



Comparative Management and Administration

— A BOOK OF READINGS —

— Second Edition —

Edited by

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Administration
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Chapter 15

Nigerian Professionals as Change Agents in Comparative Management and Administration Research

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This section of our survey in this book is concerned with the requirements for, and actions needed in, providing empirical evidences necessary in comparative management and administration in Nigeria. This has to be based on various researches.

Conceptual Issues

A number of conceptual issues need clarification for the purpose of this section. Change is defined as a modification or alteration of the status quo of a phenomenon. It implies some movement from one condition to another (Ekpo-Ufot, 1988). This definition of change shows that all dynamic Organizations undergo changes, and organizations, (private/public), as dynamic forces, also undergo changes. These VI have to be identified and planned for.

Managing organizational change has a goal, that is, a specifically determined direction; however we have to confine our discussion to planned change. This has a number of Implications. Ekpo-Ufot (1988) states that, first; there must be someone or some people to plan the change — the “change agent”, as he may be called. Sekaran (1989) calls the manager a change agent when he/she facilitates changes to occur in various subsystems of the organization, as needed.

There are two types of change agents in organizations: the expert staff manager (e.g. job evaluation manager, the accountant) and the operations manager (i.e. the manager with subordinates through whom the activities defining his responsibilities are executed).

Secondly, Ekpo-Ufot (1988) states that there must be recognized need, deficiency or gap to which the programme will be directed. In the Nigerian context, one may suggest that such need exists in the low productivity of our organizations. Role means the function that is incumbent on an individual or group, or the part that such an individual or group has to play in a given situation (Collins, 1984).

A profession is an occupation that requires extensive period of education, and training of its members before one can be considered proficient and competent enough to perform to set standards. Professionals are groups of individuals who subscribe to such set standards. Professionalism, on the other hand, is a commitment to excellence and high ethical standards in the rendering of professional service

(Osayameh, 1993).

Nigerian professionals, in the context of this discussion, include external consultants, researchers, accountants, engineers, medical doctors, top-level public servants, top-level managers in private organizations, managers of public corporations, academics and several other high-level professionals.

For research to be relevant to the purposes of our discussion here, it must be scientific. Kerlinger (1983) defines scientific research as a systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena. It should be noted that the systematic and controlled aspects of scientific research means that scientific investigation is so ordered that investigators can have critical confidence in the research outcomes. Also, scientific investigation is empirical. This means that if the scientist believes something, he must somehow put his belief to a test outside himself. (Subjective belief must be checked against objective reality (Kerlinger, 1983).

If our definition of professionals is matched with the requirements of scientific research, we should be in no doubt expect that Nigerian professionals have an important role play in comparative management and administration search. This will provide an adequate base for comparative assessment and comparability with research findings from other parts of the world on these subjects.

The Nigerian professionals, as defined above, in their capacities either as professional external change agents (external consultants to organizations), or internal change agents (line and staff managers inside organizations) are well placed to undertake comparative management and administration research for the following reasons:

- I. They have the knowledge base needed for such research.
- II. They know the workings of private and public organizations.
- III. They are likely to have minimal problems in data collection from the research.
- IV. They are more likely to appropriately identify Organizational issues requiring comparative analysis.
- V. Their findings are more likely to satisfy the specifications of the scientific research listed above.
- VI. Their recommendations are likely to be more relevant and practical in solving identified problems, partly because of their knowledge of a given organization, its culture and environment, and partly because they may be part of the implementation process.

Role Requirements

We have defined Nigerian professionals as agents of change, and' Nigerian organizations definitely need change. Nigerian professionals must accept the challenge to be change agents to move our organizations to a state of improved productivity and self-sufficiency. To do this, Nigerian professionals must, in their research efforts, in comparative management and administration, be concerned with:

- (i) Restoring and sustaining discipline in organizations;
- (ii) Inculcating nationalism and patriotism;
- (iii) Restoring respect for our culture;
- (iv) Instilling loyalty to our fatherland;
- (v) Upholding leadership by example;
- (vi) Developing respect for constituted authority; and
- (vii) Revamping the economy through hard work.

