
POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION: IMPLICATIONS TO NIGERIA GOVERNANCE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

REMIGIUS, EDWIN CHUKWUDINSO

edwinchukwudinsoremigius@gmail.com

08066776052

Department of public administration
Federal polytechnic oko, anambra, nigeria

EMEBO, OLUCHUKWU SAMUEL

oluchukwuemebo@gmail.com

Department of public administration
Federal polytechnic oko, anambra, nigeria

&

REMIGIUS, CHIDINMA URENNA

chidinmauranna@gmail.com

Lifestyle Hotel and Events, Amakpala, Oko,
Anambra, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The role of public administration in the political process has been of great concern since the emergence of public administration as an academic field in the late 1880s. Public administration relates to the political process which is of pivotal importance to scholars and practitioners as it bears implications for disciplinary identity and institutional development of public administration which in turn affects governance of the state. Contemporary Nigeria is plagued with the problems of widespread poverty, large-scale unemployment, technological backwardness, low capacity utilization, inadequate and decayed social and physical infrastructure, and high crime rate, among others. The objective of this study is to identify the challenges preventing Nigerian public administrators from playing its catalysing role in the development of the country as well as to proffer possible solutions. Data for the study were collected from secondary sources. Content analysis was adopted for the review of the empirical literature. Development Administration Theory (DAT) was used for this study propounded by Riggs (1970). One of the findings is that bribery and corruption are a bane of Nigerian public administration. The paper recommends, inter alia, the empowering of the anti-corruption institutions and ensuring effective leadership among others.

Keywords: *Politics, Public Administration, National Development, Relationship between Politics and Administration.*

INTRODUCTION

Over 20 centuries ago, a renowned philosopher Aristotle (384BC – 322BC) remarked that the State (public governance) is the conclusion of human development (teleologism). He viewed the polis, or city state, as the highest form of human social and political development, allowing its citizens to find and live the good life. He viewed the village and the family as existing to provide good life within the polis (state) (Mazi-Mbah, 2006). That is to say that governing or administering an organization, society, nation or a community of nations is basically because there is the common need to evolve, execute and maintain or improve on the policies that would ensure that people in that group or nation have a common goal. The plan, execution and controls aimed at achieving and upholding those goals constitute what administration is all about (Ichima, 1998). One of such goals could be national development which Nigeria imperatively desires.

Achimugu *et al* (2013) view national development and transformation as the main challenges which Nigeria battles with. –The country, according to Worldometer (2024), has a population of about 195 million people, with a land mass of nearly one million square kilometres which hold great potentials for all forms of agriculture, the world’s 7th largest producer of crude oil, the 5th largest country with natural gas reserves and many other solid minerals (Achimugu, et al, 2013). With these and other resources, Nigeria stands the chance of being one of the world’s most prosperous nations.

The situation at hand is so complex that attempts to reverse it must be both systematic and strategic; hence the need for Nigerian public administration, with which national development is intricately interrelated, to be re-invigorated and repositioned for better performance, because a strong bureaucratic/administrative machinery can enhance genuine efforts at national development, and vice versa. The media (both print and electronic) are replete with cases of bureaucratic/administrative fragility, corruption, inefficiency and unethical behaviour which often render policy implementation difficult and sometimes impossible. For instance, for the issuance of national identity cards in Nigeria, US\$214 million went down the drains with nobody to account for it (Daily Sun, 2010). Another instance concerns an Inspector General of Police (the highest position in the Nigerian Police Force) who was convicted and sacked for corrupt enrichment (Adegbe *et al*, 2013). These and similar deficiencies which are widespread and systemic penetrates public institutions in Nigeria. Achimugu *et al* (2013) corroborates this by stating that for one to achieve sustainable national development that will be substantial, such effort must first address reform, begin with transformation, the repositioning and the development of the internal capacity and capability of public administration to support and drive national development.

