

**BATHO PELE PRINCIPLES AND QUALITY SERVICE
DELIVERY IN THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR: CASE
OF RIVERS STATE**

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ABSTRACT

Batho Pele principles sought to enhance public sector service delivery with ethical behaviour. In this scenario, this study presented and discussed the findings of a case study research that was conducted in Rivers State public sector based on the eight principles of Batho Pele namely consultation, setting service standards, increasing access, ensuring courtesy, providing information, openness and transparency, redress and value for money. The study was predominantly qualitative in nature and a purposive sample size of 500 Rivers State indigenes was drawn. The study employed simple percentage and a bar chart to ease the analysis and discussion. The finding revealed that the Rivers State public sector lacked properly functioning service delivery system because of the inability of the public institutions to deliver quality public services based on the needs of the citizens. It was asserted in the study that apart from the principles of ensuring courtesy and providing information, all the response rates regarding the other principles were less than 50%. The common factors that impeded the effective implementation of Batho Pele principles in the State public sector as identified in the study included corruption, nepotism, incompetence, lack of transparency, weak institutional framework and strong political components. Based on the study's findings, it was recommended that Rivers State public institutions should adopt a consumer based approach regarding quality service delivery. It was also recommended that the legal and institutional framework of the public sector should be reinforced to curb subornment and nepotism, the political elements embedded in public service delivery should be de-emphasized, and transparency and accountability encouraged.

Key words: Batho Pele principles, good governance, participation, public sector, quality service delivery, reforms, Rivers State.

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INTRODUCTION

Quality service delivery is the measure of effective and efficient utilization of resources by service providers to satisfy the needs of customers (Jones, George and Hill, 2000). According to Stephen Oronsaye, former head of the Nigerian civil service, quality service delivery in the public sector meets the crucial needs of citizens through prompt and efficient procedures that presupposes that the interaction between citizens and government results in value creation (marketingnigeria.org/downloads/stephenoronsaye.ppt). The South African Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) White Paper (1994) cited in Batho Pele review document, prepared by Job Mokgoro Consultancy cc (2003), posits that the public service is the servant of the people and as such adopts an entrepreneurial process (Briggs, 2009) that creates incremental value for its citizens through customer based approach regarding quality service delivery. The customer based approach was adopted in South Africa by launching a number of initiatives aimed at improving service delivery in the public sector and one of such initiative is the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service Delivery (WTPSD) commonly known as the Batho Pele White Paper (Pietersen, 2014).

Batho Pele is a Sesotho phrase that means 'people first' (Moran, 2002 cited in Pieterse, 2014). The name was chosen to emphasize the need for public service to serve its customers first through efficient and effective service delivery (Glendinning, 1988). Briefing to the portfolio committee on the Batho Pele programme for public service (2010) cited in Pieterse (2014), asserts that the aim of the Batho Pele initiatives is to get public servants to be service oriented, strive for excellence in service delivery, commit themselves to continuous service delivery improvement, allow citizens to hold them accountable for the type of services they deliver and to adopt a customer based approach to service delivery informed by eight principles which are consultation, setting service standards, increasing access, ensuring courtesy, providing information, openness and transparency, redress, and value for money (Ngidi and Dorasamy, 2013).

The current democratic government of Nigeria is administered in line with the provisions of 1999 constitution. The constitution establishes that Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign country whose constituent units are bound together by a federal arrangement (United

Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, 2012). The constitution further provides for the operation of three tiers of government namely the Federal government which is the central government, the different State governments which comprised 36 States with a Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and the respective Local Government Areas (LGAs) which consist of 774 Councils (Okojie, 2009). The country operates a presidential system of government in which there exists an executive, legislature and judicial arms with each arm acting as a check and balance on the powers of the others. The exclusive responsibilities of the Federal government of Nigeria are in accordance with international practice including matters of national issues such as defense, foreign affairs, regulation and monetary policy (Khemani, 2001). The responsibility of service delivery in some public sectors such as education, health, agriculture and commerce are concurrently shared amongst the three tiers of government with respective expenditure assignments (Table 1).

