

Strong organisations in weak states : atypical public sector performance in dysfunctional environments

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Propositions Accompanying the Thesis

Strong Organisations in Weak States

By

Joe Abah

1. The literature on atypical performance in dysfunctional environments, though limited, consists of a plethora of inconsistent propositions, hypotheses and theories, many of which are equally applicable in good governance environments. This means that academics in this field are often unable to answer the simple question: "So, what do you recommend?" (Chapter 1).
2. Although colonialism had adverse effects on Africa's development, fifty years of independence is sufficient to reverse many of its negative effects. There is a need to live down the past and move on like some post-colonial countries have done (Chapter 2).
3. Although Culture is an important consideration, it has very little effect on the ability of public organisations to achieve atypical performance in dysfunctional environments (Chapter 2).
4. It is now common knowledge that even in the most difficult institutional environments, exceptional, well-functioning, government and government-supported agencies do exist. Despite operating in an environment of weak state capacity and ineffective public sector organisation, these so-called "pockets of productivity" can be formed and continue to thrive in environments that are generally hostile for productivity and results (Chapter 2).
5. Organisational effectiveness can often be a precursor to the ability to attract and maintain the required level of funding (Chapter 7).
6. Open, transparent and merit-based recruitment is important. However, it is not enough to introduce a set of rules or procedures for hiring staff. More important is that recruitment is primarily for the purpose of improving performance, rather than for patronage or rents.
7. Where two organisations performing similar functions are on similar pay scales, my study offers no evidence that pay is a key determinant of organisational performance.
8. It is important to focus on outputs in measuring performance. However, delivering outputs cannot be the sole measure for good public sector performance. When an organisation loses credibility, public support and political backing, performance statistics pale into insignificance (Chapter 7)

9. The determinism of the three main strands of institutional theory (rational choice, historical and sociological) is challenged by the very existence of atypical organisations. Institutions can pose constraints to organisational performance, but these constraints are not so binding as to be insurmountable (Chapter 7).
10. Public sector organizations in dysfunctional environments are more likely to overcome institutional constraints and perform well when there is convergent demand (i.e., a convergence of pressure, power and passion) in their mandate area (Chapter 8).