



ANALYSIS OF BENCHMARKS FOR NIGERIA'S PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

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Abstract

Effective performance in public sector organisations is vital for a governance system that delivers optimal services. However, what constitutes appropriate benchmarks for measuring this performance remains debated and varies among scholars. This article addresses this gap by offering a comprehensive analysis of performance benchmarks. A desk research methodology was employed to analyse traditional models, such as the 3Es approach, and newer frameworks, such as the 9Es and the Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL). Through four extensive case studies—comparing OECD countries, the World Bank Governance Indicators, the Dutch Ministry’s evaluation of EU countries, and the OECD and EU Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI)—the article provides valuable insights into optimising public sector performance. These benchmarks can serve as models for enhancing public sector institutions, particularly in Africa, focusing on Nigeria.

Keywords: public-sector, public-sector performance, benchmark, performance measurement, public service delivery, Nigeria’s public sector

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, various methodologies in social science research have been employed to examine public sector organisations, the delivery of public services, and the experiences of end-users, to assess the outcomes and results derived from the inputs, processes, and outputs within the public sector (Genc, 2018; Jeffares, 2020; Kilonzo & Ojebode, 2023). These outcomes are typically the indicators that relevant public administration stakeholders use to assess public sector performance. In most cases, the results of these studies are utilised to initiate and implement public sector reforms aimed at enhancing performance (Joshi & Carter, 2015).

Defining public sector performance is contentious, with diverse scholarly opinions (Taylor, 2021). This study examines frameworks and benchmarks that could be used to measure the performance of African public sector institutions, particularly in Nigeria, where, despite numerous reforms and increased budget allocations, poor public sector performance remains a concern.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

Organisational performance in both private and public sector institutions have significant reputational and financial implications (Paul & Jim, 2005). Consequently, measuring performance remains a critical topic for public sector administrators and

governments (Williams, 2003; Neely, 1999). There is a consensus that organisational performance can be assessed using quantitative and qualitative indicators and pre-set performance targets (Verbeeten & Speklé, 2015), typically within performance measurement systems (PMS). These systems include key performance indicators (KPIs) for inputs, outputs, and outcomes related to product or service delivery, and a methodology for combining these scores into a simplified measurement scale that reflects overall organisational performance (Hyndman & McGeough, 2008; Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012). In this context, inputs are the resources available or used to provide services, outputs are the activities and direct services of the organisation, and outcomes are the results of those activities and services on the organisation or the public.

Common key performance indicators for measuring organisational performance include economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, known as the 3Es approach (Hyndman & McGeough, 2008; Peter, 1994). However, indicators such as efficacy, electability, ethics, environment, equity, and excellence have also been proposed in practice and literature (Liu, Cheng, Mingers, Qi, & Meng, 2010; Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012). Some scholars have replaced economy with these additional indicators, creating models like the 6Es or 9Es for performance measurement (Peter, 1994; Liu, Cheng, Mingers, Qi, & Meng, 2010; Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012). These models have, however, maintained efficiency and effectiveness as indicators, suggesting that they are the "gold standard measures" for assessing organisational performance.

The 9E's Indicators for Measuring Organisational Performance in the Public Sector

- a. *Economy*: As a performance measure, economy evaluates the cost of inputs and resources used to deliver services in relation to planned budgets, available alternatives of the same quality, outputs delivered, outcomes achieved, and overall organisational performance (Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012; Gilhespy, 1999; Norman-Major, 2011). It primarily measures input within the service-delivery spectrum (input-output-outcome) and focuses on minimising costs (Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012). However, public officials need to recognise that the cheapest option is not always the most economical (Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012).
- b. *Efficiency*: Unlike economy, efficiency evaluates outputs in relation to the total cost of inputs (Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012). It is the ratio of outputs to inputs or the amount of input per output unit. For example, an efficiency measure could be the cost (input) per operation. Efficiency focuses on the processes or activities that transform

inputs into services (outputs) without compromising quality (Davis & Pett, 2002; Bishop & Brand, 2003; Asmild, Paradi, Reese, & Tam, 2007).

