

“POCKETS OF EFFECTIVENESS” IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC SERVICE AND LESSONS FOR ACCELERATING NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

JOE ABAH

It is well established that even in countries that have poor governance and weak public sectors, exceptional, well-functioning government and government-supported agencies do exist. – David K. Leonard (2008)

You need to do ten times what is ordinary in this environment to get anything done. You need to be a little crazy. – Nuhu Ribadu.

1.0 Introduction

I start this lecture by paying tribute to the convener of the Iju Public Affairs Forum, Professor Ladipo Adamolekun. Many would ask what the purpose of these lectures is. Why does an accomplished, world-class intellectual spend his retirement funds on organising public discourses on topical societal issues? What does he really hope to achieve and why does it attract such an audience? Is it simply for the purpose of engaging in the favourite Nigerian pastime: complaining about the Nigerian project, and the cathartic release that comes from it? I have reflected on these questions myself and am convinced that the Forum has a deeper purpose and aim. The dearth of serious thought in today’s Nigeria is a matter of great concern to many and can be blamed for shaping (or misshaping) Nigeria’s destiny. We have developed a penchant for acting without thinking and are fast creating a nation where resources often take primacy over resourcefulness. I am reminded of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s reflections on the link between thought and destiny: “Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny”. If all that these lectures are able to achieve is to sow thoughts, precipitate some action, encourage good habits, form upright character, and shape the destiny of those that attend or read the papers, it would have been a worthwhile national service of tremendous value that Professor Adamolekun has contributed to shaping the destiny our country. This is more so, given the calibre, and range, of people that attend these lectures.

I am deeply honoured that Professor Adamolekun has chosen to ask me to think about this very interesting topic: “Pockets of Effectiveness” in Nigerian Public Service and Lessons for Accelerating National Development. In order to properly address the topic, it is pertinent to consider a number of questions: What are “Pockets of Effectiveness”? How are they formed and what are their characteristics? Do they exist in Nigeria? If so, how do they manage to survive the “Nigerian Factor”? What lessons can we learn from them? Can these lessons help to accelerate national development? It is my reflection on this topic (and previous topics of the Iju Public Affairs Forum series) that has convinced me, without any doubt, of the deeper purpose of the Forum. With regards to the topic that I have been asked to reflect on, it is a search for answers to a current, knotty and interesting development conundrum: will there always be pockets of good performance or can they trigger ‘organic diffusion’ and raise performance across the board? This is rather different from the catharsis that comes from setting out how bad things have become, and the comforting assertion that things were so much better in days of yore. It is also consistent with the main thrust of the Iju Public Affairs

Form series – the search for answers. The answers I offer to the questions above will form the basis of my paper. I will attempt a synthesis of known academic literature on the “Pockets of Effectiveness” phenomenon, and my own research on the subject, with the practical insights that I have gained as a development practitioner in more than two decades of attempting public service reforms and contributing to national development in Nigeria and elsewhere.

2.0 The Phenomenon of “Pockets of Effectiveness” in Weak Governance States

Effectiveness can simply be defined as the capability of producing a desired result. In the context of the public service, an organisation is said to be effective when it is able to deliver the services that it was primarily designed to deliver. Therefore, an effective postal service, for instance, is one that is able to deliver letters within an agreed timeframe, predictably and securely. The effectiveness of such an organisation is to be distinguished from Economy which is delivering the service at the lowest cost, or Efficiency which is the ratio of input costs to outputs. Effectiveness simply looks at whether or not the organisation is doing the job that it was created to do.

Public service organisations can simply be defined as publicly-owned organisations that receive public funds from government budget allocations. They include the civil service, agencies and parastatals, the wider public service (such as the military), and local authorities.

