

# Public Education, a Conduit for Responsible Leadership in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

*This study reviews an ideal public education as conduit for responsible leadership in Nigeria. It is evident that public administration predates when society started organizing themselves to pursue common goals. Public education has been perceived as the enlightenment platform for the State; especially in areas where the State has metamorphosed from the maintenance of law and order to the creation of welfare and services to the people. The classical theory was used as the basis of analysis. It is based on the findings of this work that it is concluded that when talking about public administration, we are indeed discussing about public institutions. As a way towards achieving an ideal public administration practice and responsible leadership, public education is therefore recommended.*  
**Keywords:** Public administration, education, bureaucracy, leadership, administration.

## INTRODUCTION

In the discourse of national development, public education has become imperative, owing to its significance in shaping and redirecting the nation's development objectives. In trying to delve further into the critical issues of this discourse, we should understand the concept of public administration. In this context, public here denotes governmental organizations. On the other hand, administration is the art and science of harnessing the human and material resources to achieve organizational goal (Frank, 1966). According to Okoli and Onah (2010), public administration means organization run by government or its agencies. In simple words, public administration is the management of affairs by the government or government agencies to serve the people at all levels (Nwizu, 2002). According to Uduma (2004), it presupposes all those operations having for their purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of public policy. Public Administration in Nigeria came into being right from the day the people began to organize themselves concretely in a bid to achieve better standard of living. Thus, as a guide on the ideal practice of public administration in Nigeria, the imperative of public education is examined. The ideal type is a model which may not be found in the real world but exists only in the imagination. From the foregoing, it could be deduced that this discourse could only exist in the imaginary world but could not be found in our contemporary world and Nigeria in particular. Therefore, highlighting the ideal model of public administration through a responsible leadership as a path towards national development is better x-rayed by looking at the larger society.

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## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS**

The relevant theoretical framework that guide this review is the Classical Theory (Weber, 1946). And the particular classical tradition that is most suited is Bureaucratic Theory. This theory is a classical theoretical framework put in place by a German Sociologist named Max Weber (Laxmikanth, 2007). Weber projected this theory in a bid to demystify the intricacies inherent in managing large scale organizations. Conversely, the use of Weber's bureaucratic theory better situate in dissecting the ideal practice of public administration through a responsible leadership. By Weber's projection, an organization that is large should be managed bureaucratically, in this case the society. For Weber, bureaucracy represented a move towards rationality that could replace the old practice in organization (Buechman, 1968). According to Blitz (1968) bureaucracy implies an organization characterized by rules, procedures, impersonal relations, and an elaborate fairly rigid hierarchy of authority-responsibility relationship.

### **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND EDUCATION**

According to Dimock M. and Dimock G. (1969), public administration is the fulfillment or enforcement of Public policy as declared by competent authority. Based on this definition, public administration is the art and science of carrying out policies been declared by a legal authority in the society. Thus, the activity of public administration under this context is based on carrying out policies of government as being declared by a competent authority. As posited by White (1955), public administration are all those operations having for their purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of public policy. Viewing from the later definition, it is evident that both scholars are in agreement in terms of defining the subject matter. For Balogun (1983), public administration involves role relationship that defines "the intentions and programs of government, the means available internally and externally to accomplish them, where, when and how they are to be accomplished, who is to benefit from them, and finally, it is a system that cause intentions and programmes to be realized in real life".

According to Gulick and Urwick (1948), public administration is the part of the science of administration which has to do with government and thus concern itself primarily with the executive branch where the work of the government is done. According to Simon (1965), public administration is meant in common usage, the activities of the executive branch of the national, state and local governments. Premised on the later definition, it is evident that the definition of public administration has been narrowed in view to mean the activities of government carried out in all the tiers of government. This indeed does not project a broader or comprehensive meaning of the concept of public administration. Without mincing words, any policy is administered on the people. This is to say that it is the people who feel the effect of the policy. This therefore suggests the relevance of education in carrying out government policies. For a better and justifiable government policy implementation, the people must be educated on any policy instituted by the government. This is necessary because though some policies of government may be sagacious, yet they may have some ephemeral side-effects which if not properly communicated, may cause

disharmony in the system. Therefore there is need for a sound public administration education to take place before government policies are implemented. Wider or integral view of public administration looks into the theory and practice of public administration in a broader perspective. Thus this view is said to be very comprehensive about the subject matter of public administration. According to this view, public administration studies social, political, economic, cultural and administrative aspects of the society and studies the executive, legislative and judicial activities of the State (Marx, 1968). The definition looks at large scale organization by dissecting how it is run and operated. Scholars known to have contributed to this view are L. D. White, M. Dimock and J. Pfiffer.

