

Capacity Building and Utilization in the Public Service: An Assessment of Project e-Delta

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of project e-Delta on efficient service delivery in Delta State Civil Service. Delta State Government in 2000 established project e-Delta, a platform to change the hitherto manual ways of running government business to electronic ways for the purpose of improving efficiency and effectiveness in the public service. The study investigates the seeming poor service delivery, in spite of government subsisting efforts in capacity building and utilization. The paper also examines the relationship between pre-training and post training activities in Delta State Civil Service. The study also reveals vital empirical evidence of yawning gap between pre-training and post training activities in some government ministries, Departments and Agencies. The paper recommends measures to mitigate identified gap in order to ensure that the objectives of project e-Delta are fully realized.

Keywords: Capacity Building, Capacity Utilization, Civil Service, Public Service Project e-Delta

Introduction

Over the years, the issue on Capacity Building and utilization has dominated discourse amongst scholars, experts and public private sector administration. Similarly, in the past, commentators and researchers have shown concentration of effects in either capacity building or capacity utilization. In this connection, according to Olugbemi (2001: vii) “the received wisdom in the field inadvertently leaves a yawning gap between pre-training and post training activities. A positive relation between the two is desirable if the result of such an enterprise will be fully realized”. While it is built into appropriate use in other words, gain of capacity building becomes immeasurable if properly utilized. This is true because, if there is no capacity utilization, resources ploughed into developing such capacity would have been wasted. This paper attempts to identify the existing relationship between pre-training and post training activities in Personnel Administration and the impact of such relationship in enhancing productivity. Capacity building and utilization find relevance in private and public sectors of our economy. It is even more relevant at national levels, and the world over. According to Third World Academy of Science (TWAS) quoted in Oni (2005:1415):

Problem in developing world can only be tackled by improving the capacity of both personnel and institutions. While developing capacity requires planning and persistence, sustaining and utilizing it often prove even more difficult. The challenges, therefore is how to develop and maintain a minimum capacity or critical mass of highly qualified, innovative scientists, technology and managers in each country.

Additionally, Capacity building could be in the area of individual (improving individual skills and competence), or institution (building or strengthening of institutional framework, or government policy towards enhancing capacity building and utilization).

Corollary, therefore, capacity building and utilization in personnel administration presupposes that all the efforts are deployed in developing manpower, in terms of educating, training, and development of personnel. It also involves all efforts in building and strengthening government institutions and policy framework which translate to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of personnel administration to delivering its mandate more effectively. In 2000, the Delta State Government introduced project e-Delta, a clearly IT enablement project, designed on a wide spread introduction of computers to conduct daily work activities and a world class business application to enhance service delivery in Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government. Its aim was to instill international or global best practices into public service of Delta State.

This study is an assessment of the project e-Delta and its service delivery in Delta State Civil Service. The strategy and tools adopted by Delta State Government in implementing the various policy objectives in capacity building are encapsulated in its annual budget between 2000 to 2006. The same policy objectives are as enunciated in Change Agent Information Pack. (Ofuani 2006:29)

- i. Strengthening and improving the existing spending and procurement guidelines as to ensure timely implementation of the budget, value for money and reduce resource wastage.
- ii. Capacity building of personnel to enhance efficiency in public service through training and retraining of officers.
- iii. Computerization of all ministries via “system application and products” linking government activities to modern information and communication technology for efficient service delivery.
- iv. The public-private sector partnerships are being thoroughly explored especially in the areas where such co-operation will lead to improved service delivery.
- v. Government introduction of a new service delivery concept known as service delivery compact or ‘SEVICOM’ aims to improve service delivery and help to check corruption and inefficiency in running government business.
- vi. Strengthening existing institutional capacity for monitoring and evaluation of government projects and programs. General public were also encouraged to assist government in monitoring on-going projects and programs in their localities via the well-publicized Public Complaints Desk (P.C.D) located in the Ministry of Economic Planning, (Ojie, 2006). It must be noted that checking corruption, inefficiency and ensuring due process in government spending and procurement have taken a new dimension since the establishment of Project e-Delta.