In many developing countries, public service organisations deliver little or no services to citizens. The functions of ministries are unclear and successive governments set up parallel organisations to perform normal bureaucratic functions. Finely-honed toll gates are designed to ensure that rents are extracted from the public if they are to receive any service whatsoever. This often gives the impression that the public service has been redesigned to serve the public servant, rather than the public. However, in virtually every country, there are public organisations that manage to deliver on their *raison d'être*, despite operating in difficult environments. In some cases, these so called “pockets of effectiveness” perform well for some time and then fade away, others are deliberately and systematically weakened, and yet others flicker into life only when a good leader is in place (Leonard, 2008). Some are able to survive changes in government, policy reversals, internal organisational upheavals, intimidation by the elite, dwindling budgets and changes in leadership, and still manage to deliver on their mandates. Given various institutional theories (Rational Choice, Historical Institutionalism and Sociological Institutionalism) this should not be possible. The inbuilt dysfunction of the operating environment should constantly crush such organisations, but some of them refuse to be crushed. They continue to fulfil their mandates and deliver decent public services to citizens, against all odds. It is this interesting phenomenon that we want to discuss, to see whether any lessons can be learnt from such organisations for the acceleration of national development.

How do we know that an organisation is effective? The easiest way is often to go to the mandate of the organisation. It is often difficult to assess the effectiveness of ministries because there is often no consolidated mandate describing, in measurable ways, what they are expected to deliver. In the case of agencies however, mandates are often set out in the

laws establishing the agency and the functions that it is expected to perform are clearly spelt out. It is for this reason that most of the literature on “pockets of effectiveness” (POEs) tend to focus on agencies, rather than ministries or their departments.

3. Formation Process and Characteristics of Pockets of Effectiveness

Governments create agencies for various reasons. Some agencies are created to focus on certain functions of a technical nature that may not properly be delivered through the generalist structure and personnel of the mainstream civil service. Therefore, governments could, for instance, hive off a body of civil engineers to create a road maintenance agency or its pharmacists to create a food and drug administration and control agency. However, those that go on to become POEs are often created additionally as a result of some reform effort or as a result of dissatisfaction with the way that a required function is delivered by mainstream ministries and departments.

It is usual for a POE's to have a clear mandate and a list of functions that the government expects it to deliver, enshrined in its establishing act or law. The establishing legislation will often give it specific powers to enforce its mandate and deliver its functions. Quite often, the government will seek a certain type of 'atypical' leader to run the newly-created body. This may be a charismatic leader who is not afraid to take risks and push known boundaries. Governments will often create a clear line in its budget that gives the agency the financial resources that it needs to operate effectively. Budgetary provision will often be more generous than those previously provided for the delivery of the function when it formed part of normal bureaucratic functions. The agencies will often have a freer hand than normal to recruit the personnel that it needs (without a narrow interpretation of, say, the Federal Character principle), rather than having to rely on the arbitrary posting of staff from the mainstream civil service. Where staff is sourced from the mainstream, it is often done in a deliberate and selective, rather than representative, way. Where they are sourced from outside the mainstream, the sourcing is often done in an open and transparent way. There is usually some form of performance management system that ensures a focus on organisational objectives; and pay and conditions of service are often more generous than those that obtain in the mainstream civil service. In many cases, the legislation establishing the agency will give it the freedom to set its own remuneration structure, benchmarked against similar organisations in the public and private sectors. There will often be provision for the agency to obtain the technical capacity that it needs to deliver its functions, both in terms of personnel and equipment. Because they will often be created as a result of a reform effort or a general dissatisfaction with the way the functions have been delivered by the mainstream civil service, the agencies are likely to enjoy public support at inception, and politicians will provide a high level of support to protect the agency from 'infant mortality'. The newly-created agency will often invest a lot of effort in informing the public that it is no longer 'business as usual', and will strive to create an 'elite organisation' image, including taking deliberate, and sometimes drastic, steps to eschew corruption in its operations.

The charismatic leader that commences the drive for effectiveness tends to be a forceful, knowledgeable, incorruptible and courageous leader who is not risk-averse or afraid of pushing the boundaries to ensure that the agency is established in the public consciousness.

They will often adopt a 'big-bang' approach that tests the mettle of government by going after the elite in society to show that 'no one is above the law'.

Politicians react in different ways to this discomfort. They sometimes use the agency as a foil to achieve an altruistic purpose, regardless of what the elite feel, or will be forced to create an alternative avenue for patronage that does not damage society in quite the same way as the status quo. As an example, an outcry from the public against the prevalence of fake and substandard pharmaceuticals could force government to create a strong and effective food and drug agency which destroys the business of certain members of the elite. Corrupt and prebendal governments may then create a new avenue for patronage for those members of the elite that have been disadvantaged by the agency's actions. Sometimes, governments create the agency to silence public outcry by pretending that it is doing something. Where this is the case, it merely buys the government some time and makes it possible for it to blame any ineffectiveness on the agency, being that government has 'done all it can'. While doing this, governments may accidentally appoint a serious and committed leader for the agency, who may make it to realise that it may have unwittingly given the agency more powers than it initially intended. Such a committed leader will use these powers to force government to demonstrate its own commitment to the agency's objectives. Quite often, the discomfort that this creates forces concessions out of even a non-reforming government, while it seeks new ways to curtail the actions of the agency.