Therefore, the objective of this paper is to examine the place and role of public administrators in national development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Politics

The changing nature of politics makes it intricate, complex and more difficult than the physical sciences. This is due to the changing nature and the complexities of man. However, the noun word “politics” is derived from a Greek word polis which means city-state. The inhabitants of the city state are naturally citizens (Kepedi, 2013). This accounts for why politics is usually an effort, a battle and struggle towards establishing order and justice. It is based on this that politics is viewed from the subjective idealism and also existential which is the view from the point of reality. This connect that, politics cannot be separated from the real political world. In the word of a Danish philosopher popularized by Sarte (1905) it is an indifferent and hostile world. This statement was corroborated by Aristotle (384-322 BC) when he observed that man by nature is a political animal and by this, he meant that the essence of social existence is politics and that two or more men interacting with one another are invariably involved in a political relationship. This resonates from the natural character of man as seeker of social companionship and abhorrer of isolation. Scholars of different backgrounds have defined politics as follows.

Harold Laswell (1937) in his famous book politics defines it as being concerned with that get what, when and how. He attempts to expand the horizon of the system to look for politics in many other social settings other than formal public government. It underscores the point that politics is about decisions made by people concerning certain objectives which they considered desirable. Harold Laswell in his definition lays emphasis on, the role of power in the distribution of scarce resources.

According to David Easton in his political system (1953) surmises politics as a process through which binding decisions on the distribution of scarce values are made for a society in a world of change. It is in this light that he views politics as the authoritative allocation of values in an organized society thus,

Easton examines the relationship between what goes into the system as demand and what comes out as decisions. In the view of Ola (1995), he sees politics as dealing with power, in the management and administration within an existing nation state and community which is an aggregate of people with shared boundaries, values and some mutual interests, feelings and behaviour. From a pluralist understanding, politics involves competitiveness between and among different interest groups who seek to maximize their advantage. Since no one particular group is seen to be dominant, politics is therefore a business of bargaining and compromise.

Public Administration

Public Administration, like every other academic term, has been conceptualized from diverse perspectives. That is why Kautilya (1999) observes that the concept has been seen as featuring heterodoxy rather than orthodoxy. Despite the many definitions of Public Administration that exist, truth about the concept is that it remains part of general administration practice which is an action targeted at some group predefined objectives (Apeh, 2014). Public administration is further seen as an art and a discipline of study (Anifowose and Enemu, 1999). Being an art, it is an instrument and process through which the government brings her policies into reality. It stands for the institution or organizational structure that acts as the fulcrum public policy making and implementation in a state. Public administration is the modern day civil service and also includes other agencies and parastatals across local, state and national levels of government levels (in a federal system of government) or central and regional levels (in a unitary system). More so, Public administration represents the channel through which public goods and services are delivered to the people within the state. Being a discipline of study, it studies the configurations and structures through which government makes policies, turns them into programmes and implements them within the state. As an academic field of study, public administration develops organizational theories at the public sector level which is very different form that of the private sector market principles and theories (McLean and McMillan, 2003).

Public administration originated from two different fields of study: political science and management. Bellow (2005) puts it differently – that public administration resonates from a parent and a foster parent. The mother discipline is political science, while management is the foster parent. Furthermore, Public administration possesses both a narrow and broad meaning and use. In the broad meaning, Public administration covers all the activities and processes within the executive, legislative and judiciary arms of government. It is this broad view of public administration that is adopted in this paper. On the other hand, the narrower meaning of public administration is concerned with only the executive branch of government. It is most times used interchangeably with other terms like government, public sector administration, and administration. The main target of Public administration is issues that affect the entire society as against issues that affect groups within the society. It is therefore concerned with the purposes of the State. Administration is carried out in an organization. In this regard, the entire society could be regarded as an organization which is called a State (Ujoh, 2001). As every State has a government which is responsible for implementation of its policies, public administration is often called government administration.

Administration as a process can take place in a variety of settings (public or private) for defined goals. It could take place in the university, prison, church, Army, courts of justice, remand homes, industrial/business centres, rehabilitation centres. It also takes at the local government, state government, national and international levels of government. Public administration is the aspect of administration found in a political setting and which is primarily concerned with the implementation of public policies as opposed to administration in the private sector.

In a nutshell, public administration denotes the application and the study of the principles of administration in a political setting. It is the harnessing and utilization of human, financial and material resources to implement government policies and programmes aimed at achieving specified objectives, such as national development.