Statement of Problem

This paper seeks to investigate the seeming low capacity building and utilization in Delta State Civil Service in spite of subsisting government efforts. The paper also tries to assess the impact of project e-Delta as a change agent, an IT – enablement of the Delta State Government business process in capacity building and utilization in its public service as a panacea to poor service delivery. The paper attempts to identify the gap between pre- and post-training activities in project e-Delta, and why Global best practice still pervade the civil service of Delta State.

Conceptual Clarification

Capacity Building

The term capacity has been defined variously by many scholars and authorities. According to Yahaya (2004:167):

Capacity in the context of public sector is the ability of the government, by the combination of resources, to design and implement good policies for sustainable development, promote human welfare and create an enabling environment for economic growth and prosperity. Capacity building as a process will, therefore, include the investment in human resources through training and manpower development, and the adoption of best practices in public sector management.

It therefore follows that inadequate human and institutional capacity is a serious impediment to development. The World Bank, a strong advocate of capacity building had identified it as the: “Missing Link” in Africa’s Development process. It is imperative to note that before capacity building is contemplated there must be a desideratum. (Need) i.e. skill deficiencies must exist? This view is consistent with Iyayi’s assertion (2000:780) that;

The reason for failure in the past and the envisaged possibility of failure in the future is simple: the desire for change was and is still fad driven in many of those organizations. Yet, experience shows that unless an organization transformation effort is need driven, it is likely to be abandoned as soon as another innovative management approach makes its appearance.

According to Maduabum (2001: Viii) “the proposition handed in is that the full benefit of capacity building and utilization are likely to be realized in a situation where the following conditions are present;

- i. A prior determination of skills deficiencies in advance of training action.
- ii. Identification and selection of personnel who are deficient (need) in skill and are anxious to improve through training.
- iii. Identification, selection and use of training programs which have high potentials for the acquisition of the required skill.
- iv. The determination and administration of post-training scheme with ample opportunities for the use skills acquired through training.
- v. Identification and administration of an adequate post-training reward scheme to motivate the newly trained to apply the skills he had acquired, and
- vi. Provision of leadership support to the trained personnel for the application of acquired skills and ideas.

From the foregoing, capacity building can be conceptualized as all the efforts and activities made towards enhancing individuals disposition to learning relevant skills, competencies and aptitudes which enables him to develop tasks much better in attaining set target or goals. Ajayi (2006: 28) Sees “Capacity as the process by which individuals, organizations, and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problems, set and achieve goals.” Capacity building according to Ajayi (2006: 28) refers to:

Activities that improve an organizations ability to achieve its mission or a person’s ability to define and realize his/her goals or to do his/her job more effectively. At individual level, capacity building many relate to leadership development, advocacy skills, training/speaking abilities, technical skills, organizing skills, and other areas of personal and professional development. For

organizations, capacity may relate to almost any aspect of its work, improved governance, leadership, mission, vision and strategy, administrative (including human resource, financial management, legal matters) marketing and positioning, etc. for country, capacity building is a long term continuing process, in which all stakeholders including ministries, local, Authorities, Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) among other participate.

Capacity therefore, is the process by which individuals, organizations and societies develop abilities to perform functions, solve problem, and set and achieve goals premised on ownership, choice and self-esteem. It deals with sustainable creation, retention, and utilization of capacity in order to reduce poverty, enhance self-reliance and improve people.

In both the old and new views of development, human capital formation and human capital utilization assume relevance. Human capital is a stock concept just like physical capital. It is therefore, not surprising that in endogenous growth models, which like the new classical growth model before it has a mechanical view of the growth process, human capital enters the growth models as input (Garba 2002:616).

It must be noted, that human resource is a key factor in any organization, for every reform, innovation or re-engineering efforts by any organization that desires change to enhance productivity and efficiency, needs to educate, train and re-train and as well develop the capital to bring about a sustainable growth and development. Iyayi (2000:777) observes that “organizations do not actually change: only the people in the organizations do, when individuals change their attitude, improve their competence, skills, change their values and beliefs, organization and its performance would seem to change”. Therefore, people are agents of change. People in an organization must agree to change to meet organizational desire of innovation or transformation. It is the human person that will bring the desired change that will translate into achieving set objectives of organization. Human resources rather than capital or income or material resources consist the ultimate basis for the wealth of the nation. This explains why training and re-training, and education of personnel (i.e. human capacity building and utilization) have remained a central focus of any organization whether private or public sector that desires to achieve sustainable growth and development.

