PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This work examines public administration and socio-economic development in Nigeria. The study emphasized that socio-economic development in a developing country like Nigeria cannot be noticed without having a good system of administration in the country. Socio-economic advancement is regarded as socio-economic development that is measured with indicators, such as Gross Domestic Product, Life Expectancy, Literacy and levels of employment. It is very unfortunate in Nigeria today, we have the following problems that affect socio-economic development; Corruption, Mass looting of public funds, Incompetent administrators and so on. Finally, to get it right, the government of Nigeria must work aggressively and assiduously towards having a strong gross domestic product, life expectancy, literacy and increase in employment rate and that can be achieved through eliminating those problems affecting the socio-economic advancement and through strong government administration which is also known as public administration.

Keywords: Advancement, Development, Nigeria, Public Administration and Socio-economic

Introduction

Nigeria has huge strategic significance to Africa and the world at large. Nigeria is about the most populous country in Africa with a population of about 150 million and is endowed with numerous mineral resources. Nigeria is the fourteenth largest oil exporting country in the world. Despite these huge resources, Nigeria is still considered to be a poor country with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of about $374.3 Billion. Nigeria is engulfed with socio-economic problems which have caused poverty and conflict in the country. The growth of the country is still hampered by consumptive cultures, weak institutions and fragile political structures (Charles O. Ofoche). In this paper, the key variables need to be examined 'Public Administration and Socio-economic advancement’ ‘Public as a term means government in social science field whereas Administration, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (7th Eds.) means the activities that are done in order to plan, organize and run a business, school or other institutions.

Administration is equally a process common to all group effort, public or private, civil or military, large-scale or small-scale. Although it may vary in form and objects, and although administration of public and private affairs differs at many points, there are underlying similarities, if not identity, in the process wherever observed. There are two basic
characteristics of what has come to be called Administration. These are:

(a) There is a purpose (building a house)
(b) There is a cooperative action. Several persons using combined strength to accomplish something that could not have been done without such a combination (Dimock, 1969 in Okoli and Onah, 2002:4).

Conceptual Clarifications

Public Administration

McLean and McMillan (2009) define Public Administration in an interesting manner. According to them, "Public Administration denotes the institutions of public bureaucracy within a state; the organizational structures which form the basis of public decision-making and implementation; and the arrangements by which public services are delivered" (McLean and McMillian, 2009:440 in Umezurike, 2014).

Also, Public Administration consists of all those operations having for their purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of Public Policy (Okoli, 1985 in Okoli and Onah, 2002:5). The immediate objective of the art of public administration is the efficient utilization of resources at the disposal of officials and employees. It seeks the elimination of waste, conservation and effective use of men and materials and the protection of the welfare and interests of employees. In a broader context, the goals of public administration are the ultimate objectives of the state itself-the attainment of the good life (Waldo, 1948 in Okoli and Onah, 2002:5).

Socio-economic Advancement

Socio-economics is the social science that studies how economic activity affects and is shaped by social processes. In general it analyzes how societies progress, stagnate, or regress because of their local or regional economy, or the global economy (Wikipedia, 2016). It has its negative effects, especially in a shorter term, e.g., the phase of increasing inequality, overall trends are indicative that countries (like Nigeria) with higher levels of economic freedom have not only higher gross domestic product per capita and its growth rates, but also have better health care, education system, environment protection, as well as greater income equality and maybe above all, happiness result (Wikipedia, 2016).

Socio-economic Advancement is also regarded as development that is measured with indicators, such as GDP, life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment. Changes in less-tangible factors are also considered, such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm, and the extent of participation in civil society. Causes of socio-economic impacts are, for example, new technologies, changes in laws, changes in the physical environment and ecological changes (Wikipedia, 2013).

Development

Development is defined as the process of economic and social transformation that is based on the complex, cultural, environmental factors and their interactions (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2013). It is the process of growing or causing something to grow. Development is a major societal change, not just change in particular economic magnitude such as per capita income or rate of employment; it involves a complex of maturely related economic, social, cultural and political changes. The word development connotes too many things following its usage by so many disciplines. But in this restricted application, development is the ability of a people within a given area to manage the local natural resources within their local environment effectively to induce positive changes that would enhance the quality of their lives and their economic wellbeing.

Growth and Development

Economic growth deals with increase in the level of output, but economic development is related to increase in output coupled with improvement in social and political welfare of people within a country. Therefore, economic development encompasses both growth and welfare values. Dependency theorists argue that poor countries have sometimes experienced economic growth with little or no economic development initiatives; for instance, in cases where they have functioned mainly as resource-providers to wealthy industrialized countries. There is an opposing argument, however,
that growth causes development because some of the increases in income gets spent on human development such as education and health.

For Ranis et al., in (Wikipedia, n.d), economic growth and development is a two-way relationship. The first chain consists of economic growth benefiting human development, since economic growth is likely to lead families and individuals to use their heightened incomes to increase expenditures, which in turn furthers human development. At the same time, with the increased consumption and spending, health, education, and infrastructure systems grow and contribute to economic growth (Wikipedia, n.d).

According to Wikipedia n.d, in addition to increasing private incomes, economic growth also generates additional resources that can be used to improve social services (such as healthcare, safe drinking water, etc.). By generating additional resources for social services, unequal income distribution will be mitigated as such social services are distributed equally across each community, thereby benefiting each individual. Concisely, the relationship between human development and economic development can be explained in three ways. First, increase in average income leads to improvement in health and nutrition (known as Capability Expansion through Economic Growth). Second, it is believed that social outcomes can only be improved by reducing income poverty (known as Capability Expansion through Poverty Reduction). Lastly, social outcomes can also be improved with essential services such as education, healthcare, and clean drinking water (known as Capability Expansion through Social Services).