- c. *Effectiveness*: This measures the achievement of set targets and objectives (Peter, 1994). It addresses the question, "Did we do the right things, the things that needed to be done, and the things we planned to do?" (Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012). Effectiveness helps public sector administrators understand how outputs align with set targets and objectives (Gilhespy, 1999). It can be broken down into output and activity levels to assess each contribution to organizational targets.
- d. *Efficacy*: This is a summative assessment of outputs (Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012). While efficiency focuses on the best way to produce outputs or the cost implications, efficacy examines what has been produced, asking, "Are we producing the expected output?"
- e. *Electability*: This pertains to the political value of service outputs, determining their priority for state support and development (Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012).
- f. *Ethics*: This measures how employees are managed throughout the service delivery cycle according to moral codes and labour laws (Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012). It includes financial remuneration, employee benefits, occupational health and safety, and working conditions, which significantly impact service outputs.
- g. *Environment*: This evaluates how the service delivery system promotes environmental sustainability (Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012).
- h. *Equity*: This measures the balanced representation of all significant and necessary groups in the service delivery process (Otrusanova & Pastuszkova, 2012; Norman-Major, 2011). It addresses concerns about discrimination and equal opportunity, which are gaining global prominence.
- i. *Excellence*: This assesses service quality, asking, "How good is the service output compared to appropriate standards?"

While these 9Es are quantitative measures typically analysed using statistical tools and processes (Taylor, 2021), Andrews, Boyne, and Enticott (2006) argue that the subjective features of public sector organisations cannot be quantified using these indicators. This is because the public sector is service-oriented, and services often change and become more complex across different organisations. Many observers suggest that public sector performance measurement systems should include subjective and qualitative measures to account for this unique characteristic (Taylor, 2021). This led to the development of qualitative indicators, such as those in the SERVQUAL model.

The Service Quality (SERVQUAL) Indicators for Measuring Organisational Performance in the Public Sector

The SERVQUAL indicators, based on user opinions and addressing potential biases, have proven to be reliable qualitative measures for performance in public sector organisations. Introduced by Parasuraman and Berry (1988), these indicators were initially designed to improve customer service management in marketing but have since been applied to various sectors, including healthcare, telecommunications, academia, and public relations in both private and public sectors (Mukhtar, Saeed, & Ata, 2013). SERVQUAL measures service quality based on consumer perceptions (Mukhtar, Saeed, & Ata, 2013). The indicators include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991; Pakdil & Aydin, 2007; Amelia, Hidayanto, & Hapsari, 2011).

- a. *Reliability*: Measures the accuracy and dependability of the promised service delivery (Punnakitikashem, Buavaraporn, Maluesri, & Leelartapin, 2012; Ramya, Kowsalya, & Dharanipriya, 2019).
- b. *Responsiveness*: Assesses the willingness to promptly respond to consumer inquiries, complaints, requests, and problems, reflecting the service provider's attitude and professional commitment (Buttle, 1996; Punnakitikashem, Buavaraporn, Maluesri, & Leelartapin, 2012; Ramya, Kowsalya, & Dharanipriya, 2019).
- c. *Assurance*: Evaluates the confidence and trust an employee or system can instil in a consumer to ensure their cooperation and compliance (Punnakitikashem, Buavaraporn, Maluesri, & Leelartapin, 2012; Ramya, Kowsalya, & Dharanipriya, 2019).
- d. *Empathy*: Measures the organisation's approachability and attentiveness to consumer needs, emphasizing the importance of caring and personalised service (Ramya, Kowsalya, & Dharanipriya, 2019).
- e. *Tangibility*: Provides social proof of the organisation's ability to deliver the promised service, focusing on physical infrastructure, facilities, technology, processes, communication materials, and personnel appearance, which shape consumer perceptions and experiences (Ramya, Kowsalya, & Dharanipriya, 2019).

High-Performance Organisations (HPO) Framework Indicators for Measuring Performance in the Public Sector

High-Performance Organisations (HPOs) consistently achieve superior financial and non-financial results compared to their peers over a five to ten-year period. These results include a strong financial balance sheet, satisfied customers and employees, high productivity, self-driven initiatives, innovation, performance measurement, and reward systems (Bagorogoza,

de Waal, Van Den Herik, & Van De Walle, 2012). Initially a research concept in the 1990s, HPO has evolved into a practical tool for public sector reform and a framework for measuring organisational performance. The HPO Framework includes five key indicators, often referred to as HPO factors:

- a. *Management Quality*: Encourages trust, fairness, and belief in others. Managers demonstrate integrity, commitment, respect, and decisive, action-oriented decision-making.
- b. *Openness and Action Orientation*: Promotes an open culture that values employee opinions and involves them in critical processes. Mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities.
- c. *Long-term Orientation*: Focuses on long-term stakeholder commitment through partnerships with suppliers and customers. Prioritises internal candidates for leadership development and fosters a secure, nurturing work environment.
- d. *Continuous Improvement and Renewal*: Revitalises strategies to keep them distinctive and relevant. Emphasises ongoing improvement, process simplification, and innovation in products and services to maintain competitive advantages. Efficiently manages core competencies and outsources non-core aspects.
- e. *High Quality of Workforce*: Develops a diverse, complementary management team and workforce, embracing flexibility. Trains resilient and adaptable employees, fostering exceptional skills and a culture of responsibility that enhances creativity and performance.

Research on HPOs highlights a clear positive link between the five HPO factors and competitive organisational performance (de Waal, Van Nierop, & Sloot, 2017). Higher HPO scores correlate with improved organisational outcomes, while lower scores indicate reduced competitive performance (de Waal, Van Nierop, & Sloot, 2017).

TOOLS AND METHODS FOR MEASURING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

According to Mihaiu (2014), there are two categories of performance measurement methods: one-dimensional and multi-dimensional. Mihaiu argues that the one-dimensional methods measure performance through indicators with financial orientation, which do not cover the service delivery aspect of public sector organisations. This implies that these methods evaluate the measures in 3E's model (economy, efficiency, and effectiveness) whose indicators rely on financial performance. The primary limitations of these methods are summarised by the

fact that public sector organisations do not only have economic objectives and finished tangible products like most private sector organisations (Ingrida & Giedrė, 2015).

A preeminent social priority and a high volume of intangible services need to be measured as well (Mukhtar, Saeed, & Ata, 2013; Taylor, 2021; Ingrida & Giedrė, 2015). These limitations necessitated the development of multidimensional methods that attempt to include both sides of the spectrum—financial and non-financial measures—into the performance measurement system (Mihaiu, 2014). Three of these methods are discussed as follows:

Balanced Scorecard

The concept of a Balanced Scorecard (BSC) was first introduced by Kaplan and Norton in 1992 to help for-profit and private-sector organisations overcome the limitations of previously used traditional financial-based performance measurement tools (Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Northcott, 2012). Today, it is one of the household tools used by for-profit, non-profit, private, and public sector organisations. Although a myriad of outcomes, including underperformance and failure, have been recorded with the usage of the Balanced Scorecard in public sector organisations, it remains a popular and adaptable tool for many public sector organisations as notable successes have also been reported with its use (Northcott, 2012).

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) translates the organisational vision, mission, and strategy into actionable objectives and measures in a comprehensive performance measurement framework. It goes beyond just the financial aspects that are captured in most traditional tools and includes other performance measures that are summarised into four perspectives (Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Northcott, 2012; Ingrida & Giedrė, 2015; Mihaiu, 2014):

- a. **Financial Perspective:** This examines traditional financial indicators such as revenue, profitability, and return on investment (ROI), primarily indicators of the 3E's model measures, such as economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- b. **Customer or User Perspective:** This attempts to answer questions in the SERVQUAL measures: How do we look at our customers? Are we meeting expectations? Are our customers satisfied?
- c. **Internal Process Perspective:** This perspective focuses on the organisational processes and operations to deliver products or services and how they support achieving the other organisational goals. The indicators of this perspective help the performance managers and leaders identify areas of improvement and implement reforms where necessary.
- d. **Learning and Growth Perspective:** This perspective addresses the organisation's ability to learn, innovate, adapt to changes, and improve. It covers essential areas such as employee development, organisational culture, and new digital tools.

Using indicators and measures across these four perspectives provides qualitative and quantitative data covering organisational finance, customer satisfaction, human resources, tangible and intangible assets, processes, etc., thereby giving a comprehensive outlook on organisational performance. While there is no universal template for implementing BSC the underpinning implementing principles include a clear organisational purpose (vision and strategy), Key Progress Indicators (KPIs) for each measure, realistic targets, data collection methods, management, and insights. Success using the tool has been recorded across public sector organisations in different parts of the world.