Capacity Utilization

Capacity utilization, according to Maduabum (2001:26) is “matching of men, their skills, potentials and their level of development with available or projected jobs in a given process of production”. This definition pre-supposes that capacity utilization is getting the right caliber of men for the right job, a square peg in a square hole, so as to achieve the organizational set goals. It is only at this point that we consider utilization as good and profitable.

For any government or organization to achieve its set objectives, its human capacity must be utilized optimally. It must be, noted that there are nine major (elements) that must always be considered when an organization or institution is desirous to achieve optimal utilization of its human resource for the attainment of higher productivity. They are planning, selection/placement, organizing, manpower development and training, motivation, controlling and leadership. Aside from the bread objectives of capacity building and utilization need, organizations carry out staff development for a number of reasons, via:

- (i) To improve staff performance and eliminate incompetence
- (ii) For the newly engaged staff, it is to match employee’s abilities with the job requirement.

- (iii) To improve on quality of work thus leading to higher productivity and efficiency.
- (iv) To keep staff continuously abreast with the new development/technology.
- (v) To reduce cost and waste.
- (vi) To help and identify personnel lacking in skills and potentials, groom them for future higher responsibilities.
- (vii) To prevent man-power and skill obsolescence overtime via the provision of in-built mechanism for updating staff knowledge and technical know-how, and
- (viii) To ensure continuity and smooth succession process and for effective mobility.

There is general acceptance of the fact that if private sector management practices are adopted in the operation of the public sector, this may help to improve performance and efficiency of the service delivery in the sector (Musa 2006:20) In the same vein, Uda-Aka (2000:14) agrees with Musa, when he opines that “a complete shift in the ways government carries out its business is inevitable such that it permits us to challenge established axioms and re-examine some government policies”.

Delta State

On 27th August 1991 Delta State was created along eight other states of Abia, Anambra, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kogi, Ogun, Taraba and Yobe by General Ibrahim Babaginda’s administration under section 1(i) of States Creation and Transitional Provision Decree No 2, 41 of 1991.

Delta state has an estimated population of 4million people. It has a total area of about 18,000 square kilometers of which over 50% is mangrove swamp with about 160km long coast line. It lies roughly between latitude 50:00 and 60:30 North and longitude 50:00 and 60:45 East. The state has a work force of 10,555 by 2012 (Tetsola 2014:37).

Civil Service

Civil Service of a country or state consists of its Governments’ Ministries Development and Agencies, and all the people who work in them. However, it should be noted that in some countries, the departments concerned with military and legal affairs are not part of the civil service. Civil service is part of public sector of any economy. The public sector is usually composed of organizations owned and operated by the government. It includes Federal, States and local governments. The government institution, as public service provider, provides free public services, essential services, with little or no profit motives, but for the welfare of the citizens.

Basic Principles of Public Service

Hierarchy of Authority: This simply means the orderly arrangement and distribution of power, functions, positions and authority in an organization

Political Direction: Public Service obtains leadership from politics. This principle shows that administration obtains instruction from politics in providing the needed services to the people.

Unity of Command: This means that each member of the organization should receive order from one supervisor. This is to avoid conflict and confusion.

Public Responsibility: Political representative are responsible for their acts of omissions and commissions. It also stipulates the need for accountability to the people.

Unity of Direction: Organization is effective when members work together towards achieving same objectives. Individual interest must be subordinated to the organizational objectives.

Public Relations: this means that the general public must be informed about government programmes and activities.

Chain of Command: Power and Authority linkage, order and power must flow from the top to the bottom in an unbroken order to make for proper communication of decision taken at each level of authority.

Social Necessity: The essence of public service is the process of formulating and implementing public policies. The policies go to express the will of the people via the provision of social amenities.

Span of Control: the number of people a Supervisor should control should not be too large, i.e. the supervisor should be able to coordinate the activities of the subordinates.

Division of Labour: This is the division of work or specialization which promotes high productivity.

Authority and responsibility: this is the right to give orders to subordinates and be responsible and accountable for such orders.

Discipline: This is respect for and obedient to rules and goals of the organization.

