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Research Article

**Addressing the Wicked Problems in Nigeria with the ‘4Es’ in Public
Administration**

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Abstract

The concept of wicked problems is continuously gaining more attention due basically to the inability of political authorities in certain nations to address some issues that have lingered for decades. This justifies the scholarly interrogation of various strategies adopted to solve these problems as well as the realization of their failure. Narrowing it down to Nigeria, this paper sufficiently contends that poverty, Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, herders-farmers crisis and secessionist agitation fit into the wicked problems; hence, the study primarily investigates the efficacy of the 4Es in Public Administration (a new model) in solving these wicked problems in Nigeria. Adopting a literature-based method, the paper argues compellingly on the need for the adoption of the 4Es in public administration in Nigeria and also highlights its implementation strategies. However, bureaucratic resistance is examined to be a potential challenge to the implementation of the model in the country. Consequently, the paper proposes for sensitization, participation and gradual implementation of the model among others. Drawing on the above, it concludes that the model should be adopted and offers some practical policy recommendations.

Keywords: wicked problems; equity, empathy, ethics, engagement and public administration

JEL Codes: H11,H12,H56,H83

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Araştırma Makalesi

**Nijerya'daki Çetrefilli Sorunları Kamu Yönetimi'ndeki '4E'lerle Çözmek
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Öz

Çetrefilli sorunlar (wicked problems) kavramı, temel olarak bazı ülkelerdeki siyasi otoritelerin onlarca yıldır devam eden bazı sorunları ele alma konusundaki yetersizliklerinden dolayı sürekli olarak daha fazla ilgi görmektedir. Bu durum, bu sorunları çözmek için benimsenen çeşitli stratejilerin bilimsel olarak sorgulanmasını ve başarısızlıklarının farkına varılmasını gerektirmektedir. Konuyu Nijerya'ya indirgeyecek olursak bu makale, yoksulluğun, boko-haram isyanının, eşkıyalığın, çoban-çiftçi krizinin ve şiddetli ayrılıkçı ajitasyonun çetrefilli sorunlar kavramına uyduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Ülkedeki bu çetrefilli sorunların çözümünde Kamu Yönetiminde yeni bir model olan 4E'lerin etkinliğini araştırmaktadır. Literatüre dayalı bir yöntemi benimseyen makale, Nijerya'da kamu yönetiminde 4E'lerin benimsenmesi ihtiyacını ikna edici bir şekilde tartışmakta ve bu doğrultuda sonuçlar ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: çetrefilli sorunlar, eşitlik, empati, etik, katılım ve kamu yönetimi

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Introduction

The issues faced by the 21st century policy makers have always been serious, but there is a consensus that these issues are increasingly complex and more difficult (Room, 2011; Steffen, 2011). Wicked problems came into being as a result of frustrating experiences in public policy to the extent that certain problems were insurmountable, hence, should be clearly distinguished as such (Nick & Robert, 2019). Moreover, it is stressed that the idea behind wicked problems was thought out so as to explain the unfolding environmental and social issues in 1970. The extensive policy measures implemented by the Great Society in the US improved the standard of living of significant American citizens but the fundamental issue of poverty seemed to be intractable. Scholars have even further argued that political authorities had addressed a greater number of challenges they were faced with but were unable to solve the challenging issues known as wicked problems. If the above is established, then the challenges of political authorities at the beginning of the 21st century could be said to be more gloomy (Peters & Tarpey, 2019).

It, therefore, suffices to posit that certain challenges in Nigeria such as terrorism, banditry, poverty and secessionist agitation fit into the concept of ‘wicked problems’. Their resistance to solutions over the years strengthens this argument. This assertion is supported by the submission by Ejiofor (2022) that Nigeria is one of the less secure countries due to various security concerns such as the herders-farmers crisis, Boko Haram insurgency and secessionist agitation. The citizens are presently living under the control of criminals across the country with the security agents looking overwhelmed (Ofoma & Onwe, 2023). Agitation by Biafran separatists is another source of security concern that has appeared intractable in spite of measures adopted by the political authorities (Ofoma, 2023).

