
COMPARATIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: AN ANALYSIS OF NIGERIA AND RUSSIA FROM THE VIEW POINT OF MIXED SCANNING MODEL OF DECISION MAKING

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Abstract

The paper is an analysis of the Nigerian Public Administrative System in comparison with that of Russia, as it has to do with similarities, differences and lessons that can be harnessed from the Russian system of Public Administration. The paper relied mostly on secondary data sources. Basic challenges gleaned as lessons were also drawn from Russia. Based on the major findings, it was suggested amongst others, that Nigerian bureaucrats, policy makers and decision makers should use the mixed scanning approach or model of decision making when embarking on critical decisions.

Key words: Comparative, Public Administration, Mixed Scanning, Nigeria, Russia.

1.1 Introduction

Comparative methods of studying Administrative systems have always been in existence since the 19th century. It was Fred Riggs who has contributed the most, to its development. (Anthony, 2008). According to Nwachukwu, Lambert Chidi (2008), Comparative Public Administration is predominantly concerned with Cross-Cultural and Cross National Public Administration. It tries to study and understand Public Administrative practices and behaviours of different countries on a comparative basis. It also aims at the development of a more scientific Public Administration by building and strengthening theory of a more scientific study in Public Administration.

This work addresses Comparative Public Administration using Nigeria and Russia with the view point of the mixed scanning model of Decision making. It was observed that previous studies have always been narrowed around management by objective, Scientific theory, Human relation theory, Behavioural approach, General system theory, Administrative management school and the Games theory. In this work, the authors addressed issues affecting proper and effective decision making in the Nigerian Civil Service using the mixed scanning model and making a comparison between Nigeria and Russia and drawing lessons from Russia where necessary.

2.1 Conceptual Discourse/Brief Review of Related Literature

Comparative Public Administration:

Scholarly interests and research in comparative Public Administration can be traced to the period after the second world war. (Chidi, 2008) in Anthony et al (2008). Despite all odds the origin of comparative Public Administration as a systematic field of study, research and teaching can be traced to the conference on comparative Public Administration held at Princeton University, USA, in September, 1952 (Chidi, 2008). According to him therefore, it was one Robert .H. Jackson who defined it as that facet of the study of Public Administration which is concerned with making rigorous Cross-Cultural Comparisons of the structures and processes involved in the activity of administering public affairs.

Mixed scanning is a hierarchical mode of decision-making that combines higher-order, fundamental decision-making with lower-order, incremental decisions that work out, and/or prepare for the higher-order ones. (Goldberg, 1975, p.937). The term “scanning” is used to refer to search, collection, processing, and evaluation of information as well as to the drawing of conclusions, all elements in the service of decision-making. Mixed scanning also contains rules for allocation of resources among the levels of decision-making and for evaluation, leading to changes in the proportion of higher versus lower levels of scanning based on changes in the situation.

Mixed-scanning provides both a realistic description of the strategy used by actors in a large variety of fields and the strategy for effective actors to follow. Let us first illustrate this approach in a simple situation and then explore its societal dimensions. Assume we are about to set up a worldwide weather observation system using weather satellites. The rationalistic approach would seek an exhaustive survey of weather conditions by using cameras capable of detailed observations and by scheduling reviews of the entire sky as often as possible. This would yield an avalanche of details, costly to analyze and likely to overwhelm our action capacities (e.g., “seeding” cloud formations that could develop into hurricanes or bring rain to arid areas). Incrementalism would focus on those areas in which similar patterns developed in the recent past and, perhaps, on a few nearby regions; it would thus ignore all formations which might deserve attention if they arose in unexpected areas.

A mixed-scanning strategy would include elements of both approaches by employing two cameras: a broad-angle camera that would cover all parts of the sky but not in great detail, and a second one which would zero in on those areas revealed by the first camera to require a more in-depth examination. While mixed-scanning might miss areas in which only a detailed camera could reveal trouble, it is less likely that incrementalism will miss obvious trouble spots in unfamiliar areas. Etzioni (1967).

3.1 Importance/Benefits of Comparative Analysis

The Importance/Benefits of the Study of Comparative Public Administration cannot be over emphasized. Arora (1979) in Anthony et al have identified four significant contributions and benefits of comparative Public Administration as follows:

1. Comparative Public Administration has widened the horizons of Public Administration.
2. It has opened the doors of the discipline to all kinds of social scientists.
3. It has made the scope of the field more systematic by studying different administrative systems in their ecological settings.
4. It has stimulated interest on the part of its members in the problems of development administration.

Chartuvedi (n.d.10-11) in Anthony et al (2008) has added the following;

- Comparative Public Administration has helped to eliminate Provincialism and Regionalism.
- It has broadened the field of social science research which was earlier confined to cultural limitations.
- It has encouraged the process of broadening the field of social analysis.
- It has brought politics and Public Administration closer to each other, etc.

According to Nnaa, (2013), there are four key limitations of the Nigerian Bureaucracy as an Agent of change. These are; Political factors which mostly involves political instability and inconsistency of policy issues. Economic factors; which deals with low economic resources.

Social environmental factors: where human interactions are a challenge: faulty communication between the generalist administrators and the professionals and technical experts.

In Russia the president simply takes charge and issues are resolved almost immediately by all parties concerned in the event of an issue.