Efficiency: Power to accomplish expected result career development via pre-entry and in-service training programmes, all to promote efficiency.

Organization: These are observable levels of government, e.g. Federal, State, Local Governments, Legislature, Executive and Judiciary formal structure for effective use of resources and services.

Equity: Kindness, justice, impartiality to all workers and citizen in the organization.

Spirit-De-corp.: This is unity. Union is strength. Workers need to cooperate to be able to achieve organizational set goals.

Project e-Delta

When the civilian administration of Delta State led by the immediate past Governor, Chief James Onanefe Ibori took over the mantle of leadership in May 1999, the payment and accounting system of the state and its general operations were largely manual. Worrisome areas that posed serious challenge to the government at inception of the administration were weaknesses and leakages in the manual system, annual budget preparation, monthly cash budget and payment processing/approval (warrant preparation), annual statutory accounts, management report, project accounting and personnel audit, (Okpokpor, 2007).

To cope with the above challenges and also instill best practices into in the public service, the state government, in 2000, embarked on a systematic and phased computerization of her operations beginning with the ministry of finance and Economic Planning. Project e-DELTA is IT-enablement of Delta State as a change agent, business process, a wide spread introduction of computers to conduct daily operations of government and world class application of internet facilities adopted to enhance prompt and efficient service delivery in the Public Service (Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government). In spite of the initial challenges such as change management, training costs, business process issue and On-line Support Services (OSS) link and power outages, the project e-DELTA recorded the following benefits:

- (i) Internet Facilities.
- (ii) Accuracy and timeliness of overall business process.
- (iii) Increased convenience in discharging official duties.
- (iv) Budget control.
- (v) Improved Audit trail.
- (vi) Final reporting tool.
- (vii) Authorization and Access control.
- (viii) Standard Due Process.
- (ix) Paperless office and web-enable management system.

While assessing the success of the project e-DELTA, Chinedum Nwoko Consultant to World Bank, asserted that “certainly, the Delta State pilot is by far, more advanced and more concrete than what exist elsewhere in Nigeria’s public administration including at Federal Level”. (Okpokpo, 2007:14). This assertion is instructive because right now in a number of ministries, Departments and Agencies of Delta State Government, a good number of civil servants have keyed into the project.

Theoretical Framework

In this paper, we have applied the Requisite Analysis or Structural Functionalism and Communication theory. The requisite analysis which was developed by Robert Marton was more focused on the third world countries where people are prone to learning application and adaptation. It shares the standard western type of governmental structure, while communication theory is a new modern information and technology as well as physiology of nervous system to analyze the situation (Mbah, 2006). According to Deutsen (1963), power depends on the coordination of human efforts which is based on information and ability to communicate effectively. He argued that the political system is the system of decision making and enforcement with the network of communication channels.

A leading Scholar, McLuhan (1967) opines that technology inevitably causes specific change on how people think, how society is structured and in the form of culture that are created. The technological determinism theory is also apt in this study because it is used to determine the role communication technologies are playing in the sphere of human communication (Baran and Davis’ 2006). Changes in communication model largely determine the course of history. The theory regards the under dimension of information craze in society as a direct result of information explosion fostered by ICTs.

The move towards online public-sector service has proved difficult for Nigeria. In 2012, Nigeria ranked 162nd out of 193 countries in the global UN e-government survey down from 150th in 2010. A recent UN scholar article also notes that “Nigeria has the fastest growing and most incredible telecommunication and information and communication technology (ICT) market in Africa, yet in spite of this obvious and significant progress it is still ranking low in e-government (Adeyemo 2011:18).

Methodology

The study applied the Survey Research Method. Secondary data were collected from government document/report, book, internet news-letters and journals, while primary data was sourced through interview and questionnaire structured to elicit information on the subject matter, from ten ministries in Delta State Civil Service. The Rensis-Likert format of questionnaire was adopted with five point grading system SA, A, UD, SD & D. The population of study is 10555 made up of 6,119 male and 4,436 female staff of Delta State Civil Service. To determine the sample size, Yamane’s (1985: 250) Proportional Sampling Technique was used as shown below: the sampling formula is represented by the following equation;

N= Population

n - Sample

e – Margin of error with value from 0.01- 0.10, (0.05) is chosen for this study I constant

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Thus, the sample Size (n) for the study was determined from the total number of senior staff of 10,555

$$n = \frac{10555}{1 + 10555(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{10555}{27.4}$$

$$n = 385$$

The reliability coefficients of the instruments were established using the test retest method. Data obtained, yielded reliability coefficient of 0.82 and 0.85 respectively, using alpha formula by Cronbach. Data collected for the study were analyzed using 5 point Likert scale measurement and percentage (%), and data presented in tabular formats.