The above raises concerns about the capacity of the long-established principles/pillars of public administration to solve these ‘wicked problems’ that have bedeviled the country for decades. Though there is contradictory evidence on the capacity of these long-established principles/pillars of public administration (Seth, Richard & Sean, 2022), the deteriorating condition of Nigeria rationalizes the consideration of the 4Es (engagement, ethics, empathy, and equity) which has emerged as a shift in thinking from the traditional pillars of public administration (economy, effectiveness and efficiency) called the 3Es. This new perspective has become necessary since the traditional pillars fail to take cognizance of certain critical aspects of public administration such as equity, empathy, engagement and ethics (Frederickson, 2010; Dolamore, 2021; McCandless & Ronquillo, 2020; Svara, 2014; Svara et al., 2015 and Alkadry & Blessett, 2010). Moreover, it is argued that this model has been successfully implemented in certain countries of the world such as New Zealand (well-being budget), City of Barcelona (participation and empowerment initiatives), Canada (indigenous reconciliation commission), Sweden (gender responsive budgeting), and South Korea (anti-corruption and transparency reform) (Kalinowski & Kim, 2013; Government Offices of Sweden, 2019; Jaquierey, 2022; Colomer & Perez, 2024).

The scholarly interrogations around this new idea (4Es in public administration) arguably provide a solid foundation to better comprehend the capacity of this new perspective in addressing issues of governance in countries (Seth et al, 2022 and Clare, 2023). However, studies examining the correlation between the new perspective and wicked problems in Africa, especially Nigeria appear to be lacking grossly. Consequently, this study is framed to examine the efficacy of the 4Es model in solving the ‘wicked problems’ in Nigeria which are pinned down to poverty and security challenges. The paper proceeds by interrogating the wicked problems in Nigeria. The next section of the paper specifically examines initiatives

implemented by the Nigerian state in tackling the wicked problems. The third section centers on the literature-based method adopted for the study. The ensuing section focuses on the argument in favor of the adoption of the new model (4Es in public administration); while the fifth section centers on practical steps for implementing the model. The next section focuses on bureaucratic resistance as a potential challenge and the measures for addressing it; while the last section deals with concluding remarks and policy recommendations.

Literature Review

Wicked Problems in Nigeria

The painful reality of "wicked problems" in the context of public policy is that certain issues cannot be surmounted and hence, must be distinguished from others (Nick & Robert, 2019). Rittel & Webber (1973), the advocates of this concept, were urban planners who were dissatisfied with the way analytical systems approaches failed to address numerous issues and thought it was necessary to label these issues as "wicked" in order to elicit interest over their peculiarities and encourage consideration of other strategies. Fundamentally, wicked problems were viewed as the opposite of benign or tame issues which were remarkably surmountable (Nick & Robert, 2019). A wicked problem is conceptualized as a type of social issues which are poorly articulated, having ambiguous information as well as divergent values among stakeholders and extremely complex implications on the entire structure. The word 'wicked' is meant to explain the cunning and even malevolent nature of certain issues, where suggested measures end up deteriorating the situation (Churchman, 1967).

However, the concept is not without criticisms as demonstrated by some scholars such as Noordegraaf et al. (2019) who contend that the perspective and associated literature fail to consider individuals and their customs, true perception and solution of wicked problems. Also, cooperative, trust-establishing, and learning-driven strategies that are frequently recommended for dealing with wicked problems are utopian and may actually be hindered by elements associated with the problem or they may represent added advantages of regular steps instead of being strategies themselves. Lastly, it is argued that wicked perspective has to blur professional and administrative undertones since it is unable to suggest workable strategies for addressing practical problems that are connected to wicked problems such as revenue allocation.

As cogent as the above weaknesses seem, it is strong to assert that they do not outweigh the merits of the concept as some governments across the globe have not been able to address certain challenges even with foreign assistance. Where does one place a problem that has defied the capacity of political authorities to govern effectively if not 'wicked'? Supporting this view, Catrien, Art & Robert (2019) specifically identify various challenges that fit into the concept and they include terrorism, climate-related events, aging populations and digital warfare among others. This opinion is strengthened in the submission by Guy & Matthew (2019) that wicked problems emerged due to the need to deconstruct certain evolving challenges such as poverty that have seemed to be a conundrum to political authorities.

