

## EFFECT OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE MANAGEMENT ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

**P**ublic spending on capital and recurrent spending has a significant implication on public revenue which makes effective management quite imperative in a bid to foster accountability that can create enabling environment conducive for socio economic development in Nigeria. Public expenditure management is a major instrument of economic policy aimed at achieving three goals which are: fiscal discipline, resource allocation and operational efficiency. Similarly, these three goals intend to foster expenditure control, prioritization in budgetary allocation and good operational management. This paper asserted that public expenditure management is a catalyst for fostering development in every country, Nigeria inclusive, against the backdrop of pursuing economic policies that can fast track growth and development, allocation of financial resources to priority areas can only provide optimal results when there is an effective control measures which is one of the goals of expenditure management. A thematic review of current literature on facets of public expenditure management was conducted to situate the paper within the main stream economic thought and identified the related gaps to be filled. An appropriate methodology that explained source and methods of data collection and analysis was employed. This study deduct that, public expenditure management is set to foster fiscal responsibility, efficient budgetary allocation and following due process in public expenditure. The paper concluded that entrenching public expenditure management regime at all levels of Nigerian government is a prerequisite for improved budget outcomes.

**Key words:** Public Expenditure Management, Accountability, Development, Nigeria.

## 1. Introduction

The quest to provide mechanisms for financial control assessed in terms of compliance with financial procedures and legislatively sanctioned expenditure policies as expressed in the annual national budget informed the need for public expenditure management (PEM) in many countries including Nigeria. This trending strand of financial management is being pushed by international financial institutions particularly World Bank aimed at achieving financial discipline, efficiency in allocation and operational efficiency. Public expenditure management (PEM) is regarded as being the pivotal to economic policy making in many countries on account of renewed consideration of the need for having a responsible, responsive and effective government that works better and costs less and the growing fiscal deficits (Premchand, 2000). Public expenditure management relates to allocation and use financial resources responsively, efficiently and effectively (Campos, 2001; Schick, 1998). To Shah (2007), Kroeker (1978), and Allen & Tommasi (2001) good financial performance is hinged on good institutional arrangement during budgeting and the success of governments is usually measured by their management of public expenditure because it depicts their policies, priorities and actions that ensure effective service delivery.

### 1.1 Concept of Public Expenditure Management

The growing fiscal burdens as a result of the expansion of the state economy have become a barrier in the development of the economies of most developing countries. The government expenditures, as in the past, still keep its importance today. Especially, despite the fact that it has already been proved in many postulations that the public expenditures have continually been increasing owing to various reasons, the problems related to essential, effective, productive and on time-using of the increasing public expenditures have gradually been enlarged. The Wagner's law of increasing state activities and Wiseman – Peacock Hypothesis of jerks of public expenditure provide informed analysis of the phenomenon of persistent increase in public expenditure, that make public expenditure management very imperative. Public expenditure management (PEM) is one instrument of government policy. Public expenditure management is a basic means of government policy distributing and utilizing resources productively, effectively and sensitively (Allen, Tommasi, 2001).

Potter and Diamond (1999) consider public expenditure management as the interactions between aspects of budget preparation, budget execution, and cash management so as to achieve fiscal discipline in the control of fiscal discipline, strategic prioritization and achievement of value for money. Public expenditure management is divided into the two broad phases of budget preparation and budget implementation. Some studies regard cash planning and management (Potter & Diamond, 1999) or accounting (Premchand, 2005) as independent phases.

## 2. Literature Review

Expenditure reform in developing countries including Nigeria involves a package of policy measures that include: Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), Performance Based Budgeting, Financial Management Information System (FMIS) and Cash Management. This paper intends to make detailed exposition of these components of public expenditure management.

### **2.1 The Medium Term Expenditure Management Framework Approach**

The exact definition of medium term expenditure framework (MTEF) has evolved according to the needs of the governments implementing the process. However, it is seen as a strategic policy and expenditure framework from which better information is developed as the basis of decisions on resource allocation in line with priorities (Anipa, Kaluma and Muggeridge, 1999). The World Bank (1998) describes it as a process consisting of a top-down resource envelope and bottom-up estimation of the current and medium term cost of existing policies and ultimately, the matching of these costs with available resources. It is further stated that the objectives of MTEF are to:

- i. Improve macro-economic balance by developing a consistent and realistic resource framework;
- ii. Improve the allocation of resources to strategic priorities among and within sectors;
- iii. Increase the commitment to predictability of both policy and funding so that ministries can plan ahead and programs can be sustained;
- iv. Provide line agencies with a hard budget constraint and increase autonomy, and increasing incentives for efficient and effective use of funds.