Total Quality Management (TQM) Frameworks

Two central total quality management (TQM) types have been used to measure organisational performance (Mihaiu, 2014). These two models are used for quality and performance excellence awards in Europe and the United States of America (USA) (Liu, Mingers, Wang, & Zheng, 2018). The first is the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA), which utilises seven measurement criteria in a 1000-point scoring system. These criteria include Leadership, Strategic Planning, Customer and Market Focus, Information and Analysis, Human Resource Focus, Process Management, and Results (Ingrida & Giedrė, 2015). This model, however, does not aim to measure the internal processes organisations use to deliver services but emphasises customer satisfaction measures, making it more suitable for public sector organisations (Sampaio, Saraiva, & Monteiro, 2012).

The other model is the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). This model combines the U.S. Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) and the Japanese Demming Award, resulting in 9 measurement criteria (Ingrida & Giedrė, 2015; Sampaio, Saraiva, & Monteiro, 2012). Five criteria are called enablers, while the other four are categorised as results. The “Enablers” criteria include Leadership, People, Policy & Strategy, Partnerships & Resources, and Processes, which are essential inputs for operational management. The “Results” criteria are People Results, Customer Results, Society Results, and Key Performance Results, and these are viewed as the expected outcomes of the “Enabler” criteria. The first five criteria attempt to measure what the organisation does, while the four results criteria focus on what the organisation achieves (Bou-Llusar, Escrig-Tena, Roca-Puig, & Beltra’n-Martin, 2009; Ingrida & Giedrė, 2015).

In addition to these nine criteria, this model also includes 32 sub-terms for organisational self-assessment and benchmarking (Liu, Mingers, Wang, & Zheng, 2018). Although the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) is prevalent in the United States of

America, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) is the most popular, used, and influential total quality management (TQM) performance measurement model in the world (Liu, Mingers, Wang, & Zheng, 2018).

A study that reviewed the practices of TQM in European healthcare reported that implementing the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) in public sector organisations is one of the notable approaches to building a high-performance organisation (Nabitz, Klazinga, & Walburg, 2000). It is essential to state that the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) are all used for benchmarking, which will be discussed in the following performance measurement method. Other TQM models include the Demming Prize and the British Quality Foundation (BQF).

Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a long-standing method used in both private and public sector organisations to measure performance (Triantafillou, 2007; Mihaiu, 2014). This approach relies on other performance measurement tools to establish comparative standards or reference points (Sylvie & Suzanne, 1996). Public sector managers typically set internal or external benchmarks and assess performance against these standards. External benchmarks can be drawn from other organisations within the same government or from those in different countries (Sylvie & Suzanne, 1996). The main principle is for organisations to strive to meet and exceed these benchmarks. Public administrators must be cautious when selecting benchmarks to avoid incorrect judgments about their organisational performance (Mihaiu, 2014; Liu, Mingers, Wang, & Zheng, 2018).

ANALYSIS OF WELL-RATED BENCHMARKS OF PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE

Initially, the plan was to identify single-country cases that illustrate public sector performance globally. However, such cases are scarce in public administration literature and attempts in countries like the Netherlands and Britain have not been published.

Instead, aggregate comparative indexes have been identified as valuable alternatives. These indexes compare the performance of national public sectors across regions and globally. The goal is to provide concise descriptions, focusing on the indicators and methodologies used to assess public sector performance in the examined countries. Therefore, three indexes in public administration literature are analysed.

Case Study 1 - Public Sector Performance in Selected Organisations for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Countries

Afonso, Schuknecht, and Tanzi (2003) created an index to measure national public sector performance and efficiency using data from 23 OECD countries. This study was the first of its kind, and the authors have not carried out any similar studies since then. They differentiated between "performance" and "efficiency" and selected indicators for both to rank the countries.

Data from various sources and timeframes were collected and analysed using different statistical methods. The study found that overall performance differences among the countries were moderate, with an average efficiency of about 80%. It concluded that approximately 20% of public spending in these countries does not lead to improved performance and that there is a significant correlation between performance and efficiency in the public sector.