Quality service delivery in the public sector is a product of good governance and the question of good governance has captured the attention of international institutions including the World Bank (Natufe, 2006). Good governance means respect for human rights (Iqbal, 2006) and the need to operate with transparency, due process, accountability, participation (Mansuri and Rao, 2013), efficiency and fairness (Iqbal, 2006). Civil service reform needs to be an integral part of good governance process if sustainable solutions to currently existing issues within the ambit of public services delivery are envisaged (Iqbal, 2006). The civil service in Nigeria has emerged over the years as the most critical and crucial part of national development and democratic stability. The civil service in Nigeria has undergone several reforms from the period of colonization through military era up to the fourth Republic which is the current democratic administration (Ogunyomi, 2009) which started in 1999. The reforms are aimed at enhancing professionalism, promoting general modernization, instituting checks and balances, aligning the civil service with the spirit of true federalism, and instituting efficiency and effectiveness to promote quality service delivery in the public sector (Ogunyomi, 2009).

In an effort to successfully implement the reform processes and improve service delivery in the Nigerian public sector, the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) was established on the 26th of September, 2003 (Olaopa, 2013) to coordinate and manage reform processes of the public service (marketingnigeria.org/downloads/stephenoronsaye.ppt) in order to create a clearing house for all stakeholders to receive information and guidance on all the reform programmes of

the government (Bureau of Public Service Reforms). According to the Federal Road Safety Corps official website, the Federal government of Nigeria also established the Service Compact (SERVICOM) on 21st March, 2004 to provide quality service to the citizens in a timely, fair, honest, effective and transparent manner. For result oriented and customer friendly public service delivery at the grass root level in Nigeria, there is devolution of a considerable number of reforms to the other lower tiers of government.

The Problem

Nigeria's efforts to implement reforms and decentralize the government system are aimed at improving service delivery (Okojie, 2009). The roles of the three tiers of government regarding public service delivery in Nigeria has been a subject of discussion but the State governments appear to be appreciably responsible for the actual delivery of basic public services (Khemani, 2001). Despite the efforts made by the government to improve public sector management through reforms, services provided by public institutions in the three tiers of government are poor because of lack of transparency in governance which often leads to wrong political, social and economic decisions (Iqbal, 2006). Stephen Oronsaye asserts that there are still visible gaps between policy intentions and implementation in Nigerian public sector (marketingnigeria.org/downloads/stephenoronsaye.ppt) despite the establishment of SERVICOM programme to address the obvious gaps in service delivery. Citizens and customers are not satisfied with public products (Awoyinfa, 2011) and the Nigerian public sector is characterized with poor service attitudes, lack of capability, inaccessibility of service providers and government detachment from realities.

The importance of Batho Pele in transforming public service delivery compelled an investigation into the implementation of the eight principles in Rivers State. The justification for using Rivers State as the case study is as a result of the researcher's familiarity with the State and because according to the official website of Rivers State Micro Finance Agency, the State is one of the largest economies in Nigeria. The findings seek to provide information that will be of benefit to public service providers in Rivers State and Nigeria in general because it will broaden their capabilities in improving the quantity and quality of public services duly and fairly. Public service users will also benefit from the findings of this study because it will empower them to use their voice and access to demand better services and induce service providers to become more accountable and transparent (Heerden and Steyn, 2012). The study's findings will also

serve as additional source of information to researchers and students especially in the areas of management, public administration, marketing, accounting and other fields of social sciences. The time scope of this study is delimited to Nigeria's fourth Republic (1999 to 2014) in adherence to the principle of currency in research (Kothari, 2004).