National Development

The concepts of development and indeed national development are quite hazy due to the diverse views and perspectives from which they are seen. For example, some people regard development as change while others take it to mean advancement, improvement and progress. The concept of development, particularly national development, is complex and multifaceted due to the diverse perspectives from which it is viewed (Todaro, 1997, p. 16). Some scholars define development as a change, while others interpret it as advancement, improvement, and progress (Rostow, 1960, p. 4). Many researchers contend that development occurs when there is an upward movement from one position to another, especially if the movement is positive (Higgins, 1968, p. 5). Some scholars view development through an ethnocentric lens, equating it with modernization or Westernization (Frank, 1969, p. 10). Others argue that development should be understood within specific sectors of life, such as:

- Social development (Midgley, 1995, p. 12)
- Economic development (Todaro, 1997, p. 20)
- Political development (Almond & Powell, 1966, p. 15)
- Industrial development (Rostow, 1960, p. 10)
- Rural development (Lipton, 1977, p. 18)
- Technological development (Freeman, 1987, p. 12)

It is strikingly appropriate to state here that, in its simplest form, there are two broad perspectives of conceptualizing development – the liberal perspective and the Marxist perspective (Nnadozie, 2004). The traditional or liberal perspective sees development as the ability for of a national economy, that has initially been static for a long period, to begin to produce and sustain an annual increase in its Gross National Product (GNP) at rates of, perhaps, 5% to 7% or more (Obi, 2005; Todaro and Smith, 2004). Development in this perspective has economic undertones and index which principally entail growth in income per capita or per capita Gross National Product. It is generally believed that growth in income per capita or Gross National Product will trickle down in terms of benefits to all segments of the society. This view of development is equated with Westernization. The meaning of this is that any country that wishes to develop must strive to be replicate the model of the Western capitalist countries (Offiong, 1980).

The liberal perspective of development was criticized as being too myopic, cosmetic, ethnocentric and projecting ideas that are untenable. As Obi (2005) acknowledges, the disappointing performance of most countries that pursued development from the traditional or liberal approach led to a new thinking of the concept of development. The liberal approach succeeded in making a few people rich, while a mass of people is left to wallow in poverty. Following the above discovery, there was a re- conceptualization of development to make it people-oriented. This is the Marxist perspective. For example, Goulet (1971) argues that the concept of development embraces economic and social transformation within a country with core values of life sustenance (provision of basic needs), self- esteem (feeling of respect and independence) and freedom (from the three evils of want, ignorance and squalor) so that people are more able to determine their own destiny. Thus, development was redefined to mean the process by which people will create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choices and values (Ake, 1981). Development means the ability and capacity of man to adequately interact with his physical environment and other individuals to constantly improve himself and humanity (Nnadozie, 2004). According to Seers (1969), development should be geared towards reduction or alleviation of poverty, unemployment and inequality. As he (Seers) asserts, where these variables decline from high levels, there is development in the country concerned. Conversely, if the variables rise to high levels (even if only one of them does), it is wrong to call the situation development, even if the per capita income doubles. According to Apeh (2013), this is a paradigm shift from economic progress to alleviation of poverty, unemployment and inequality, though

still maintaining economic growth. National development refers to a state of change in conditions or situations within a particular nation to better ones (Adayi, 2006). It denotes positive changes or improvements in some or all aspects of the national life of a country. National development comprises the holistic array of policies, programmes and actions detailed in confrontation of national challenges, with the intention of improving the internal workings of government, the private sector and the entire citizenry (Achimugu et al, 2013).

The desire for national development in Nigeria can be situated in the agitation for self-rule by Nigerian Nationalist leaders during the colonial days. The agitation, many years after independence, has not subsided; hence the numerous and insatiable demands for the country to be compartmentalized into smaller units, the demand for resource control and also for restructuring of the country. Other agitators include the Niger Delta militants and Boko Haram insurgents who tend to make the country ungovernable. How prepared then is Nigerian public administrators to sustain current efforts or make new strides in the development of the nation?