The close link between POEs and top-level government makes them susceptible to changes in administration. In many cases, effective agencies under one administration fade away and die once there is a change in administration. Others continue to exist but are severely weakened (often by the removal or 'promotion' of the charismatic leader). However, yet others have sufficiently institutionalised their modus operandi, and entrenched the support of the public, that they are able to withstand sustained attack from a non-reforming new administration and continue to deliver effective services to the public. The sustainability of such agencies is more likely where they are able to survive at least two changes in government.

Some authors have argued that POEs need a charismatic fearless leader at the start who is willing to push legal and regulatory boundaries to the limit while they enjoy public and political support. They further argue that, at a point in the development of the organisation, the charismatic leader needs to give way to a measured and more methodical leader who will entrench good practices and procedures, reduce arbitrariness and settle the organisation down into one whose effectiveness is not dependent solely on the sheer force of character of its leader.

While the measure of effectiveness remains constant, the route to that effectiveness can sometimes vary during the lifetime of a POE. An effective POE can sometimes focus on collecting taxes from big business (rather than focusing on a country's large informal sector, or vice versa) or on tackling bureaucratic corruption (rather than political corruption, or vice versa). Although a shift in emphasis or political direction could affect public perception about the effectiveness of the agency, a dispassionate assessment of the agency against its mandate and functions would often show that an effective POE generally continues to deliver its mandate and prioritise public interest over personal considerations. In any case,

the agency is likely to be performing in a way that is better than the baseline performance for the function at the time that the agency was established.

There is sharp divergence in the academic literature about how POEs come to exist and the qualities that they need to survive the vagaries of the political environment. Most authors and commentators default almost automatically to leadership, without distinguishing between organisational and political leadership and the respective impacts of each on the performance of the agency. Some would point to a transparent recruitment process and the fact that employees in those agencies receive higher remuneration than those in other parts of the public service, thereby giving them more motivation to perform well. Others would ascribe success to good management and the existence of robust performance management systems, and yet others would attribute it to clever manipulation of the media and public opinion.

I would argue that all of these internal factors are important but that it is when they converge with external institutional factors to create pressure on the government to act in a different way or on an organisation to perform better; and the organisation is able to obtain the power to overcome adverse anti-reform pressure; and the imperative to deliver (and the benefits of that altered state of affairs) outweighs the benefits of maintaining the status quo, that an enduring POE can be formed and sustained.

4. Do Pockets of Effectiveness exist in Nigeria?

Although we are often tempted to believe that everything is different in Nigeria, Nigeria is inescapably part of a global community. It is unlikely, therefore, that the country is so different from others that it can escape all global phenomena such as climate change and the global financial crises. Physical and geographic characteristics may mean that the country does not suffer earthquakes and tsunamis and a cash-based economy could mean that the country is able to avoid the worst consequences of a global financial meltdown occasioned by irresponsible lending, weak credit management, and a weak financial regulatory regime. However, while it is tempting to believe that nothing works in Nigeria, some things actually do. Measured dispassionately against clearly articulated mandates and functions (rather than just public perception), and known performance indicators used worldwide, some Nigerian agencies are indeed pockets of effectiveness.

I am part of a small group of researchers studying this phenomenon in the Nigerian context, and our hope is that our research on POEs may be able to yield lessons for raising public sector performance across the board and possibly thereby accelerate national development. The German development agency Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) commenced a POE study in Nigeria in 2009, at exactly the same time that I commenced my own research into the topic. I suspect that my own research and that of FES was probably the first time an attempt had been made to study the phenomenon in-depth in Nigeria. The FES study identified 7 agencies as potential POEs: Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC); National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP); Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS); Lagos State Ministry of Environment; Punch Newspaper, and Fahimta Microfinance Bank in Kaduna.