The Structure of Rivers State

Rivers State is one of the 36 States that makes up the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The State was created on May 27, 1967 by a military decree and by 1996, another State called Bayelsa was created and carved out of the present Rivers State (Rivers State House of Assembly, the 7th Assembly). According to Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, the surface area size of the State is approximately 11,077km² with a population of 5,198,716 (being the sixth populated State in Nigeria) as at 2006 preliminary census. The State is one of the richest States in Nigeria because it is endowed with enormous crude oil and natural gas resources. The State is an important commercial and industrial centre (Tradeinvest Nigeria) that accommodates a large number of multi-national firms particularly business related to the petroleum industry. The State is a home of many ethnic compositions with diverse culture. Some of the common ethnic groups are Okrika, Ibani, Kalabari, Ikwerre, Ogoni, Etche, Ogba, amongst others (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia).

There are three arms of government in Rivers State namely the executive, legislature and the judiciary. The executive arm of government is headed by the governor of the State and assisted by the deputy governor (all elected). Other executive council members made up of the commissioners, special advisers and the State secretary are appointed by the governor of the State. The commissioners are the heads of their respective ministries and the special advisers are assigned responsibilities in areas such as education, information, hotels and tourism etc (Rivers State House of Assembly, the 7th Assembly). The governor also appoints the heads of parastatals and State owned establishments with specific regulatory and administrative functions (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia) in areas such as education, information, micro-finance, agriculture, road maintenance and rehabilitation, environmental sanitation, pilgrims welfare, health and local government. The heads of parastatals are placed directly under the authority of the governor or the deputy governor.

The State House of Assembly is the legislative arm of the government and the Speaker of the House is the chairman in all the proceedings. The House has 32 members (Rivers State House of

Assembly, the 7th Assembly) drawn from the 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) contingent upon the number of constituencies in the respective LGA. The judiciary is the body that interprets the law in the State and it is headed by the State Chief Justice. Regarding career civil service structure, the State civil service is headed by the Head of Service (HOS) with each ministry headed by the Permanent Secretary (PS). While the commissioners are responsible for broad policies formulation and implementation, the permanent secretaries provide routine operations and continuity in the civil service (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia). The 23 LGAs are closer to the people of the State at the grass root level and the respective LGA is run by an elected executive chairman assisted by a vice chairman and elected councilors that perform legislative functions at that level. The different public officers (whether elected, appointed or career) in Rivers State are assigned responsibilities to efficiently and effectively enhance good governance and also provide quality service delivery to the citizens in key socio-economic areas.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the case study method by x-raying Rivers State as a single unit amongst the other States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The case study design involves extensive study of a social unit (White, 2000) or a single situation such as a person, family, institution, cultural group or even the entire community (Kothari, 2004). The case study method was used because it is useful in applying solutions to current problems (Sekaran, 2007) based on comprehensive analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their interrelations (Kothari, 2004). Purposive sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 500 because the population elements are heterogeneous and imagined (Asika, 1991). Consequently, the study deliberately selected the respondents based on the following criteria: they are all indigenes of Rivers State; they all have adequate (though not proportional) representation in each LGA of the State; and, they are all customers of public products.

The study was predominantly qualitative in nature using the questionnaire and personal interviews (Ndigi and Dorasamy, 2013) as the major instruments for data collection. Qualitative research is descriptive and non-numerical in nature and it is designed to tell the researcher how and why things happen as they do (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). The study used both structured and unstructured questions in the questionnaire design. The structured questions are designed in the form of two-way questions (Yes or No) while the unstructured questions are open-end questions. The structured questions make coding and analysis of response very easy to handle,

and the unstructured questions make it easy for probing the attitude and feelings of respondents since it enables them respond to the questions without restrictions (Asika, 1991). Finally, simple percentage and bar chart (Figure 1) was employed to ease the analysis and discussion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The responses through the research instruments and current related literature were used to analytically, logically and comprehensively (Igbara, 2012) discuss issues on the implementation of Batho Pele principles in relation to quality service delivery in Rivers State public sector.

