

Public Administration and Nation Building in Nigeria, Creating Connections and Developing Possibilities

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Abstract

Nigeria as a nation is in dire need of using Public Administration as an instrument of Nation Building, which involves establishing institutions with adequate utilization of highly connected and developed human capital or people with the strong cerebral capacity and intellectual sagacity that can project our bureaucracy on the pedestal of unhindered opportunities and prospects. Politics focuses on the determination of the will of a state while public bureaucracy is responsible for actualizing the will of a state. Traditionally, public bureaucracy performs three functions: supporting the policy-making function of government; facilitating or regulating the private sector and providing managerial leadership for operating public sector enterprises. The capacity of public bureaucracy to perform its statutory functions is critically dependent on its ability to attract and retain competent and highly skilled personnel in the professional category; the willingness to offer attractive pay and benefits package; and the modernization of the office infrastructure. The paper made use of secondary source or method of data collection and exploratory approach with public choice theory as a theoretical framework. The paper concluded that the practice of public administration in Nigeria is still characterized with lethargic and slowness in official decision and action, insensitiveness to the value of time, irregularity in the attendance at work, nepotism, wastefulness of government resources, high corruption scales, slowness to change, unresponsive and discourteous attitude to the public among several others. The paper recommended that there is need to create a public bureaucracy that is staffed with competent men and women who are committed to efficient service delivery.

Keywords: Public Administration, New Public Management, Bureaucracy, Civil Service, Public Service, Nation Building, Developing Possibilities

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Background to the Study

The attempts to improve the capability of the public bureaucracy in the enhancement of effective service delivery led to a shift from traditional public administration to new public management as a result of political development. This has made public administration to embrace; creativity, innovation, accountability, transparency, efficiency, improved productivity and digitalization in place of; red-tapism, lack of initiative, traditionalism, analogue and moribund secretariat administration. A shift from traditionalism to modernism has offered several opportunities to public sector administration. The emergence of New Public Management and effective administration has resulted in the need for new skills, attitudes and behaviours among public officials at all levels. However, any time a new method is introduced; those who are used to the old system tend to resist the forces of change. In light of this, there is a need to create a new environment, make the right connection, build the capacity of leaders, create new opportunities and develop new prospects. The paper seeks to address the aforementioned issues.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore Public Administration as an instrument of Nation Building. It also centres on creating connections and building those who build the Nation with developing possibilities to take Public Administration to the next level. The specific objectives are to;

1. Assess the inherent benefits and contradictions in transiting from traditional public administration to new public management.
2. Ascertain the extent to which a paradigm shift old public administration to new public management has the tendency of enhancing the building and sustained of strong institutions in order to guarantee transparency and accountability.

Methodology

The paper made use of secondary source or method of data collection and exploratory approach. This will enable the researchers to explore the instrumentality of Public Administration in Nation Building dwelling extensively on the opinions of Scholars in the area of study

Theoretical Framework

Public choice theory

The approach to public administration came into existence in the 1960s, almost coinciding with the new public administration. Vincent Ostrom and Gordon Gunlock are the chief proponents of this approach. It was advocated for the replacement of the traditional doctrine of 'bureaucratic administration' by the concept of 'democratic administration'. In his book "The Intellectual Crisis in American Public Administration", Ostrom writes: "bureaucratic structures are necessary, but not sufficient structures for a productive and responsive public service economy". He further says "perfection in the hierarchical ordering of a professionally trained public service, accountable to a single centre of power will reduce the capability of a larger administrative system to respond to diverse preferences among citizens for many different public goods and services and cope with diverse environmental conditions (Hendrie and Porter, 1987).

Public Choice analysis has roots in the positive analysis ("what is") but is often used for normative purposes ("what ought to be") to identify a problem or to suggest improvements. public choice theory modelled government as made up of officials who, besides pursuing the public interest, might act to benefit themselves, for example in the budget-maximizing model of bureaucracy, possibly at the cost of efficiency.

