a functional library in its area of speciality;

iii. Civil servants should be trained across all cadres on electronic research methods;

iv. The Registry units should be digitalized to reduce the cases of missing files and reduce the man-hours spent by registry personnel to locate files.

v. Review of relevant sections of the Public Service Rules (PSR) and the Civil Service Commission Regulations to encourage independent research efforts with extant provisions for rewards and incentives such as grants, exceptional promotion for staff, etc.

Innovation is an ongoing process which can only be sustained from a research-based civil service. With the multidimensional approach offered by the theory of organizational development, this promises to be a pathway to be taken to guarantee a more effective and efficient service delivery to be guaranteed continuously.

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