Consultation: Consultation involves interacting with, listening to, and learning from the people you serve (Education and Training Unit). Meaningful consultation encourages greater public involvement and interest in local democracy, delivers stronger community leadership, plans services and policies based on the needs and views of people, identifies priorities and improve strategies, improves the take-up of those services, monitors the performance of services over time (Bristol City Council) and gives feedback to management to change the system or take the steps needed to improve the service given to the citizens or customers. Regarding the adequate employment of this principle as an instrument of quality service delivery in Rivers State, 47% of the respondents indicated that consultation is meaningfully and adequately employed by public service providers in Rivers State. The study identified town hall meetings, sectoral stakeholders forums, interactive sessions and summits with Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) organized by different Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as the major mechanisms of consultation used by public service providers in Rivers State. The study however observed that the consultation mechanisms employed by Rivers State public service providers lack comprehensiveness and representativeness (Independent Police Investigative Directorate) because the process of participation is political with an insignificant element of organic components.

Politically induced participation in consultation is promoted by politicians and their associates as against organic participation which is more consumer based since it is an engagement designed to identify and address issues of public concern and spurred by civic groups (Mansuri and Rao, 2013). Politicians in Rivers State are bad omen for good governance because they are self aggrandizers and self perpetuators (Jones, 2006) who use public institutions to satisfy their personal needs and not that of their citizens. For meaningful consultation process regarding

quality service delivery and good governance, it is necessary for more than one method of consultation mechanism to be applied (Independent Police Investigative Directorate) but the study observed that because of greed, corruption and the negative influence caused by the political elements in the State, the consultation processes are not adequate and the outcomes are rarely integrated into the State's plans and policies based on the needs and views of the citizens making the principle of consultation not meaningful.

Setting Service Standards: According to the Independent Police Investigative Directorate, the principle of setting service standard braces the need for benchmarks to constantly evaluate the extent to which citizens are satisfied with the service or products they receive from public service providers. This principle also plays a critical role in the development of service delivery improvement plans to ensure a better life for all citizens. Regarding this principle as an instrument of quality service delivery in Rivers State, 42% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that the State public sector sets service delivery standards. However, a significant number of interview responses revealed that setting service standards in Rivers State is impeded because of corruption and political considerations. This implies that there is a relationship between the principle of consultation and the principle of setting service standard because the questionnaire response rates regarding the two principles are equivalent and the prevalent factors hindering the implementation of the two principles in the State public sector are appreciably the same, corroborating with the reason why citizens should be consulted and be involved in the development of service delivery standards (Independent Police Investigative Directorate). Poor service delivery standard affects control process (Briggs, 2002) in the public sector because of difficulty in monitoring and measuring the actual performance at regular intervals (Njoku and Nwosu, 2010). Also, poor service delivery standards and high political considerations engender project abandonment and discontinuity in the State. The Adolescent Project (TAP), the State mobile hospital, the State shopping mall amongst others were identified as recent projects which were either discontinued and or abandoned in the State because of poor service standards and when the political initiators of the projects are no longer politically relevant causing waste of financial and non-financial resources.

Increasing Access: The principle of increasing access provides that all citizens have the right to equal access to public services to which they are entitled to (Pietersen, 2014). 38% of the questionnaire responses revealed that consumers have equal access to public services in Rivers

State. The study however identified bribery and nepotism as the major factors affecting equal access to public service in the State. A significant number of interview respondents revealed that the customers in many cases bribe officials of service providers in the State public sector before they are attended to. Also, the variety of ethnic groups in the State (Rivers State Micro Finance Agency) has induced favouritism in respect of equity access to public service delivery. This study observed that inaccessibility of equal and fair public service in the State affects different segments including essential areas like health, education, finance and information. This situation has resulted in a market shift in paradigm of consumer appeal (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001) from the public sector to the private sector because many customers are moving their loyalty and patronage from the public to the private sector especially in the areas of health, education and information.