THE STAFF STRENGTH OF DELTA STATE CIVIL SERVICE FROM 2000- 2012

S/NO.	YEARS/ PERIOD	STAFF STRENGTH		TOTAL
		MALE	FEMALE	
1	2000	3,547	1,568	5,115
2	2001	4,614	2,148	6,762
3	2002	5,769	2,863	8,632
4	2003	5,933	2,901	8,834
5	2004	5,966	2,971	8,937
6	2005	5,862	3,042	8,904
7	2006	5,970	3,407	9,377
8	2007	6,051	3,487	9,548
9	2008	5,854	3,462	9,316
10	2009	5,767	3,501	9,268
11	2010	6,194	4,078	10,272
12	2011	6,053	4,141	10,194
13	2012	6,119	4,436	10,555

Sources: Tetsola, E.A (2014) Chairman, Civil Service Commission, Asaba

Findings and Discussion

The process of data collection and analysis produced some finding which confirmed some fundamental constraints inherent in capacity building and utilization in public service. The researcher administered 400 questionnaires to staff of the Delta State Civil Service and selected 385 properly completed questionnaire for analysis.

The data presentation and analysis of responses from respondents are shown in annexure 1

In the finding, the researcher observed that there are infrastructural constraints, financial constraints, institutional and human capacity constraints which negatively impact on the efficiency of project e-Delta in meeting its set goals of enhancing prompt and efficient service delivery.

Infrastructural Constraints

Inadequate infrastructural facilities in public sector are key factors that hamper effective and efficient operation of government institutions. Generally, the Civil Service has a history of being incapable of carrying out necessary maintenance of its machinery and equipment. This is reflected in the responses obtained for questions 8 and 10 on dearth of infrastructure and poor maintenance culture of government establishments. In question 8, three hundred and seventy seven (367) respondents representing 95% agreed that the irregular power supply for I.T operation hampered efficient service delivery. Similarly, question 10 shows that two hundred and ten (210) respondents, representing 54.4% agreed that inadequate computers and poor maintenance culture account for inefficient service delivery in the operations of project e-delta

Financial Constraints

Budget allocation is the primary source of funding of manpower development programme in public service. It is always not enough; thus in question 2, two hundred and five (205) respondents, representing 53.3% agree that there is poor funding of the project e-Delta. Limited fund affects the attainment of set goals in capacity building and utilization in public service of Delta State. Perhaps, this account in part for the huge gap between training activities and outcome of goals of Delta State Government in terms of Project e-Delta. 207 respondents, representing 80% agree to the fact that there is a huge gap. See question 11.

Institutional Constraints

Leadership and management style of chief executives sometimes affects capacity planning and execution in terms of defining clear objectives, vision and future needs of an organization. As can be seen in question 3, two hundred and eighty five (285) respondents, representing 74% agreed that political interference affect selection of staff to be trained by the consultant, which also bother on leadership, and management of capacity building and utilization. This negatively impact on actual outcome of personnel in the service. Similarly, appropriate placement after training was not properly implemented as can be seen in question 7. Two hundred and seventeen respondents, (217), representing 56% confirmed trained officers were not properly given appropriate placement after training.

Human Capacity Constraints

The state workforce of 10,555 as at 2012 staff appeared to be bloated and that makes it a difficult task for training of personnel. The structure, composition, including poor measurement performance evaluation in terms of those requiring training has becomes difficult to determine. In the Ministries of Finance and Economic Planning, time managers, super-users, solution team etc. had challenges coordinating subordinate staff.

