

Economic Stagnation and Backwardness: The Role of Public Sector Administrators

Patricia Uche Chukwu and Michael Chukwuemeka Amony

National Board for Technology Incubation, (Federal Ministry of Science and Technology) (NBTI), Federal Secretariat phase II, Abuja.

Corresponding author: mikeamonye@gmail.com

Abstract: Public administration is globally understood to be the management and implementation of the whole set of government activities dealing with the implementation of laws, regulations and decisions of the Government and the management related to the provision of public services. It entails an aggregate machinery (policies, rules, procedures, systems, organizational structures, personnel and so forth) funded by the budget of the state. These interwoven components of public administration propels and drives the management and direction of the affairs of government at all levels, and its interaction with other stakeholders in the State, society and external environment. Hence public administrators at some desks make and/or enforce rules and policies of government, while other administrators at other desks execute and control as the case may be, the operations and procedures as well as personnel for government business towards ensuring the attainment of stated objectives and production of the requisite projected deliverables. It is thus opined that good governance and its deliverables leading to economic and industrial growth are direct positive index speaking the good performance of the consortium of all the public administrators at various levels of the government in any country. Similarly economic stagnation, recession and depression are assuredly the final outcomes of the aggregate poor performance of the public administrators in the country. This document discusses the role of public sector administrators in dragging Nigeria out of economic stagnation, intermittent recession and slow growth. It adduced without prejudice, that poor public administration was basic to the last recession and that excellent public administration is the matching panacea to recovery and engendering of steady economic growth. The paper enjoins all public administrators to offer their best in tandem with the policies they are championing and implementing for the country to move forward to a developed economy.

Keywords: Administration, Public, Recession, Recovery, Role

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I. Introduction

Administration in any form constitutes the determined action taken in pursuit of conscious purpose. It is the systematic ordering of affairs and the calculated use of resources, aimed at making those things happen which we want to happen and simultaneously preventing developments that fail to square with our intentions. It is the marshaling of available labour and materials in order to gain that which is desired at the lowest cost in energy, time and money. Public administration is the aspect of administration that exists in a political system for the accomplishment of goals, and objectives formulated by the political decision makers and consists of the activities of all branches of government in the national, state (provincial) and local governments. It encompasses all the activities which are undertaken to accomplish the stated objectives of government in varied directions and dimensions. In other words, public administration is the sum total of managerial, technical, clerical and manual activities thereto in the attainment of stated goals (Marume, 2016).

Public Administration covers all three branches of the government, Legislative, Executive and Judicial and their interrelationships. Legislative organ makes the laws, Executive organ of the government implements the laws, while the Judicial organ of the government interprets the laws. Public Administration is an integral part of the political process and plays important role in the formulation and execution of public policies at all levels, from national to grassroots. It is also closely associated with numerous private groups and individuals in providing services to the community. Public sector governance refers to the regimes of laws, rules, judicial decisions and administrative practices that constrain, prescribe, and enable the provision of publicly supported goods and services wherefore constitutional institutions are linked to the realities of policymaking and public management (United Nations 2006).

So, public administration is government administration, government in action, or a socio-economic and politico-administrative confluence encompassing all things from policy making to final provision of infrastructure, utilities and state wise services. Public Administration, therefore, refers to that part of

administration, which pertains to the administrative activities of the government in all ramifications. Indeed Public administration is what government does. It exists within a political environment, and it is this political context that makes it “public.” Public administration is about implementation of the public interest. It is also about doing collectively what cannot be done as well individually. The executive nature of public administration enables the public will to be translated into action by the people responsible for running the public bureaucracy. Public administration includes many occupational fields—medicine, engineering, social welfare, economics, etc. It is within the framework of each of these fields that the political, legal, and managerial aspects of public administration are transformed by public administrators into the work of government. Essentially it is majorly the actions and operations of the public administration of a country which results in its growth, decline, recession or depression. The responsibilities of Public Sector Administrators are very enormous and critically impactful.

About July 2016 various government officials, notably the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emezie, and the Minister of Finance, Kemi Adeosun, informed Nigerians that the economy was in “technical” recession. Shortly after, in August 2016, the National Bureau of Statistics officially confirmed the information via the release of figures. The statistics bureau said the second quarter 2016 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined by -2.06 per cent. Annual inflation rose to 17.1 percent in July from 16.5 percent in June, and food inflation rose to 15.8 percent from 15.3. The statistics agency said the onset of the harvest season was yet to significantly impact on food prices, with food sub-index rising by 15.8 per cent (year-on-year basis) in July, about 0.5 per cent points lower from rates recorded the previous month. Equally, the agency said energy prices accounted for the rise in inflation for the month, with energy and energy related prices recording some of the largest increases reflected in the core sub-index. (Premium Times, August 31, 2016). It became glaring that the country has indeed slipped into recession.

