

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

Public Administration plays a pivotal role toward national development in all states across the world. It has not only simplified the formulation and implementation of governmental policies and programmes but expedite national development. Public Administration is a government in action and this aspect of governance exist in any modern state. The Nigerian civil service and other public organizations are confronted with diverse phenomenal problems which require systematically organized process of establishing a universal knowledge as to what causes those problems and how they could be deciphered. Example, effects of corrupt practice by public official on national development. This study examines the role of public administration toward national development in Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative method of analysis. This is to help in providing critical and in-depth understanding of the Phenomena under study. The study generated data from array of published and unpublished materials such as textbooks, newspapers, magazines, Journals, seminar and conference materials, internet materials, and a lot of others. The study revealed that public administration is essential in the act of governance and also aid government in executing its policies and programmes. It also established that Public Administration plays a crucial role in promoting national development in Nigeria. The investigation further revealed that there is a connection between sound administration and national development. Basesd on the findings, the study Recommend the need for sound and vibrant policies; good leadership and adherence to principle of rule of law as drivers that would help public administration in driving home the desired development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Public Administration, National Development, Policy, Public Policy, Nation building.

Introduction

Public administration serves as the cornerstone in the edifice of national development. An aspect of these roles is the socio-economic role. There are many socio-economic roles of Public Administration which includes; improving the well- being of the society; reducing poverty, diseases and social illness; removing social and economic disparities and providing countries with higher education and intensive training in many fields; Role in Nation Building; Public Administration has important role in nation building (Sudha and Anita 2023).

Hence, a well functioning public administration is essential for building resilient, responsive, and equitable societies, where the needs and aspirations of all the citizens are met and no one is left behind. Government is a social institution established in each human society for orderly conduct

of public affairs, therefore, for it to be affective, an efficient administrative skills must be injected into the system to promote the flow of government activities, political programmes and reforms (Cinjel.and Danjuma 2020).

Public administration is instrumental in fostering sustainable development practices. It facilitates the provision of essential services such as health care, education, infrastructure and social protection, thereby improving living standard and reducing poverty. Additionally, through strategic planning and resource management, public administration addresses pressing challenges such as climate change, urbanization, and public health crises, safeguarding the well-being of present and future generation. By integrating sustainability into policies and projects, it safeguards natural resources for the future generation.

Nigeria today is challenged with the compelling issue of national development. The unending list of disparaging indicators expresses the complication in the Nigeria situation and calls for urgent, systematic and strategic effort towards a reversal. Nigeria has been rated to be among the most corrupt countries in the world (Institute for Insecurity Studies 2023). Public administration serves as the cornerstone in the edifice of national development, providing the structural framework through which governments implement policies, deliver services, and foster socio-economic progress.

Statement of the problem

The Nigerian civil service and other public organizations are confronted with diverse phenomenal problems which require systematically organized process of establishing a universal knowledge as to what causes those problems and how they could be deciphered. Example, effects of corrupt practice by public official on national development.

The relationship between Public Administration and National Development has lost its vigour, dynamism and interest because of criticisms that has trailed the role of the public bureaucracy in rural development in Nigeria (Eme, and Eme, 2012). Despite its pivotal role, public administration faces numerous challenges that hinder its effectiveness and efficiency. These challenges include bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, inadequate human and financial resources, political interference and lack of accountability and transparency. Moreover rapid technological advancement and globalization present new complexities and opportunities, requiring governments to adapt and innovate in their approaches to governance and service delivery. Public administration systems in Africa and Nigeria in particular are also in a serious disequilibrium. Some of the most serious systems of this state of affairs include the absence of reliable information systems on staffing levels, sense of mission, or sense of performance, achievements over a period of time (Igbokwe 2017).

The Nigerian public service also, is so grievously plagued by bribery and corruption that the country now ranks very high on corruption ranking (Transparency International, 2017). This problem ranges from public servants accepting bribes, grafts and gratifications for carrying out their lawful duties to inflation of contract awards so as to collect kick-backs from contractors in return. It also ranges from embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds to direct looting of the treasury (Achimugu and Aliyu 2013; Igbuzor, 2015; Arthur, 2016). Moreover, many public sector organizations pay little attention to staff training and development. It is nevertheless noteworthy that only trained or developed staff can render efficient services that can contribute effectively to national development. The need therefore for Nigeria to, as a matter of urgency, invests heavily in education-driven human capital development cannot be over-emphasized (Apeh 2018). One of the major problems that confront a country like Nigeria is that of administration which essentially hinges on how to effectively deploy her available human and material resources that would help public administration in driving home the desired development in Nigeria.

