

**Role of Public Administration in Rebuilding Nigerian Productivity in Economic Resilience**

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**Abstract**

Public administration is popularly regarded as the handmaid of public policies. However, this traditional role of public administration has since changed. Public administrators now play vital roles in policy formulation as the perceived gap between politics and administration continue to close up. In the quest for productivity in economic resilience public administration is certainly a game changer. Therefore, with the use of the ecological theory, the paper argued that in the quest for productivity, there are stumbling blocks which public administration should overcome. These include among others: lack of ethical climate in the public sector, poor professionalization of public administration, lack of inclusive decision making, attitudinal change by public officers, pursuit of foreign paradigm of development, lack of merit system in the public sector and low morale among public administrators. The paper finally made recommendations on how to achieve productive in economic resilience through public administration. These include: comparative pay and reward system, ability to develop home grown development paradigm and emphasis on merit and zero tolerance to corruption.

*Keywords:* public administration, productivity, economic resilience

**Introduction**

Nigeria is acclaimed to be potentially rich in human and material resources that are lying fallow waiting to be substantially explored and exploited for the growth and development of the country. Unlocking these potentials remains a huge challenge before every government that comes to power. Presently, Africa in general and Nigeria in particular are regarded as the new frontier greatly revealed for their huge market and resource endowment. However, ability to translate these opportunities into sustainable national development remain a huge problematic to surmount. Challenges to national development have long been identified by state managers, public and private sector practitioners. These include: human capacity gap, poor funding of development programmes, low workers' morale in the public sector, fluctuating fortunes in the economy, political instability, corruption in the public sector, patron-client relations, failure of public sector reforms to yield their expected results, among many others (Ayee, 2018; Maduabum, 2014; Olaopa, 2016; Nchuchuwe & Akhakpe, 2016). The unstable state of the oil market (the mainstay of the Nigeria economy) has continued to cast dark cloud over the socio-economic development drives of the country.

Public administration plays a crucial role in fostering economic resilience and rebuilding productivity. The effectiveness of public administration directly impacts the country's ability to create policies, manage resources, and implement strategies that drive economic growth and development. In the wake of challenges like economic downturns, infrastructure deficits, and social inequalities, the role of public administration becomes even more pivotal.

Nigeria grapples with significant infrastructure gaps in transportation, energy, healthcare, and education. The lack of adequate infrastructure hampers productivity in various

sectors and impedes economic growth. Rampant corruption and bureaucratic red tape within public institutions undermine effective governance, hinder resource allocation, and deter investment, impacting productivity and economic stability. Understanding and addressing these challenges are pivotal in redefining the role of public administration in Nigeria to drive productivity, foster economic resilience, and steer the country towards sustainable development.

The aim of this paper is to explore the role of public administration in rebuilding Nigerian productivity in economic resilience. The specific objectives are to;

1. Ascertain the extent to which public administration enhance Nigerian productivity in economic resilience
2. Assess the inherent benefits of public administration in rebuilding Nigerian productivity in economic resilience.

### **Public Administration**

Public administration is a major driver of socio-economic and political development in any country. Every country desirous of genuine development invests enormous human and material resources in its public administration in order to achieve greater welfare and well-being for the citizenry. Viewed from this perspective, scholars have analyzed public administration from the prism of its developmental roles in the society (Maduabum, 2014; Akhakpe, 2016). Generally speaking, public administration is seen as the best way of getting things done. It involves a cooperative action involving human and material resources directed towards achieving stated objectives.

Similarly, Henry (2017) provides an elastic definition of public administration “as a broad ranging and amorphous combination of theory and practices, its purpose is to promote a superior understanding of government and its relationships with the society it governs, as well as to encourage public policies to be more responsive to social needs and to institute managerial practices attuned to effectiveness, efficiency and deeper human requisites of the citizenry”. This means that the essence of government that is the realization of the culture and well-being of the people can be efficiently and effectively achieved through public administration which Dimock and Dimock in Maduabum (2014) see as the action part of government.