4.1 Mixed Scanning Model of Decision Making in Government Bureaucracy

The concept of social decision-making, vague commitments of a normative and political nature are translated into specific commitments to one or more specific courses of action. Since decision-making includes an element of choice, it is the most deliberate aspect of social conduct. As such, it raises the question: To what extent can social actors decide what their course will be? and to what extent are they compelled to follow a course set by forces beyond their control? Three conceptions of decision-

making are considered here with assumptions that give varying weights to the conscious choice of the decision-makers. This three strata of decision making includes rationalism which has to do with taking decisions at its best or logical pace, incrementalism on the other hand is of the notion of making or spicing decisions with little modifications to suite a particular situation in terms of policy formulation while the third stage in decision making is the mixed scanning which primarily has to do with the adoption or applicability of both models or approaches to arrive at a more convenient and productive policy output. For the purpose of this paper, we shall be domesticating our analysis on the mixed scanning model as a third stage in decision making. It might be a very complex concept for those who are not familiar with the term mixed scanning decision making. Although it can be a combination of various ideas that comprise this type of decision making process, it cannot be that difficult to understand. The secret is to break down the construction of the thought process of mixed scanning in order to get a better understanding of this whole concept. Although, there are several examples of mixed scanning decision making that can be expressed once you get the basic definition of this term. It is a technique that can be used to understand problems and enable us make decisions based on a particular situation that we need to take care of. In fact, many believe that mixed scanning type of decision making can provide more opportunities to learn about the different components that constitute its infrastructure.

Brief Historical Development of the Model

The mixed scanning model was developed by a sociologist; Amittai Etzioni. Etzioni (1968) suggested that organizations plan on two different levels: the tactical and the strategic. He posited that organizations could accomplish this by essentially scanning the environment on multiple levels and then choose different strategies and tactics to address what they found there. While Lindblom's approach only operated on the functional level, Etzioni argued that the mixed scanning approach would allow organization to work on both the functional and more big-pictures oriented levels.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, planners began to look for new approaches because as happened nearly a decade before, it was realized that the current models were not necessarily sufficient. As had happened before, a number of different models emerged. Lane (2005) notes that it is most useful to think of these model as emerging from a social transformation planning tradition as opposed to a social guidance one, so the emphasis is more of bottom-up in nature than it is top-down.

Applicability of Mixed Scanning Model to Nigeria

The mixed scanning model can be applied to Nigeria in the following ways;

1. Mixed Scanning as Adaptive Strategy

In contrast to rationalism that offers a deeply optimistic approach that enables a person to learn all that he or she needs to know, mixed scanning is rather an adaptive strategy. So it acknowledges the inability of a person to know in excess of what he or she needs to make a rational decision.

On the other hand, incrementalism avoids making decisions on the basis of partial knowledge as it is profoundly cautious. However, mixed scanning is able to make the best possible way of using this partial knowledge than simply going without any knowledge at all.

2. Use of Mixed Scanning by Public Administrators

Public administrators make a variety of choices and decisions on daily basis. Some of these decisions are made in split seconds while others are made after due consideration of various facts and figures. The mixed scanning model will assist in making sure that every decision that is made is somewhere along the line error free.

3. Effective Managers often Use this Approach

For successful managers, this method of decision making often works for them. Since business data are not unequivocal in nature, it is very important to be cautious in making decisions. Thus, being humble yet efficient in making decisions are similar for executives and doctors in this sense.

4. Focused Trial and Error

In order to adapt to partial knowledge effectively, the most widely used method is that of a focused trial and error. This method will have to employ two different parts, namely where to begin searching for effective intervention and modify or adjust the intervention by checking results at intervals.

Basically, this method is different from outright trial and error, assuming no knowledge of the situation at all. In focused trial and error approach, though, searches need to be fine-tuned. This can happen only when uncertainty is low and knowledge is high.

5.1 The Bureaucracy in Nigeria/Russia; Lessons for Nigeria Via the Mixed Scanning Model of Decision Making

The benefits of the mixed scanning model of decision making are numerous as is seen above. However, there are several lessons for the Nigerian Bureaucracy as follows; our decision makers led by the president of the country, should focus on problem discovery to solution advancement; there should be rational or incremental approach depending on the situation; there should be policy goals and direction; there should be a two camera system such as the broad angle camera and zero-in, for in-depth examination of problems and situations; Bureaucrats, decision makers and public

administrators should use the routine incremental process of the mixed scanning model by regularly scanning the entire organization or environment to look for major issues.

Conclusion/Recommendations

A cursory look at the two countries clearly shows where the differences lie. It also shows a little bit of similarities as it has to do with the arms of government.

Considering the both countries from a comparative angle, we can observe the following;

They are both democracies but with differences in operation. Both countries operate a bicameral legislature. However, in Russia, the president appears to be all-powerful, as he is a member of all the organs of government. Both countries operate a Civil Service System which lubricates their Public Administrations. However, the president of Russia appears to be in charge of the Russian Civil Service in all ramifications. Public Administration as practiced in Russia today is an inheritance from the erstwhile soviet union. (Goetz, 2001:1033). It is the exact opposite of everything that looks like the weberian ideal bureaucracy, as is known and understood in the developed world. Thus, the Civil Service is not separate and not different from the government.

Based on our discussion above, we recommend the following;

Nigerian leaders, decision makers and bureaucrats should learn some lessons from Russia where the president takes certain major decisions for the good of the country without any tribal, religious or sectional bias. Public administration in Nigeria should take a cue from Russia as it has to do with the running of the civil service. For effective decision making, the mixed scanning model or approach should be adopted by leaders and policy makers in Nigeria.

The study is limited by time, space and other relevant secondary data bearing in mind the fact that Russia is not an Anglophone country. As a result of this, future studies in this area is being suggested.

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