Research Method

The method adopted in this study is content analysis using mainly secondary data. The secondary data consist of existing literature on topic such as books, journals, conference papers, and other related documents.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Public Administration

Varied and divers perspectives abound in the literature concerning the definition of the concept of public administration. This fact, speaks to the nature of the discipline the scope is fluid and divers in the sense that it could be very narrow in definition and broad in operation (Mela 2024). However, despite the different perspectives regarding the subject matter, there are some degree of similarities in the submission of scholars about the essential element of the disciples. Few of such definition are examine here.

According to Starling, (2013), traditionally, public administration is thought of as the accomplishing side of government. It is supposed to comprise all those activities involved in carrying out the policies of elected officials and some activities associated with the development of these policies. Public administration is.... all that comes after the last campaign promise and election night cheer (Starling. 2013). The inadequacy in this definition is that it presented a view that suggests that public administration is only concerned about the activities of the government. To address this fallacy, Shafritz & Borick (2013), offered a slightly different perspective. According to them, public administration is both direct and indirect. The subject can be regarded as to the straightforward when government employees provide service to the public as varied as

mortgage insurance, mail delivery and electricity. Public administration could be indirect when the government pays private contractor to provide goods and service to citizens (Olademeji 2021).

In the same direction, Public administration is the use of managerial, political and legal theories and process to fulfill legislative, executive and judiciary governmental mandate for the provision of regulatory and service function for the society as a whole or some segment of it (Rosenbloom & Goldman, 2009). The purpose of public administration is to coordinate and maximize the welfare of group of people co-existing in a political system (Mela 2024).

In the word of Dibie (2014), public administration takes place within a political setting. It is primary focused on carrying out public policy decision made by decision makers, through the political system. Therefore, the systematic study of public administration started in western Europe about the Eighteen Century. It became established in the United State of America in the latter part of the Nineteen Century.

Khan (2013) list the function which will enable public administration of developing countries an appropriate disciple as promoting human resource; ensuring peoples right and political freedom; ensuring peoples right and political freedom; ensuring safety, security, health, and development; promoting social capital through activating civil society conserving the natural environment; utilizing financial resource, launching public-private partnership for service delivery, decentralization in government, the democratization of bureaucracy, developing physical, and technological infrastructure, and encouraging the private sector.

Consequently, we can infer that the issue central to the subject-matter of public administration are its themes. In other words, the issue of interest to student and scholars of public administration are issue to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration institution. They are also issues that promote better management of both men and material resources in public organization, non-profit making organization and creating a conducive atmosphere for the private sector organization to thrive (Mela et-al 2024).

Concepts of National Development

The word national Development is the coinage of two English words national and development. The word national is both an adjective (denoting country wide, general, a state) and a noun (denoting resident, citizen, subject, native and inhabitant). Development denotes improvement, advancement, increase, expansion, change among others (Cinjel and Joseph 2020).

According to Saleh (2013), the word national development implies the effort of a nation or a state to better-off the welfare of its citizen in all aspect of life. In the same direction, Stevenson (2014) sees national development as a condition or a state at which a nation improve the quantity of life of its citizen. The two definitions above sees national development as human centered and oriented. They do not emphasize on the physical aspect of life. In his own view, Douglas (2014) defined national development as a process where constituted authority of a nation or society provides the basic necessity of life to its citizen. He went further to mention the basic necessity to include: fight against hunger, illiteracy and poor standard of living.

Bello (2012), also see national development as broaden concept which comprise social, economic and physical advancement in a society such as: Improvement in a GNI, PI, economic growth, GNP, infrastructural development and a lot of other. This definition also flow with the perception of Smith (2015) who also advocated that national development encompasses the improvement in GDP, GNP, PI and all sector of the economy.

In another parlance, Sule (2015) sees national development as the solution to societal problem such as national cohesion, stability (political and economic mechanism), and national integration, ethnic and religious harmony. The definition restricted national development to only social aspect of life and care less about infrastructural development. With all this, we can opine that, national development is a heated and nebulous concept that is very difficult to conceptualize. It is so broaden and depth in horizon. It comprises of social, economic and physical aspect of life. Its overall essence is to promote a meaningful and better life to the citizens.