Numbers (i), (v) and (vii) above are those which can sustain organizational change programmes that are certain to move our organizations to self-sufficiency (Ekpo-Ufot, 1988). Specifically, the following roles are required of Nigerian professionals as change agents in comparative management and administration on research:

- (i) Anticipating changes from the external environment;
- (ii) Diagnosing, driving and restraining forces on change and how to control the latter;
- (iii) Overcoming resistance to change;
- (iv) Facilitating the “unfreezing-changing-refreezing” change process;
- (v) Adopting a human resource development philosophy to serve as a foundation for change; and
- (vi) Serving as a model for change.

Since Nigerian professionals are practical people who have been managing change all along in their organizations and, in some cases, are consultants to various organizations, the model below on properties or characteristics of organizational change will be helpful in our discussion in the next segment

National Culture as a Dimension of the Organization Context

In the analysis of both comparative management and administration, there is the debate on the relevance of administrative and management theories among national cultures. This is embedded in the convergent-divergent paradigm of comparative administration and management. The convergent view contends that the forces of industrialization tend to minimize cultural or national differences in the work organization.

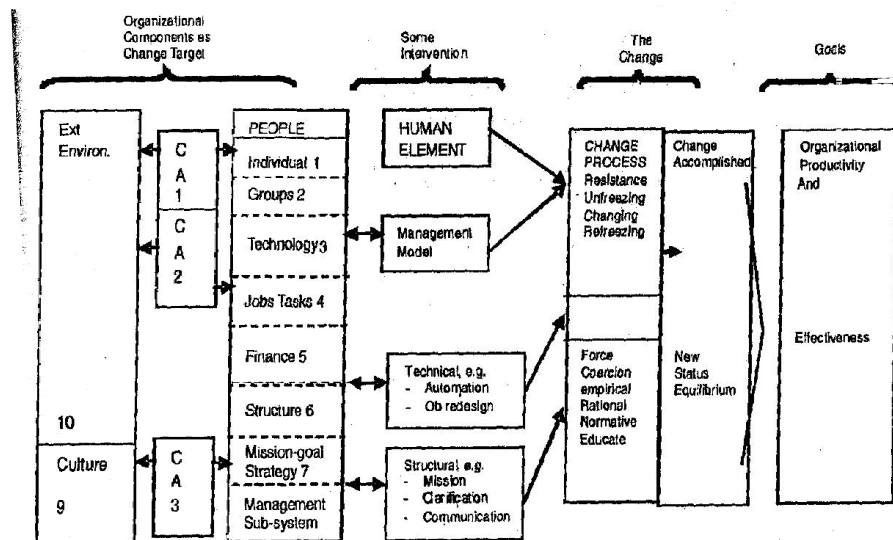


Fig. 15.1: A Model of Organizational Change Properties

Source: Adapted from Short, L.E. (1973). "Planned Organization Change," MUS

Business Topic, Autumn, pp 53-61 Cited in Ekpo A (1988).

Managing Change: The Role of Supervisor Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of Lagos.

Fig. 15.1: above indicates the various areas where research is required for improvement in the practice of comparative administration and management.

Technology makes the same demands on management and administration whenever it is applied (Webber, 1969). The divergent view contends that differences in culture, national resources and the pace of industrialization, tend to magnify national differences in organizational structures and processes (Hoffman and Hegarty, 1988). Empirical research to date has been consistent in its support of either of these views. Some of the data suggest that differences in organization and management occur among groups of clusters of nations having similar geographic and cultural characteristics (Rone and Shénkar, 1985). Supporters of the convergent view hold that knowledge about management and administration, is transferable among nations having similar levels of industrialization, while those of the divergent view do not see many opportunities for knowledge transfer.

The combative administration and management paradigm assumes that nation/culture represents a major contingency accounting for differences in management and administration. The broader contingency paradigm of the organizational sciences takes into account other salient features of the organizational context. In the latter paradigm, contingencies represent the broad characteristics of an organizational context (or the setting in which it develops) that are believed to affect its structure and management process. Pugh, Hickson, Hinings and Turner (1969), have identified the following as

the key dimensions of an organizational context or setting: history, or origin, ownership, size, technology, location and dependence environmental uncertainty and existing strategy have all been shown as key contextual dimensions causing variations in organizational management. This paradigm indicates that nation/culture becomes one of the many dimensions that can account for observed differences in management and administration (Hoffman and Hegarty, 1988). To demonstrate the transferability of a theory to another nation/ culture, one should determine both of the following:

- i. That nation/culture causes a variation in the phenomenon
- ii. That nation/culture is a relatively more important contextual variable accounting for differences in phenomenon.

