

Collaborative Public Management in Nigeria-Governance and Performance Insights on the Anchor Borrowers' Programme

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Abstract

Numerous changes have occurred in public management in the last 5 decades aimed at creating an interface between the tripod of public, private, and voluntary sectors using several governance tools in the delivery of public goods and services, with the collaborative public management (CPM) governance mechanism attracting global attention. This paper provided analytical insights on the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) which it regarded as a brand of CPM in Nigeria. The paper is theoretical and employed the descriptive-analytical design which relied on secondary data culled from newspapers, journal articles, textbooks, and the internet. From the data, it was clear that certain features such as governance structure, stakeholder composition, modus operandi, performance index among others characterized the ABP as a CPM governance mechanism. Actor-behaviour was identified as a primary challenge of the ABP precipitating other challenges. Nevertheless, the paper arrived at the conclusion that the ABP as a version of CPM looks potentially successful in Nigeria provided the right environment is created for it to thrive.

Keywords: *Anchor borrowers' programme, collaboration, governance, Nigeria, public management*

Introduction

Public management has undergone changes globally since the mid-1980s. The changes aimed at getting the most from or the best out of all the sectors – public, private, and nonprofit – in the spirit of new public management (NPM). Eliassen and Sitter (2008), state that the public management reforms were enacted to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery by getting citizens actively involved through non-hierarchical and decentralized governance tools and designs such as networks and teams. Among the numerous management strategies or governance tools that have emerged, collaborative public management (CPM) has attracted significant and considerable attention as well as sustained interest from actors of state, and scholars particularly, those of public management persuasion. This keen interest can be attributed probably to CPM's ability and capacity to foster inter-organizational synergies that accommodate local initiatives and approaches in addressing societal problems, most of which reside in communities whether urban or rural. It allows localities or local communities to use local ideas and talents to solve peculiar or unique problems within communities. Kapucu (2010:16) alludes to this view stating that "CPM focuses on localities" or "looks more on the local level" and embraces the core values or virtues of transparency, accountability and trust among the stakeholders and service delivery participants.

The Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) which was launched in November 2015 by the Buhari administration is a model (or at least a semblance) of CPM in Nigeria. The programme has received accolades from public and private citizens especially farmers though with some reservations by the latter. It was reported (Mojeed, 2021) that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)-RIFAN (Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria) partnership under the ABP financed over 200,000 farmers across 32 states in 2020 while by January 2022, President Muhammadu Buhari revealed that over 4.8million farmers across the nation had been financially supported (Mojeed, 2021, 2022). As at April 2022, it was reported that the CBN had disbursed over N948billion to more than 4.4million farmers who cultivated 5.2million hectares of land for various commodities across the country (Akinfenwa, 2022). Representatives of various farmers groups like RIFAN, All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), Rice Millers Association of Nigeria (RIMAN) among others have all extolled the ABP initiative explaining that it has exerted significant impact on rice production in the country. The programme has, therefore, attracted nationwide attention, which serves as a source of inspiration for this study.

This wide attention has, however, not translated into bumper research, which also instigated and motivated this study. There is scanty research and literature in Nigeria on CPM generally and ABP in particular. The few studies on the ABP like those of Opeyemi and Osabohien (2021), Akinwale (2021), Umeh and Adejo (2019), and Coker, Akogun, Adebayo and Mohammed (2018) simply assessed the impact of the programme on farmers and agricultural production, and did not attempt to explore or situate the programme within the context of the CPM governance mechanism thereby leaving a gap, which this study seeks to fill. The aim is to provide analytical insights and clarity on the pattern, modus operandi, and performance of the ABP as a CPM governance tool in Nigeria with a view to drawing policy implications and lessons for the future.

To achieve its desires, the article is organized into four sections: Section one, which has just ended, introduced the paper highlighting its thrust, objectives and focus. Section two presents the conceptual and contextual issues including, the dynamics and complexities inherent in CPM such as the multiplicity of definitions, rationale and motivation to collaborate, ability to dispense both positive and negative outcomes, presence of multiple partnerships and actors, the governance structure among others. Section three discusses the ABP as a CPM model with a governance structure, stakeholders, performance indicators, and challenges. The paper concludes in section four noting that ABP as a brand of the CPM approach has a potential future to succeed in Nigeria given the right environment. The paper adopted the descriptive-analytical method with a reliance on secondary data sourced from newspapers, journal articles, textbooks, government publications, and the internet. Some of the data were displayed in frequency tables while others were qualitatively analyzed.

