

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN MANAGING THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND JOB CREATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The role of Public Administration as a government machinery should not be only relegated to simple implementation of programmes. In other words, it should include improving and enriching the effectiveness of those programmes as well as providing the necessary update to keep track of the pace of development within the continent and beyond. Educational development, to be specific, should take care of all the significant issues from all angles such as job creation, security, international relations, modern scientific and technological innovations etc. And for Nigeria's educational system to be salvaged from being the shadow of its former self, educational policies must be backed up with appropriate funding and implemented with commitment, seriousness and sense of direction for the greater good of all its citizens.

Introduction

Public administration as a machinery for implementing government policies and programs is carried out by public servants and draws on theories from economics, management, political science, sociology and administrative law. The objectives of public administration are to manage and monitor the democratic values of the people, improving equality, justice, security, efficiency, effectiveness

of public services. Woodrow (1887) was concerned about what government could effectively and efficiently do at the least positive cost either of money or energy. From this perspective, there was a call by the citizens for efficient administration to replace ineffective, wasteful bureaucracy.

There are two divergent views regarding the nature of the Public administration. These views are: *The Integral View and Managerial view and Managerial View*. From the perspective of the **Integral View**, Public administration is a sum total of all the activities undertaken in pursuit of and in fulfillment of public policy. These activities include not only managerial and technical but also manual and clerical. Thus the activities of all persons from top to bottom constitute administration although they are of varying significance to the running of administrative machinery. White adopts this view of Public administration. According to him, Public Administration 'consists of all those operations having for their purpose the fulfilment or enforcement of public policy'. This definition covers a multitude of particular operations, many in fields. In similar passion, Dimock also holds that administration is concerned with the 'what' and 'how' of government. The 'what' is the subject

matter, the technical knowledge of a field which enables the administrator to perform his tasks. The 'how' on the other hand is the technique of management, the principles according to which cooperative programmes are carried to success. From the angle of **Managerial View**, the works of only those persons who are engaged in the performance of managerial functions in an organisation constitute administration. The Managerial view of the administration has the functions of planning, programming and organizing all the activities in an organisation to be able to achieve the desired ends. Gullick and Simon subscribed to this view. Further stressing on the managerial view, Gullick pointed out that 'Administration has to do with getting things done; with the accomplishment of defined objectives'. No wonder, the reform of Public Administration over the past several decades has concentrated on the managerial aspects of government, attempting to make government more efficient, effective and economical.

Meaning of Public Administration

Wilson (1887) defined Public Administration as "the most obvious part of government; it is government in action; it is the executive, the operative, the most visible side of government"

Henry (1995: 21) defined public administration as a

"Broad ranging and amorphous combination of theory and practice" that aimed to promote a superior understanding of government and its relationship with the society it governs, as well as to encourage public policies more responsive to social needs and to institute managerial practices attuned to effectiveness, efficiency, and the deeper human requisites of the citizenry".

Public Administration could be termed as a newly emerged discipline compare to other disciplines in Social Science's discipline; it deals with every aspect of the state and its relation to subjects. Simply put, Public Administration is state mechanism. In every Political System administration have significant role. Public administration is "centrally concerned with the organization of

government policies and programmes as well as the behavior of officials (usually non-elected) formally responsible for their conduct. Generally Public Administration has been used in two senses. In the wider sense it includes all the activities of the government whether falling in the sphere of legislature, executive or judicial branch of the government, in the narrow sense Public Administration is concerned with the activities of the executive branch only.

Public Administration and Management of Nigeria's Educational System for Quality Improvement

The role of Public Administration in the Management of Nigerian Educational System for Quality improvement cannot be over emphasized. Education has been at the top of the priority lists of some previous Nigerian governments yet the education system is still far from being ready for the challenges of the new century. Though Nigeria is not the only country whose education system is unprepared, a closer examination of many systems, especially in a developing context, indicate that most of the educational systems in developing countries are not yet ready to prepare students for the contemporary global world.

The Federal Ministry of Education has the responsibility for the coherence of national policy and procedures and for ensuring that the states' policies operate within the parameters of national policy as adapted for local needs. Co-ordination of policy at the political level takes place through the National Council of Education. This is the highest policy making body, chaired by the Federal Minister of Education and includes all the State Commissioners of Education. This body is advised by the Joint Consultative Committee on Education, which consists of all the Federal and State Directors of Education, Chief Executives of education statutory bodies, and Directors of University Institutes of Education. The Director of the Federal Ministry of Education chairs the Committee.