It is argued that a well implemented MTEF should link the ``governments' priorities with a budget within a sustainable spending envelope; highlight tradeoffs between the competing objectives of government; links budgets with policy choice made, and improve outcomes by increasing accountability, transparency and predictability of funding.

### **2.2 Performance Budgeting**

Roberts (2003) defines performance budgeting as the planning of public expenditures for the purpose of achieving explicit or defined results (policy objectives/outputs, outputs of public service activities contribution towards policy goals or intermediate outcomes). It is argued that performance budgeting allows the budget to be built on the basis of anticipated workload measures that relate the activity performed to cost (World Bank, 1998). Furthermore, it allocates budget resources to spending ministries and agencies on the basis of reviews of past performance and statements of future strategy, and in return for commitments to achieve defined results. In addition performance budgeting and management help to; clarify policy priorities; focus expenditure more tightly on priorities, identify the causes of good and bad performance and thereby reduce waste and increase impact facilitate cross institutional working, and; inform and motivate programme managers and service providers Roberts (2003).

### **2.3 Financial Management Information System (FMIS)**

Financial Management Information Systems (FMIS) are designed to support the achievement of public expenditure management objectives. They provide decision makers and public sector managers with a set of tools to support: controlling aggregate spending and the deficit; strategic prioritization of expenditure across policies, programmes and projects for allocative efficiency and equity, and; better use of budgeted resources (World Bank, 1998). By integrating information from varied sources, FMIS can support better expenditure controls and improve accountability and transparency in the budget cycle as managers are provided with tools to plan, manage, and control public resources (Heidenhof, et al, 2002).

### **2.4 Cash Management System**

Governments need to ensure both efficient implementation of their budgets and optimum utilization of their financial resources such that spending agencies must be provided with the funds needed to implement the budget in a timely manner, and the cost of government borrowing must be minimized.

Cash management is also referred to having the right money in the right place and at the right time to

meet government's obligations in the most cost-effective way (Storkey, 2003). Basically, it is the strategy and associated processes for managing cost-effectively the Government's short-term cash flows and cash balances, both within Government and other sectors (Williams, 2004). Thus cash management system maintains an up-to-date picture of the Governments liquidity position and cash requirements by obtaining information on actual agency expenditures and cash balances in government accounts – from general ledger, revenue inflows, borrowing, loan disbursement treasury bills, government bonds, and cash deposit maturities (World Bank, 1998). This information can be used by the government to decide on budget pegging and funding levels, and the timing of the issues and redemptions of government securities to provide short-term financing for shortfalls.

Cash management sets out to achieve such purposes as controlling spending in the aggregate, implementing the budget efficiently, minimizing of the cost of government borrowing and maximizing the opportunity cost resources (Schiavo-Campo and Tommasi, 1999). Williams (2004) contends that cash management policies are set in the context of wider policy objectives such as: monetary policy and the related objectives for the control of financial sector liquidity, interest rates and inflation; the government's objectives for its own balance-sheet and management of balance sheet risk; debt management policies; and financial market development policies.

### **3. Sequence of public expenditure management**

As stated earlier, broadly, public expenditure management has two major phases; budget preparation and budget implementation. These phases are supported by several essential stages of PEM. On account of the fact that this paper focuses on expenditure management at the budget implementation phase, it covers all the processes of budget implementation which includes budget execution, cash management, and accounting and reporting among other issues.

#### **3.1 Authority to spend**

After the annual budget law has been approved by legislature, line ministries have authority to spend money according to the appropriation for programs or economic classifications. But in many systems governments still need to convert these budget appropriations into detailed budget documents. A budget document or warrant document is prepared as an authority to line ministries or to spending units to utilize resources for the provision of goods and services for the current year (Campo & Tommasi, 1999, Allen & Tommasi, 2001). The types of document vary depending on the treasury system and the extent of controls imposed in each country; the format and detail of budget documents are influenced by the implementation of performance-based budgeting, classification of accounts, and cash planning (Premchand, 1993; Hashim & Allan, 2001). The document should be in line with the performance targets that are allotted to each spending unit, and should show the interaction among functions of PEM. Primarily, the budget document is a tool to control expenditure, in which commitment, payment, and accounting of each transaction should be in line with the detailed accounts (Hashim & Allan, 2001). Every change in the accounts must be approved by the finance ministry; as a consequence, the more detailed the accounts the less flexible the execution of the budget.