Public Administration and National Development

Public administration is instrumental in fostering sustainable development practices. It facilitates the provision of essential services such as health care, education, infrastructure and social protection, thereby improving living standard and reducing poverty. Additionally, through strategic planning and resource management, public administration addresses pressing challenges such as climate change, urbanization, and public health crises, safeguarding the well-being of present and future generation. By integrating sustainability into policies and projects, it safeguards natural resources for the future generation while mitigating against the adverse impact of development.

Achimugu and Aliyu (2013), observed that, any attempt at meaningful sustainable national development must begin with reforming, repositioning and developing the internal capacity of public administration to both support and as well drive the process of national development. Effective public administration fosters economic growth, social development, and infrastructure improvement, contributing to overall national progress. Key aspects include transparency,

accountability, strategic planning and responsiveness to citizens' needs, all of which are essential for sustainable development and nation building. This implies that, public administration and national development are strongly related in a way that, weak administrative machinery may never be able to play the catalyzing role it ought to play in the process of national development

Historically, Nigeria inherited a bureaucratic system from its colonial past, which prioritized control and administration over development and service delivery. This legacy has contributed to a bureaucratic culture that often prioritizes process over outcomes, leading to inefficiencies and corruption within public institutions. Additionally, frequent changes in government have disrupted continuity and long-term planning in human capital development initiatives. Human capital development in Nigeria faces multifaceted challenges. There is a mismatch between educational outcomes and skills demanded by the labour market, exacerbated by a rapidly growing population and inadequate investment in education and vocational training.

The need for qualified and experience administrators in developing countries can hardly be over emphasize. Efficient and sound administration is required to guide the execution of policies and programme of government in any country. In Nigeria, millions of naira are left in the hands of administrators who do not even have the elementary principle of administration. A realistic approach to the development of the country call for qualified high level manpower most especially in this time that functional administration is needed in order to officially and effectively utilizes both human and material resources in the country (Abraham, 2002).

Challenges of Public Administration in Nigeria.

This section focused on the challenges that confront the contribution of public administration toward national development in Nigeria. The relationship between Public Administration and National Development has lost its vigour, dynamism and interest because of criticisms that has trailed the role of the public bureaucracy in rural development in Nigeria Eme, and . Eme, (2012). Despite its pivotal role, public administration faces numerous challenges that hinders its effectiveness and efficiency. These challenges include bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, inadequate human and financial resources, political interference and lack of accountability and transparency.

Moreover, rapid technological advancement and globalization present new complexities and opportunities, requiring governments to adapt and innovate in their approaches to governance and service delivery. Public administration systems in Africa and Nigeria in particular are also in a serious disequilibrium. Some of the most serious systems of this state of affairs include the absence of reliable information systems on staffing levels, sense of mission, or sense of performance, achievements over a period of time (Igbokwe 2017).

Similarly, the Nigerian public service also, is so grievously plagued by bribery and corruption that the country now ranks very high on corruption ranking (Transparency International, 2017). This problem ranges from public servants accepting bribes, grafts and gratifications for carrying out their lawful duties to inflation of contract awards so as to collect kick-backs from contractors in return. It also ranges from embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds to direct looting of the treasury (Arthur, 2016).

In addition, many public sector organizations pay little attention to staff training and development. It is nevertheless noteworthy that only trained or developed staff can render efficient services that can contribute effectively to national development. The need therefore for Nigeria to, as a matter of urgency, invest heavily in education-driven human capital development cannot be over-emphasized (Apeh, (2018). One of the major problems that confront a country like Nigeria is that of administration which essentially hinges on how to effectively deploy her available human and material resources in order to accomplish the goals and objectives of the citizenry.

In the same vein, the politisation of the civil service and adoption of the spoil system does not only affect the performance of the civil service. Merit and experience are given less consideration. This affects performance of employees and productivity of the civil service. This menace does not give sufficient room for the flow of government policies and programmes. It also affects the sustainability of policies. It was common during the Ibrahim Babangida Regime and the Obasanjo civilian regime. There is no line of demarcation between the function expected of a politician and does that are to be carried by the administrator. The politician dominates and played a role of a boss. He mostly acts in areas that are the domain of a trained and learned administrator. Who should initiate, formulate and implement policy function for long has been a serious migraine in the body of Nigeria polity (Igbokwe 2017).