Recession as defined by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) is a business cycle contraction, and it refers to a general slowdown in economic activity for two consecutive quarters. During recession, there is usually a decline in certain macroeconomic indicators such as GDP, employment, investment spending, capacity utilization, household income, business income, and inflation, with the attendant increase in the rate of unemployment. Technically, when an economy recorded two consecutive quarters of negative growth in real GDP, it can be said to be in recession. GDP is the market value of all legitimately recognized goods and services produced in the country in a given period of time, usually one year. A recession is thus a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy and for quite some length of time. Recessions are typically visible in real GDP postings (reported quarterly), and in four other monthly data series: real income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales (Tule et al, 2012).

All the indices project the inactivity or lack of activity in the industrial sectors of the economy which categorically informs us that had the country religiously and concertedly promoted economic activities in all sectors, we would have been very distant from recession. The integrating and encompassing solutions and remedies against economic stagnation, decline or recession are industrial productions and related wholesale retail sales. Virtually all ministries, departments and agencies of government at all levels in most ways are directly and indirectly tailored to promote these ingredients of GDP enhancement and these MDAs are manned by public sector administrators. The ministries of Works and its agencies, Agriculture and its agencies, Mines and its agencies, Commerce and Industry and its agencies, Science and Technology and its agencies, etc. Also the yearly capital appropriations of government virtually every year are planned for improved productivity. Yet the impact on the economy is grossly abysmal. What and where lies the shortcomings. The more time we spend on this question the more correct we would adduce without prejudice, that poor public administration was basic to the abysmal economic growth and that excellent public administration is the matching panacea to recovery and fostering of steady economic growth.

II. Aim And Objectives

This work aims to highlight the lacking ingredients in an economy led by public sector administrators at all sectors and level; which poor state, corruption, poor attention and poor leadership and poor drive for advancement pummeled us into the current recession. It aims to ginger sound and moral leadership that would ensure due process in the activities of governance. It seeks to invite all public sector administrators to improved performance in line with global best practice to enhance recovery from the economy recession, stagnation or backwardness and simultaneously engender steady sound economic growth.

III. Methodology

Data for this paper were derived from secondary sources: previous researches and analyses of scholars, government documents; as well as journal articles that are related to the subject. The study involved an extensive literature review which critically analyzed the present status and deliverables which a disciplined and determined public sector consortium of administrators can render to the country as well as the supportive and

regulatory roles which the government must play to ensure continuous economic growth with the attendant enhancement of our Gross domestic Product (GDP).

IV. Statement of the Problem

Presently Nigeria is undergoing economic recession and grossly under equipped by way of leadership drive to engender technological knowhow and requisite machineries to prosecute or install needed infrastructures to position her as a developed country. It is thus technologically backward and falls short in the following areas:

- i.** It is unable to produce her own military hardware with which to defend herself if the need arises.
- ii.** It cannot produce capital goods such as tractors, lathe machines, drilling machines, cars, trains, and other earth moving equipment.
- iii.** It is unable to exploit her natural resources except with the help of foreigners who will normally provide the technology and expertise to undertake the exploitation of her natural resources.
- iv.** It is unable to mechanize her agriculture i.e. crude implements are still used for agricultural production activities by a large percentage of those who are involved in agricultural production.
- v.** It depends on other countries for the supply of its spare parts for industrial machinery
- vi.** It exports raw materials to other countries as against finished products

Uwaifo and Uddin, (2009) states that Nigeria's shortcoming in meeting the above stated conditionality marks her out as a technological backward country. Correlating this obvious fact Eneh (2011), opines that technology diffusion is at the lowest ebb in Nigeria with the country importing virtually every product and object of need. Also our educational system is in prolonged crises of decaying infrastructure and the attendant agitation of staff for a change. Research and development (R&D) which is the most significant driver of industrial performance is also poor and therefore cannot be appropriated for meaningful development in Nigeria. The situation is pitiable and we must do something to reverse the trend and move this country out of recession and into economic and industrial stardom.