Drawing on this submission, it suffices to categorize Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, herder-farmers crisis, secessionist agitation and poverty in Nigeria as wicked problems. Nigeria like some other countries of the world has been bedeviled with security issues which include but are not limited to Boko Haram insurgency, secessionist agitation, herders-farmers crisis and Niger-Delta militancy in Northeast, Southeast, North-central and South-south geopolitical zones respectively (Ejofor, 2022). Which problem is more wicked than Boko Haram insurgency that has strongly resisted numerous solutions (both kinetics and non-kinetics) after more than two decades of its emergence? Despite the insurmountable nature of Boko Haram insurgency,

herders-farmers crisis has emerged thereby posing another challenge for the ruling class. Basically, this crisis between the pastoralists and farming communities which began in the North-central geopolitical zone has resulted in the killings of a significant number of Nigerian citizens. The modus operandi of the Fulani militias involves violent attacks, hostage-taking, and destruction of farmlands. The long-standing, ancient rivalry between farmers and herders was rekindled in 2018 and is still a contributing factor to the lack of security in the north (Ojo, 2020). While there is a continuous attempt by Boko Haram terrorists to conquer the Northeastern geopolitical zone, the maiming and killings by some criminal pastoralists in the North-central have continued unabated, banditry has emerged in the North-west, thereby endangering the whole northern region (ThisDay, 2019). The herders-farmers crisis is a security challenge compounded by certain factors such as a continuous increase in population. The increase in population places a serious burden on natural endowments such as land grasses and water which are essential for the continuous existence of people in rural communities. Therefore, the quest for survival using these natural resources usually leads to conflict between the herders and host farming communities (Olusegun et al., 2023).

Banditry especially in the Northwest geopolitical zone is another recently emerged security concern in the country that has resulted in the raping of women, stealing of cattle and kidnapping of farmers among others. Just as in other parts of the country, the socio-economic activities in the South-eastern geopolitical zone have been greatly undermined as a result of security threats arising from the enforcement of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IBOP) sit-at-home order (Ofoma, 2023). One of the consequences of Nigeria's civil war of 1967-1970 is the reawakening of a new group (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra) agitating for a state of Biafra. This peaceful group emerged at the beginning of 2000 with the primary aim of liberating Biafra. Ralph Uwazuruike, a lawyer, spearheaded the creation of the movement. Simultaneously, the engagement in battles between the Nigerian security personnel and MASSOB members together with the apprehension of Ralph Uwazuruike suppressed the resurgence of the independence campaign. The fall of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra led to the creation Indigenous People of Biafra in 2012 by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, a Nigerian British citizen staying in London (Ojo, 2023). Where does one place secessionist agitation with its accompanied security disturbances that resurfaced since the beginning of this uninterrupted democracy (1999)? These security concerns have been used by different political parties especially the All Progressive Congress (APC) during their electioneering campaign to win elections but the situation has consistently deteriorated.

While these security issues have been there for decades, governments' inability to address the increasing rate of poverty in the country which has manifested in so many complicated forms leaving one with no other term than a 'wicked problem'. While lending credence to this submission, Abayomi & Omoyeni (2018) contend that poverty in Nigeria is a clear definition of a 'wicked problem' as it has become more alarming in spite of numerous initiatives implemented by successive governments at all levels. National Bureau of Statistics (2012) reveals that the estimates of poverty rate per person per year in 2003-2004 and 2009-2010 stood at ₦28,836.70 and ₦55,235.20 respectively. The latest statistics seems more hopeless and disturbing as about 133 million individuals, or 62.9% of the population, face multidimensional poverty and are considered to be experiencing at least 26% of weighted deprivations across several dimensions (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

Table 1

Framework specifically explaining the Failed Measures Adopted by Nigeria State to Address Wicked Problems

| The wicked problems and failed measures | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Boko-haram insurgency | Herders-farmers conflict | Banditry | Secessionist agitation | Poverty |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creation of Joint Task Operation in 2009 2. Passage of Terrorism Prevention Act, 2011 3. Setting up of 26 member Amnesty Committee on Dialogue 4. Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenge in the North, 2013 5. Joint Multinational Task Force 6. Civilian Joint Task Force | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishment of Grazing Reserve, 1965; 2. Setting up of National Commission for <u>Normadic</u> Education, 1989 3. Deployment of security personnel to the affected communities 4. Anti-open Grazing Law by some state governments | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deployment of security forces to the affected areas 2. Payment of ransom 3. Offering of amnesty to the bandits 4. Maintenance of vigilante groups | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deployment of security personnel 2. Proscription of IPOB as a terrorist group 3. Incarceration of IPOB leader. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Poverty Eradication Programme 2. Better Life Programme 3. Family Economic Advancement Programme 4. National Social Investment Programmes. |

Note.Ojo,2020;Olusegun et.al,2023 and Aina et al,2023

Methodology

This paper adopts a literature review-based method driven by content analysis. Conceptually, literature review is distinguished through a replicable and methodical strategy for determining and examining the condition of art in certain disciplines (Fink, 2005). It integrates research in a methodical, lucid and reproducible way to advance understanding and guide conduct and policy (Tranfield, Denyer & Smart, 2003).