Unfortunately, the study was never finished and the conclusions as to which, if any, of these organisations are POEs were never fully drawn. However, the erstwhile FES Country Director, Michael Roll, who commissioned the study, has since published an article naming NAFDAC and NAPTIP as pockets of effectiveness in Nigeria¹ and Professor Adele Jinadu has written a paper about the Punch as a POE². The FES study had, in my opinion, serious methodological issues including a questionable method of case selection, the inability to identify the indices for measuring effectiveness, and an eclectic mix of public and private organisations and agencies and ministries all operating within different institutional contexts, with different funding arrangements and guided by different rules. This is probably one of the factors responsible for the study being inchoate. The non-selection of the other organisations by Roll or Jinadu is not a statement about the status of those organisations as POEs or otherwise. In some cases, the data with which to undertake the case study was simply not available to the researchers and, in other cases, it was probably not clear to the researchers what was being looked for and how they would know a POE if they saw one.

My own study adopted a rigorous case selection methodology starting with a review of public perception of the effectiveness of 16 Nigerian agencies compiled by NOI Polls, under the aegis of the internationally-renowned Gallup Polls. I next confirmed the actual performance of organisations against their mandates and internationally-recognised performance indicators and measures of effectiveness for similar agencies worldwide. Following this assessment, NAFDAC, EFCC and FIRS emerged as three of the most effective agencies in Nigeria, measured against their mandates and internationally-accepted performance indicators. In order to understand why these agencies perform better than their peers, I paired them with similar organisations performing similar functions in the same institutional environment so that the differences between them could emerge. I compared EFCC with the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), NAFDAC with the Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON) and FIRS with the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS). A review of their functions, as set out by their enabling laws will confirm the similarities in mandates. The main purpose of both EFCC and ICPC is to fight corruption; that of NAFDAC and SON to regulate products; and that of FIRS and NCS to collect revenue. My finding is that NAFDAC, EFCC and FIRS are undoubtedly POEs and that they share certain characteristics in their formation (or reform), organisational culture and approach to seeking effectiveness. Interestingly, their comparator organisations that do not fulfil their potentials also shared a number of similar characteristics that help to explain their limited effectiveness. My cross-case analysis of the lessons from my study of all six organisations, as well as a synthesis of the findings of others in other countries, is the subject of the next section.

¹ Roll, M., (2011), *The State that Works: "Pockets of Effectiveness as a Perspective on Stateness in Developing Countries*, *Working Papers No. 128*, Johannes Gutenberg Universitat, Mainz.

² Jinadu, A., Akinyemi, R. And Abutudu, M, (2009), *The Punch: The Political Media and the Public Interest*. Paper submitted to the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, Maastricht University on 6 June, 2011.

5. Lessons from Pockets of Effectiveness

David Leonard developed a propositional inventory of the state of the literature in 2008. The inventory identified more than 60 propositions about why some agencies are able to be effective in weak governance states. Most insights on the POE phenomenon tend to be tautological, static in time and oblivious of the political, historical and sociological context in which the organisation is performing. The literature on the topic is, therefore, a collection of incoherent and often competing hypotheses that can be true of any organisation, not just POEs. Therefore, there are almost always findings that leadership matters, good management is important, funding is a key input and it is important to get good personnel. These are nothing new and do not take us much further forward. The really interesting question is: How do these agencies manage to be effective in environments where the incentives to perform well are perverse? It is pertinent to examine this question in the context of the most popular arguments in the literature, relating to Leadership, Management, Technical Capacity, Public Support and Institutions (the way things are done in a society).

Leadership

Leadership matters, of course. It matters to any organisation (public, private or non-profit), and matters both at the political and organisational levels. I argue that for POEs, one of the main triggers for effectiveness is the combination of an 'activist' political leader and an 'activist' organisational leader. President Obasanjo was one of the founders of Transparency International in the interregnum between his tenures as military head of state and democratic president. He was widely known as an anticorruption activist, even before he became president. In my interview with him in October 2011, he drew an anticorruption thread through EFCC, NAFDAC and FIRs in response to my question about why he chose to focus his reform efforts on only a few organisations. The three agencies appealed to his anticorruption sentiments, which was the reason why the first bill that he sent to the National Assembly upon becoming President was the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act of 2000 that established ICPC (a bill that he said that he wrote in his own hand). The limited effectiveness of ICPC, compared to EFCC, therefore questions the intuitive proposition that many Nigerians first put forward: that all you need is political will. At the organisational level, Nuhu Ribadu had vowed to dedicate his life to the fight against corruption, long before he became EFCC Chairman, the day he realised that the generator at Police Headquarters did not work as a result of a lack of diesel. He knew that the money for diesel had been provided and had almost certainly been stolen.