CHALLENGES OF NIGERIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

There are different obstacles that hinder the Nigerian public administrators of both political and bureaucratic class from executing their duties as an instrument of national development over time. Such obstacles include the following:

Bribery and Corruption

The public service in Nigeria is heavily affected by bribery and corruption. As such, the country occupies one of the front seats among the high-ranking corrupt countries across the globe (Transparency International, 2017). Evidence of corruption appear in the form receiving gratifications by civil servants for carrying out lawful duties, accepting bribes, inflation of contracts, receiving kickbacks from contractors and so many others. Corruption also shows up in the form of misappropriation of public funds, looting of public treasure and embezzlement (Achimugu, et al, 2013; Igbuzor, 2015; Arthur, 2016).

The Nigerian Tribune (May 20, 2010) reported that five billion Naira was allocated to agencies that never existed in the 2010 national budget. More so, Wikipedia (2015) reporting on crude swaps accruing from subsidy and domestic crude allocation from 2005 to 2012 showed that the total sum of 11.63 billion US dollars were paid to the account of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). However, there was no evidence showing the remitting of the said amount to the federation account.

It must be stated further that corruption in Nigeria is not seen only in the public service; it is also seen in the private sector. There are reports of some bank officials who defraud their customers. Some firms

also falsify records and documents to evade tax and other forms of payments. Vanguard News (February 3, 2015), has it that about 68.1 percent of the total revenue being lost by Africa annually by way of illegal transfer of revenue abroad emanates from Nigeria. These funds are often stolen through tax evasion, illegal transfer by MNCs and corruption. Numerous other mind-boggling cases of corruption in the country also abound.

Inadequate Training and Development Opportunities

Observation of public sector organizations in Nigeria show that a lot of them do not understand how importance staff training and development is. Thus, they only send a few of their staff to such training (if any). It is true that an employee who is not trained is a liability to an organization that is open to change. This is so because he applies the wrong skills in carrying out his job and also transmits the wrong knowledge or ideas to his subordinates. Nwachukwu (2008) submits that, there is never a nation that have sustained high level of economic growth and development which does not have a good number of qualified manpower. Thus, human resource is the most important resource for achieving economic growth and development. Without human resource, all other factors will not be useful.

Where there is fully realized and existence of well trained staff, they may not be properly utilized. National development can only be effectively achieved through trained administrators.

Ineffective Leadership

It is Chinua Achebe who identified leadership failure as the major problem with Nigeria (Achebe, 1983). This means that the inability and unwillingness of the leaders of Nigeria to carry out their leadership duties in a very responsible way that brings about the backwardness of the country. Ukaegbu (2010) puts it succinctly thus:

“Having reflected on the development policies made by the Nigerian governments, one discovers that Nigerian leaders, both past and present, display some very bad orientation; they are dependent-minded, and they lack a sense of personal or group self-efficacy. As a result of this, they provide a very negative leadership type which stalls the country’s development”.

The above excerpt shows that lack of firm and purposeful leaders with sound knowledge and full of integrity is one major problem Nigeria faces as she strives towards achieving national development.

Poor Remuneration

The salaries and wages paid to public servants in Nigeria are very low compared to the amount paid in the private sector in the country and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Besides the paucity, the meagre income is often eroded by the persistent high rate of inflation. Therefore, to ameliorate the situation, a number of attempts has been made since independence in 1960 to increase public sector minimum wage in Nigeria (Okoli and Onah, 2002). These efforts include the Morgan Commission (1964); the Adebo Commission (1971); the Udoji Commission (1974); the Dotun Philips Commission (1988) and the Ayida Panel (1994). In addition, the Shagari-led administration (1979-1983); the Abdulsalami Abubakar military regime (1998-1999); the Obasanjo government (1999-2007); and the Yar’Adua/Goodluck Jonathan administration (2007-2015) did increase the minimum wage in 1981, 1998, 2000 and 2011 respectively, which brought it to the current amount of N18,000.00 per month or N216,000.00 per annum.