Hoffman and Hegarty (1988) observe that most of comparative research has focused on the first criterion and drawn a conclusion about convergence and divergence solely on that basis; and that ignoring the second criterion may lead to exaggeration in the importance of nation/culture in accounting for observed differences in organizational phenomenon.

Comparative management and Administration

(CMA) Research

Hoffman and Hegarty (1988) state that comparative search on national differences in managerial practice has been conducted in the areas of organizational behaviour, development and theory. They observed that the dearth of comparative research in strategic management was due to its later emergence as a subfield of organizational science.

Consequently, top managers in all nations have very few theories to guide them in fulfilling their responsibilities. There is need, therefore, for considerable comparative studies in this new field.

On national differences in top management processes, Gouy (1978) found minor differences in the context and techniques used in making strategic decisions among firms located in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Most of the difference were explained by other aspects of organizational context, such as size, the business environment, and existing strategy. Horovitz (1980) found that British and German used more formal strategic planning than French firms.

The control practice was similar in all three nations, as the firms all emphasized operating versus strategic control. Heller and Wilpert (1981) examined the extent of participation by top-level managers and their immediate subordinates in non-strategic decisions. They found that participation in decision varied more by type of decision and the environmental uncertainty faced by the top managers. Hoffman and Hegarty's (1988) study on convergence and divergence found that the contextual dimension closest to the strategic activity seems to explain most of the observed differences, rather than the more remote national dimension. Also in the subunit, activities explained the variation in the decision influence.

Hoffman and Hegarty (1988) conclude that the successful transfer of practice of organizational sciences to other locations depends not only on what is transferred but also on how the transfer is accomplished. They then make three recommendations:

- (a) That prior to transfer, a theory should have demonstrated explanatory power in a given national/cultural setting.
- (b) It must be established that convergence between two or more nations/cultures exists. This must be accomplished by incorporating other dimensions of organizational context besides location in the assessment context.
- (c) The timing of the transfer is important to its receptivity. The theory should address problems currently facing organizations in the target nation.

The review of some of the comparative research elsewhere is to show the nature of tasks before Nigerian professionals in undertaking management and administration research. There are issues of content of the research study and of context, apart from the human side of the undertaking.

Role Expectation of Nigerian Professionals

We have defined role earlier on in this chapter. Expectation rotate to support, information supply, the exercise of joint responsibility and a diversity of other expectations about interactional relationships (Rahman, 1984).

Rahman (1984) notes further that any national expectation perceived and transmitted from one to another, must be subject to the influence of norms, values, customs and the environment of the work situation. It will also be tied up with the rules, regulations and procedures that are in operation to control actions. This emphasizes the fact that culture and other environmental factors in operation should serve as guides to what are expected from Nigerian professionals in task of carrying out comparative management and administration research.

The preceding sections shed some light on national culture as a dimension of organizational context. From that perspective, Nigerian professionals, being members of our cultural environment, are better placed to undertake researches that will be relevant to the needs of the country and be more accurate in their comparison with management and administration practice elsewhere.

Areas Where Comparative Management and Administration (CMA) Research are Needed

The entire field of management and administration calls for comparative research by Nigerian professionals. This is based on the fact that the Nigerian economy has for long been held out as performing poorly when compared with other developing countries which were on the same level of development at the time of Nigeria's independence (Ogundele, 2000).

- (a) Culture and its effect on adaptation of excellent management and administration practice that have worked well elsewhere;

- (b) Political administration and its effect on adoption of worthwhile changes that are recommended for implementation;
- (c) Effects of adopted cultures on the Nigerian legislative, legal, judicial and political environments; progressive and effective policies and programmes that could produce positive changes in our own environment;
- (d) Technological and technical development that could be of immense value in changing the pace of development in the Nigerian economy;
- (e) People as individuals and groups and their influence on technology, tasks, finance, organizational structure, mission, goals strategy and the management subsystem;
- (f) Human elements in terms of awareness, training, knowledge, and the managerial model that is most appropriate. Technical aspects in the form of automation in relation to job redesign, structural factors of mission clarification, communication and organizational design; (All these areas where intervention strategies of the change agents are needed, must be researched adequately.
- (g) The change process itself in terms of forces of resistance to change, the change processes of unfreezing — changing refreezing; methods to be used in achieving change — force, coercion, empirical, rational, normative or educative methods
- (h) Evaluative research to determine effectiveness of change strategies in terms of higher productivity and organizational effectiveness.