When these goals captured above are realized, it means development is taking place. Development as a means to an end should be able to take a people and the society they live in progressively from one state of being to the other. Such social change should better the lives of the people and society (Iwayemi, 2021; Adefarasin, 2015). Sustainability is the ability to conserve something both for the present and future use. Sustainable development is therefore, the practice of making use of both finite and non-finite resources today without compromising or endangering their use by the present and future generations (Amue & Igwe, 2016; Ayeni, 2022).

Many commentaries have been made on Fred Riggs ecological approach to public administration in developing societies (Sapru, 2019; Ayee, 2018; Olojede, 2012). It remains a potent force in explaining public administration processes with different attitude, pattern, structure and outcomes in developing societies. The reason is that their environments are different. Sustainable development has become the vogue in the contemporary global system due to the apparent failure of past and present developmental efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations to bring about qualitative changes in the life of the people and environment they live in (Ayeni, 2022; Oyewole, 2008). Perhaps, it is on the basis of these imperative needs that the United Nations declaration of the next decade and half (2015 – 2030) as years for the pursuit and achievement of the sustainable development goals. While these goals are much in terms of numbers and issues to be addressed, it is up to governments

in developing areas of the world to deal with those issues they have the human and material resources to be adequately realized. However, if past and present efforts at national development in the country are anything to go by, there is need to tinker with the present structure and processes of public administration in Nigeria. This point can only be properly understood by analyzing the nature and character of public administration and the quest for sustainable national development in the country.

### **An Overview of Public Administration and Productivity in Economic Resilience**

Public administration in developing countries can aptly be described as the handmaid of socio-economic and politico-cultural growth and development. Its roles contrast with the practice in the developed or advanced countries of Western Europe and North America where for centuries the private sector was and continue to be the engine room of growth and development. Most countries in the South-South got independence with a poorly developed private sector. Therefore, it behooves on the various governments through their public administration systems to champion the course of development in their respective countries. However, in most cases, public administration was constrained humanly and materially to push for sustainable national development. Colonialism had stunted the growth of indigenous forces of production through its exploitation policies and programmes (The Political Bureau Report, 1987). At independence, a new form of colonialism known as neo-colonialism was put in place by the ex-colonial masters. Through cajolery and or brute force, most developing countries were and are still made to embrace and imbibe Western mono-culture perspective to public administration.

Certain principles of administration are said to be sacrosanct and universalistic. Ever too often detailed blue prints of development are drawn up in a top-bottom manner from the West and handed over to developing nations for implementation with the hope that foreign aid will flow in, training of public servants will progress inhibited and public institutions will be strengthened to implement them. However, these expectations have hardly been realized because of socio-economic and politico-cultural challenges. Indeed, successive governments in the country have long recognized the imperative of sustainable national development. Thus, since independence, several development and rolling plans have been formulated and implemented (Lawal & Oluwatoyin, 2011). There is no gain saying that public administration has a pivotal role to play in sustainable national development because it is the engine of governmental activities aimed at achieving the common good. Perhaps, this is what Dimock and Dimock (in Maduabum, 2014) meant when they aver that “public administration is problem solving, it is as much involved with the formulation of policies by which agencies are guided as it is with the execution of policies through practical down-to-earth, action-oriented programme”. In view of these all important roles it is imperative that well talented, technically endowed and trained personnel are engaged in the public sector to pursue the corporate interests of the country (Olugbemi, 2017; Dibie, 2014; Akhakpe, 2016). Also, Henry (2017) apports a central and crucial role to public bureaucracy when he avers that it is primarily the public bureaucracy that investigates and roots out political corruption, it is the bureaucracy that researches and recommends what new or revised benefits or policies, society needs, it is the bureaucracy that delivers these public benefits and it is the bureaucracy that assesses the effects of government policies and adjusts them accordingly.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Riggsian Model of Public Administration (The Ecological Approach to Public Administration) Fred Riggs (2018)**

This theory was propounded by Fred Riggs (2018). Riggsian model states that administration is the subset of society. Moreover, administration is influenced by the other sub-systems like economic dimensions and cultural, social, and political influences. The structural-functional approach to the Riggsian model states that society has different structures. These structures perform different communicational, symbolic, social, economic and political functions. All these functions are valid for the administrative sub-system. The ecological approach has also been utilized by Fred Riggs in the ecology of public administration and his administration in developing countries. In his work, Riggs conceptualizes the prismatic model of administrative system which deals with a range of social phenomena and behavior which influence the political and administrative aspects of life in developing countries. The ecological approach in public administration focuses attention on the dynamic relationship between a public administration system and its total environment, physical, culture, historical economic and political. These variables to a large extent singly or collectively determine the content, direction and consequence of policies and policy implementation in the public service.

