

Development Administration in Nigeria Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

The general focus of this paper is to analyse the efforts made by government administration since independence at achieving development and the administrative approaches in terms of policies as it translates into meaningful development huge sum of resources spent on projects annually and seeing little or no results. The attempt of this work is to seek for answers to why the country is still underdeveloped despite the huge efforts that have been made by past administrations which is being owed to the old colonial development administration tools for development as they are still being adopted thereby halting the process of development and impeding growth process as well. The specific focus of this work is to seek for ways to better the development administration approach of Nigeria in other to achieve development in all ramifications. One of such approaches is to articulate the needs of the people in the development process.

Keywords: Development administration, Administration, Government, Growth, Public policies, Underdevelopment.

Journal Reference Format:

*Mokwunyei Victor Ndidi, Dibia Godwin Chukwuedo & Chukwusa Marvin Udoka (2018): Development Administration in Nigeria Challenges and Prospects. Humanities, Management, Arts, Education & the Social Sciences Journal. Vol. 6. No. 2, Pp 1-6

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria celebrated her golden jubilee on 1st October, 2010. The event provided an opportunity for the country to objectively review the journey into nationhood over the past 50 years. The general consensus in the country seems to be that the people of Nigeria should be thankful to God for the modest progress recorded since Independence and despite the fact that it has not truly fulfilled the dreams of the founding fathers who worked assiduously to make Nigeria the giant and pride of Africa. In the absence of development, underdevelopment exists in a nation. Relating this to Nigeria gives us reason to reflect on the state of the country. Since independence, we have strived to attain development in social, economic, political, cultural life. In the world presently, some nations have attained economic, political as well as social development and are seeking for new strides.

However in Nigeria, with the traditional administration inherited from the British colonial masters at independence the country have not been able to deliver some of these basic necessities of life that would regard it as developed thus, we may say the country have failed in its developmental strides.

Therefore it was necessary to seek for a new and modest way of granting development to Nigeria as a nation and the tool development administration is the requirement for contemporary development which other nations of the world have adopted in achieving development. This tool for advancement inherited from the colonial administration adopted after independence have thereafter met some challenges that have stalled the journey for years now.

Indeed, in registering his disappointment with the state of the nation, His Excellency, former Governor of Anambra State, Peter Obi, underscored the need for taking urgent steps to remedy the situation by observing that “we cannot afford to remain the Shakespearean giant walking with the limb of a mosquito”. From the forgoing statement, the present state of the country is a true reflection of the quality of governance and leadership in Nigeria over the years, and provides a barometer for measuring the development of its social, economic, educational and political structures.

1.1 The Meaning of Development Administration

The term development administration is basically defined as a system of administration geared towards development. It initiates and manages innovation-political, social and economic. Development administration is characterized by innovation and social engineering. Explaining development administration, Fainsod (1963: 1-5) says:

It is a carrier of innovation values. It embraces the array of new functions assumed by developing countries embarking on the path of modernisation and industrialization. Development administration ordinarily involves the establishment of machinery for planning to expand national income.

Development administration is therefore a necessary step for transformation in Nigeria as it affects all total life spheres and indeed an engine room for development in our nation.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

The task of development in the developing countries like Nigeria is said to be a most challenging one for a variety of reasons: first, because, unlike in the advanced countries where the pressure on the government is for more social services for a society already at an advanced stage of development in which most of its members possess and enjoy the basic necessities for a decent life, in the new nations even those basic necessities are either non-existent or minimal for the vast majority of the population. Moreover, the task of development is an urgent one since upon it lays the very survival of a country itself. It is of an assumption that the people had also been made to expect that independence would bring about an immediate improvement in their conditions. It was therefore felt that the traditional model of public administration would be inadequate in providing guidelines for building a nation-state out of traditional society. Thus, a new model of administration termed development administration especially within the broader field of public administration was adopted in Nigeria to ‘modernize’ our economy, accelerate development, to be equivalent, eventually, to the advanced countries.

The first development plan in Nigeria after independence was in 1962, the plan was to cover a period of six years, and had the objectives of economic growth rate at 4% per annually, a target savings ratio of about 15% of the GDP was set and an increase of 1.0% per annum in the per capita consumption was proposed.

The second national development plan was between the period of 1970 and 1974. This plan had the objectives of attaining a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, a just and egalitarian society, a land with bright and diverse opportunities for all citizens and a free and democratic

society. This plan was meant to unite the nation after the civil war. The third national plan was between the period of 1975 and 1980. This plan was meant to achieve increase in per capita income, to foster more even distribution of income, to reduce the level of unemployment, to increase the supply of high-level manpower, to diversify the economy, to promote balanced development and to encourage indigenisation of economic activities. The fourth national plan was between the period of 1981 and 1985 which attempted to cover issues regarding agriculture, manufacturing, education and manpower development, housing, health, water supply, and infrastructural facilities.

Other plans such as the Operation Feed the Nation (OPF), was also introduced and launched on May 21, 1976 by President Olusegun Obasanjo to help mobilize the general public to participate in agricultural activities. Also, the Agricultural Development Project (ADP) was introduced as a measure to achieve rural development and improve the welfare of the rural communities through increasing the productivity of farmers as well as farming family income. Thereafter, in 1977, the River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) was established to address the problem of drought in the country to develop, irrigate and cultivate numerous river basins in the country, (Edesiri, 1986: 16). Then on November 27, 1996, the vision 2020 was set up to transform the country and placing her firmly on the route to becoming a developed nation by the year 2010.

Despite these policies implemented by past administrations and leaders to transform Nigeria from an underdeveloped nation to a developed nation it has been futile due to these challenges that we shall evaluate below.

3. THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

Development administration in Nigeria has being futile due to some of these limitations.