The synergy between MDAs in project e-Delta appeared to be poorly coordinated because not all staff identified for training were actually trained. The reflection on motivation in question 9, shows that 271 respondents, representing 70% agreed that there was poor motivation. Poor motivation is a critical factor promotes low productivity and poor service delivery. Poor motivation produces low morale. Corruption was also observed to be prevalent in the process of selection of staff that need skill in ICT, see question 5; about 285% respondents, representing 74% confirmed that corruption was a major challenge affecting capacity building and utilization in project e-Delta

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the paper makes the following recommendations;

- (i) The political leaders should make themselves a core team of trained leaders who can inspire the bureaucrats to implement government plans and targets/programs with determination, creativity and innovativeness to help develop the state into efficient and effective organ of society.
- (ii) A modern and reliable data bank and high-speed data processing unit of Project e-Delta should be and strengthened for efficient and prompt service delivery. The government should widen the scope and spread of e-government and to link all personnel in the various MDAs.
- (iii) A more reliable and credible identification of training needs of civil servant be promptly carried out across all MDAs. Officers trained should be posted to appropriate units for efficient service delivery and capacity utilization.
- (iv) More funds should be allocated for the provision of infrastructure, equipment and maintenance of necessary facilities and computers including provision of electricity at work hours.
- (v) Training and re-training be improved upon and motivation of trained staff should be effected to encourage high productivity, and
- (vi) Train the trainer programme should be developed, so that the trained personnel would in turn train others, so that the overall objectives of project e-Delta can be fully realized.

Conclusion

One needs hardly emphasize the strategic importance of effective capacity building and utilization in personnel administration for growth and development of any organization. If Delta State Government must attain its set goals in ensuring efficient service delivery and meeting the yawning gap in capacity utilization, it must train and retrain the civil servants (Bureaucrats) to meet the modern economic challenges. Therefore, the need to bridge the gap in capacity building and utilization becomes imperative in order to actualize the goals of project e-Delta. Government also needs to provide enabling environment, by way of provision of infrastructural facilities, provision of adequate funds for training programs motivate its work force, as well as strengthening institutional frameworks to mitigate any gap arising from capacity building and utilization in Delta State Ministries, Department and Agencies with respect to project e-Delta.

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Table 1: Responses by Respondents on Project e-delta Questionnaire

Annexure 1

S/ N	Questionnaire	Strongly agree	%	Agree	%	Undecided	%	Strongly Disagree	%	Disagree	%
1	Do you agree that Delta State Civil Service has adequate qualified Personnel?	200	51.9	180	46.8	-	-	-	-	5	1.3
	Delta State Government failed to make adequate annual budget provision for staff training for project e-delta from 2000-2010?	60	15.6	145	37.7	10	2.6	80	20.8	90	23
3	Do you agree that there is political interference in selection of staff to be trained in project e-delta?	100	25.9	185	48.0	2	0.5	40	10.3	58	15.0
4	Do you agree that officers in charge of selection of officers to be trained failed to identify personnel that are deficient in skill that really need training?	88	22.8	185	48.0	10	2.6	12	3.1	90	23
5	Do you agree that corruption is a major factor affecting efficient capacity building and utilization in project e-delta?	90	23.3	195	50.6	8	2.0	80	20.8	12	3.1
6	Do you agree that there is a positive relationship between pre-training and post training activities for officers trained for project e-delta?	60	15.5	160	41.5	5	1.2	60	15.5	100	25.9
7	Do you agree that trained officers under project e-delta are not given appropriate placement?	95	24.6	122	31.6	8	2.0	90	23.3	70	18.1

8	There are poor and irregular power supply for ICT. use, thus hamper efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery compact.	207	53.7	160	41.5	-	-	8	2.0	10	2.6
9	Do you agree that there is poor motivation of trained personnel in project e-delta programme and this make for poor service delivery	111	28.8	160	41.5	4	1.0	20	5.1	90	23.3
10	Do you agree that the core objective of project e-delta has been full realized because of inadequate computers and poor maintenance culture of infrastructure?	80	20.7	130	33.7	5	1.2	70	18.1	100	25.9
11	Do you agree that there is a gap between trained staff for the project e-delta and original government set goals?	85	22	222	57.6	2	0.5	33	8.5	43	11.1
12	Do you agree that there has been improvement in service delivery now than before project e-delta was introduced?	125	32.5	114	29.5	6	1.5	60	15.5	80	20.7