#### **3.2 Commitment**

On the basis of the budget document, a line ministry can enter into contracts to provide goods and services, with invoices to be paid later. Good management of budget execution should record all commitments in order to show what payments will be claimed and when government should prepare and pay those (Allen & Tommasi, 2001). The important issue here is how the government, finance ministry, or spending unit can provide appropriate assurance to other parties providing services and goods that the commitments will be paid on time. The inability of government to pay increases the accumulation of

payment arrears (Potter & Diamond, 1999). In principle, payment arrears should be eliminated or minimized in sound public expenditure management. In a good treasury system, the finance ministry can assure spending units that all activities can be financed as long as fiscal shock does not occur; it is the responsibility of the ministry to manage all financial resources needed. But the system should also have the capability to easily adjust all allotments of spending units in accordance with macroeconomic conditions (Premchand, 1993).

### **3.3 Verification**

Commitments being made, providers deliver public goods or services. At the verification process, the spending unit should check whether or not goods or services have been delivered as stipulated in the contract document. Spending units should verify the quantity and quality of the goods or services and also check the accuracy and veracity of invoices. After goods and services have been delivered, items are verified, bills are accepted, and then the spending unit prepares a payment order for the finance ministry (Hashim & Allan, 2001).

### **3.4 Payment authorization**

In many countries, the body that authorizes payments is different from the one that receives the goods and services; or it can be in the same institution but with its functions carried out by a different division (Allen & Tommasi, 2001). Payment orders are prepared after goods and services have been received. If spending units hold a certain amount of money, the payment order is checked, usually by another unit or financial officer, to verify that it is within spending limits, and then payment is effected. Otherwise, if spending units do not hold money the payment request will be sent to the ministry of finance for verification. However in some systems, cash rationing is imposed on payment orders. Although goods and services have been rendered, a payment order will be issued only on the basis of the availability of allocated money. The implementation of cash rationing in some developing countries leads to delays in the issue of payment orders, or else the payment order is issued but then delayed at the spending unit or finance ministry (Potter & Diamond, 1999).

### **3.5 Payment**

Payment is the process of transferring money from the finance ministry or spending unit to the provider or beneficiaries. In Nigeria, the finance ministry verifies payment orders that are sent by spending units. Payment verification by the ministry is an attempt to check whether the payment order is within budget limits, the classification of accounts is correct, the document has been properly signed by authorized persons, and the order is supported with adequate documents (Hashim & Allan, 2001). The payment order is paid either in cash, cheque, or electronic transfer to the beneficiary's bank account. However, this requires the ministry to manage the availability of cash (Campo & Tommasi, 1999). In some systems, miscellaneous expenses are paid out of petty cash held by the spending unit (Hashim & Allan, 2001).

### **3.6 Cash planning and management**

The key function of treasury during the budget implementation phase is planning and managing cash efficiently and effectively. Periodic cash planning and management are intended to determine the demand for cash, to provide cash in a timely manner, and to optimize the use of cash shortfalls or surpluses (Allen & Tommasi, 2001). Cash planning can be derived from annual budget appropriations by dividing them into monthly revenue and expenditure forecasts (Campo & Tommasi, 1999). In some developed countries, daily or weekly revenue and expenditure forecasts are available, but in any case revised estimates should be conducted regularly in order to permit up-to-date cash planning (Hashim & Allan, 2001). To provide sound cash planning, the treasury should constantly coordinate, with other institutions, such as the budget office, the Inland Revenue service, and line ministries, all of which provide treasury

with data. However, in some simplified systems the finance ministry controls only those line ministries that have very large budget allotments. The ministry also takes into account the trends of the receipt and payment figures from previous years.

#### **4. Institutional Framework of Public Expenditure Management**

The efficacy of public expenditure management, especially treasury management, demands the clear delineation of roles and synergy between the key institutions (Schick, 1998). The finance ministry, line ministries and the central bank are the principal actors in any treasury system, but each country has peculiar institutional arrangements that depend on the governmental structure. The public expenditure management regime in Nigeria is conventional with little variations. In this section, the interaction between key institutions will be identified and the degree to which their changing roles can impact the level of controls will be examined:

##### **4.1 Finance Ministry/Treasury**

In many countries, the finance ministry, as the nation's fiscal authority and treasury, has a major role in initiating and imposing public sector reform, even though in some cases the reform itself may change the roles of the ministry in managing public finances (Jensen, 2003; Wanna & Bartos, 2003). Therefore the roles of finance ministries in the management of public expenditure are crucial in respect of all objectives and phases (Allen & Tommasi, 2001). A strong finance ministry is needed for the aggregate control and fiscal discipline, particularly to handle fiscal shock and respond to demands for more spending from parliament and line ministries. The finance ministry should work in concert with the monetary authority to keep macroeconomic conditions conducive and to remain in line with a medium-term expenditure framework. Moreover, a strong role for the ministry is essential for efficient allocation, particularly to distribute the budget between sectors and to discuss budget requests – which tend to increase incrementally from previous budget allotments and are also claimed as high priorities. The function of the treasury in maintaining cash flow should be consistent with aggregate fiscal discipline and revenue forecasting (Schick, 1998; Hashim & Allan, 2001). The programs and activities of line ministries have to be adjusted on occasion of reduced public revenue.