Furthermore, a lot of government policies and programme are not sustained. The country has a lot of abandoned policies and programme. Most government that appears comes to build for themselves legacy and not to improve the lot of the society. Common example of these are: Green revolution, War Against Corruption, War Against corruption and indiscipline, NEEDs, DIFFRI, Poverty Alleviation programme, Transformation Agenda, free and compulsory Education, Education for all and a lot of others. There are also abandoned project such as: the Ajakuta Rolling mills, Jos still Rolling mills, Benue- Enugu Road, Panyam-Wamba Road, Gindiri water project and a lot of others (Igbokwe 2017).

In the course of the study, it was also found that colleges and training centre for the advocacy of public administration and good governance such as: Administrative staff college of Nigeria, Nigerian Institute of Administration, Leadership Institute and training centre, Institute of Legislative study, institute of Local Government and Development studies, institute of policies

and strategic studies and a lot of others are performing below expectation. They are created to serve as administrative laboratory to aid in testing and diagnosing problem of administration in the country but this is the opposite (Arthur, 2016)..

It was also found out that there is poor inter-governmental relation between the tiers of government and organ of government. There is battle of supremacy of whose action should not be override. The centripetal federalism adopted in the country tends to give more power to the federal government than the other levels of government. The federal governments see the subordinate level as its creation and thus control its fiscal policies. The executive arm also dominates the other organ of government in terms of administrative practice and art of governances. The hold the heart and breath of most of the government programme. The legislative and Judiciary are more or less a toothless bull dog in the act of governance (Igbokwe 2017).

Conclusion/ Recommendations

In conclusion, the role of bureaucratic values and public accountability in the strengthening of the practices of public administration and national development can never be emphasized. Public administration is the only vehicle that steer government in action and also ensure that their activities are effective and functional.

Nigeria's journey towards effective public administration and robust human capital development is fraught with challenges but also opportunities for transformation. Addressing these challenges requires sustained political will, strategic investments, and conclusive policies that prioritize meritocracy, equity, and sustainable development. By tackling these issues head on, Nigeria can harness its demographic dividend and propel itself towards socio-economic prosperity and competitiveness in the 21st century.

The role of public administration in National development is multifaceted and indispensable. It encompasses governance, economic growth, social welfare, and environmental stewardship. Through effective management of resources and responsive policy making, public administration contributes significantly to the overall progress and prosperity of a nation. Its impact extends beyond immediate outcomes, laying the foundation for a sustainable and inclusive future development in Nigeria.

It is in the light of the forgoing, the following sets of recommendations were proffered.

- i. There is the need for good governance from the national to the local level. This should be done in such a way that there are acts such as: maintenance of law and orders, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, due process, rule of law, competence, separation and devolutions of powers, free press, a free virile civil

- society arena, competition for power, existence of credible opposition, respect of minority right among other human rights.
- ii. Public accountability and transparency agent should be allowed to perform their role without destruction. Interference in their activities such as unlawful removal of key staff, non-compliance with the finding of their investigation, non adherence to their decision and professional advices and a lot of others needed to be revised.
 - iii. Political parties should be educated and given adequate orientation on healthy politicking. They should enlighten and educate their members toward how to exhibit tolerance, build good relationship with other competitive groups, avoiding money politics and a lot of others. This will help to bring sanity to unhealthy rivalry, character assassination, violence, electoral malpractices and a lot of others.
 - iv. There is also the need for policies and programmes sustainability in government. Since government is a continue process and no mans property, regimes and administrations should ensure the continuity of policies and policies on grounds rather than seeking to create legacy. What government should see as paramount is the public good of the people which comprises of their welfare, essential services, infrastructural development and a lot of others. There is need for the reformation of public institutions to enhance transparency, accountability and professionalism through training and performance management.
 - v. There is need for increase in investment in education infrastructure, curriculum reform, teacher training, and vocational skills development to align with labor market needs. Government should put in coordinated effort across multiple sectors, including law enforcement, judiciary, education, social services, and economic development. Strengthening these areas can help mitigate the impact of crime on public administration and promote sustainable national development.

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