Public Sector Performance Indicators

To measure performance, Afonso, Schuknecht, and Tanzi (2003) selected seven key indicators, categorised into two groups: Opportunity indicators and Musgravian indicators. Opportunity indicators assess the government's role in creating a conducive environment for effective performance, while Musgravian indicators evaluate three fundamental government functions according to the Musgrave Three-Functions Framework: income distribution, macroeconomic stability, and resource allocation.

The four opportunity indicators are:

- a. *Good public administration*: Evaluated using corruption levels, bureaucratic red tape, and the quality of the judiciary system.
- b. *Quality education*: Assessed through secondary school enrolment rates and OECD educational achievement indicators.
- c. *Well-functioning health system*: Measured by infant mortality rates and life expectancy.
- d. *High-quality public infrastructure*: Determined by the state of communication and transport infrastructure.

The Musgravian indicators include:

- a. *Income distribution*: Measured by the income share of the poorest 40% of households.
- b. *Macroeconomic stability*: Assessed using GDP growth stability (coefficient of variation) and 10-year average inflation rates.
- c. *Economic performance*: Evaluated through per-capita GDP, 10-year average GDP growth, and the 10-year unemployment rate.

Each indicator was equally weighted in the final computation to assess public sector performance. For example, secondary school enrolment rates and OECD educational achievement indicators were each assigned a 50% weight in assessing education quality. Values were normalised and calculated relative to a selected average of 1. Most of the figures used for the computation were derived from 1999 and 2000 reports, the most recent data available at the time of the study.

Public Sector Efficiency Indicators

Public sector efficiency was measured both directly and in conjunction with the calculated outcomes from the selected performance indicators. The authors aimed to estimate the opportunity cost associated with the performance outcomes of the seven primary performance indicators. As a result, efficiency was analysed using the ratio of performance outcomes to the public expenditure that produced them. In addition, the authors utilised the Full Disposal Hull (FDH) to measure the input and output efficiency of public expenditure and assess the wastefulness of public spending across the selected countries.

Cases of High Public Sector Performance in OECD Countries Based on European Central Bank (ECB) Working Paper No. 242

Based on the statistical analysis by Afonso, Schuknecht, and Tanzi (2003), performance differences across the selected countries were generally marginal, indicating that most countries performed well on average. However, countries with smaller governments (public spending below 40% of GDP) tended to excel in economic stability, administrative efficiency, and economic performance compared to medium-sized (40-50%) and large-sized (above 50%) governments. These smaller governments prioritise fiscal responsibility and limited intervention, leading to better economic outcomes. Conversely, larger governments performed better in household income distribution, likely due to more resources rather than administrative efficiency or economic performance.

Countries such as Luxembourg, Japan, Norway, Austria, and the Netherlands demonstrated high public sector performance, consistently ranking high in the Public Sector Performance (PSP) indicators. Luxembourg led in economic performance, Japan in education, Norway in economic stability, Austria in income distribution, Iceland in health, and Switzerland in administration and infrastructure. The findings were reliable and resilient to moderate changes in weighting.

The United States and Japan reported above-average performance in most sub-indices and overall public sector performance, excelling in economic stability, administrative efficiency, and economic performance due to effective governance and robust public policies. In contrast, the European Union recorded below-average performance in these sub-indicators. Between 1999 and 2000, Ireland showed the most significant improvement in public sector performance among the 23 countries.

In terms of efficiency, notable performance was observed in Japan, Switzerland, Australia, the United States, and Luxembourg. Smaller governments exhibited superior efficiency, with scores approximately 40% higher than those of larger governments. This highlights a more substantial contrast in efficiency compared to the marginal differences in performance outcomes.

Case Study 2 - The World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) for Government Effectiveness

The WGI used the methodology of perception-based data sources to assess and compare national public sector performance and provides comprehensive governance assessments spanning over 200 countries and territories from 1996 to 2021. These assessments cover six essential dimensions of governance. They include:

- Voice and accountability
- Political stability
- Absence of violence or terrorism
- Government effectiveness
- Regulatory quality,
- The rule of law and control of corruption.

These insights are derived from a comprehensive compilation of data from over 30 sources, including surveys by research institutes, think tanks, NGOs, international bodies, and private sector entities. While all six dimensions evaluate essential aspects of government performance, the indicators used to calculate Government Effectiveness primarily reflect public sector performance. This indicator assesses factors such as the quality of public services, civil service competence and independence, policy development and implementation effectiveness, and the trustworthiness of the government's commitment to its policies.