I argue that it was the convergence of these two 'activists', in addition to some other factors, that gave EFCC the start that it had. This convergence was absent in ICPC during Obasanjo's time, and his successors would be difficult to describe as anticorruption activists. Opinion is divided about the anticorruption credentials of Ribadu's successor. What is clear is that, at some point, she lost the support of the public and eventually the support of President Jonathan. What is not so apparent to most people is that EFCC continued to be effective under her tenure when assessed against its mandate (rather than public perception) and measured against the two common performance indicators for anticorruption bodies worldwide: Prosecution to Conviction Rate and Asset Recovery Rate. As at 2012, EFCC had obtained 500 convictions out of 700 prosecutions (a success rate of 71%) and

had recovered \$11 billion. ICPC, on the other hand, had only secured 35 convictions out of 255 prosecutions (a success rate of just 14%) and had recovered only \$100 million.

The story of NAFDAC is very similar. Dora Akunyili came to Obasanjo's attention when she demonstrated uncommon honesty by returning unused funds that she had been advanced for medical treatment abroad. More interestingly, she is a pharmacist who had lost her blood sister to the effects of fake and substandard insulin, years before she had even heard about NAFDAC. While at NAFDAC, she was also sufficiently transparent to sack her own brother-in-law for corrupt practices, and eschewed ethnic sentiments to burn down the notorious Onitsha Headbridge fake drugs open market, despite being an Igbo woman from Anambra State. Her activism during her tenure as Director General of NAFDAC was clear for all to see. In terms of performance, the prevalence rate of fake and substandard drugs fell from 41% in 2002 to 10% in 2011. Conversely, the prevalence rate of fake and substandard goods (regulated by SON) is actually increasing. 60-80% of all goods sold in Nigeria are estimated to be counterfeit and 75% of textiles sold in Nigeria are counterfeit. The Director General of SON himself admitted, in an interview with me in October 2011, that 95% of the light bulbs in the Nigerian market are fake and that 90% of the contents of seized containers in the nation's seaports contain fake and adulterated goods.

Ifeueko Omoigui-Okauru was altogether a different kind of activist. While she oversaw what has been described by the press as a 'silent revolution' in FIRS, she did not adopt the big-bang, all-action, attention-grabbing style of Ribadu and Akunyili. However, this did not make her any less of an activist, in her own way. She took the Independent National Electoral Commission to court for refusing to make the possession of a valid tax clearance a precondition for seeking electoral office. She also oversaw the sealing up of various organisations for tax evasion, including the high-profile Federal Capital Development Authority and companies owned by major funders of the ruling party and friends of successive Presidents. While FIRS has consistently exceeded its revenue targets in the 8 years to 2011, the performance of NCS has been weak.

An interesting debate in the leadership literature is whether good leaders are born that way or can be made. I am persuaded by John Stuart Mills' argument that human actions are

[...] never (except in some cases of mania) ruled by any one motive with such absolute sway that there is no room for the influence of any other. The causes, therefore, on which action depends are never uncontrollable, and any given effect is only necessary provided the causes tending to produce it are not controlled (Mills, 1987, p.25).

I therefore believe that a leader can *choose* to be a good leader, regardless of whether or not he or she was born that way and acquire the skills needed to lead effectively.

Many authors argue that after the breathlessness of leaders like Ribadu and Akunyili, you need leaders in those organisations who can entrench the organisational culture that they have developed into fair and balanced systems and processes. Such less-flamboyant leaders often form an impression of reduced effectiveness in the minds of the public, but tests of effectiveness do not rely on perception (unless of course the agency was created

with the mandate of influencing public opinion). They rely on delivery against mandates and key performance indicators.