Conceptual Definitions of CPM

Collaborative public management has been variously defined but with some commonalities or common denominators. Two of the definitions are explored in this paper. Agranoff and McGuire (2003) define CPM as a governance mechanism involving multi-organizational or multi-sector arrangements that facilitate the provision of solutions to problems that cannot be easily or readily solved by a single organization. Different or even the same organizations cross-breed ideas, financial and material resources in order to find solutions to difficult and daunting challenges, which is why collaboration is regarded as "a process in which organizations exchange information, alter activities, share resources, and enhance each other's capacity for mutual benefit and a common purpose by sharing risks, responsibilities, and rewards" (Himmelman, 2002:3). Among the commonalities derivable from the definitions and several other ones of CPM considered in this paper are: cooperation, product creation or service delivery or problem solving, and value creation or addition.

CPM is thus a cooperative arrangement whereby public organizations share or exchange capacities and competencies with one another or with private or third sector entities in addressing societal challenges. It is an inter-mix of physical, managerial and financial efforts within the public sector system, between the public and private sectors or between the government and the non-profit sector at resolving difficult problems that cannot be handled by one organization or sector.

Contextual Dynamics and Complexities of CPM

CPM is both dynamic and complex whether at the formative or implementation stages. A major motivation to collaborate is to increase performance in service delivery (O'Leary & Vij, 2012). Accepting this position, Klijn and Tiesman (2003) and Shergold (2008), state that cooperating actors develop mutual high-quality products or services that create added value to public consumption. An equally compelling rationale for CPM is that the challenges confronting the public be they at organizational or community level have multiplied, become larger, complex and more daunting for one sector or organization to deal with. 21st century challenges faced by public service organizations (PSOs) are more numerous, varied and complex (Eggers, 2008), increasingly complex, ambiguous, and uncertain, often addressing societal, even global, matters of concern (Bryson, et al., 2017; Crosby, 'T Hart & Torfing, 2017). Poverty, natural disasters, terrorism, forced migration, pandemics, climate change among others have been described as 'wicked' (Geuijen et al., 2017) or 'unruly' (Crosby, 'T Hart & Torfing, 2017) problems devoid of one-off solution or remedy hence the need for more flexible, more adaptable and inclusive strategies which do not readily reside with the traditional bureaucracies or conventional organizations (McGuire, 2006). Collaboration is needed not only to improve services, but to create the capacity and capability of solving contemporary meta-problems of public sector service delivery (Keast & Brown, 2002).

The implication of this is that collaborations can occur within and among organizations, as well as cross-jurisdictions and cross-sectors (Meek, 2021) giving rise to four forms of CPM: collaboration within bureaucracies or governments (among departments) referred to as inter-agency collaboration; collaboration between government and individual citizens or clients which is christened civic engagement or co-production; collaboration with private sector (PPP); and collaboration across jurisdictions or jurisdictional collaboration between governments both vertically and horizontally (Meek, 2021; Wanna; 2008). It is on this premise that Donahue (2004) describes collaborative governance as an amalgam of public, private and civil society organizations engaged in some joint efforts.

Ordinarily, therefore, CPM is expected to dispense favourable outcomes to the stakeholders or participants. However, collaboration sometimes produces negative or awful results that are completely at variance with the primary mission or initial intension of an organization or the intended goal or purpose of the collaboration (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). In some cases, collaborations may even lead to conflicts or disputes (O'Leary & Vij, 2012) because CPM networks possess certain characteristics that tend to create complexities and pose operational difficulties among which are multiple membership, varied missions, cultural variation, different modus operandi, as well as different stakeholders and funder groups.

Governance Structure of CPM

Collaboration is usually delineated in or occurs within a governance framework involving a number of stakeholders and actors or players. It involves a diversity of actors, each exerting a significant sphere of influence on policy formulation and implementation in a certain way. Thus, collaboration

may be, as stated earlier, government-government, government-citizens, within governments or among jurisdictions. The major collaborative stakeholders, therefore, include governments and their agencies, the private sector, no-for-profit sector, and third-party agents such as community institutions or organizations. Government through its political executive and the public bureaucracy usually spearheads the collaboration. Authority is devolved to individual agencies and departments in the public service, some of which exert substantial independence and powers to perform functions that are critical to the success of the collaborations (Shergold, 2008). They are saddled with the task of advising the government and implementing final decisions.