##### **4.2 Line Ministries, Departments and Agencies**

Given that the current focus of public expenditure management is on outcomes, each line ministry should specify the outcomes and outputs to be achieved (Premchand, 1993; Allen & Tommasi, 2001). These are the salient elements in contracts between government and line ministries, and between line ministry and spending units or agencies. Therefore the institution responsible for achieving particular outputs or outcomes should be clearly identified, but in many countries various outcomes, such as poverty reduction, order and safety, or curbing of corruption, are produced jointly by several institutions. The cascading performance approach would be an appropriate approach to develop clear responsibilities for outcomes and outputs based on the structure of institutions (Premchand, 2005). To realize the targeted outcomes and outputs, line ministries articulate programs and activities to be delivered. The finance ministry will subsequently disburse money to finance these programs and activities; however several problems still resurfaced in practice.

##### **4.3 The Central Bank**

As the monetary authority, the central bank has responsibility for providing good economic indicators so as to support the finance ministry in maintaining overall fiscal discipline (Schick, 1998). Inflation, interest on borrowing, and the volume of circulated money are monitored. The central bank, as banker to the government, especially in support of the treasury system. The treasury needs to work in concert

with the central bank in managing cash, especially the cash balance that is held by the central bank. In the recent development of a treasury single account, the treasury relies on the central bank to sweep all balances in subsidiary accounts into the treasury single account and to support the treasury in maintaining the minimum balance (Allen & Tommasi, 2001).

### **5. Control Mechanisms in Public Expenditure management**

Although governments in developing countries impose various public expenditure controls, such as rule compliance, an input-based centralized budget, and a one-year budget perspective, the objectives of PEM are often not achieved as intended (Schick, 1998; World Bank, 1998). To overcome these shortcomings the most effective mechanisms to PEM are performance-based budgeting, treasury single account, and accrual accounting.

#### **5.1 Performance-based budgeting**

One approach with a major impact on the management of public expenditure is performance-based budgeting. The basic concept here is to allocate resources on the basis of expected performance, with each increment in resources linked to a specific increment in output (Schick, 1998a). Line ministries and spending units should define what outcomes and outputs will be delivered, and then the finance ministry will evaluate and determine their cost of production. Therefore resource allocation is based on the volume of targeted outputs; spending units thus have a great deal of freedom in utilizing the resources so as to achieve their targets (Premchand, 2005). This approach seeks to overcome some of the weaknesses of line-item budgeting which allocates funds and uses resources based on input classifications.

In developing countries, some prerequisites need to be fulfilled before introducing performance-based budgeting; in particular, a performance culture needs to be developed in order to raise awareness of performance across all government services. Moreover, it is imperative to standardize the costing of outputs from activities. Malaysia, Singapore, and several other Asian countries have adopted varieties of performance-based budgeting, albeit with uneven results. Essentially the implementation of performance-based budgeting should be in line with the development of an accounting system, specifically an accrual accounting system, for calculating the full cost of outputs (Premchand, 2005). The funding mechanisms on an outputs or outcomes basis should be anticipated by the treasury in developing a cash management and treasury system.

#### **5.2 Treasury Single Account (TSA)**

In order to minimize borrowing costs and maximize interest-bearing deposits, centralized cash balances through a treasury single account is recommended (Campo & Tommasi, 1999). According to Tanberg (2005), this approach has major benefits, particularly in terms of financial control and promoting efficiency and cost effectiveness. Even Pattanayak and Fainboim (2010) emphasize that the approach facilitates better fiscal and monetary policy coordination. Technically, this approach is applied by sweeping all daily cash balances into a single account, usually at the central bank, but there are various types of mechanism in use. Campo and Tommasi (1999) segregate these into two types of treasury single account: active centralized treasury single account, and passive treasury single account. In the first type, all payment requests are sent and approved by the treasury; in the second, payments are by spending units, although all are through treasury single account. The important point is that all government bank accounts should be integrated into a treasury single account. Pattanayak and Fainboim (2010) emphasize three features of this approach; namely the unification of all banking arrangements, oversight of all bank accounts, and comprehensive all-cash resources. Therefore the structure of the treasury and the sophistication of the banking system contribute to the implementation of the approach (Campo & Tommasi, 1999; Tanberg, 2005).