Responsibility for educational institutions is shared between Federal, State, local government, communities and private organizations. The

Ministry of Education has the major responsibility for education but other Ministries also play an important role. The Ministry of Information has the responsibility for publicity and awareness of some of the educational policies and programs offered. The Ministry of Women's affairs and Social Welfare together with the State Commission for Women also play a role in promoting the education of women and girls.

The administration of the education system is shared mainly amongst the Federal and State Ministries of Education as well as statutory bodies referred to as Commissions. There are Commissions established for different sub - sectors of the education system and are charged with various responsibilities for the sub - sectors. There is a National Primary Education Commission (NPEC), the National Secondary Education Commission (NSEC), the National Mass Literacy, Adult and Non - Formal Education Commission (NMEC) and the National Universities Commission (NUC). In addition there are other major role players at local government level, district level and in the immediate environment where the school is located.

The system grew rapidly in the late 70s and early 80s. The growth was mainly in size and not in quality. There have been problems in the implementation of policies for the expansion of the education system that have contributed to their failure to assist in the social and economic development of the country. Lack of capacity for planning and management, limited financial resources, inadequate information systems and monitoring systems are some of the problems that led to rapid and unplanned growth. More attention had been paid to the expansion of the system due to political pressures than from a concern about the provision of greater access to quality education.

The overall responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education is to ensure quality within the system, to encourage and initiate innovations, and to ensure that the schools maintain minimum standards of acceptable educational practice. However, the public perception is that the quality of education offered is low and that standards have dropped.

These perceptions are based on lack of adherence to acceptable educational practice. Teacher qualifications are low. The learning environment does not promote effective learning. Basic facilities, teaching and learning resources are generally not available. Teacher - pupil ratios are high. General performance in examinations is poor and the graduates have low levels of competencies in the work environment.

The collaborative roles of the public service in governance, policy formulation and implementation rest largely on the institutional machinery of government like the Civil Service, Defense forces, Diplomatic Service, the Legislature, Regulative Commissions etc. These institutions are set up to ensure the smooth working of the various components that make up the state. There is no gainsaying the fact, that the future growth and development of a nation depends on the strength and ability of the public service to develop a science and a philosophy of administration competent to discharge social goods in the developing societies (Stone, 1986:2). In functional terms, public service involves the process of rule application, that is, the process through which general social rules are converted into specific observable decisions to better the lives of the people (Agagu, 1997:233).

Public Administration and Job Creation in Nigeria

Job creation simply means the process of providing jobs especially for people who are unemployed. It is also the process of making more paid jobs available. The Public Administration as the engine room of government played a significant role in job creation in Nigeria. Over the years, Nigerian government through the public service implements various approaches all with sole aim of creating more job opportunities among the youth in order to address the problem of youth unemployment. Unemployment is the inability of a matured citizen or individual to acquire employment to satisfy his basic needs. Unemployment is a hydra-headed monster which exists among the youth in all developing countries. According to National Bureau of Statistics, the national unemployment rates for Nigeria between 2000 and 2011 showed

that the number of unemployed persons constituted 31.1% in 2000; 13.6% in 2001; 12.6% in 2002; 14.8% in 2003; 13.4% in 2004; 11.9% in 2005; 13.7% in 2006; 14.6% in 2007; 14.9% in 2008, 19.7% in 2009, 19.7% in 2010 and 23.9% in 2011.

Job creation for full employment of labour was recognized early in Nigeria by policy makers as an important process of aligning economic growth with the development needs of the country. The First National Development Plan (1962-68) had, as one of its cardinal objectives, the development of employment opportunity which would be accessible to all citizens, The Second National Development Plan used industrialization as envisaged in the industrial policy to create more employment opportunities (FRN,1970). Even the third National Development Plan and forth National Development Plan also have as one of their objectives, "the reduction in the level of unemployment" (FRN, 1975; FRN, 1980).