According to Salisu (2001), effort at such wage increases could achieve little or nothing because they soon get eroded by very high inflation; worse still they were most times beyond the budget of state

governments, who are more often than not unable to pay workers at the new minimum wage, resulting in conflict between Labour Unions and the state governors (Salisu, 2001). Under poor remuneration, one can mention irregular payment of salaries to workers. When workers' emoluments are paid to them as at when due, they will feel sufficiently motivated to exhibit good behaviours that are capable of enhancing the accomplishment of stated goals. This cannot happen when workers go about their work on empty stomachs because their salary payment has been delayed or if they are owed a backlog of salary arrears which sometimes run into many months. This situation does not only demoralize the average Nigerian public servant; it also results in poor attitudes to work which retard national development.

SOLUTIONS FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

National development is achievable if the machinery of public administration which acts as the fulcrum is restructured so they can effectively face the hard task of driving development in the country. Thus, this can be achieved in the following ways:

Empowering Anti-Corruption Institutions

Empowerment has to do with giving someone the instruments and ability to do something and the right to exercise control or authority in a particular area or responsibility (Apeh, 2013). It can be equated with enablement and capability. The the Public Complaints Commission (PCC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Public Accounts Commission (PAC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), and other sister organizations need such empowerment. Even with the existence of these institutions, corruption has continued to rise in Nigeria, especially in the public sector. In support of the above claim, the Transparency International released her latest Corruption Perception Index (CPI) on Wednesday, 21st February 2018. In that report, Nigeria ranked 148th out of 180 least corrupt nations of the world. The implication of this is that the government of Nigeria needs to add more impetus in the fight against crime and corruption especially in the training and re-training of the staff of these institutions.

Human Capital Development

Education is very important in achieving human and national development (Dike, 2002; Alhassan, 2007; Ghandi, 1988), good education is paramount to the development of our very most keyassets, and our human resources. Education lets us act with reason and also be more scientific in our actions, thereby eschewing prejudice and bias. Societies are modernized through good education.

Effective Leadership

Nigeria have the challenge of effective leadership. Nigeria lacks and needs knowledgeable, honest, intelligent, hardworking leaders who are ready to address the country's challenges with every sense of commitment. Thus, national development can only happen when the government makes sure that men and women of timber and calibre occupy the positions of policy making and implementation in the country. Such people should be Nigerians whose sense of dedication to duty and integrity are undoubtful. According to Stogdill (1974), such people:

Possess strong drive for taking responsibility and completing tasks, having vigour and persisting in the pursuit of goals, venturesomeness and originality in problem-solving, drive to exercise initiatives in social situations, self-confidence and a sense of personal identity, willingness to tolerate frustration and delay, ability to influence other persons' behaviour, and capacity to structure social interaction systems to the purpose at hand.

Improved Remuneration Packages

It is axiomatic that the most important input for achieving national development is the human resource. There is therefore the need to have such human capital sufficiently motivated especially in terms of improved remuneration because, according to Lethbridge, (2004) and Apeh, (2014), a vital element in the motivation of human capital is undoubtedly the quality of its remuneration packages. This view is quite true in the case of Nigerian public servants whose remuneration packages are currently low. The status quo should therefore be reviewed upwards in order to be able to mobilize Nigerian government employees towards national development. Government should also endeavour to ensure prompt and regular payment of staff emoluments, thereby motivating them to more productive efforts.

Relationship between Politics and Administration

Peters (1987) introduced the five models of relationships that exist between public managers and politicians. These models include: the 'formal model', which feature is that public managers and placed under politicians; the next model is the 'administrative state', where public managers play the important role of leading the policy making process because they are seen as experts in that field; the intermediate models include the 'functional village life', the 'village of life', and 'adversarial politics'.

Within the 'village of life' public managers and politicians demonstrate very strong cooperation, shared logics of action, and common objectives. They also apply the principle of reciprocity in promoting promoting a 'good governance of public institutions'. It is believed that will engender positive effects on their careers. On the other hand, the 'functional village of life' model has some close resemblance with the previous one - here, public managers and politicians in a particular policy sector establish an alliance with one another in order to get the best allocation of funds and resources against the public managers and politicians of other policy sectors. Finally, the 'adversarial model' stands against the 'village of life' model because public managers and politicians are constantly in struggle and competition for gaining strong hold on the policy process.