Relating the theory with the study on Public Administration and Nation Building, the usual model depicts the top bureaucrats as being chosen by the chief executive and legislature, depending on whether the democratic system is presidential or parliamentary. The typical image of a bureau chief is a person on a fixed salary who is concerned with pleasing those who appointed him or her. The latter has the power to hire and fire him or her more or less at will. The bulk of the bureaucrats, however, are civil servants whose jobs and pay are protected by a civil service system against major changes by their appointed bureau chiefs. This image is often compared with that of a business owner whose profit varies with the success of production and sales, who aims to maximize profit, and who can in an ideal system hire and fire employees at will. William Niskanen is generally considered the founder of public choice literature on the bureaucracy.

Conceptual Clarifications

Nation Building

Nation-building has many important aspects. Firstly, it is about building a political entity which corresponds to a given territory, based on some generally accepted rules, norms, and principles, and common citizenship. Secondly, it is also about building institutions which symbolize the political entity – institutions such as a bureaucracy, an economy, the judiciary, universities, a civil service, and civil society organizations. Above all, however, nation-building is about building a common sense of purpose, a sense of shared destiny, a collective imagination of belonging. Nation-building is therefore about building the tangible and intangible threads that hold a political entity together and gives it a sense of purpose. Even in these days of globalization and rapid international flows of people and ideas, having a viable nation remains synonymous with achieving modernity. It is about building the institutions and values which sustain the collective community in these modern times (Olalekan, 2015)

Prof. Gambari once observed that in Nigeria, however, some people represent our national importance by calling us the 'Giant of Africa'. This is a mere ascription. We are seen as giants not necessarily because of the quality of our national institutions and values, but simply by our large population and oil wealth. But in reality, the greatness of a nation has to be earned and is not determined just by the size of its population or the abundance of its natural resources. China and India have the largest populations in the world, but they are only now rising as important global players. On the other hand, Japan has few natural resources but has long managed to turn itself into a global economic powerhouse (Gambari, 2008).

In today's world, skills, industriousness, productivity, and competitiveness are the determinant factors of national greatness. Not even the possession of the nuclear bomb is enough to make a nation great without reference to the industriousness and creativity of its

citizens. Since the time of Adam Smith, every serious nationalist and politician has come to know that the wealth of a nation is not based on the wealth and opulence of its rulers, but the productivity and industriousness of its citizenry.

The real question is why has the task of nation-building been so difficult in Nigeria, and the fruits so patchy, despite our enormous human and natural resources? There is need to look for the answer in three critical areas: (1) threats and challenges posed by the environment for nation-building; (2) the quality of leadership that has confronted these challenges; and (3) the fragility of political and development institutions. It necessary to understand the environment for nation-building in Nigeria, so we can identify our strengths, weaknesses, and core challenges. There is also need to evolve a system of leadership selection and accountability which produces the sort of leaders that will confront the challenges of the environment in a way that is beneficial for nation-building. As the study has reiterated at the beginning, nations are a product of the human will and imagination and the institutions that sustain their collective efforts.

Leadership as a human capital tenet of our bureaucracy is a critical factor in nation-building and it should be understood in two important but related ways. First, there are the *personal* qualities of integrity, honesty, commitment, and competence of *individual* leaders at the top. Secondly, there are the *collective* qualities of common vision, focus, and desire for the development of the elites as a whole. The standards for recruitment and the performance of leaders over the years have left much to be desired. To succeed in nation-building, there is the need for a leadership that is committed to the rule of law and has a demonstrable sense of fair play and democratic tolerance; a leadership with ability and integrity; above all. We must have leaders who have a vision for a Nigeria better than the one they inherited; leaders who will lead by deeds and not by words; achievers, not deceivers. There is urgent need a leadership that will not only leave its footprints on the sands of time but one, which by dint of hard work, fair play, dedication and commitment, will live forever in the hearts of Nigerians.

Leadership is not everything, but it is an extremely important factor. Unless we have leaders with ability, integrity, commitment, and vision, we cannot succeed at nation-building. It is gratifying to note that within the judiciary, the National Assembly, and within the Executive, the issue of the quality of leadership is currently receiving attention. We must not relent in this struggle for quality leadership as it is the key to building our nation. Beyond the qualities of individual leaders, however, there is the equally important question of the quality of the collective plea leadership offered by the Nigerian elite class as a whole. After all, a tree cannot make a forest, and an individual leader cannot do everything alone.