Integrated system and a chart of accounts with an impact on treasury management, would served to enhance the effectiveness of public expenditure management. An integrated financial management information system (IFMIS) is often said to be central to PEM reform because all its approaches influence the system. In addition, IFMIS brings benefits of improved information and control, but it should be acknowledged that this development has significant costs (Allen & Tommasi, 2001). The introduction of such a system is classified as a project giving high results but with high risks (Bhatnagar, 2004). IFMIS is seen as a set of tools to support the achievement of PEM objectives by linking planning, budget preparation, budget execution, and accounting and reporting. In short, the treasury system is effectively part of an integrated financial management information system. The chart of accounts ensures that not only can all government transactions be compared but they can also be classified, recorded and reported appropriately. The implementation of a chart of accounts will permit a sound cash management and treasury system, particularly for preparing and analyzing the cash inflow and outflow statements of government activities.

Furthermore, to give a comprehensive framework for public expenditure management, an organic law and other subsidiary laws should be enacted (Allen & Tommasi, 2001). Hashim and Allan (2001) note that comprehensive laws are crucial for providing a framework for government financial management at large, emphasizing the roles of actors, receipts, expenditures, accounting systems, asset management and control, borrowing and investment, and auditing.

#### **6. Enhancing Accountability through Public Expenditure Management**

Accountability is needed both for the use of public money and for the results of spending it. Effective accountability has two components: (i) answerability and (ii) consequences. First, answerability (the original meaning of the word “responsibility”) is the requirement for central budget officials and sector ministry personnel to respond periodically to questions concerning where the money went and what was achieved with it. Schlenker (1997) sees accountability as "being answerable to audiences for performing up to prescribed standards that are relevant to fulfilling obligations, duties, expectations and other charges. The International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) (2007) defines it as the obligation of persons or entities entrusted with public resources to be answerable for the fiscal, managerial and program responsibilities that have been conferred on them and to report to those that have conferred these responsibilities. Accountability can also be examined from social perspective. To Bovens (2006) it is a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct in which case, the forum can ask questions and pass judgment and the actor may face consequences. The actor may be individual or an organization while the forum can be a specific individual, usually a superior or an agency such as legislature or the audit office.

Largely because the PEM system, must be accountable both for the use of the public money and for the results of spending it, accountability in public expenditure management has two dimensions. Stronger internal accountability of budget system personnel to their superiors may be necessary, but is more applicable to “overhead” PEM activities (e.g., policy advice, macroeconomic forecasting, etc) than to sector ministries responsible for services to the public. For the latter, external accountability is needed as well. Particularly with the dramatic improvements in information and communication technology, feedback from service users and the citizenry can now be obtained at low cost and for a greater variety of activities, and is an essential adjunct to improving efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Strengthening external accountability is especially necessary in the context of initiatives for greater decentralization or managerial autonomy, when new checks and balances are required to assure that access to and quality of public services is not compromised as a result.

### **7, Public Expenditure Management and National Development Nexus**

Development is the transformation of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable conditions, with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. It is also referred to as the uniform distribution of resources, the integration of the people into national economy; it is a socio-economic process which seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources and income within the society (Mundi, 2008). Similarly, development is not just a matter of getting more money into the hands of the people, but ensuring that increased production, and its resulting increased income, leads to an improved standard of living. These transformational ideals are hinged on government's budgetary allocations and these allocations need to be done in responsible, efficient and effective manner which entails fiscal discipline which equally denotes expenditure control and resource allocation which is concern with national development polices priorities that will deepen growth in critical sectors of the economy which also foster sustained all encompassing growth and development in Nigeria.

### **8. Conclusion**

Public assets have gained a much more valuable appearance than the formal ones and the necessity for efficiency in expending public resources has become significant. This paper concluded that to curtail government's growing expenditure which lead to the continued fiscal indiscipline, allocative inefficiency and operational inefficiency, the Nigerian government should prioritize controlling over-expenditure. However, this should not be at the expense of expenditures on critical infrastructure which contribute to the overall government agendas of fast tracking socio economic growth. These expenditures must be enhanced and protected. The public expenditure management instruments should set out to control fiscal indiscipline while supporting the allocation of resources towards the growth and development goals and objectives. The strategy in PEM should include "development of predictable budgets" which would allow finance managers to efficiently manage the limited resources allocated hence spend within the approved limits. Finally, to introduce and sustained these public expenditure reforms which are prerequisite for national development, requires strong political will on part of the government.

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