Ensuring Courtesy: This principle requires public service providers to empathize with the citizens and treat them with consideration and respect (Pietersen, 2014). 54% of questionnaire respondents indicated that officials of public service providers in Rivers State treat clients with consideration and respect. However, personal interview responses revealed that a considerable number of public service officials in the State possess low standards of professional ethics regarding courtesy because of lack of education and as such consider themselves more as an ‘Oga’ meaning boss or person in charge (Babawilly’s Dictionary of Pidgin English Words and Phrases) than responding to the needs of the customer (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001). This implies that the customer is not a notion that has gained much attention (Awoyinfa, 2011) in the State public service delivery process. This scenario affects good governance in the State public sector because it negates the citizen and consumer based concepts of the ‘customer is the king’ (Ifedigbo, 2013), the public service is the ‘servant to the people’, and the ‘people first’ as spawned by Batho Pele (Pietersen, 2014). It was also observed in the study that officials of public service providers in State hold discretionary powers and discharge their duties with impunity without reverence for customers because of their links to political clout either directly or indirectly causing lack of commitment and dishonesty.

Providing information: Citizens should be given accurate, reliable, timely, relevant (Jones, George and Hill, 2000) and full (Pietersen, 2014) information about the public services they are entitled to receive. Regarding this principle, 68% of questionnaire respondents indicated that the Rivers State Government provides information about public services. The major means of

disseminating information about public service in the State are through oral, electronic and print media by the different Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). However, the State Ministry of Information and its parastatals perform generic function in respect of information dissemination and quality service delivery. Some of the parastatals in respect of information dissemination in the Ministry of Information are Rivers State Television (RSTV), Rivers State Broadcasting Corporation and Rivers News Paper Corporation (The Tide). It was also revealed that the State engages the services of private electronic and print media to boost information dissemination about service delivery even beyond the State to international level. The various means of consultation as identified previously are also utilized as avenue for the provision of information regarding service delivery in the State public sector. The various methods of information dissemination regarding public service delivery in the State must have contributed to the relatively high response rate. Some respondents also indicated that the law backing Freedom of Information (FoI) in the country has also influenced the response rate. Conversely, a significant number of interview respondents opined that information regarding public service delivery in Rivers State is bogus, misleading and unrealistic because it is more of an instrument of political campaign that detaches the truth from reality. Some respondents affirmed that it explains the reason why people outside the State adore the State public sector more than the inhabitants because they receive inaccurate information from the various public and private media concerning civic service delivery without acknowledging the reality on ground.

Openness and Transparency: Citizens should be told about the way government at all tiers operates, how well they utilizes the resources they consume, who is responsible, and how much they cost (Pietersen, 2014). According to GOV.UK website, openness and transparency saves money, strengthens peoples trust in government and encourages participation in decision making. 61% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that Rivers State public service providers are not open and transparent implying that the process of decision making and implementation in the State are hidden from public criticism because of the upsurge in corruption (Olagunju, 2012) and bureaucratic bottlenecks (Okotoni, 2001) that are associated with the public sector. The study observed that lack of transparency in the State public sector affects trust, accountability and civic participation which are key elements of good governance (Organization for Economic Co-operation Development).

Redress: Citizens should be offered explanation if the promised standard of service are not delivered and to have procedures in place to remedy the situation. Also, when complaints are made, citizens should receive a swift, sympathetic and positive response (Pietersen, 2014). Regarding redress in Rivers State public service, only 11% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that consumers of public products in the State are provided with platform for redress to customer complaints. Consumer violation in Nigeria is widespread and not limited to Rivers State with many consumers choosing to graciously accept their losses. In Nigeria, consumers complaints are provided with speedy redress through negotiation, mediations and conciliation by the Consumer Protection Council (CPC) Act, CAP.C25 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 cited in Ekiye (2013) but the Consumer Protection Council has performed way below expectation because of lack of education amongst the Nigerian consumers, weak institutional framework, corruption and ineptitude of law enforcement agencies and bureaucratic bottlenecks associated with public institutions (Ekeyi, 2013).