## **Challenges**

It is clear from the foregoing that the differences in cultural values and norms play a significant role in determining the success or failure of public sector reforms, processes and the quest for development in the global. Perhaps, the attitude and behaviour of public administrators to the issue of development remains largely uncooperative and most times self-servicing. Thus, public administrators see government work as no man's work therefore, it should be put on the shoulder not on the head. Similarly, its resources were considered inexhaustible and to steal from government coffers was seen as punishment for the oyibo rulers (Osaghae, 2012).

However, many years after independence this attitude and behaviour have not changed in the positive direction. Indeed, the materialistic perception of the State and its institutions make transparency and accountability difficult in public service and prebendal use of public offices for personal interests on norms (Osaghae, 2012; Joseph, 2017).

Also, the educational system in the country has not been generally restructured and transformed to address the need of a country in quest for development. The colonialists left a tertiary educational system that was not directed at stimulating industrialization but to provide secretarial services for an administrative State. Ekeh (2018) showed that the university of Ibadan model left behind by the British colonialist was already being abandoned in the West at the time it was introduced in Nigeria. Many years after independence, universities are still established based on this model. We cannot be doing the same thing and expect different result.

Political and administrative corruption remains perennial struggles plaguing the body polity. Why some scholars attribute its rise to lack of national integration (Onimode, 2007). Others attribute it to the crisis of leadership and authoritarian rule (Achebe, 1983; Ayoade, 1998). Although, several institutions have been set up to fight this scourge such as: the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Code of Conduct Bureau their impact on the anti-graft war remain largely negligible. It would appear, the anti-graft law can bark but cannot bite (Akhakpe, 2016).

## **Methodology**

The study used qualitative method. These were complimented by the use of secondary data-books, newsletter, journals, seminar and workshop papers, newspapers and magazines together with publications and related articles which were thoroughly perused. This will enable the

researchers to explore the instrumentality of public administration in rebuilding productivity in economic resilience dwelling extensively on the opinions of scholars in the area of study.

### **Conclusion**

Productivity in economic resilience is an unnegotiable responsibility of public administration in a developing country like Nigeria. National development has always been on the agenda of public administration in the country. However, we have shown that the mere fact that the country is in deep recession, social dislocation with people selling their children for money, high rate of school drop-out, low enrolment in schools, lack of affordable medical care, high rate of infant and maternal mortality, insecurity in the land, inability to manage outbreak of epidemics among others, means that national development has not been sustained over the years. The country's mono-culture economy makes it responsive to external shock rather than internal stimuli. Diversification of the economy and cut in cost of governance hold the key to sustainable growth and development of the economy. Over reliance on oil revenue makes the economy a distributive rather than productive one. Self-reliant, inward looking system is what the country needs to build up capital and create employment opportunities for the teeming youths of the country. Is about time the country carves a niche for itself rather than leave at the mercy of external forces.

### **Suggestions**

1. To begin with, the country should get its development paradigm right. Ever too often, policy makers and executors, public-private sector practitioners tend to look at development from the point of view of the West forgetting that every country's development path has to be based on its cultural and social value systems.
2. The country public sector leadership should increase their faith in science and technology and invest massively in them rather they pay lip service to them because they hold the key to inclusive and sustainable national development.
3. The country should get it prioritizes right in this sector or else the country might as well forget its vision. Performance appraisal and management should be the basis for retention of public servants in the service of the country.
4. An indigenous paradigm or model of development has a higher rate or possibility of success than borrowed one. Technique and precept of development in public sector management from Europe may not function efficiently and effectively in Nigeria because of differences in culture and environment. If public administration in the country must borrow from its homologue in Europe, more emphasis should be on adaptation of model rather than pattern maintenance. Once these recommendations are faithfully followed, the country will surely be on the path of sustainable national development and productivity.

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