Since the partnership involves different and multiple sectors, organizations or individuals, the need for committees, teams, and in some cases task forces, becomes imperative and a grand norm. Eriksson et al. (2020) note that teams are set up comprising of co-workers (who form learning networks that spread and maintain shared principles and culture to create a feeling of ‘us’ among participants). Other groups include coordinators network (which identifies and discusses problems before presenting them to management network), and management network (which sanctions policies and decisions). They effectively operate as full-time inter-departmental committees brought together for a specific purpose (Shergold, 2008). Shergold further stresses that “the real work of collaboration is generally done in committees or through a secretariat, usually provided by a bureaucratic host. Recently, the roles of these teams are increasingly broadening to include not only policy design, advice and implementation, but also oversight of the implementation.

Empirical Review

Akinwale (2021) conducted a study on innovative financing of the agricultural value chain with emphasis on rice production. The purpose of the study was to assess the innovation and potentials of the ABP in ensuring self-sufficiency in rice production in Nigeria. The study combined a qualitative strategy (using in-depth interview method) with documentary evidence that adopted a desktop approach. The results of the study revealed that ABP was actually innovative in terms of applying finance models, distribution models and risk mitigation, with a significance performance in its scope of coverage and loan repayment. However, the major challenges of the programme which were identified by the study were sharp practices perpetrated by officials of participating institutions (PFIs) and multiple stakeholders. To resolve these challenges, the study recommended the creation of a special purpose vehicle (SPV) by the CBN which will accommodate the stakeholders and ease implementation of the programme.

In the same year, that is 2021, another study was conducted by Opeyemi and Osabohien which was aimed at assessing the impact of ABP on the productivity of youth rice farmers in northern Nigeria. The study used cross-sectional data of youth rice farmers in Kaduna State. It adopted both probit regression and instrumental variable IV regression analyses. Probit regression was used to examine the determinants of youth participation in ABP’s rice production initiative while instrumental variable IV regression was applied to mitigate selection bias. Findings identified marital status, education, access to credit, and membership of cooperative society as major determinants of youth participation in the ABP. The results further indicated that youth participation increased rice production by about 42.46 percent implying that more youths are needed to boost the production of rice under the ABP.

Anchor Borrower’ Programme: A Brief History

The ABP was initiated by the CBN and launched on November 17, 2015 by the Buhari administration. The aim of the programme was to create synergies among stakeholders and catalyze the agricultural production value chain. Akinwale (2022), states that ABP was initiated to bridge the financing deficits of smallholder farmers (SHFs). The thrust of the ABP is, therefore, the provision of farm inputs in cash and kind to SHFs in order to boost production, stabilize input supply to agro-processors, improve foreign exchange, and address or reverse the country’s negative balance of payments on food. The ABP focuses on ramping up agricultural production, boosting non-oil exports thereby diversifying the revenue base of the country. It also aims at providing economic linkages between SHFs and commodity processors (anchor companies involved in processing) with a view to increasing major agricultural output and ensuring food price stability (Akinfenwa, 2022; CBN, 2021). The specific objectives of the programme are improving agricultural financing, creating smart and innovative farmers and farming practices, as well as transiting from subsistence to commercial agriculture (CBN, 2021). The transformation of agriculture through this model is expected to concomitantly create jobs, reduce food importation and conserve foreign reserves. Initially, the programme targeted SHFs who are cultivating legumes, cereals, vegetables, root and tree crops. However, at present, both medium-scale and large-scale farmers are incorporated into the programme.

Governance Structure of ABP

The ABP operates a governance structure comprising multiple stakeholders and actors which can be grouped into public-based stakeholders and private-inclined stakeholders as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Stakeholders in ABP

Public-based stakeholders	Private-based stakeholders
1 Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMA&RD)	1 Agro processors (anchors)
2 Federal Ministry of Water Resources (FMWR)	2 Commodity associations
3 Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment (FMIT&I)	3 Financial institutions
4 CBN	4 Insurance companies
5 State Governments	5 SHFs
6 Project Management Teams (PMTs)	6 Medium-scale farmers
7 Research Institutes	7 Large-scale farmers

Source: Compiled by the authors (2022).

The data in table 1 represent stakeholders in the ABP, each possessing a specific role, with the CBN as the overseer or overall manager. While the three federal ministries collaborate to provide expertise advice and services regarding production (FMA&RD), trade and exports (FMIT&I), and resource availability (FMWR), state governments as stakeholders are mandated to constitute PMTs for each project, research institutes provide knowledge and cutting-edge researches on farming practices and seed variety and improvement to enhance better yield for farmers on the programme. Insurance

companies are present to provide agricultural insurance cover with array of value-added services. The rest of the stakeholders in the table are discussed in detail in the next subsection of the article.