The Government Effectiveness Indicator is a composite index of 47 characteristics collected from approximately 17 sources. However, only six sources are representative: the Economist Intelligence Unit's Country Risk Service, the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report, the Gallup World Poll, the Institutional Profiles Database, Political Risk

Services' International Country Risk Guide, and Global Insight's Business Conditions and Risk Indicators. These sources include factors like bureaucratic quality, transportation infrastructure, primary education, healthcare services, energy, waste disposal, vulnerability to political instability, and lawlessness.

Non-representative sources include the Bertelsmann Foundation's Bertelsmann Transformation Index, the University of Gothenburg's European Quality of Government Index, Global Insight's Business Conditions and Risk Indicators, and Country Policy and Institutional Assessments by the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank. These sources provide supporting variables and data from the representative sources, measuring the quality of education, healthcare, infrastructure, and public administration.

The Unobserved Component Model (UCM) method was used to compute all six dimensions of the World Bank World Governance Indicator. This statistical methodology allows researchers to derive insights from multiple data sources to support or refute specific suspicions. For example, data points on healthcare, education, and transportation provide insights into the quality of public service in a country. UCM offers a statistical approach to identify narratives that individual sources might not reveal directly.

Furthermore, the data points were rescaled, similar to the OECD public sector performance and efficiency indicators, to rank government effectiveness. However, the scale ranges from -2.5 to 2.5 (and 0 to 100 by percentile), unlike the OECD indicators framed between 0 and 1. Kaufman et al. (2010) noted that these rankings do not imply absolute superiority due to variations in data sources and confidence levels supporting the aggregate estimates for each country. Nonetheless, in cases where the confidence level for the country aggregate score shows statistical differences, comparisons are valid.

The World Bank Governance Indicators dataset is one of the most comprehensive for assessing governance quality, with the government effectiveness indicator being the most thorough for evaluating public administration performance globally. Specifically, government effectiveness in public service delivery significantly influences poverty levels. Evidence suggests that countries with better governments have superior educational systems and more streamlined healthcare services. Additionally, countries with impartial and merit-based bureaucracies excel in childhood vaccination, protecting vulnerable populations, reducing child mortality, and addressing environmental concerns. Meritocratic civil services also tend to experience lower corruption levels.

Case Study 3 - Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands Public Sector Performance Project: Comparing the Public Sector Performance of the European Union Member States

In 2004, the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations commissioned the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands to evaluate public sector performance across twenty-five EU member states and four non-EU Anglo-Saxon countries. The goal was to gain insights into improving the Dutch public sector and create a comparative index for benchmarking public sector performance. The study utilised extensive data from reputable sources like Eurostat, the OECD, the World Bank, and the Council of Europe, employing various statistical methodologies to draw meaningful conclusions.

The study focused on four key policy areas: education, healthcare, the criminal justice system, and public administration. It aggregated scores for health, education, and criminal justice systems to create a performance index for the allocative functions of government. Additionally, the authors developed a broader index that included the distribution of welfare, economic stabilisation, and the quality of public administration. Nineteen indicators were used across these areas: GDP growth, unemployment rate, inflation rate, budget deficit as a proportion of GDP, poverty rate, reading literacy, mathematical literacy, scientific literacy, percentage of dropouts, percentage with higher qualifications, life expectancy at birth, disability-adjusted life years, infant mortality, subjective health status, crime rate, bureaucracy, transparency, effectiveness, and corruption.

A z-score methodology was employed to aggregate scores for functions with multiple indicators. The authors also explored different variants of aggregating these indicators, where some were weighted individually outside their government function group. These variants provided different country rankings for public sector performance and added nuances to the statistical inferences.

Cases of High Public Sector Performance in Member States of the European Union Based on the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands Public Sector Performance Project

Based on the comparative index developed in this study, countries frequently cited in prior research, such as Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, and Ireland, consistently rank in the top 10 for overall public sector performance. This composite index combines scores related to economic stability and growth, equitable welfare distribution, public service allocation, and the quality of public administration. It is important to note that these leading nations exhibit varying scores across these domains, highlighting both their strengths and weaknesses.