Creating Connections, Building institutions and People Responsible for Nation Building

There are three important components of nation-building: setting the rules; hiring persons with the technical expertise and moral competence to interpret the rules or implement the goals of the organizations; and ensuring that the institutions inspire public confidence by being transparent, fair and consistent. These are also the standards by which the

performance of any organization, in particular, public sector organizations should be measured. This shows that the act of creating the organization itself is not as important as its proper functioning and overall effectiveness. In this regard, Nigeria needs to create, connect, build or strengthen institutions and people that would help achieve the national goals of democratic governance and sustainable development. These include:

(a) Institutions and human capital for fostering public integrity

When referring to the courts or the ICPC or Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) as institutions that fight corruption; it imply that these organizations not only operate and apply or enforce a set of rules but also aim to create a system of values that rejects the abusive of public position for private gain.

Today, there are three institutions equipped with experts that are dedicated to fostering integrity in the public sector: the Code of Conduct Bureau [CCB], the ICPC and EFCC. Together the ICPC's mandate includes reviewing public sector systems and procedures with to eliminating pitfalls for corruption, public enlightenment and mobilization against corruption and enforces the law in these areas. By contrast, EFCC has the mandate to combat 419 crimes, money laundering, and terrorist financing and fraud in the financial sector.

Yet, there is also growing sense among the public that there is an overlap in functions between the ICPC and EFCC. However, those knowledgeable with the statues creating the ICPC and EFCC argue that the main area of overlap is in the definition of economic crime as including corruption. The anti-corruption bodies have met the criteria of inspiring public confidence in their work. That public confidence will be raised much higher if the functions are delineated in a way that can easily be grasped by the public.

(b) Institutions and human capital for public service delivery

The civil service is the main instrument and institution of public service delivery. Traditionally, the civil service performs three functions: supporting the policy-making function of government at the federal, state and local government; facilitating or regulating the private sector; and providing managerial leadership for operating public sector enterprises. The capacity of the Nigerian civil service to perform its statutory functions is critically dependent on its ability to attract and retain competent and highly skilled persons in the professional category; the willing to offer attractive pay and benefits package of the public servants; and the modernization of the office infrastructure.

The reforms of the federal civil service have rightly focused on improving the pay package, increasing the number of staff in the professional category and improving service to the public through the Service Compact with Nigerians (SERVICOM).

Nonetheless, much remains to be done both in improving the office infrastructure in the civil service and in bringing public servants attitude to the standards of many emerging economies. Moreover, it is doubtful whether the new pay scale has done much to improve

the overall conditions of the civil servants. While high pay may not offer a guarantee against fraud and corruption, it is a major incentive to work harder and show commitment to public service.

(c) The human capital and Judicial Institutions

The Judiciary is an important institution in any democracy but they are essential to the functioning of a market economy. The judiciary not only arbitrates disputes between the various levels of government, between government and citizens, and among citizens but also among private sector agents. Given its pivotal role in national stability and economic prosperity, some of the major features of good institutions noted earlier are quite relevant. These institutions should have persons with the technical expertise and moral competence to interpret the rules or implement the goals of the organizations and ensure that the institutions inspire public confidence.

In recent times, the Supreme Court, the apex court in the country, has inspired much public confidence and respect because of the quality of its judgment, especially in some politically sensitive cases. In some ways, the gradual maturity of the democratic process in Nigeria, where politicians now prefer legal recourse rather to local rampage with their supporters and loyalists, is directly linked to the growing public confidence in the courts. Election-related disputes should be addressed in the courts –be they electoral courts or ultimately in judicial courts –and not through violence.

There are multiplying instances of election-related violence tearing apart the social fabric in several African countries. Nigerians have also needlessly shed much blood in the past. If Nigerians are beginning to realize the futility of shedding blood in elections disputes, this owes much to our judiciary, which has provided reasoned judgment on several cases. Nonetheless, the responsibility for conducting free and fair elections and accepting results should not be left to the judiciary alone. Democracy cannot be built solely on court orders or judgment of electoral tribunals.