Notable Stakeholders in the ABP

The CBN – is a primary stakeholder that oversees the management and administration of the ABP. It funds the entire programme and bears 50 percent credit risk in the event of non-recovery of loans by the PFIs.

The PFIs – these are financial institutions through which beneficiary farmers access the ABP's loans. Principal among them are deposit money banks (DMBs). Others are development finance institutions (DFIs) such as Bank of Agriculture (BOA), Bank of Industry (BOI), Development Bank of Nigeria (DBN). Microfinance Banks (MFIs), non-profit interest banks also form part of the PFIs.

Anchors – an anchor is a duly registered, reputable company with capacity to off-take produce/output at agreed prices. It may be a processor or off-taker that can identify a PFI willing to partner with it to provide validated farmland (CBN, 2021). In simple terms, an anchor is a registered company involved in agro processing. The anchor pays and collects the farmers' produce.

PMTs – the PMTs are constituted by state governments to coordinate and monitor ABP projects within the states. Each PMT is for a specific project such as rice farm, poultry farm, cocoa farm and so forth. The membership of each PMT is standardized with a representative of PFIs as chair while the co-chair is rotated among the representatives of anchor, commodity association, cooperative association, and state government. Heads of states' ADP (Agricultural Development Programme), representatives of farmers and insurance companies are also members.

Service provider – this is also a duly registered company with the capacity and expertise to dispense services such as farm mapping, extension services, aggregation, mechanization, input supply and distribution, and farm monitoring (CBN, 2021). The service providers are professional firms specialized in agro-allied farming activities that can provide inputs, render technical advice to farmers, and monitor farming activities.

Targeted beneficiaries – the targeted beneficiaries are mainly SHFs producing the identified agricultural commodities. They are regarded by the ABP as primary stakeholders. The ABP requires them to operate in groups as cooperatives or associations of between 5 and 20 for easy identification and administration (Nigeria Farmers' Group [NFG], nd). Medium-scale farmers (MSFs) and large-scale farmers (LSFs) are also recognized by the scheme. However, these categories of farmers do not necessarily need to form associations or cooperative societies to access loans.

Financing and Operating Mechanisms

The ABP, instead of leveraging private sector finance like most other collaborations do, draws its funding from the CBN – a public agency. The funding is in form of loans to farmers without collateral (Akinfenwa, 2022). The ABP operates two loanable models: the first is the private sector-led window where loans are accessed by farmers through the private anchors and commodity associations or cooperative societies. The second is the public sector-led window also known as state model in which the state government guarantees participating farmers in their state and undertake the responsibility of loan repayment and off-take of produce (CBN, 2021). In both models, the funds are paid directly into the benefiting farmer's account duly verified, confirmed and certified by a PFI. After the harvest,

the benefiting farmers repay their loans by handing over their harvest to anchors (agro-processors) who pay the cash equivalent to the farmers’ account (Mojeed, 2022; CBN, 2021).

Performance Indicators of ABP

The ABP has recorded some significant success since its inauguration. Prior to its introduction, there were less than 10 functional Rice Milling Plants in Nigeria with a combined capacity of a little over 350,000mt (metric tons). However, the emergence of the ABP triggered or galvanized more than 60 Integrated Rice Mills across the country with a combined capacity of over 3mmt (million metric tons) as at year 2022, and 10 more were up for commissioning in the same year (Shuaibu, 2022). Similarly, from 1999-2015 (before the advent of ABP), rice production in the country was barely 2.4mmt. But with ABP, production of the crop rose from 3.9mmt in 2015 to 4.5mmt in 2016, indicating a 15 percent increase (Mojeed, 2022); and by 2019, production had gone up to 5.0mmt. The data in table 2 provide insights into the trend in rice production driven by the ABP.

Table 2: Trend in rice production under ABP

Year	mmt
2015	3.9
2016	4.5
2017	4.5
2018	4.5
2019	5.0
2020	4.8
2021	5.0

Source: Compiled by the authors (2022) using Premium Times data (2022).