Furthermore, Svava (2001) developed a new classification that considered the interplay of two factors; the level of independence of administrators and the level of control exerted by elected officials, out of this, there are four combinations that emerged: (i) political dominance in case of low administrative independence and high political control; (ii) bureaucratic autonomy in case of high administrative independence and low political control; (iii) 'laissez faire', when both independence and control are low; and (iv) complementarity, when both independence and control are high. In complementarity, administrators and elected officials play separate roles but their functions overlap.

The combination 'laissez faire' includes the dichotomy model, because 'the distance between the two sets of officials does not contribute to real control or real independence, but to coexistence' (Svava 2001: 180). Combining the degree of distance and differentiation between elected officials and administrators and the level of control of administrators by elected officials – Svava (2006) distinguished four models:

1. Separate roles with subordination of administrators to politicians and separate roles and norms.
2. Autonomous administrators when administrators are involved in the policy role, whereas politicians are separated from the administrative role.
3. Responsive administrators when administrators are subordinates to politicians and political norms dominate over administrative norms.
4. Overlapping roles when reciprocal influence exists between elected officials and administrators and they share roles.

Theoretical Framework

Development Administration Theory (DAT)

This theory was popularized, in the early years of Comparative Public Administration (CPA). It is traced to the works of Riggs (1970), Montgomery (1966), and Esman (1970). It then entered the field of administration as several scholars sought to develop a theory that guides administrative development within the context of comparative public administration. The central thrust of this theory is the evaluation of administrative systems at different stages of development in the society.

According to Marini (1971), development administration theory is action-driven and goal oriented. The theory is built on two premises. One, the method of administering developmental policies, plans, large – scale programmes by government in order to meet the developmental objective of a state and this presumption is known in literature as “the Administration of Development”. Two, the development of administrative capacities and capabilities of state institutions or organs of governments, generally acclaimed to be “the Development of Administration”. Weidner (1970) captures development administration theory as constellation of processes that promote political, economic, and social agenda of a state in progressive manner within the ambit of authoritatively designed jurisdictions. Development Administration Theory is anchored on the thrust that an “action–driven, goal oriented administrative system is central to effective functioning of all levels of government. Therefore, the theory is supported by three blocks: Change-Oriented, Goal-Oriented and Progressivism. The theory believes that administrative structure is expected to be dynamic not static consequently, change is said to mean adjustment or movement of structures or systems from a position to another. This movement is expected to reflect the coping capacity of an administrative system in relation to its strengths and weaknesses. This bloc is more strengthened in a globalized era where administrative cum governance systems are built for potential transformation. The goal-orientation bloc according to Weidner (1970) is the dominant value expected of any efficient administrative system. It is characteristically fashioned chronologically and systematically in order to achieve the desired objectives. Put differently, DAT as an element of public administration is goal-oriented. It supports the notion that development at all level of government (federal, state or local) should ensure advancement in economic, political and socio- cultural agenda of the state. The third bloc, progressivism is central to the overall tenets of DAT. It emphasizes the significance of grassroots participation in public affairs. In addition, this theory extends towards equality in the distribution of income and wealth among the citizens – ensuring economic justice in the society. The theory emphasizes the importance of making available social services like health utilities, education, social and safety programs etc. This means that the theory is focused on the good of the people.

One of the implications of this is that the administrative system of a country can be galvanised to represent the aspirations and desires people as it relates to material and human resources with the aim of achieving strong and sustainable development.

Conclusion

This study shows the existence of numerous obstacles to national development in Nigeria, among which are ineffective leadership, bribery and corruption, poor remuneration, inadequate education/training opportunities, and many others. The above act as stumbling block for public administrators in Nigeria as they strive towards driving national development efforts of the country.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. There should be rejuvenation of the agencies and organizations in the country by empowering the anti-corruption institutions,
2. Effective leadership is important and needs to be instituted with improvement of the remuneration packages.
3. Crime and insecurity should be reduced to the barest minimum by the government through provision and addressing of the basic needs of Nigerians

When the above recommendations are effectively implemented, public administration in Nigeria will be well placed in a level that it can engender national development in Nigeria.

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