Consequently, this study centered on peer-reviewed papers interrogating issues around the 4Es in public administration and wicked problems (Boko Haram insurgency, herders-farmers crisis, violent secessionist agitation, banditry and poverty) in Nigeria. Accordingly, a keyword search was carried out using SCOPUS and Web of Science (WoS) databases. These databases form a major part of the tools utilized in this methodology. Where available, the Digital Object Identifier (DOI) and Uniform Resources Locators (URL) of the papers were equally stated for transparency. The rationale for this selection is illuminated in the assertion by Thome, Scavarda & Scavarda (2016) in Chantal & Andrea (2023) while arguing that these two search databases were chosen because of their comprehensive nature and wider utilization in social sciences publications precisely those of management. Also, using these citation databases guarantees the identification of a larger variety of studies because they index many vendor and journal databases in one place. Also, publications from media outlets, government establishments and international organizations were equally considered.

The two main variables in this paper are 4Es in public administration and wicked problems. In the course of screening the literature, it was discovered that wicked problem is

contextual as well as country specific but should be characterized by its basic elements such as being insurmountable, conundrum, complex and confusing. Peer-reviewed papers on public administration in general were discarded as a result of their insignificant relevance. Meanwhile, it is argued that bias is a big challenge to data collection and could significantly negatively affect the validity of findings and by extension quality of a research. Hence, to prevent any form of bias as this study was driven by content analysis, the paper adopted a two-stage process whereby peer-reviewed papers that did not show significant relevance by their titles and abstracts were read to make a valid decision. To this end, 251 articles were considered using formal inclusion and exclusion criteria and this led to 70 articles that were finally found relevant and utilized for the paper. To be specific, articles interrogating issues around the 4Es model, methodology (systematic literature review) and wicked problem as a concept as well as Nigerian examples such as Boko Haram, banditry, and herdes-farmers conflict were included. As argued by Demartini (2013); and Centobelli, Cerchione & Esposito (2017), articles examining issues outside the topic were excluded.

Why the 4Es in Public Administration?

Over the years, Nigerian state has continued to face numerous challenges as discussed in the above section and these challenges can at best be described as wicked problems due to their nature, dimensions, and intractability which make them suitable to the concept. The insurmountable nature of the problems has warranted a rethink of the 4Es in public administration. Justifying the importance of a paradigm shift in the pillars of public administration, Seth et al (2022) contends that there is increasing inequality between the rich and the poor; and agitation among various groups (economic, social and racial) exacerbated by disparities in access to healthcare and educational services globally. Therefore, there will be deepening inequality between the rich and the poor if these challenges are not addressed. Moreover, the planet is becoming uninhabitable due to global warming, and its effects are not being felt equally in all regions. To address these problems, a new perspective that centers on ethics, equity empathy and engagement is extremely important. These new four pillars equip administrative officers or street-level bureaucrats with the knowledge and abilities necessary to perform in the best interest of the citizens and the globe (ethics), including individuals who are incapable of speaking for themselves (equity), paying attention and assisting every community in a manner that meets their needs and aspirations (engagement) and knowing the intricacies of the divergent universe in which these people reside (empathy).

Arguably, the efficacy of this new perspective on Nigeria's issues (wicked problems) can be properly deconstructed and determined when its pillars are separately interrogated and linked to the issues. Accordingly, equity as a strong element of this perspective has not been given its rightful place in Nigeria when it comes to service delivery, project execution, appointment, provision of grants and credit facilities among others. In their attempt to find out how public administration drives justice, Adams et al. (2019) rhetorically asks "what do people deserve; who decides; how do administrative decision-making process intersect with other values?" These salient issues expose the manifestations of shenanigans among administrators as they can be professional in their conduct and activities but remain ignorant of harm caused by their unequal or unfair treatment given to people in the course policy implementation. Ejiofor (2022) observes that most of the prison inmates who granted interviews stated that they were unapologetic over their involvement in criminality as the political class has continuously and deliberately made life comfortable for very few people at the detriment of the majority of the citizens. Niger-Delta militancy is also linked to injustice and neglect from the political authorities. The (perceived) marginalization of Igbos in the South-eastern part of Nigeria is arguably responsible for secessionist agitation in the area culminating in security threats.