On the narrower or managerial view, the managerial school of thought is of the view that only the managerial activities are included under public administration or the work of only those persons who are engaged in the performance of managerial functions in an organization constitutes administration (Gulick and Urwick, 1948). Luther Gulick, Henry Fayol, Manson etc are scholars known to have contributed to this school of thought. Based on their assertion, those who involve in public administration use certain techniques of management. These techniques are: planning, organizing, communicating, directing, budgeting, controlling, recruitment, among others. According to Gulick and Urwick (1948), the techniques used by public administration is given the acronym POSDCORB meaning planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. It is the application of these techniques that large scale organizations are being run.

## **IDEAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

Every discipline or area has an ideal model with which scholars practitioners used in analyzing and making comparison. For Weber (1946), any large scale organization should be run bureaucratically. It is against Weber's projection that we are going to demonstrate the ideal model of public administration through a responsible leadership. According to Kendal, cited in Ifeanacho (2007), a bureaucracy is an organization model characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labour, explicit rules and procedures and impersonality in personal matter. For Ekpenyong (2003), the ideal type is a mental construct for comparing what exists in the real world.

Adding to what he has projected, Ekpenyong (2003) further states that all administrative organizations are bureaucratically organized. He again stated that the foundations for our understanding of bureaucracy were laid by Weber. He analyses the phenomenon in terms of what he called an ideal type. From what have been put forward by the aforementioned scholars, it is clearly evident that Weber's public administration which through a responsible leadership can achieve the desired development of the nation. For Adebayo (1981), in an ideal sense, the most efficient and rational organization is that in which there is clearly a defined hierarchy of offices, each office with a clearly defined area of jurisdiction, each office filled by an individual tested to possess the highest technical qualifications and the entire set of offices linked together by a system of rules, procedures and impersonal relationship. The demonstration of the ideal model by the above scholar further buttresses the need to take the above subject matter bureaucratically. Since public

administration is about managing the affairs of governmental or large scale organization (Okereke, 2003). It is only through the bureaucratic mode that we can tackle the subject matter ideally. Viewing from the above projection made, we could draw an inference of what an ideal public administration is all about. In totality, an ideal public administration is the same thing as an ideal public bureaucracy.

### **Limitations of an Ideal Model of Public Administration**

There has been a scholarly presentation made to point out the limitations inherent in the practice of an ideal public administration otherwise tagged public bureaucracy. According to Ifeanacho (2007), bureaucratic organizations are supposed to be efficient. Yet most of the time they amount to huge wastes in human and natural resources. What has been heard about the drawback of bureaucracy by the later mentioned scholar is obviously true. This is exemplified in the activities of most managers and administrators requesting for more staff even though the ones on ground are suitably qualified to do the job. Therefore, the way forward towards the achievement of national development, is through a responsible leadership.

### **LEADERSHIP**

In any organization, the quality of the leader determines to a great extent the success and failure of such an organization. Thus, it is highly imperative that a highly competent leader should be acquired to man the nation's public bureaucracy. It is against this backdrop that we have to look into various attributes that are needed from a leader. Leadership is a crucial element in the social relationship of groups and individuals in an organization. By definition, leadership is a dynamic process at work in a group whereby one individual over a particular period of time, and in a particular organizational context, influences the other group members to commit themselves freely to the achievement of group's tasks or goals (Cole, 2002). Another apt definition of leadership is that, it is a dynamic process, influenced by the changing requirement of the task, the group itself and the individual members (Olusanya, 1975). Based on our subject of discourse, without a committed and dynamic leadership the tendency of achieving an ideal objective is very slim.

In the works of Ekpenyong (2003), Harold Kootz and Cyril Dounel put it that, leadership is the process of influencing the activities of individuals or group in an effort towards goal achievement in a given situation. A very good attribute of a leader is his personality attribute which he uses in influencing or garnering the support of other people. Put other way round, in most cases, some leaders has the charisma which makes other people to have the strong emotional and physical attachment on them (Stepherd, 1981). Public bureaucracy only has what Weber's called legal rational authority. According to this authority, is based on the belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules that issues commands (Sule, 1980). Thus in public bureaucracy, people occupy their positions based on legal plane. In drawing into conclusion on the leadership meaning, we have to show case some of the leadership traits as been exhibited by eminent scholars. Consequently, some of the known leadership traits

are: integrity, knowledge, courage, densiveness, tact and dependability. Others include sense of duty, faith, humility and being energetic. These attributes mentioned above are some of the ideal traits been required in any public bureaucratic set up.