John Joseph Puthenkalam’s in (Wikipedia, n.d), research aims at the process of economic growth theories that lead to economic development. After analyzing the existing capitalistic growth-development theoretical apparatus, he introduces the new model which integrates the variables of freedom, democracy and human rights into the existing models and argues that any future economic growth-development of any nation depends on this emerging model as we witness the third wave of unfolding demand for democracy in the Middle East. He develops the knowledge sector in growth theories with two new concepts of 'micro knowledge' and 'macro knowledge'. Micro knowledge is what an individual learns from school or from various existing knowledge and macro knowledge is the core philosophical thinking of a nation that all individuals inherently receive. How to combine both these knowledge would determine further growth that leads to economic development of developing nations (Wikipedia, n.d).

Yet others believe that a number of basic building blocks need to be in place for growth and development to take place. For instance, some economists believe that a fundamental first step toward development and growth is to address property rights issues, otherwise only a small part of the economic sector will be able to participate in growth. That is, without inclusive property rights in the equation, the informal sector will remain outside the mainstream economy, excluded and without the same opportunities for study (Wikipedia, n.d).

Economic development typically involves improvements in a variety of indicators such as literacy rates, life expectancy, and poverty rates. GDP does not take into account other aspects such as leisure time, environmental quality, interracial and united international peace, freedom, or social justice; alternative measures of economic well-being have been proposed. Essentially, a country’s economic development is related to its human development, which encompasses, among other things, health and education. These factors are, however, closely related to economic growth so that development and growth often go together. Due to globalization growth and development in those countries are interrelated to trends on international trade and participation in Global Value Chains (GVCs) and international financial markets. The last financial crisis had a huge effect on economies in developing countries (Wikipedia, n.d).

Economist Jayati Ghosh in Wikipedia, n.d, states that it is necessary to make financial markets in developing countries more resilient by providing a variety of financial institutions. This could also add to financial security for small-scale producers.

**Nexus between Public Administration and Socio-economic Advancement**

The ability of a developing country like Nigeria to thrive in socio-economic development depends on the nation’s objectives of public administration and their ability for proper implementation of public administration principles. Public Administration is a very strong instrument that when applied well, brings positive changes in a country and to the citizens too. Public Administration is also known as Government Administration and as a result of this, socio-economic
advancement in a developing country like Nigeria depends massively on the government system of administration. Once the government is made up of a team of technocrats, then the socio-economic level will grow. Some of the problems of socio-economic development in Nigeria are as follows: corruption, incompetent administrators, poor administration and poor policies, brings poor health care, poor education system, protective environment for the citizenry, massive unemployment rate, poor power supply, massive looting of public funds for selfish reasons which end up creating a big lacuna between the rich and the poor and this trends, affects the socio-economic advancement of any country.

So, to get it right, the government system of administration must work aggressively and assiduously towards having a strong gross domestic product, life expectancy, literacy and increase in employment rate and that can be achieved through eliminating the above problems mentioned and through having a strong government administration which is also known as public administration. Public Administration is often referred to as the action part of Government. Civil servants are often referred to as public administrators and are identified by several functions they perform. These functions are regarded as the roles of public administration and they also represent the relationship between the public administration and socio-economic advancement. These roles which also form the nexus between public administration and socio-economic advancement are as follows:

**Policy Formulation**

Policy formulation is the exclusive preserve of politicians and political office holders. But they may not be able to do this without the assistance of the bureaucrats, who usually provide the necessary data and information which will guide policy choices by political masters. Civil servants go to the field to collect data, analyze them and provide policy alternatives with supportive arguments on each. The final policy choice and decision are not the responsibilities of civil servants but they reserve administrative discretions on certain matters of public policy urgency, especially at the implementation stage. Thus, their spontaneous use of discretion and decision making has helped in socio-economic advancement in Nigeria.

**Law Making**

The executive, under a democratic government like Nigeria today, presents bills to the parliament (National Assembly) for legislation. It is the duty of public administrators to draft the bill and fashion it up with the necessary details before presentation to parliament (National Assembly) for debate. Therefore, the bureaucrats are inexorable in the law-making of an administration.

**Policy Implementation**

Public administrators are expected to perform implementation of public policy function to the best of their administrative and technical ability. When this particular function is performed religiously, development is ensured as they are nothing but policy decisions taken which awaits implementation by the bureaucrats. This is the core role of public bureaucracy in achieving advancement of the country.

**Provision of Social Amenities and Services**

As one of the official assignments, the provision of social amenities has the sole responsibility of ensuring socio-economic development. Therefore, the Public Bureaucracy has the responsibility of providing social services to the populace which helps achieve advancement of the country.

**Continuity of Government:**

Civil servants in the past, especially during the numerous military regimes Nigeria have witnessed, had always played prominent roles in maintaining the continuity of government. Civil servants often provided continuity in government by ensuring provision of social services in all its ramifications. This responsibility leads them to playing a major role in socio-economic advancement of the people because government exists to provide development and so whoever keeps the government going, keeps development going too.
Summary and Conclusion

This work looks at public administration and socio-economic advancement in Nigeria. It identifies the definitions and the relationship between public administration and socio-economic advancement. Some of the problems identified working against socio-economic advancement in Nigeria are as follows: corruption, incompetent administrators, poor administration and poor policies, brings poor health care, poor education system, poor protective environment for the citizenry, massive unemployment rate, poor power supply, massive looting of public funds for selfish reasons which end up creating a big lacuna between the rich and the poor and this trends, affects the socio-economic advancement of the country. To manage the above identified problems, the following measured have been seen as solution: Government system of administration must work towards having a strong gross domestic product, increase in life expectancy of the people, increase literacy level of the people and increase in employment rate.

References