Nigerian government establishes various forms of youth empowerment programs which resulted in employment generation and policies targeted at reduction/eliminating the menace of unemployment in the Nigerian polity. Prominent among these programs are the establishment:

- National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1989
- Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) in 1999, and
- National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) by the Obasanjo led administration.
- Graduate Empowerment Scheme (GES) in 2004
- National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS) in 2009
- Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) in 2012, etc.

Presently, the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Public Works, Youth and Women Employment Component of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE-P) established the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS) which aims to provide the unemployed graduates youths with job apprenticeship

opportunities that will expose them to skills and experiences relevant to the current labour market and enhance their employability (FGN, 2012).

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The state of affairs of the Nigerian education system is discussed in the next section.

The State of Affairs of the Nigerian Education System

The circumstance of Public Administration extends beyond the territory of political principles and the state this is without doubt, if one follows carefully the opinion of the pluralists. The growth of Public Administration and the discovery of petroleum and natural gas are part of the major issues that led to a number of corrupt practices in the country such as Political corruption, regionalism and tribal sentiments, disregard for farming, little attention to mining, pottery and carving and a pathetic nosedive in the educational sector. For quite some time now, Nigeria's wealth has been withered and swindled with little effort and concern shown to the living conditions of the citizenry little wonder then therefore, that Nigeria was ranked 139th out of 176 countries in

Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index.

It has become increasingly popular that the Nigerian education system is always not fortunate for having demands that are considered hard and very pressed to meet by the government. Despite the growth of the Nigerian universities for example, over 1.7 million students or more compete to fill up rarely 0.5 million places available not to talk of relatively few number of expertise coupled with the unavailability of the required facilities to aid teaching. These issues among others contributed to drastic fall in the educational quality and making tall the joblessness with university graduates a serious issue of concern. Amidst all these, the numbers of those seeking admissions into higher educational institutions only increase by the day.

At the secondary school level, the unpleasant enrollment proportion signifies that not up to the

half of Nigerian Youths make it through the basic education most of them lost their ways during the first two years in the secondary school which no doubt adds up to the illiteracy rate and that of joblessness and crime. The situation is even more challenging at the primary level because the UNESCO (2012) revealed that one fifth of every Nigerian child is out of school pointing to virtually 11 million children that are out of school.

The inability of Nigeria's education system to meet up with the growing demands of the institutions and citizens, warrants the international movement of those citizens who can afford to travel abroad to acquire education and even become expatriates afterwards. This movement according to UIS (2012) led to the number of Nigerian students abroad grew up to 71% from 2007 and 2010. More so, British council (2012) released that the number of Nigerians students in United Kingdom rose from 11, 785 in 2008 to 17,620 in 2012.

NIGERIAN STUDENTS ABROAD (2007-2010) TOP FIVE OVERSEA STUDY DESTINATIONS						
YEAR	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH	FIFTH	TOTAL
2010	UK (16, 486)	USA (6, 510)	MALAYSIA (5, 443)	GHANA (1, 649)	CANADA (1, 302)	38, 851
2009	UK (14, 380)	USA (6, 153)	MALAYSIA (1, 407)	GHANA (1, 349)	S/AFRICA (1, 084)	31, 405
2008	UK (11, 783)	USA (6, 229)	GHANA (1, 349)	S/AFRICA (649)	MALAYSIA (497)	24, 953
2007	UK (11, 136)	USA (6, 074)	GHANA (1, 349)	GERMANY (430)	CANADA (405)	22, 712

Source: Adopted from Clark, 2013

Summary of the Challenges in Nigeria's Education System

The Nigerian education system is not without a number of challenges. The findings of Needs Assessment and Situation Analysis carried out for Teacher Development for 21st century (TDev21)

program which is a joint effort of World Bank and Global e-schools and communities initiative (GeSCI) reveals a lot of challenges. Below is snapshot of issues that characterize the Nigerian education system in relation to access, quality, equity and relevance:

- Inadequate infrastructure and information structure (poor infrastructure, inadequate classrooms, teaching aids, and poor learning environments due to neglect of the physical facilities).
- Low rate of growth of teaching staff population.
- High rate of growth of students'
- High student to teacher ratios
- Lack of qualified teachers
- Lack of incentives in the system for the teaching workforce
- Lack of adequate staff development programmes for sustainable career structure
- Inadequate instructional materials, books and learning materials
- Gender disparity which is more pronounced in the rural areas
- Declining standards in quality with learner achievement test results comparing unfavorably with other countries in the region.
- Lack of funding. (It has been observed that recurrent budgetary allocation has never exceeded 10% in Nigeria)
- Lack of effective monitoring of the management of funds presently being allocated to the sector.
- Inadequate directional, relevant and functional curriculum.
- Inadequate teaching and learning facilities leading to poorly prepared students, examination malpractices and lack of self confidence in student graduates
- Lack of correct and reliable operational data and statistics for education planning.
- Inadequate funding
- Inadequate administrative procedures
- Multiplicity of initiative especially in ICT and education without any coordinating mechanism resulting in duplication of efforts and wastage of resources
- Lack of a systemic and systematic approach in ICT use in education settings.

Sources: NITDA 2008; Key Informant Interviews, TDeve 21 2011

The Way forward

Any educational system that emphasizes growth

and expansion without due regard to the development of reliable sources of funding, an adequate supply of trained teachers for different academic programs, infrastructural facilities to accommodate natural and stimulated increases in school population and a dynamic economy to absorb its graduates from the schools is laying the seeds that will, on germination, create an environment in which all types of crises will flourish. Such is the experience of the Nigerian Public Administration in its role towards managing the education system.

This paper suggests that the planning and management of the education system should be left to professional educators who arguably have the training, experience and, above all, the interest and commitment necessary to achieve the effective development of the system and the attainment of both short-term and long-term educational aims and objectives.

Schooling is not synonymous with education and political leaders should constantly be made aware of this. Therefore, a situation in which young people are stimulated to go to school but are then denied reasonable facilities and opportunities for effective teaching and learning experiences is likely to lead to a crisis, not only in the education system but also for society as a whole. Therefore, Schools should be well equipped with suitable teaching aids, facilities and quality teachers. At the same time, it is the government that will make it possible for effective teaching and learning to take place if they equip their schools properly and supervise school activities.

Placing too much value on the possession of certificates rather than on the acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills should be discouraged. Many students, therefore, supported by their parents and teachers, even resort to criminal activities (including membership of secret cults) to pass the public examinations which will secure these cherished certificates and help obtain admission into higher institutions or employment.

The government must also ensure that corrupt

leaders in the Nigerian education sector in particular, and public service in general are dealt with. Curtailing corruption in Nigeria will enhance proper funding, more infrastructures, adequate facilities, etc.

The most important role of public sector leaders has been to solve the problems and challenges faced in a specific environment. When we say we want more leadership in the public sector, what we are really looking for are people who will promote institutional adaptations in the public interest. Leadership in this sense is not value neutral. It is a positive espousal of the need to promote certain fundamental values that can be called public spiritedness. Leadership is an important and crucial variable that leads to enhanced management capacity, as well as organizational performance. A leadership focus also plays an integrating role among various Human Resource Management components including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, public service ethics, and succession planning.

Conclusion

The roles and responsibilities of Public Administration in a democratic country has long been a matter of debate. It has been a central concern in the literature from the beginning of Public Administration, and remains so to this day. When the issue of Nigeria educational system today is raised, the first sets of thoughts that comes to mind are: decline in standard, deterioration of facilities, examination malpractices, mass promotion syndrome and the like before any other thing else. As a matter of fact, the problem facing developing countries including Nigeria, most of the time, is not that of policy formulation but of implementation. This can be clearly seen in the case of Nigerian Policy on Education, which seems to have failed to be effective. Adesina (1977) confirmed the non-effectiveness of this policy when he admitted that the policy on education has failed to be effective as a result of defective planning process, political constraints, financial constraints and statistical deficiencies.

The Nigerian public service has faced a number of

challenges, which has considerably undermined its capacity to serve as agent of managing the educational system for quality improvement and job creation. Such challenges include those of achieving technical competence, coping with public expectation and change, behaving ethically and maintaining constitutional order (Ayo, 1998: 73). The truth is that all these problems are inextricably linked to failure of the public service to play its rightful role in system maintenance and continuity. To a large extent, the poor performance of public service in Nigeria in the areas of transparency and accountability is due largely to the quality of personnel and the authoritarian regimes. More importantly, public servants are not trained to view their service delivery as sacred and sacrosanct, while very negligible percentage of their population can recognize the impacts of their policies on the people.

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