Management

By Management, I mean the totality of attributes needed to run an organisation. These include funding, recruitment processes, performance management, and decent pay and conditions of service. Unsurprisingly, these are all important for POEs, just as they are important to other organisations. Agencies in Nigeria operate the same public service rules, are headquartered in the capital city, are subject to the same funding and budget provision processes, mostly use the Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (APER) system and are subject to pay rates set by the National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission. However, POEs are able to mobilise and secure more funding, recruit capable staff on merit (correctly using the Federal Character Principle, rather than its misconstrued interpretation), manage and reward performance in a fair and transparent manner, and can often find ways to incentivise their staff and get them the best deal possible within the strictures imposed by the Salaries and Wages Commission. Therefore, it is HOW they are managed that sets POEs apart, not the management rules that exist, since they apply to everyone. The difference seems to be that the POEs push the rules to their very limit in their quest for effectiveness.

There is a 'chicken and egg' argument in the literature about whether POEs are able to secure additional funding and privileges because they have demonstrated effectiveness to their political masters, on the one hand, and whether they manage to become POEs because they are given additional resources and privileges, on the other hand. Because these agencies often come about as a result of disaffection with the status quo, they are often created with strong powers and given some take-off leverage. However, if they then fail to perform, they will quickly lose this preferential funding and leverage, and reforming governments will direct efforts and investment at other agencies (or create new ones) that have the potential to deliver. This is precisely what has happened to ICPC and SON. Underperforming agencies are usually provided with just enough resources to keep them ticking over, until an opportunity for change presents itself.

Technical Capacity

POEs tend to focus on the technical capacity required to deliver their mandates effectively. A tax administrator needs training on tax, an anticorruption officer needs training on investigation, detection and prosecution, and a regulator needs the skills to be able to test products for conformity. While generic training adds value, there is a need to focus first on building the core competencies required to deliver organisational goals. Without the core skills, the employee is akin to a carpenter who can describe a hammer but is unable to use one. The ability to use a hammer cannot be gained through generic training on strategy development, gained from attending an executive management course at a prestigious university. This is what the POEs do very well. While ineffective organisations consider capacity development as an opportunity to claim generous duty tour allowances to supplement wages, POEs consider it as the key ingredient for success.

Another aspect of technical capacity is the investment in technology. As at October 2011, SON did not have a single functioning laboratory with which to test products for conformity. NAFDAC, on the other hand, has moved beyond just relying on its many world-class laboratories to develop mobile hand-held technology (Truscan) that can verify the genuineness of any drug instantly and at any location. The reliance on advanced computer technology is common among POEs, and a lack of reliance on technology common among ineffective organisations. As an example, EFCC has the Eagle Claw software that identifies fraudulent emails, monitors them and shuts down their sites. It also uses advanced computer software in its investigation and case management system. ICPC, on the other hand, still does everything manually. As at June 2011, many pages of the ICPC website had not been updated since 2008 and I have been unable to access the site in three attempts between 15 June 2011 and 3 March 2013.

Public Support

Most POEs make a deliberate effort to secure public support. This public support can help to insulate an organisation from adverse political pressure and the 'Nigerian Factor'. It can also improve an organisation's chances of mobilising required resources and create a sense of pride in its officials. One suspects that an officer would feel a greater sense of pride in saying that she works at EFCC, rather than ICPC, or at NAFDAC, rather than SON.

However, POEs have sometimes been accused of manipulating the media to create a sense of effectiveness. I believe that the media, particularly in Nigeria, is sufficiently sophisticated to be able to discern when something is working and when it is not. While they publish paid rhetoric and propaganda, editorials and articles would often puncture these and paint a balanced picture of the organisation. Also, an assessment of effectiveness based on mandates and key performance indicators will often sift the wheat from the chaff.

Nevertheless, the attitude of the public to the purpose that an organisation is trying to fulfil can be important. While many members of the public would be completely intolerant of fake drugs (and would support the efforts of NAFDAC), many would see the prevalence of fake designer goods as a victimless crime (and may view any efforts by SON as an attack on the poor). Some would even make a deliberate choice to buy substandard light bulbs or tyres, because they simply cannot afford good quality ones. In many cases, the traders will actually ask consumers what quality they are prepared to pay for: 'China' or 'Original'? However, it would not be correct to blame the ineffectiveness of an organisation simply on negative public attitudes to its mandate. If this sort of public support was to be the sole determining factor, ICPC would perform just as well as EFCC, since they are both in the anticorruption field. Also, FIRS would be completely unsuccessful since no one likes paying taxes, particularly where the government is seen as not fulfilling its own part of the social contract.