Nationally, the level of poverty is alarming but there are significant discrepancies in the rates of poverty among regions as some geopolitical zones have higher rates of poverty than certain other zones (Jaiyeola & Bayat in Ejiofor, 2022). It therefore suffices to contend that equity is very critical in addressing this problem as argued by Frederickson (2010) that it is necessary to establish the beneficiaries of public policy or programme. It is not enough to have a functional and efficient administrative system, it must also be seen to be equitable in service delivery in order not to create disadvantaged groups that will be vulnerable.

Linking empathy to the solution of wicked problems in Nigeria is not far-fetched. “Empathy can be both a cognitive process – a conscious and deliberate attempt to understand how others experience the world, without necessarily sharing in their feelings – and an affective response to another – a feeling of connection with another’s experience and an alignment of feelings (whether accurately or not). However, these are not neat or sterile binaries: empathy can be an intelligent and judicious way to examine experiences beyond ourselves, and reflect on our interactions with others that combines how we rationally analyse situations or objects and their meaning to others, as well as sensitivity to the emotions involved” (Claire, 2023, 1082). This paper adopts the later understanding of empathy to contend that its timely demonstration by political actors and administrators could contribute significantly to addressing the wicked problems in Nigeria. There is a perception that some young people have taken up arms against the state due basically to the insensitivity of those managing the commonwealth. For instance, Onyekpere (2023) argues that while Nigerians were being asked to tighten their belt due to economic hardship, the President was making a request for ₦12.7 billion from the National Assembly for SUV vehicles, presidential air fleet and replacement of operational vehicles among others. This is one out of numerous acts of insensitivity such as running over bloated ministries while Nigerians are languishing in abject poverty and holding political rallies amidst kidnapping and killing of innocent citizens. The point being made here is that empathy has a significant way of assuaging the feelings of citizens in difficulty as well as discouraging them from engaging in criminalities. This goes to suggest that both political actors and bureaucrats should at all times be seen to be empathetic. Empathy is viewed as a remedy to these weaknesses forces introspection and recognition of someone’s impact on other people. By structure, it ought to be thoughtful and continuous. It can be challenging to fully comprehend the actions, intentions, or experiences of another person or group when attempting to interact with them in order to negotiate, cooperate, or exert influence. This is especially true if no thought is given to how they may perceive you, the interactions that have come before that may have shaped your current strategy, anxieties, and trust levels. Even though it is impossible to know oneself perfectly, attempts to view oneself from the perspectives of others should balance the extremes of morality and power-hunger (Claire, 2023).

Ethical conduct among administrators is also put forward as a vital element of the 4Es capable of contributing significantly to solving the issues. The word ethics comes from the Greek word "ethikos," which means custom. The Latin equivalent of this Greek word is "mors," which means "custom" or "mores." The habits and behaviours that are characteristic of a place or group of people are known as the mores of that area or group. Ethics originated as a branch of philosophy, which explains why some refer to it as moral philosophy or assume that it is the same as morality (Ibietan & Joshua, 2013). It is ethically required of administrators to uphold certain ideals. American Society for Public Administration's (ASPA) code of ethics reveal that administrators are expected to advance professional excellence, promote national interest, enhance social justice, advance democratic participation, protect constitutions, and fully inform and advise the citizens (McCandless & Ronquillo, 2020; Svara, 2014; Svara et al., 2015). Therefore, to contend that public administration in Nigeria has been driven by ethical conduct

may be tantamount to living in yesterday if not completely fallacious. This takes us to the submission by Ezeani (2006) built on the works of Rasheed that unethical conduct, absence of transparency and corruption are not only prevalent but have also become part of the system to the point that one may have strong justification to deconstruct ethical misconducts in Nigeria public administration. Ikeanyibe (2009) trenchantly infers that unethical behavior is a serious threat to public administration in Nigeria.

Consequently, this paper is led to argue that advancement of ethical conduct in Nigerian public administration is the way to go in solving the wicked problems as it is not only needed for quality service delivery but equally important because it has a way of sending a strong signal to the public that it is no longer business as usual. Underlying this perspective, is the assertion by Ikeanyibe (2009) that the relevance of ethics manifests as principles guiding human behavior in a society as well as a societal approach used in enhancing human life by preserving a more humane environment together with achieving a harmonious society.