Table presents a picture of the trend in rice production since the inauguration of ABP in 2015. It can be observed from the data that there was a significant rise (3.9-4.5mmt) representing an increase of 15 percent in the early years of the programme (2015-2016). Thereafter, production remained constant (4.5mmt) up to 2019. The years 2019 and 2021 recorded peaks (based on this distribution) in rice production. The drop from 5.0mmt in 2019 to 4.8mmt in 2020 is attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic, which occasioned a lockdown of close to 10 months, accompanied by the vagaries of insecurity and climate change.

The CPM synergies forged through the instrumentality of the ABP led to massive support to farmers across the country which galvanized the production of particularly rice up to 7.5mmt annually (Mojeed, 2022). In 2021, for instance, paddy rice pyramids were launched in the states of Ekiti and Kebbi. This was followed, in 2022, by the unveiling of 1million bags of the same product in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. As a result of these, Nigeria was ranked the 14th highest rice producer in the global pecking order and highest in Africa (CBN, 2021).

Challenges of the ABP CPM

Like all other CPM engagements, the ABP is enmeshed in difficulties which tend to affect its performance and even pose existential and sustainability threats to it. Actor-behaviour is the primary challenge in the ABP CPM initiative and has generated a range of concerns and controversies among beneficiaries of the programme. Just as Shapiro (2005) and O’Leary and Vij (2012) observe, it appears the personal goals and interests of some of the actors or participants supersede those of the ABP or are incompatible with the programme’s overall mission.

First among the actor-behaviour-induced challenges is the nonchalant attitude towards loan repayment and debt servicing (Akinfenwa, 2022) which culminated in massive loan default by beneficiaries across the country. It was reported (Azeez, 2021) that over N77.18 billion was owed CBN by farmers. Adewale, Danjuma, Akhaine and Idris (2021) report that 70,000 rice farmers in Kebbi State benefitted from ABP's loans in 2015 but only 200 of them repaid. The same reporters state that 80 percent of farmers in Kano State could not pay their loans while less than 50 percent of Kaduna State farmers were able to repay their loan facilities.

Second, accusations of marginalization, alienation and favouritism trailed the ABP in some regions like the southeast, south-south and south-west on the one hand while partisan disbursement of loans and disbursement of loans to non-farmers characterized the other.

Third, the allegations of marginalization, alienation and favouritism in the disbursement of loans raise much dust about trust among stakeholders and actors within the ABP. Prospective participants especially farmers complain of so much trust deficit in the scheme, which has waned or diminished the relationship among the players and discouraged wide participation in the programme. Eriksson et al. (2020) warn that for CPM to succeed there must be trust among actors. This trust, the authors stress, emanate from shared and cordial relationships which enhance mutual understanding. They emphasize that relationships are crucial and indeed constitute the actual network in the teams because knowledge, ideas and information are brought and received by participants. Collaborations function better and more fruitful when the relationships among individual agents representing their principals are stronger and cordial. Stronger ties and relationships create mutual dependence among players. As Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) aver, CPM assumes that actors are mutually dependent and cannot achieve their objectives without resources that are possessed by other actors.

Fourth, there are also issues involving lack of political will to participate or mobilize participation in the programme by some governors like those of the southwest and southeast (Akinfenwa, 2022). for CPM to work effectively, Eriksson et al. (2020) assert that beside the shared principles, having clear, uninterrupted plans and well articulated goals to be achieved is always critical and important.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Nigeria is not left behind in the inter-sector and inter-organizational synergies for solving wicked problems provided by the CPM. The experience with ABP indicates that CPM as a governance tool is indeed feasible or practicable in Nigeria. A major point of departure of the ABP from most other CPM approaches across countries is that funding is with tax payers' money provided by the CBN in contrast to private sector financing otherwise the governance structure of ABP reflects that of any other CPM. Although significant achievements have been recorded especially in the realm of rice production, numerous pitfalls and challenges exist which tend to threaten not only the success but also the sustainability. Actor-behaviour constitute by far a major drawback. It has precipitated goal incompatibility among the actors, which has adversely affected the virtues of transparency and accountability, as well as undermined trust among participants. Oversight and monitoring are, therefore, imperative to prevent or curtail sharp practices by actors who pursue personal interest at the expense of the programme's goals and objectives. There is equally the need to strengthen the political will and commitment to shared principles by, particularly, public collaborators like state governments, whose roles are critical in terms of mobilizing participation, guaranteeing loan disbursement and recovery among others. Overall, therefore, CPM has potentials and prospects to succeed in Nigeria (as exemplified in the ABP) if the right environment is entrenched for it.

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