Value for Money: The principle of value for money (VfM) in the study's context posits that public service should economically and efficiently provide citizens the best possible value for money (Pietersen, 2014). Value for money is a major ingredient of good governance and has become more prominent on the development agenda in the public sector because it strikes the balance between the 'four Es' namely economy (cost minimization), efficiency (output maximization), effectiveness (full attainment of the intended result) and equity (reaching different group fairly) (Jackson, 2012). Only 8% of the questionnaire respondents accepted that the State public sector optimally combines the 'four Es' in the provision of public service to meet the customer's expectation. The study identified factors such as fraud, corruption, incompetency, lack of transparency and accountability amongst others as major factors affecting the optimal combination of the 'four Es' in the provision of public service to meet the customer's expectation in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Batho Pele is used to accelerate service delivery in the public sector and the principles are initiatives in getting public service providers to commit to continuous service delivery improvements and allow customers to hold public servants accountable for the type of services they deliver. Quality service delivery in the public sector is a key antecedent to good governance

and successful customer relations (Ghobadian, Speller and Jones, 1993 cited in Sibanda, 2012). The Rivers State public sector delivers services on the needs of the people through government institutions but result of poor performance of government institutions raised the question of the authenticity of the government's existence in the delivery of customer based services (Mathur and Puvvada, 2009). Consequently, the study x-rayed the implementation of Batho Pele principles in the Rivers State public sector. The study's findings revealed that Batho Pele principles are not adequately employed in the State public sector because apart from the principles of ensuring courtesy and the principle of providing information, all the response rates regarding the other principles are less than 50% implying that the State public sector lacks properly functioning service delivery system that enables the public institutions to deliver quality public services based on the needs of the citizens. Therefore for effective implementation of Batho Pele principles in Rivers State, public institutions should adopt consumer based approach with regard to service delivery, the consultation process relating to service delivery should be representative and comprehensive spurred by civic groups to make it meaningful, citizens should be consulted and be involved in setting service delivery standards in order to determine their crucial needs, officials of public service providers in the State should be trained and educated in order to be effective, responsive, and promote the principle of courtesy, the public should be credibly informed of public services with openness and transparency in order to invoke people's trust in governance, the State public sector should provide an institutional framework and a good platform for customers complaints and redress when their rights are violated. Finally, the State public sector should optimally combine economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the delivery of public services. These recommendations are attainable if the public service providers de-emphasize political considerations in favour of citizens centered engagements designed to address issues of public concern. The public sector in the State should also establish a pragmatic political and legal framework to curb corruption, favouritism and nepotism.