External Institutional Factors

Institutional factor external to the organisational environment will often have a direct bearing on the ability of the organisation to perform. Therefore, pressure from the international community, the support of legislators and donors, pressure from citizens for a change to the status quo, the strengthening of existing legislation and the enactment of new ones, and a

clear expectation by the political class of what is required will influence the internal dynamics of an organisation and affect its effectiveness. I deem this brief discussion of external factors sufficient for our present purposes, as there is a mountain of literature on the subject. The important thing is that they need to converge with the internal factors discussed in previous sections if an organisation is to become or remain a POE. For brevity, I will highlight the case of EFCC as an example of this convergence between internal and external factors. Global pressure created by the international efforts against money laundering, combined with Nigeria's debt forgiveness drive at a time when it was classed as a non-cooperating country in the fight against money laundering, and the stigma that Nigerian businesses and citizens faced from foreign countries, could have forced any government to act. Where these conditions converge with the favourable internal conditions discussed above, a POE like EFCC is more likely to emerge.

Corruption as a Binding Constraint

It is pertinent to focus on binding constraints – those things that, no matter what is done, unless they are addressed, valiant efforts will come to nought. One such binding constraint is corruption. Corruption lies at the heart of the underperformance of public sector organisations in many developing countries. According to Adamolekun (2011), corruption reduces government revenue, lowers incentives to private investment, distorts the composition of government expenditure, undermines the legitimacy and credibility of the state and erodes the moral fabric of society. If there is one thing that can impede the emergence of POEs and their continued existence, it is corruption. Tackle corruption and there is a much better chance of engendering effective public organisations.

Summary

Leadership matters both at the political and organisational levels. So do funding, performance management, decent pay and conditions of service, high technical capacity, public support and a favourable institutional environment. However, although these conditions are necessary, they are each, in themselves, insufficient to create and sustain POEs. POEs are created and sustained where there is a convergence of all these factors. Nuhu Ribadu puts his finger right on it when he says:

The combination of internal and external factors that converged at the right time to create an unprecedented momentum to root out fraud and corruption in Nigeria could be difficult to replicate. Yet some lessons can be drawn from both the outside world, as well as Nigeria itself (Ribadu, 2010, p.134).

In her book, *Reforming the Unreformable*, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala lists 10 lessons for successful reforms:

- The need for a vision and a well-thought-out implementation strategy
- Communication
- A focus on results and the support of the public
- The need for a team of like-minded individuals to drive the reforms
- Political will at the highest level

- Not attempting to reform on too many fronts
- The politics and political economy of reforms
- External restraints and allies
- Managing success

I believe that the discussions in the preceding section confirm that most POE's adopt these lessons and share these characteristics. However, some are within the control of the POE while others are not. A POE could secure political will at the highest level by first demonstrating its effectiveness. Where there is strong public support, even a government that is a reluctant reformer will quickly latch on to the mood of the moment and take the political credit for success. However, where the political will is totally lacking (e.g. where a President asks an anticorruption agency to stop focusing on political corruption), there is very little that the POE can do to obtain that political will.

There is a clear and urgent need to tackle the menace of corruption, a binding constraint to organisational effectiveness. Alas, despite all EFCC's efforts, corruption is still with us, and some would argue that, in Nigerian parlance, it has even 'moved to the next level' in the last 5 years since Ribadu was forced out. Transparency International ratings, based on perceptions, will certainly appear to back this up. Can the lessons from POEs actually contribute to accelerating national development? Or will we forever have islands of effectiveness in a sea of ineffectiveness, especially as Okonjo-Iweala (who should know, having led the Obasanjo reforms) counsels against opening up too many fronts in the reform effort? Can POEs trigger improvements across the board, or are they so unique and idiosyncratic that the phenomenon must always remain? These are the questions that we will next consider.

6.0 Prospects for Accelerating National Development

As we introduce the concept of Development, definitions are again important. What is development? Will it always happen and can it really be accelerated? There is no universally-accepted definition of the word 'development', since it has so many facets. Development can simply be defined as learning from the past in order to shape the future. There can, therefore, appear to be a certain inevitability about it. However, many societies fail to learn lessons from past experiences and to use those lessons to improve their future. Therefore, inefficient institutions and organisations persist. Using this definition of Development, accelerating the process of development would simply mean learning lessons more effectively and applying those lessons with greater urgency to shaping the country's future. Can POEs help with this? POEs tend to cut through the historical, sociological and political constraints to serve the public good, against all odds. They certainly offer lessons for accelerating national development that are worthy of consideration.