From the above, it can be seen that the research agenda mapped out for Nigerian professionals is quite enormous and require tremendous effort on the part of Nigerian professionals, and support from government and other relevant institutions within the environment.

An Appraisal of Nigerian Professionals in CMA Research

Comparative analysis in the areas of management and is a administration is a common practice among Nigerian writers, because the theories and practice on which their writings are based were developed essentially in Western Europe and the United States of America. In addition, Nigeria's heritage of British colonial rule produced an administrative, management, legal and political system which influences the writings of Nigerian professionals in the areas of comparative management and administration. Therefore, the writings of Nigerian professionals have substantial linkage with the works emanating from the developed countries.

For example, in two works edited by Amagoh and Ejiofor (1984) namely:

- i. "The Nigerian Manager: Challenges and Opportunities" and
 - ii. "Managing the Nigerian Workers;" contributors employed the theories and practice methods of the advanced Western economies and Japan, as the basis for their comparative analysis of the Nigerian situation.
- Some of the works reported local research findings based on field studies in Nigeria.

From the academic sector, Inegbenehor (1984) reports a research that investigated issues and management needs of private indigenous enterprises. Popoola (1984) also investigated perceptual differences among labour leaders in the private and public sectors of the economy. Most other Ivrite focused on comparative analysis of the management administrative patterns in Nigeria against those of the developed countries. From public administration Nkala (1984) analyzed the crisis of urban growth in Anambra State.

In conferences and seminars, comparative administration and management have not been left out. Bolaji (1985) examined h in Nigeria against the background of national development. He rates Nigeria leaders poorly when compared with leaders elsewhere. At the same conference, Ukwu (1985) focused on the structure of leadership in Nigeria against the ethnic and geographical interests of Nigerians which have not helpful in producing truly national leaders.

Comparative management and administration researches have been carried out at various levels and in various fields. A few examples will be given here. In the area of decision making, Munene and Okoh (1986) focused on the organizational dynamics in terms of the environment, size, managerial values, and decision choice, They found that these organizations in Africa. Fajana (1991), in a comparative study of industrial relations practice, found that the decision to adopt an ethical practice, for example, avoidance of an unfair labour practice, may be influenced by such factors as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, testability and observability. Ogundele (2003), based on the study of acts of indiscipline in educational institutions in Nigeria, which had its root in the larger society, reported the effects of these acts on environmental degradation and called for the use of social responsibility and ethics as methods of managing the environment, as it is done elsewhere in the world, for the good of future generations.

Several other examples can be cited to show that Nigerian professionals are rising to the challenge of undertaking comparative management and administration research. But a lot still has to be done.

Difficulties in Undertaking CMAR

There are a number of constraints in the conduct of widespread comparative management and administration research by Nigerian professionals. Some of them are listed below:

- (a) Dependence on Foreign Research for Adoption and Application: As noted earlier, Nigeria is a former British colony and the operational, managerial and administrative practice is modelled after the British. In some cases, the American style also married with the British. Therefore, depending on ready researches from these sources has tended to weaken the enthusiasm to conduct a truly indigenous research in the country.