Within the context of engagement lies the consultation of the citizens on policies, programs and projects among others. Providing a strong justification for engagement, Alkadry & Blessett (2010) aver that engagement is critical especially when a section of a country is historically discriminated against by the administrative system. Engagement is very relevant and strategic as it ensures collaboration between administrative officers and communities aimed at addressing challenges. There is a convergence of opinion by scholars that the contemporary approach to public administration encourages the involvement, contribution, and influence of diverse political actors as well as the need for the people (citizens) to keep their eye on the policy-making processes, especially during the formulation stage due basically to the argument that agenda setting in a complex and diverse country is not always scientific and rational (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012; Howlett 2000; Spillane et al, 2002 and Ball, 2012). Public engagement entails the participation of citizens in governance either in the form of decision-making, policy formulation or agenda setting (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). Scott (2017) observes the importance of citizens' engagement using a stakeholder approach which suggests that it is meant to obtain responses when consulting with relevant stakeholders and utilize the information to redesign the policy solution in order to enhance its acceptability by the administrative system. Engaging the members of the public is capable of enriching policy formulation by articulating opinions towards policy under formulation. Putting the experience of individuals impacted by the decision at the forefront of discussions can also result in more informed policies and programs that are in line with the demands of the populace. Beyond civic capacity building, public engagement enhances accountability (Katsonis, 2019). It is a sine qua non for effective governance in that it builds civic capacity, and improves accountability thereby enhancing quality of the service delivery (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2009).

Building on the above discussion leads this paper to posit that public engagement is an effective tool necessary for solving the wicked problems in Nigeria. Within this context, opinions (both convergent and divergent ones), grievances, and frustrations are expressed; and policies that reflect the aspirations and needs of the people are formulated and implemented. Beyond this, a strong sense of belonging among the citizens is created. Sense of belonging as a resultant effect of public engagement could contribute significantly to addressing certain security concerns in the country.

Table 2

Tabularizing and Simplifying the Efficacy of the 4Es on Wicked Problems in Nigeria

| Empathy | Engagement | Equity | Ethics |
|--|--|---|---|
| Correcting the perception of insensitivity of the political class as a reason for criminality. | Giving the people a sense of belonging and ownership of political power. | Addressing income inequality among citizens together with cases of injustice as a valid point for taking up arms against the state. | Professionally acting within the law in service delivery and being decisive in dealing with born up deviants and outlaws. |

Note. Authors’ model, 2024

Implementation Strategies for the 4Es model in Nigeria

The significant gaps in income, infrastrucutres and education among others in Nigeria illuminates the argument advnced for equity in public organizations which has correlation with certain condrums in the country. To implement equity as a critical element of 4Es model, Seth et al. (2022) contends that relevant administrative autohirites must acknowledge their role in creating, maintaining and widening disparities. Meanwhile, acknowledging these challenges can only be practicable when the relevant public organizations get the support and ledership necessary for adopting equity mindsets as well as extensively reaching out to historically marginalized people in order to enligthen them on the causes and consequences of injustices, reveal and comprehend the culpability of administrative systems, suggest and implement workable solutions. Arguably, many cases of administrative injustices are deliberately perpetuated against the historically discriminated people, hence, such acts must be acknowledged, comprehended and addressed (Gooden, 2015; Johnson & Svara, 2015b). Therefore, public sector organizations in Nigeria must be seen to be admitting their administrative rascality and injustices which compelled certain agrieved people to take up arms against the state. This calls for collaboration between Ministry of Information and National Orientation Agency and other relavant bureaucratic organizations. This assertion resonates with the opinion of Johnson & Svara (2015a & b) that ackowledging the problems inevitably result in interacting with the public and providing significant seats at the table which is in consonance with building representative bureacratic system. It is a healthy administrative strategy as seen in Seattle’s Race and Social Justice Initiative (SRSJI) (SRSJI,2019a,2019b,2020). To be precise, Seattle’s Race and Social Justice Initiative demands that all public policies (both existing and new) must be a practical reflection of equity. This actknowledgement of administrative rascalities serves as a basis for ensuing equity-related actions such as formulating and implmenting policies and programs to fil the gaps created by administrative injustices.

In doing the foregoing, there must be a robust engagement with the communities that would mostly be impacted by such a policy (Johnson & Svara, 2015b). This engagement will be driven by digitalization which will result in the deployment of certain tools such as whatsapp, Telegram, Facbook, and Instgram among others. This makes the process of engagement convinient for both the marginalized population and policy actors which in turn leads to sustained outcomes. To this end, bureaucartic organizations in the country are expected to develop functional technological instruments aimed at driving the process of engagement.