For example, Denmark and Finland, which achieved the highest overall scores, show comparatively lower scores in public service allocation, a challenge linked to higher crime rates in these countries. Additionally, the authors identified multiple correlations between public sector performance and factors such as government expenditure levels and citizen confidence in governmental institutions. These correlations, however, exhibit relatively modest strength in significantly influencing public sector performance. Notably, high-performing countries achieve more in terms of government spending and citizen trust, despite these correlations not being particularly strong determinants of their performance.

Case Study 4 - Public Sector Performance in (OECD) and (EU) Countries Based on the Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI 2024)

The Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI), which is maintained by the Bertelsmann Foundation and was first published in 2009 and updated in 2011 as a framework for assessing public sector performance across OECD and EU countries. It aims to facilitate transitions towards a sustainable governance model that fosters well-being within planetary boundaries and promotes inclusive, effective, and accountable state institutions (Tosun & Howlett, 2022). The SGI comprises three pillars; the first being the government's policy performance regarding social, economic and environmental policies. The second pillar focuses on the quality of democracy and comprises access to information, civil rights, political liberties, electoral processes and the rule of law (Croissant & Pelke, 2022). The third pillar is government capacity in executive accountability (for more elaborate details of the three pillars and their sub-variables, see Schiller & Hellmann, 2024).

The Index methodology combines qualitative assessments by country experts and quantitative data from official sources. The index aggregates the indicators into composite indices, and the quantitative indicators (which use varying scales and units of measurement) are standardised as a linear transformation. Long-term data series are used to set appropriate minimum and maximum values and scores are calculated from 1 (worst) to 10 (best) (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2024; Schraad-Tischler & Seelkopf, 2016).

According to the SGI-2024 Index, which is the most recent when writing this article, countries like Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Germany rank consistently high in strategic capacity, transparency, and effective policy implementation. These countries were reported to have an institutionalised culture of long-term planning and interdepartmental collaboration backed by mechanisms for public accountability and participatory governance. Others, like the Netherlands, Israel, Japan, Poland, and Hungary, also perform strongly due to

their inclusive institutions, high civil service competence, and adaptive public management strategies (Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2024; Schiller & Hellmann, 2024).

The SGI Framework is a valuable benchmark for Public Sector Performance measurement in Nigeria. It shows how multidimensional indicators, beyond financial efficiency, can provide a holistic picture of governance performance. The framework identifies governance innovations essential for successful transformation and the importance of procedural quality and outcome effectiveness, which are important to reforming the public sector in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are various perspectives on how best to measure public sector performance, but certain frameworks and benchmarks are particularly suited for Nigeria and Africa. Based on theoretical evidence from this analysis, the following recommendations can be considered for conducting a suitable Public Sector performance review of Nigeria:

- a. Adoption of the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) Framework: The BSC framework offers a comprehensive approach to performance measurement by considering four perspectives: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth. Recognised globally, the BSC framework ensures alignment with international best practices. It can be tailored to Nigeria's public sector, focusing on critical performance indicators and metrics, and emphasising customer/citizen-focused delivery and civil servants' learning and growth.
- b. The World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) Benchmark: The WGI report covers over 200 countries and territories, including Nigeria, providing a thorough assessment of governance worldwide. It evaluates governance across six key dimensions: Voice and accountability, Political stability, Absence of violence or terrorism, Government
- c. The Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI) framework is a comprehensive framework that utilises multidimensional approach by evaluating policy performance, quality of democracy, and executive accountability across social, economic, and environmental dimensions. It combines qualitative expert assessments with standardised quantitative data on a 1-to-10 scale. It provides a holistic and internationally comparable governance measure by emphasising transparency, inclusive institutions, and strategic capacity, as demonstrated by high-performing countries like Sweden and Denmark. It also focuses on sustainable outcomes and participatory governance, which makes it particularly suited to guide Nigeria's public sector reforms toward effective, accountable, and citizen-focused governance.

- d. Comprehensive approach captures various aspects of governance relevant to public sector performance. Key components such as Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, and Rule of Law can be adopted to construct a robust and internationally relevant performance index. These indicators encompass factors like the quality of public services, civil service competence and independence, policy development and implementation effectiveness, and the trustworthiness of the government's commitment to its policies. These are particularly relevant for evaluating public sector performance in Nigeria, reflecting the quality of public services and policymaking and implementation.

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