

Public Administration and Nation Building in Nigeria: Issues and Prospects

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Abstract

No nation can develop without having a virile political structure and effective public administrators (civil servants) who, not only see to the effective implementation of government policies but bring about democracy dividends to the citizenry. It is also relevant to see how the public and private sectors combine to enhance political and economic growth of any given country.

Key words: *Political structure, Red tapism, Political and Administration, Economic growth, Democracy dividends*

Introduction

Political development has been defined in many ways that reflect the passage of societies and analysis preoccupations.

One formulation dwells on the emergence of national sovereignty and the integrity of the state, demanding respect and upholding commitments in the international system. Others identify the domestic attributes of constitutional order and political stability attained through the formation of a framework of government, reliable procedures for leadership succession, and a consolidation of the territorial administrative reach of government institutions.

Political development enhances the state's capacity to mobilize and allocate resources, to process policy inputs into implementable outputs. This facilitates problem-solving and adaptation to environmental changes and goal realization. The contemporary notion of good governance also dwells on linkage between economic process, policies and political developments. The former has traditionally been seen as a forerunner or facilitator of the latter, through the agency of intervening variables like the spread of literacy and rise of plural interest groups, the accumulation of independent financial power and economic strength in society.

Recently democratization and good governance have been portrayed as constitutive of political development and as conditions for sustained economic development in developing areas and post-communist societies. The rule of law (and thus respect for property right) and the development of civil society are also included. The embedding of human rights is another central plank.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to highlight the relevance of public administration in the development of any given nation.

In any society where the issue of public administration or structure is well entrenched development and noticeable changes will certainly evolve in the socio-economic and political well-being of the citizenry.

The purpose of this paper is to further bring to the front burner what we need to do collectively. Nigeria society is one in which the people are self-reliant and confident, and can constantly generate and mobilize energy which is capable of running independent and democratic government, and of inducing a productive and distributive economy which is both self-generating and self-perpetuating.

The attainment of the political and other aspects of development is not only for the mobilization and utilization of individual Nigerians, but also for the effective development of knowledge and skills of such academic and practical disciplines as public administration.

Public administration has been defined as “the organization and management of men and materials to achieve the purpose of government. (Dwight Weldo, 1978). W.F. Willoughby, (1972) defines it as the function of actually administering the law as declared by the legislature and interpreted by judicial branches of the government. Gulick (1937) is of the view that public administration has to do with getting things done with accomplishing of defined objectives.

Consequently, the task before us concerns the contribution which public administration and public administrators can make towards the attainment of the goal of national development. At this juncture we address ourselves to the roles of public administrators in the attainment of national objectives. Administration is a universal phenomenon. It is a fact of life in all modern society.

The centrality of administration is even more evident in developing country such as Nigeria, which is at the crossroads of her development. 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.

Consequently, administration in his broadest sense can be defined as the activities of group cooperating to accomplish common goals; it is a cooperative human action marked by a high degree of rationality.

Administration is therefore inevitable in any given situation where there is a clearly defined objective and two or more persons cooperate, to attain the desire objectives which otherwise would not have been accomplished by a single individual.

Even in the home front or family setup, mini-we are involved in administrative behaviour when we cooperate with other people to establish and sustain a happy family, erect and manage a town hall, construct and manage such institutions and organization such as schools, hospitals etc.

Political and administration

In this regards different opinions are that politics must be controlled and confined to its proper sphere which is the determination, crystallization and declaration of the will of the community. Whereas the proper sphere of administration is affecting this will by implementing it and it has been made clear by the political processes. The long and short of all this assertion is that politics is concerned with policy formulation while administration is concerned with policy implementation.

The view that administration is non-political and that it can be treated as an invariable quantity following it's over independent principle and unaffected by the form of government and the value orientation of the political system under which it functions is an over statement. This is because administration is to a great extent conditioned by the political system. By the closing year of the third decade of this century the issues of politics – administration dichotomy was finally laid to rest. By 1937 Marshall Danok, after a re-examination of the concept of government in relation to politics and administration concluded that the two processes of

politics and administration are co-ordinate rather than exclusive. Cail Fredrick (1940) observed that the idea of politics-administrative dichotomy is a misleading distinction, which had become a fetish, a stereotype in the politics administration dichotomy.

In some instances, politics and administrations are so intermingled that clear distinction is difficult. The distinction between the functions of a political and an administrative officer is stated below. The purpose of the distinction is to ensure harmonious working relationship between the two categories of officers.

	POLITICAL OFFICER	ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
1.	Amateur	Professional
2.	Non-technical	Technical
3.	Partisan	Non-Partisan
4.	Temporary	Permanent
5.	More Legislative Contact	Few Legislative Contact
6.	More Public Contact	Few Public Contact
7.	More Policy Formulation	Less Policy Formulating
8.	More Discussion	More Advisory
9.	More Co-operation	More Performance
10.	Influence by Popular Opinion	Influence by Study & Research

Sometimes a distinction is made between private and public administration.

Private administration refers to the administration of non-government organization and agencies such as unilever Plc while public administration refers to the administration of government and quasi government organization such as the public services state board's corporation and agencies etc.

The primary goal of private administrations is profit maximization; this is secondary in public administration which may require achieving some social objectives which may conflict with the goal of profit.

The hallmark of public administration is the public nature of its goals. As far as possible these goals reflect or are meant to reflect the needs, desire and aspiration of the society.

Public administration is subject to much political pressure and influences than its private counterpart. This is probably because private administration is not directly integrated with the political system in the way the all public administration agencies are.

Another distinction between public and private administration is the source of their funding. Public administration is sustained through public fund; as a result, public officials are constantly under the searchlight and criticism of the public. In order to safeguard the taxpayer's money, there are usually delays and paper work or what is usually referred to as "Redtapism among" in public administration." Redtapism among" other things involves the existence of a body of rule and procedures, which retard rather than enhance quick services but which ensure proper record of events. Public institutions often provide security and entrenched positions for office who may have outlived their usefulness and productivity this is not usually the case in private business organization.

Another factor that distinguishes the public administrator from the private administrator is the magnitude as well as the complexity of government activities and interests: The scope of the entire economic and social structure of the societies. This is even more so in developing countries such as Nigeria where the society looks increasingly upon the state and its agencies to provide its basic economic and social needs. The increased complexity of government

activities necessitates the employment of more skilled labour and professional than most private organization would require.

Conclusion and Recommendation

All successful programmes of political developments are usually supported by effective administrative systems. Nigeria as a federation still faces several challenges of development and these demand greater co-operation on the part of public administrators. The degree of success or failure Nigeria will attain in her future development programmes will depend largely on the quality input and exemplary commitments of her public administrators in the planning and execution of these programmes.

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