V. The Way Forward

When the rudimentary infrastructures are lacking and we are constrained to be exporting our natural raw materials and agricultural products while continuously importing all processed wares, foods, food products as well as refined petroleum products; when people who should be producing one item or the other roam our streets in their thousands and millions looking for civil service jobs that are not there; when the few employed are allowed to waste man hours every day at work for want of work because their work have been contracted or consulted out or taken by alternative importation; then the scenario is clear that our assumed intention to install sound and steady economic growth is a mirage. The President of Nigeria, the Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Directors General, Directors, Heads of Departments and Units as well as supervisors in their ranks and files are all Public Sector Administrators. On us all lies the burden of doing things differently henceforth if we are to achieve stated objectives.

The center stage of a country's growth and advancement is sound leadership at all strata of public administration. The key element to administrative leadership is its service focus. Although leadership functions and foci may vary, administrative leaders need to be responsive, open, and aware of competing interests, dedicated to the common good, etc., so that they create a sense of public trust for their stewardship roles. Leadership is a composite of providing technical performance, internal direction to followers, external organizational direction—all with a public service orientation (Van-Wart, 2003). One cankerworm militating against focused leadership in Nigeria is corruption. Corruption has permeated and invaded the public sector ministries, departments and agencies making unattainable and elusive the rightful implementation of policies and deliverables to the people (Osakede et al., 2015). Sound leadership destroys and disallows corruption through its spirited enterprise that enforces due and transparent process in the affairs of government. The time has come for us all to embrace and stimulate sound leadership in the name of service and GOD whom we all claim to serve. The time is now.

The topical argument is that corruption has been responsible for bad governance, socio-economic and political under-development in Nigeria public sector. Corruption, like all social phenomena, is intelligible only in its total social context, its peculiar form, dynamics and degree of social and cultural acceptability or tolerance being critically related to the dominant mode of capital accumulation; income, wealth and poverty distribution, power configuration; and the underpinning moral and ethical values operating in a given society. Corruption in Nigeria is a kind of social virus which is a hybrid of traits of fraudulent anti-social behaviour derived from British colonial rule and nurtured in the indigenous Nigerian context. The pervasive "climate of corruption" in Nigeria constitutes the greatest impediment to good governance and sustainable development (Osakede et al., 2015).

Leadership can focus strictly on the ends (getting things done), the means by which things get done (the followers), or aligning the organization with external needs and opportunities (which can result in substantive change). A sound and focused leadership emphasizes the spirit with which leadership is conducted and in the public sector it is called public service commitment. Administrative leadership is the process of providing the results required by authorized processes in an efficient, effective, and legal manner. Administrative leadership is the process of developing/supporting followers who provide the results. Administrative leadership is the process of aligning the organization with its environment, especially the necessary macro-level changes necessary, and realigning the culture as appropriate (Van-Wart, 2003). Public service commitment is prerequisite to ensuring the achievement of stated goals in an efficient, effective and legal manner. Public service commitment is obedience to the rules, regulations and laws in government business; corruption disallows obedience and cuts corners, robbing the rules and laws to achieve its destructive aim.

Man is born to work and achieve results in stated directions. He is endowed with acumen and appreciative spirit that recognizes talent, courage, merit and industry both in leadership and executing levels. Today our laws and rules governing the business of government are neglected by all and sundry. Merit has been degraded and in its place, tribalism, religious sectionalism, money syndrome of success and nepotism has been installed. The situation has given way to mediocrity in governance and every so often the abysmal performance and corruption of many public sector administrators occupying lofty but unmerited positions adorn the pages of Nigerian newspaper to our amazement and entertainment as the masses have been very regularly bemused by such news that they have become the order rather than strange. They way forward are assuredly to enthrone merit and embrace obedience to the rules, regulations and laws of government business and operations. This can be achieved by the infusion of collective Public Service Commitment in us all to enhance our leadership quality towards ensuring productivity at all levels and in all sectors. When this is done, there would be a gradual encompassing change facilitating and improving trade and productions at various levels of the economy thereby enhancing the country's GDP. The impact would not only pull us out of economic stagnation and recession, but shall launch Nigeria into the league of advanced countries.

VI. Conclusion

Nigeria can be seen to be in economic stagnation and technologically backwards lacking the ability to solve most of its technological problems and predominantly relying on importation to procure the needs of its citizenry. The physical difference between advanced and developing countries has been identified with the disparity in their technology knowledge production and utilization but the superb hidden difference driving the physical difference is the leadership quality and public service commitment of advanced countries as opposed to the corrupt and care free of most public sector administrators in developing countries. Poor economic growth is dislodged through enhanced industrial production and productivity. Enhanced industrial production and productivity as well as trade are fostered through a genuine leadership and Public Service Commitment. The ball is in our hands.

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