(d) Institutions and human capital for Economic Governance

The functioning and effectiveness of a market-based economy such as Nigeria rely on several institutions. It requires an institution to regulate the supply and flow of money and the financial system (Central Bank); to allocate capital to firms and individuals (Banks and Stock Exchange); to ensure against commercial risks (insurance firms); to ensure individual bank depositors against loss of up to certain amount (deposit insurance); to enforce contractual obligations (courts); and to collect revenue for the government (fiscal authorities). The performance of our national institutions of economic governance is a mixed one. However, the reform of the financial sector has strengthened public confidence in the banks especially and opened opportunities for our banks to extend their reach to other parts of the region (Van-Den-Berg, 2001).

How to spread the benefits of growth and development to all, in other words, how to achieve equitable growth, is a major public policy challenge. In Nigeria, little effort has been made in

that direction. The key instruments for sharing include unemployment insurance, access to affordable housing, and access to health.

Developing Possibilities and Prospects

Public bureaucracy in Nigeria had in the time past undergone various reform processes to reposition the public service for efficiency and capacity development of civil servants in the country towards growth-driven economy. However, past reforms were faced with structural divisions and defects that hardly allowed the different attempts to change the way of doing things and build needed capacity to create efficient public service to attract Direct Foreign Investment DFI. The following are the processes of creating, connecting and building future leaders who are capable of taking the Nigerian public service to the next level:

(a) Quality Education

Quality education has become food for thought for all well-meaning individuals. Education is of great importance to every nation as it is quite obvious that the functionality of an individual in any nation is largely dependent on the quality of education that is imparted on that individual. There is a consensus among scholars that education is the most potent instrument for the overall development of any nation (Abolade, Ogbodo & Maduwesi, 2011). There can be no productive human capital without a functional education; hence Van Den-Berg (2001) opined that countries that are at the forefront of technological advancement equally have the most educated population. This assumption is probably borne out of the view that the purpose of quality education is to create critical thinking that brings about the development of new technologies and new methods of production in line with the demand of the new dispensation. Educated people possess more skills and can perform their jobs effectively. They are also better suited to more complex jobs, which are often associated with high rates of pay and greater economic benefits

(b) Provision of Legal Framework and Enforcement of Regulation of the Public Service

The 1999 Constitution has not provided an adequate legal framework to regulate public service. The Public Service Rules no longer reflect the Constitution, and these gaps make them both ineffective in regulating the public service. This gap needs to be closed up by fast-tracking the enactment of the draft Public Service Bill. Once this is done, Public Service Rules need to be revised. It is necessary to carry out a regular review of Public Service Rules, and Financial Regulations every five years going forward. Public Service Rules and Regulations are weak and sometimes selectively enforced with different standards applied across the board. Effective enforcement of the revised Public Service Rules and Regulations will restore discipline in the civil service. It is therefore imperative that the Ethics and Compliance Division in the newly created Civil Service Transformation Department (Service Policies and Strategy Officer of the OHCSF) develops a framework to address the issue of uniform enforcement of Public Service Rules.

© Merit-based appointment and promotion and the 'Federal Character' principle

All civil service systems in both developed and developing countries seek to balance respect for the merit principle with attention to diversity. In broad terms, diversity in civil service

human resource management involves assuring fair representation for ethnic or racial groups, geographical areas, women and persons with a physical disability. A good practice is to spell out clear guidelines (including percentage targets in some cases) on how to ensure fair representation within the civil service. But every well-performing civil service in the world relies on the merit principle as the primary criterion for appointments and promotions. The recruitment process in Nigeria is not transparent enough. Although promotion is largely merit-based, the existence of a patronage culture also reduces its transparency. There is a need for more transparency in the recruitment and promotion processes. This may require reviewing the functions of the commissioners in the recruitment and promotion processes in FCSC.