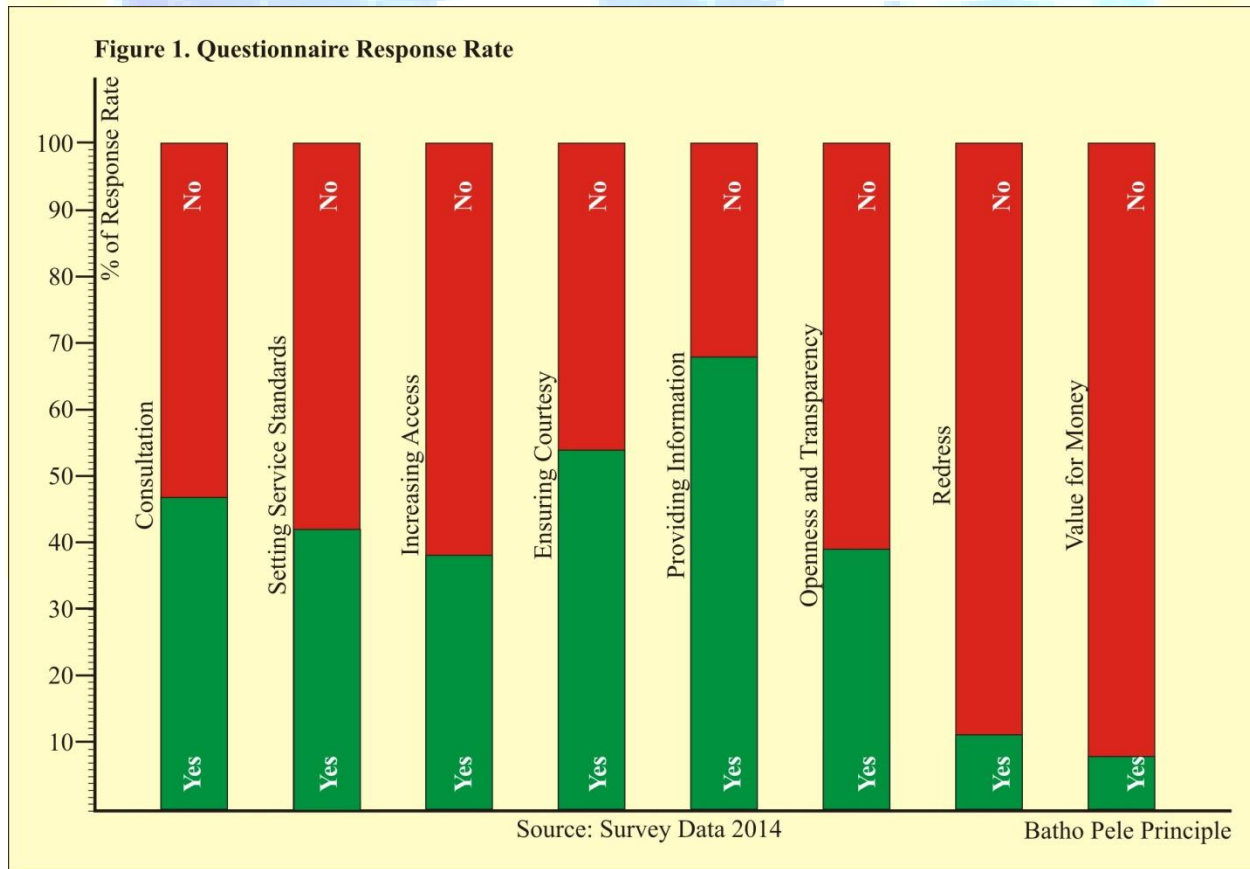
Table 1

Distribution of Nigerian development responsibilities among the three tiers of Governments

Level of Government	Development functions (expenditure and responsibilities)
Federal only	Defence
	Foreign affairs
	International trade including export marking
	Currency, banking, borrowing, exchange control
	Use of water resources
	Shipping, Federal trunk roads
	Elections
	Aviation, railways, postal services
	Police and other security services
	Regulation of labour, inter-State commerce, telecommunications, immigration
	Mines and minerals, nuclear energy, citizenship and naturalization rights
	Social security, insurance, national statistical system (census births, deaths, etc)
	Guidelines and basis for minimum education
	Business registration
Price control	
Federal-State (shared)	Health, social welfare
	Education (post primary/technology)
	Culture
	Antiquities
	Monuments, archives
	Statistics, stamp duties
	Commerce, industry
	Electricity (generation, transmission, distribution)

	Research surveys
State only	Residual power (that is, subject neither assigned to Federal nor Local Government level)
Local Government	Economic planning and development
	Health services
	Land use
	Control and regulation of advertisements, pets, small businesses
	Markets, public conveniences
	Social welfare, sewage and refuse disposal, registration of births, death, marriages
	Primary, adult and vocational education
	Development of agriculture and natural resources

Source: Nigerian Constitution cited in <http://www.aiaenigeria.org/publications/becanswp3.pdf>



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