**Leadership Style:** In an attempt to achieve objectives of individual and organizational goals different leadership styles have been used by different public administrators. Conversely, these leadership styles are basically of three types namely: democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles.

**Democratic Leadership Style:** This kind of leadership style involves the members of the organization in decision making. Under this leadership style, the public administrator seeks and perhaps public bureaucracy before final decision is made. In such circumstances, agenda setting is the collective duty of both the managers and other employees of the public bureaucracy. Many scholars have supported the use of democratic style of leadership than any other form mentioned above.

**Autocratic Leadership Style:** There are some leaders who are fond of carrying out decisions solely without the consent of other members of the organization; Such leaders are usually called autocratic leaders (Mosher, 1968). Mosher (1968) says leaders of this kind pose as problem to their subordinates.

**Laissez Faire:** Here, the style of leadership is based on decision and opinion of the organizational member's. The Public administrator is weak. Hence, he/she relies most often than not on the expertise of the subordinates working with him. Indeed, this style of leadership is not good for public bureaucracy. In fact, it negates the ideal type of public administration.

### **Application of Structures of Public Bureaucracy for Public Education in Nigeria**

There are basically two types of public bureaucratic structures; namely, formal and informal bureaucratic structures. The formal public bureaucracy is concerned with the structure which will show the lines of authority. Shepherd (1981) clearly defines the positions and areas of operation in the organization depicts what formal administration of public bureaucracy is all about. On the other hand, an informal structure in public bureaucracy entails the non-structure and the non-patterned subdivision that exist in an organization. According to Barnard (1938), informal organization refers to the aggregate of the personal contacts and interactions and the associated groupings of people. Informal organizations exist within the framework of a formal organization. Thus, in any formal organization there is an informal organization. It is the interplay of informal organization within the formal organization that determines the success of public bureaucracy to a large extent.

In Nigeria, public bureaucracy could be classified as those who produce welfare services, those who are engaged in commercial and industrial matters, those that are owned by States governments and those whose duty is to regulate the activities of other organizations of the country (Okoli, 1988). It is from the above mentioned forms of public bureaucracy that the ideal administration is expected to come to play. Public bureaucracy

in Nigeria is affected negatively by political interference of the organizational set up and running. Besides the latter mentioned problems of public bureaucracy in Nigeria. There are: technical, financial, human, personnel and management problems (Amadi, 1988). Having disclosed what constitutes the various kinds of public bureaucracy in Nigeria, we have to move forward to highlight the functions of public administration in relation to public education. For an ideal public administration to take place besides the feature of bureaucracy, an effective public administrator who will put to practice the functions which we are going to display below. The most ideal functions to be used are the ones propounded by Luther Gullick in 1938 which he gave an acronym POSDCORB (Gulick and Urwick, 1948). It is the exercise of the above mentioned functions by a public administrator in an ideal system that will lead to the path of achieving national development.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There have been alternative suggestions made by scholars as a replacement of public education. Though it is too early to rule out the importance of public administration in educating the society, the following advantages are desirable from the stand point of structural communication administration.

- i Standardization of work and procedures,
- i Promotion of professionalism,
- i Appraisal and improvement, and
- i Discipline (Abrahamson, 1977).

It is based on these findings that we concludes that when we are talking about public administration, we are indeed discussing about public bureaucracy. As a way towards achieving an ideal public administration practice and responsible leadership, public education is therefore recommended. We had itemized those qualities or characteristics that showcase any public administration otherwise tagged public bureaucracy. Albeit, it was stressed that the ideal model as been propounded by Max Weber is said to exist only in the imaginary world and does not exist in the real world. This is true because there is no place in the world the said features of bureaucracy is said to have existed. However, the degree of existence of some of the characteristics of the public bureaucracy differs from country to country. It was stated that in the developed countries, we find most of the features in existence. The reverse is the case in the developing countries like Nigeria. It is seen that only few of the said characteristics are believed to be in existence in Nigeria. Thus, as a path towards development in Nigeria through public bureaucracy is said to be an illusion. Nevertheless, we were able to pin point that, as a public administrator, a more concerned effort can be put in place towards achieving the ideal model being projected. Consequently, as a means of achieving this objective, public administrators are said to perform certain functions. And these have been projected as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. It is an effective and efficient medium through which the public bureaucrats can carry out these functions that can determine the way towards achieving the ideal status.

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