Moving beyond engagement with the marginalized groups, inter-agencies engagement is also needed to strengthen collaborations and minimize overlaps to the barest minimum. This is where administrators in Ministry of Digital Economy bring their expertise and competence to bear so as to ensure a seamless process. While supporting this step, Nelson & Brooks (2016) argue that digital tool such as toolkit enables the administrators to: (1) enhance programs and highlight desired outcomes; (2) gather both qualitative and quantitative data to explain the level, causes, and impacts of injustices; (3) engage the people and identify measures of expanding the engagement, especially with and for historically marginalized populations; (4) find out who benefits or/are detrimentally impacted by the policy reforms together with ascertaining how the reforms promote equity; (5) determine who is saddled with the responsibility of implementing the proposals; and (6) describe the ways in which public administrators should report on and assess the outcomes of public policy in a manner that is inclusive, communicative, and accountable. Gooden (2014) observes that promoting equity necessitates a variety of forms of involvement, such as conversations about anxiety and the value of equity across agencies as well as interaction with the populations most impacted by specific public policies.

While ethical conducts are always clearly spelt out in public service rule of nations including Nigeria, it suffices to put up a process through which the ethics not just as a responsibility of public servants but also as a cardinal element in public administration which could contribute to drive the process of addressing the wicked problems in Nigeria. This calls for review of existing rule concerning ethics in Nigerian public sector organizations. Also, ethical principles should be clear and unambiguous. Additionally, internal mechanisms for guidance and consultation must be put in place to enable public bureaucrats apply ethical principles in their various places of work (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2024); most fundamentally, rules against ethical misconducts should be stringent enough and always be seen to be implemented when the need arises so as to deter the public administrators. Linking equity with ethic, Seth et al. (2022) contends that a consensus has been reached among scholars that equity especially in public sector and non-governmental organizations should be considered as an ethical priority.

Empathy as a concept could be ambiguous especially in public administration as it is arguably not an idea that is naturally related to the field but other disciplines. However, researchers in public administration could learn from other disciplines while analyzing empathy in public sector organizations (Meyer et al., 2022). For instance, in nursing, empathy is one of the essential elements for high quality care of patient (Yu et al., 2021). For this paper, empathy entails sympathy (an administrative officer's concern for a citizen), tenderness (affectionate and lovely feeling for weak citizens) and compassion (witnessing a citizen's negative emotional condition with a spure to assist the citizen) (Cuff et al., 2016). Therefore, making the public administrators in Nigeria become fully aware of these variables that constitute 'empathy' is the first stage of this process. Beyond this, various administrative authorities should design a special package to be given as a motivation annually to exceptional public administrators who emerge by public opinion poll using digital tool such as Facebook or Instagram. This must be seen to be transparently done.

The above discussion focuses on steps peculiar to each of the four elements of the new model (4Es in public administration). For a successful and sustained outcomes, further implementation steps integrating the four principles are highlighted as follows:

1. Formulating and reviewing the existing policies to ensure their agreement with the 4Es model.

2. Demonstration of political will by the ruling class towards the elements (equity, engagement, ethics, and empathy) of the model.
3. Developing the capacities of the administrative officers through training, seminars, and workshop for the task ahead.
4. Restructuring of the bureaucratic organizations to support the new model.
5. Enhancing workforce diversity through the implementation of affirmative action and recruiting the marginalized population into the public sector.

Bureaucratic Resistance: A Potential Snag

The implementation of the 4Es model in Nigerian public administration as advocated in this study would understandably meet certain resistance especially from the administrative system because it is argued that bureaucracy could be hesitant to reforms and this may not be an exception. Interrogating the rationale for bureaucratic resistance to reforms, Joha & Janssen (2014) observe that reforms could result in dismantling of existing functional structure and even physical relocation of the departments that have been part of the administrative system for a very long time. Bekkers (2007) infers that one of the reasons why bureaucratic organizations attempt to resist reforms is due to a shift in emphasis from a traditional hierarchical control relationship in bureaucracy to a type of network governance that requires managers to oversee across organisational boundaries. In addition, the resistance is arguably driven by certain factors such as corruption, entrenched interests, lack of capacity and political interference among others. Targeted bureaucratic organisations have been shown to reject reforms that pose a danger to their interests (Dommett & Skelcher 2014; Overman, van Thiel, & Lafarge, 2014). Meanwhile, bureaucratic resistance has been categorized into the following: (1) Avoid (window dressing" or symbolic acceptance; decoupling); (2) compromise (conform to minimum standards or marginal adaptor role); (3) defy (use information asymmetry to challenge technical feasibility of government proposal); and (4) manipulate (mobilize stakeholders or ; influence position other constituents) (Dommett & Skelcher, 2014; Overman et al., 2014; Oliver, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Dommett & Skelcher, 2014; Scott, 1983; and Dommett & Skelcher, 2014). While "veto options" can be used by policy actors in the political arena to thwart change, institutions can also grant more or less latitude to particular interpretations and/or enforcement requirements that either promote or inhibit reform. It is further contended that institutional rules are often vague and open to interpretation, and they are frequently enforced and implemented by various institutional actors (such as the courts and bureaucrats), each of which plays a unique role in determining the dynamics of institutional reform (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).