Diverse Social-cultural Nature of Nigeria

One of the challenges of development administration in Nigeria is the social-cultural nature of Nigeria. During the colonisation of Nigeria, the British colonial government integrated the parts known as Nigeria today irrespective their differences in culture, language and religion. Thereafter, these groups cannot leave in harmony. Today this factor is responsible for the divide in our nation and the reason why our leaders aren't dedicated to overall development but only interested in their ethnic origin.

Bureaucratic Structure of Public Administration in Nigeria

Another challenge is the bureaucratic structure of public administration. This structure is not designed to achieve development strides in post-colonial Nigeria. The reason why is that, the structure present was inherited from the British at independence and the structure was established for colonisation and not development administration, therefore development would be impossible if this structure is not reformed.

Crop of Leaders

Relatively, another limitation to development administration in Nigeria is the crop of leaders in Nigeria. The crop of leaders in our nation is a strong barrier to development because their high rate of incompetence, corruption, negligence and bias is a challenge to our development administration.

Political Instability

Furthermore, the political instability is also responsible for the slow pace in development. It is a regular habit for leaders in Nigeria to abandon a policy taken up by a predecessor despite the fact that the project or plan is incomplete. We have seen government waste huge sum of money on a project and another government just wipes it away when it takes over.

True Federalism

The issue of true federalism is also another challenge to the nation's development administration. In Nigeria, we adopt the federal system of government however we do that have such things as regional autonomy to carry out state projects that would lead to the transformations of the states. This factor of a true federalism is what we desire to attain development administration in Nigeria.

Ethnic Clashes

Also, another challenge to development administration in Nigeria is ethnic clashes. Today the northern part of Nigeria and its Boko-haram insurgence would distort President Goodluck Jonathan's administration because of what is referred to as 'zoning'. This issue of clashes had been seen even during the time of the late President Umaru Musa Yara'dua, when the Niger Delta militants were constantly distorting development in Nigeria.

These are some of the contending issues that constantly pose as a challenge to development administration in Nigeria.

Military Interventions

Nigeria like most African countries continues to struggle with what seems to be an elusive goal of development even after fifty years of political independence. The country has experienced counter coups after counter coups and has survived a secessionist civil war.

Financial Misappropriation

Concomitantly, the country has also been embattled with poor economic conditions after the oil boom of the 1970's, and plundering of economic resources by its leaders.

Colonial Background

Nigeria like other African countries was colonised by Britain and this factor is a contributing impediment to our development status today.

However, these issues are complicated but the attempt to make some recommendations will be put forward.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Articulating the Peoples Need in Public Policies

The best way to affect the lives of the people is to articulate the needs and aspirations of the citizens in public policies. This directive and attempt would capture the objectives of most citizens across board and development administration would be attained.

Common Plain Ground between Government and the People

In a attempt to achieve development administration, there must be a level plain ground for the citizens and the government to put heads to together in achieving development, thus town hall meetings and conferences should be held to listen to the aspirations of the people in other for government to prioritise the needs of the people and not provide amenities that are not urgently needed and sustainability would be defeated eventually.

The Restructuring of the Country's Federal Structure to True Federalism

To curb these challenges of development administration in Nigeria, the country has to adopt true federalism. This nature would thereby weaken the centre and make development a state business as these resources would also be controlled by the states. Therefore, development administration would not be so complex.

Adopting and Implementing National Ethics to Guide National Affairs

Also, the ethical standard of the Nigerians has to be addressed too. This issue is the reason for the high rates of corruption among leaders, and even Nigerians generally. Thus, the money meant for development would not be looted and development would be attained.

Policy Continuity and Follow-Up

Continuity in development administration is another way to attain development as well in Nigeria. It would be benefitting to adopt whatever policy plan a previous leader started with rather than abandon it.

5. CONCLUSION

Conclusively, development administration in Nigeria is a fundamental challenge and the question for political leaders under the current dispensation is how to attain sustainable development given the proliferation of ethno- religious conflict and the dismaying economic condition in Nigeria. A review of models for resolving ethnic and religion conflict seem to suggest that these models are not realistic in the Nigerian situation. Accordingly, (Lemarchand, 1995) identified four models: (a) Power sharing, which suggests a grand coalition of cabinets. This has been unrealistic thus far in Nigeria since most minority groups remain marginalized; (b) Hegemonic control has not been realistic in Nigeria, since no single group has been able to establish its hegemony. (c) Federalism, where the boundaries of the federal units are roughly conterminous with those of ethnic communities, concomitantly these ethnic communities enjoy a degree of autonomy.

The Federal arrangement has not been effective in Nigeria given the demise of the three unit federal system in Nigeria whereby the Northern region held a dominant position vis-a-vis the other two regions, (d) Arbitration, which could involve an external or internal arbitrator. But given the complexities of ethno-religious conflict in Africa and Nigeria in particular the viability of this model is questionable because it does no guarantee success.

Given the complexity of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria, it appears that the solution will only emerge through the commitment of competing groups in Nigeria to forge a pact to establish an institution that will not exclude any group (Aborishade and Mundtz, 1999). In the area of economic development, development administration can become attainable in Nigeria with a commitment by the present and future leaders to diversify the economy, whereby existing economic sectors are complementary and intertwined. Furthermore, the commitment of the leadership to resolving the debt crisis through sound economic planning is imperative for the survival of average Nigerians who continue to endure the harsh economic conditions that accompany indebtedness. In the same light, the hope for development administration will also require a public commitment to eradicate blatant plundering of public and private resources. Thus, it is the position of this article that the hope for development administration in Nigeria will remain elusive if adequate measure is not taken to address the growing ethno-religious conflicts and the current economic crisis.

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