d) Professionalization within the civil service

Under the 1988 Civil Service Reform, an attempt was made to extend professionalization within the civil service beyond the traditional groups of engineers, accountants, doctors and lawyers etc. It was envisaged that the finance function would be entrusted to finance professionals while planning and research experts would lead newly created Planning, Research and Statistics Departments. This professionalization effort was not sustained, and only the traditional professional groups were recognized in the civil service that the military left behind in 1999. Evidence from well-performing civil services in developed and developing countries suggests that increased professionalization in civil service management is desirable. Some of the functions that have been professionalized elsewhere include those of policy analysts, economists, and human resource managers. In the Nigerian situation, broadening and sustaining professionalization will require the introduction of professional certification or its equivalent in the medium term. Professionalization will also improve the relationships between political office holders and civil services. There are concerns about the current practice of recruiting aides to political office holders from outside the civil service – politicians do not believe that civil servants have appropriate competences, but if civil servants are excluded from providing close support to political office holders, the public service can be politicized. Improving the skills of civil servants in policy analysis and development, research and evaluation and communications will assist in addressing this issue.

(e) An Effective Performance Management System

There have been past efforts at improving the performance management system of the Civil Service, including the Udoji Report of 1974 and the 1988 Civil Service Reforms. However, the developments now point to a serious need for comprehensive change. Among the consequences of this deficiency is the unsatisfactory level of institutional performance and service delivery. The development and institutionalization of an effective and credible performance management system are therefore considered imperative for the Civil Service going forward. Introduction of a new approach to performance management will align the work of civil servants with the Federal government's strategic vision and goals. It will show how their work fits in to, and how they contribute to the achievement of the FGN's vision and the objective of the MDA in which they work. The implementation of the revised performance management system will ensure there is a clear understanding of job

expectations, regular feedback about performance, advice and steps for improving performance. Through this, it will increase engagement of civil servants and improve the delivery of services to the citizen.

(f) Undertake a comprehensive job evaluation in the public service

A comprehensive job evaluation of the public service is long overdue. The previous one was carried out by the Udoji Commission in 1972-1974, some forty years ago. The existing job evaluation system is outdated, especially because of changes in jobs, economic developments, a technology that affect business processes, and in the job skills in the labour market. Job evaluation can be a very complex, expensive and time-consuming exercise, so time will be invested in its planning, as well as the development of the capacity of the National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission (NSIWC) to manage the process. The current job evaluation scheme has become obsolete and is inadequate for the task. It needs to be redesigned.

(g) Enhanced incentives for the civil servants

Federal civil servants perceived that the incentive system has collapsed. The implementation of the monetization policy led to the loss of fringe benefits, which is seen to have reduced incentives and therefore caused low morale in the service. The monetization policy did not, for example, make sustainable provision for new entrants into the public service to acquire their own houses. Although the monetization policy may have taken care of this issue for existing workers, new employees who enter the service are faced with similar housing problems. The problem was compounded as many public servants who lost their official quarters were forced to find accommodation that was less convenient in location. There are reports that such workers get to the office late every day. The lack of an effective transport system makes matters worse for those who do not have personal means of transportation.

(h) Improved Competence of Civil Servants

Training and capacity building in the civil service was neglected for decades. This was identified as a major explanatory factor for its weakness in 1999. But as soon as a civilian administration assumed power in 1999, attention was paid to training and capacity building, which was accelerated during the 2004-2007 Public Service Reforms implementation period. However, the ongoing objective of improving the competence of civil servants means further efforts in training and capacity building. Training programmes have rarely been based on identified needs. More importantly, training has been used as an instrument of patronage and has served more as welfare than as a tool for building capacity for performance. This needs to be addressed. There is also a need to focus more sharply on leadership and management development and on increasing the effectiveness of public service learning centres. To ensure that the civil service has appropriately skilled and knowledgeable staff, it is essential that staff training is based on identified needs. The identification of training needs through systematic training needs analysis must be the initial step in the development of training policy. There is an urgent need to develop a broad training policy for the entire civil service. This should be accompanied by a training budget.

There should also be Ministry Department and Agencies-specific training policies and programmes, supported by allocated training budgets. The training policies, programmes and budgets will need to be reviewed periodically – at three- or five-year intervals. It is expected that these policies and programmes will cover the range of on the job training as well as formal training courses, given how central on the job training, responsibility for this lies at MDA level, and is in terms of capacity development. This systematic approach to training will ensure that civil servants attend training programmes that are relevant to the jobs they do. It will also help reduce the current ad hoc approaches to training where some staff have more than one opportunity a year, while a large number spend four or five years without attending any training programme. The good practice model of preparing a training calendar and roster for all targeted staff in a year will be encouraged (Anthony, 1965). Expenditure on human capital development, in the recent past, has not closed the capacity gaps in the public service. In addition to the approaches above, there is a need to 'go back to basics' to ensure that public servants have the foundation to benefit from the more formal capacity development opportunities (Anthony, 1965).