The Nobel-Prize-winning economist, Amartya Sen characterises Development as the removal of various types of restraints that leave people with little choice and little opportunity for maximising their potential. Therefore, Development is freedom and people in developed countries have more of it than those in underdeveloped ones. Using this concept then, the acceleration of national development could be understood as hastening the removal of the various restraints that constrain us from maximising our potential as a country. Can lessons

from POEs help in this regard? It seems to me that the lessons that we have discussed in previous sections certainly bring certain constraints to national development into sharp focus. Lessons from POEs suggest the following, *inter alia*, for accelerating national development:

1. The election of political leaders should be based on a search for leaders that are passionate about something, and not merely on the basis of primordial or religious sentiments.
2. There is a need to distinguish between agencies that are mission-critical to national development and those that exist simply to extend the patronage system – some agencies are ‘more equal’ than others.
3. Recruitment into key positions should be based solely on merit. Just as one would not apply ‘Federal Character’ (in the way that it has been misinterpreted) to our first-eleven footballers, it should not be applied to our first-eleven technocrats.
4. Our regulatory and legislative environment will be strengthened if we constantly test our rules and laws and challenge usual misconceptions. For instance, the ‘Federal Character’ principle should not be misinterpreted as sacrificing merit at the altar of representation and enthroning mediocrity.
5. It is important to embrace modern technology and improve the technical capacity of various organisations to deliver their mandates. Quite often, organisations that complain of not having enough money to buy computers spend double the amount they need to do so on endless unproductive trips to foreign countries “to see how they do things over there.”
6. It is important to involve the people in any change effort, particularly where they are expected to make sacrifices or accept new conditions.
7. Nigeria is part of a global community. It should not bury its head in the sand and pretend that it is immune from global events. Climate change is real (as the recent flooding of several parts of the country in 2012 would attest), as is HIV/AIDS and insurgency.
8. Our history, culture and the ‘Nigerian Factor’ matter, but we need not be slaves to them. They can be overcome.
9. There is a need to maintain an anticorruption focus in all that we do, if we are to succeed as a nation, and to constantly draw the link between crime and punishment. Most developed countries are built on freedom to maximise potential, the equality of opportunity (rather than ‘Federal Character’) and visible sanctions for misdeeds. If development is freedom from constraints, and corruption is a binding constraint, corruption must be tackled if development is to be accelerated.
10. Although discreet initiatives are important, they can only transcend to factors that accelerate national development when they converge with other relevant factors. Therefore, it is not correct that reform efforts should be limited only to certain ‘fronts’. The fewer the reform initiatives undertaken, the greater the chance that they will be swallowed up by the status quo. This is not to suggest that reformers should spread themselves so thin that their efforts lose any effectiveness. Instead, it is a call for a reform movement that is greater than the sum of its parts.

7. Conclusion

POE's represent a good news story: that, even in the midst of the most challenging adversity, the human spirit can prevail. The notion that nothing can work in Nigeria is erroneous. The hopeless resignation to the 'Nigerian Factor' and the feeling that we are unable to shape our destiny for the better are misplaced. As John Stuart Mills points out, although you can predict action through knowledge of character and antecedents, you cannot, thereby, rule out free will and believe that causation is invariable and will follow an unconditional sequence. The fact that many aspects of Nigeria has not worked in the past does not mean that they never will, or that some parts have not already worked.

So, will Pockets of Effectiveness trigger 'organic diffusion' and raise effectiveness across the board? Only in limited ways, by similar organisations learning from POEs. But can the lessons from POEs help to accelerate national development? Absolutely!

I started this lecture by drawing a link between thought and destiny. I will also end on the same note. Like Machiavelli, I believe that destiny is like a violent river. "She shows her potency where there is no well-regulated power to resist her, and her impetus is felt where she knows that there are no embankments and dykes built to restrain her." We can accelerate our national development if we wish to. This is the abiding lessons from the POEs in our midst. Our destiny as a nation is in our own hands.

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