- (b) Competent Research in Comparative Management and Administration (CMA) is hard to do: Research on CMA could be described as evaluative research, which French, Bell and Zawaki (1989) say is inherently difficult. It is complicated by a number of characteristics such as the fact that an action programme takes place in a real-life complex social situation; that goals, interventions, and measurements may change over time; that evaluators may also be programme sponsors or advocates; and that a long period of time may be involved, among several other factors. All these constitute problems, making CMA research hard to do.
hard to do.
- (c) Difficulty of Specifying Independent and Dependent Variables Conceptually, so that Meaningful Research can be done: There is the problem of how really meaningful comparison can be. This is because the situation in country A may be quite different from that in country B. For example, the activities may be different, the actors different, the organization climates different, and so on. Also, we would expect a different effect to the same treatment at different times.
- (d) No Strong Push to Conduct CMA Research: There is no strong push to conduct CMA research, either from government or private organization or even the Nigerian professionals who occupy the Position.
Consultants in most cases, organization are interested in research to solve an immediate problem. Comparative researches take a longer time period and as such are not likely to be an area of interest to organization and consultants.
- (e) CMA Research is Costly This is in terms of time, money and efforts. Clients and consultants or researchers must be willing to pay very well for a competent research. Thus, as noted by French, Bell and Zawaki (1989), these costs may be too great for the benefits derived by any one research /consultant/client system; perhaps multi system search programmes could share out of the costs.
- (f) CMA Research is Likely, to a Great Extent, to be a Thankless Task: This is due to the fact that, in an organization, people who do not believe in CMA research are not likely to change their minds or behaviours, if the research shows that it works. People who advocate the benefits of CMA research are not likely to change their minds or behaviours if the research shows that CMA research does not work. Confirming or disconfirming evidence probably will not lead many people to change their position on the subject (French, Bell and Zawaki, 1989).
- (g) Lack of Tradition in Basic and Applied Research: Basic research is a research carried out for the purpose of discovering knowledge. Applied research, on the other hand, is concerned with converting knowledge to practice. Nigerian professionals are living in an environment where most business and public organizations are concerned with immediate results. They are thus interested in financing research that could help in solving the problem at hand, that is, action research. Since researchers could not function outside their environment, they are constrained by the requirements of the private and

public institutional Therefore, researches that could lead to the development of useful theories and their application that is, basic and applied research, are relegated to the background, thus leading to the lack of tradition for basic and applied research of any magnitude.

- (h) Fast-Changing Forces: Nigeria and other developing countries of the world are assailed by forces of change and disunity which make them exceedingly volatile Since management and administration theories are essentially designed for predicting and explaining behaviour in fairly stable environments, fast change would have rendered irrelevant a theory that was put in place to explain behaviour before the change have occurred. Therefore, unstable political, economic, social and other environments, present their own unique problems to CMA researchers in the developing Countries of Africa.
- (i) Inconsistent Legislation /Administrative Policies:. Theories of management and administration including other social sciences are designed to help in improving the functioning of the established systems. This is based on the assumption that the environment will be least disturbed. A situation where government legislation and administrative Policies are changed as soon as new leaders emerge would in-validate theoretical formulations based on the past scenario.
- (j) Ethnicity: Nigeria, and indeed Africa, probabl has a greater degree of ethnic, cultural and linguistic pluralism than other Countries or continents When taken to the extreme, ethnicity could be a cause of divisiveness, whereby some ethnic groups receive preferential treatments from those in authority. Since each ethnic group has a distinct culture, this can constitute a problem towards formulating research.. based theories that could effectively explain different ethnic shades at a goal.
- (k) Unnecessary Control of Institutions and Organizations: There are situations where the Political authority imposes unusual control on organizations and institutions, such as arm twisting the leadership of a trade union. In such a situation, the outcome of any research into the normal trade Union practice would be invalidated by the abnormal control. Such restrictions are a stumbling block on the path of developing sound CMA theory based on research in Nigeria and other poor nations of Africa

Conclusion

Despite the difficulties listed above, Nigerian professionals are to their responsibilities adapting and formulating necessary management and administration theories. The efforts of Aniagoh and Ejiofor (1984), who blazed the trail in either formulating indigenous theories or adapting theories developed elsewhere due to the frustrating experiences in our unique environment and others, have been mentioned above. The challenge of the 21st Century is for our professionals to embark on vigorous comparative management and administration researches that will shed light on the

relevant variables and necessary areas of focus in our unique environment. This will ensure competitive effectiveness of our organizations, private and public.

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Review Questions

- 1) Explain the following concepts:
 - a) Change
 - b) Change agent
 - c) Nigerian professional
 - d) Scientific research.
- 2) What are the roles that Nigerian professionals are required to play?
- 3) In what respects is the national culture a dimension of organizational Context?
- 4) Identify the areas that should be the focus of comparative manage and administration research.
- 5) What are the factors inhibiting comparative management and administration research in Nigeria?
- 6) Identify the limitations imposed on Nigeria professionals in undertaking comparative management and administration research