(i) More Effective Public Service Learning Centres

The capability of public service training institutions has been neglected, in parallel with the decades of neglect of staff training and capacity building in the public service. The most glaring evidence of this was the decline of the Administrative College of Nigeria (ASCON) in Badagry, with deteriorating facilities and underutilized capacity. The establishment of Civil Service College (CSC) in Abuja - renamed Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN) – is evidence of more recent commitment to quality public service learning institutions, as is the effort to re-position ASCON. However, there is a need for a legal framework and formal establishment by an Act of the National Assembly: delays in this have prevented full and effective functioning of training and staff development institutions.

(j) Improved leadership and management development

Managers need to manage, deliver on their objectives and key performance indicators and to help their staff build capability and improve their performance. Managers do not only have a role in monitoring achievement of service delivery standards but they are also involved in getting their part of the wider public service to achieve those standards. Leadership and management development is thus a key dimension to staff development in well-performing civil service systems. The initial effort made in 1999/2000 has not been sustained. Rolling two- or three-year programmes are needed to develop the competences of chief executives, permanent secretaries, and other senior civil service executives. This is critical, in particular given the high turn-over rate of permanent secretaries in the last few years. There is a need to conduct programme exclusively meant for civil service senior managers, others will involve participation by senior executives from the wider public service. It is possible that occasional leadership and management development programmes could also involve senior executives from the private and voluntary sectors.

(k) Accountability, result-oriented and citizens-centred work culture

The issue of accountability and results focus within the civil service are closely linked to the issues of anti-corruption and transparency. Success with anticorruption education with an

emphasis on ethics and integrity will mean in time that officials recruited into the service will be Nigerian men and women who abhor corruption, are accountable and are committed to high ethical standards. All this will result in a work culture that is oriented towards achieving high productivity and quality service delivery. However, to achieve this will take time.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is a common knowledge that there has been little or no departure from the old order despite the numerous public service reforms carried out by successive administrations in Nigeria since independence. As a matter of fact, the practice of public administration in Nigeria is still characterized with lethargic and slowness in official decision and action, insensitiveness to the value of time, irregularity in the attendance at work, nepotism, wastefulness of government resources, high corruption scales, slowness to change, unresponsive and discourteous attitude to the public among several others. Given because of the above, this paper has explored creating, connecting, building those who built the nations, developing opportunity and prospects. It was discovered that there is an urgent need to develop public bureaucracy that is willing to create a network of relationship with the general public to meet their yearnings and aspirations. It equally became clear that the time has come to be committed to the empowerment and capacity building of those who are entrusted with the responsibilities of building the nation. To realize the above expectations, there is a need for public enlightenment campaign and value re-orientation of public servants at all levels.

Nations are built by men and women who have the will and vision to accomplish greatness, not for themselves, their immediate families and friends, but for their country. I believe that if we can find the will to offer such leadership, and support it by strong and dependable political and economic institutions, we will find a way to our national greatness.

In Summary, the following measures are considered necessary in repositioning the practice of public administration in Nigeria towards the enhancement of effective service delivery:

1. There is a need to create a public bureaucracy that is staffed with competent men and women who are committed to efficient service delivery
2. It is necessary to develop a courteous, friendly, receptive and helpful relationship between public bureaucracy and the general public
3. There is a need to make public servant eager and pro-active to create a network of relationship with the general public to meet their yearnings and aspirations
4. The time has come for the nation to build a transparent, honest and corruption-free public bureaucracy in their official dealings with the general public
5. There is a need to build institutions and leaders with exemplary standards of efficiency in service delivery with minimal waste; punctuality and time consciousness in all official businesses
6. It is time to create a public bureaucracy that is eager to respond to the problems and complaints of the general public appropriately and promptly

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