The above perspective compels this paper to argue that there could be bureaucratic resistance against the 4Es model because it is tantamount to change of the status quo. Beyond this, certain policy actors (powerful) who are benefiting from the current system would go to any length to frustrate the reform for the status quo to be maintained. This could be better explained by the ugly experience by Nigerians over the introduction of IReV by Independent National Electoral Commission to enable real time transmission of election result from the polling units to INEC server. Supporting this assertion, Fernandezand & Rodrik (1991); Samuelson & ZeckHauser, (1988); and Dziuada & Loeper (2016) unaimously infer that those benefiting from the status quo may want to maintain it if there is no tendency that the reform would advance the interest of the status quo. Additionally, the uncertainties surrounding reforms compel the actors to maintain the current order. Interest groups can attempt to frustrate the reform if they perceive that their interests would be negatively affected by the change (Becker, 1983; Becker, 1985).

Sensitization, Participation and Gradual Implementation: Overcoming the Potential Bureaucratic Resistance

While bureaucratic resistance has been argued to be a potential challenge to the 4Es model being proposed, it is imperative to observe that it is not unsurmountable. Therefore, solving the problem could warrant developing an effective communication strategy whereby the policy actors and intended beneficiaries (the people) would be clearly informed about the objective and processes of the model, and their inputs sought. Aligning with this view, Pitlik et al. (2014) assert that communication of the broad objective of a reform is essential in that its absence could prevent a government from getting a clear mandate for a reform. Information on a reform should spark a public discussion about the shortcomings and issues with the current system. This calls for strategic approach because individuals assess whether they are in a gain- or loss-affected domain by looking at the current state of affairs. This therefore requires the government to effectively recast the reform problem from (possible) gains of a policy change into (potential) threats of losses in the event that no action is taken (Pitlik et al., 2014).

Participation of all the relevant policy actors and people is also critical to identify areas of agreement and disagreement before the model is implemented. Commonsensically, areas of disagreement should be looked into and consensus reached before the implementation. Pitlik et al. (2014) contend that participation of all the relevant actors could reduce of speed at which decision is taken but it is necessary to ensure that the opinions of all the concerned individuals are considered in the process. This does not only make them feel belonged but also prevent future protest or sabotage against the model when implemented.

Beyond the above is the gradual implementation of the model wherein there will be pilot phases used in ascertaining the efficacy of the model. This should include certain critical public organizations whose activities and operations have direct impact on the people. This brings to mind Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development among others. Béland (2016) contends that the execution stage of a policy is essential and largely determines the success or failure of the reform process.

Additionally and more fundamentally, there should be sincerity of purpose and genuine commitment to the model by the political leadership and high ranking administrators. This goes a long way in encouraging the street-level bureaucrats to key into the model fully. This is necessary as certain good policies and programs had failed in the past on account of this particular factor.

Concluding Remarks and Policy Recommendations

This paper was majorly motivated by the inability of the traditional pillars of public administration which are economy, efficiency and effectiveness together with other measures implemented by the Nigerian state in addressing the wicked problems such as Boko-Haram insurgency, banditry, herders-farmers conflict, secessionist agitation and poverty. Having evidently justified the categorization of the foregoing issues as ‘wicked problems’, the paper strongly argues for the adoption of the 4Es in public administration as a panacea to the challenges. This suggestion is supported by various discussions made in the body of the work. Furthermore, implementation steps for the model were also explored to guide policy actors. However, there was an understanding that the model could be hampered by bureaucratic resistance; and this resulted in the suggestion of sensitization, participation and gradual implementation of the model as overcoming strategies. In all, adopting this model as simplified in a tabular form becomes very valid in the context of these intractable issues faced by the

Nigerian state. Arising from this submission, the policy makers in the country are encouraged to:

1. Integrate the model in every aspect of policy making in the country.
2. Encourage the domestication of the model at the sub-national levels of government.
3. Develop a legal framework for the model.
4. Continuously monitor and evaluate the implementation of the model in order to easily identify deficiency (if any) and address it promptly.

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