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## An Assessment of the Relevance of Development Administration as a System of Action in Developing Nations

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### Abstract

Development administration is of a recent origin. The concept usually refers to the directly government-led effort to intervene in the process of socio-economic development of a nation with modernisation, socio-economic development, institution building, and creation of an integrated political community as its main concern. The field can be said to have started in the developing countries after World War II when some of the colonies in Asia, Latin America and Africa started agitating for independence. Many of these colonies emerged as politically independent states out of their dark colonial experience but with huge challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, poor health facilities and low agricultural and industrial development as well as socio-political instability. It was therefore felt that the western development models and concept of public administration might not be appropriate for these new nations. Development administration was adopted by these nations to modernise their economies, accelerating development to be equivalent, eventually, to the advanced countries of the West. This paper therefore attempted to reflect on whether the field is still a relevant system of action in meeting the exigencies of development in the developing countries. The study relies heavily on secondary data for its analysis. It was revealed that most of the reliance on development administration to bring about the needed development was misplaced and the results were not what had been expected. While the motivations of practitioners of development administration were high, there were problems such as high levels of poverty, and unemployment as well as a yawning gap between the rich and the poor. Other problems include formalism, corruption and elitism. There is therefore the need to refocus the discipline in the new nations with Nigeria inclusive to meet the exigencies of development.

**Keywords:** Development Administration, Development, Nation-building, Poverty, Corruption.



## 1. Introduction

Modernisation, socio-economic development, institution-building, and creation of an integrated political community are regarded as the concerns of development administration. The crux of development administration is therefore, societal change in the direction of modernity. The field can be said to have started in the developing countries after World War II. After this war, the colonies started agitating for independence and many of them especially in Asia, Latin America and Africa got the independence. Although these countries emerged as politically independent states out of their dark colonial experience, they had huge challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, poor health facilities, and low agricultural and industrial development as well as socio-political instability. Obviously, the task of development in the new nations was a challenging one. First, unlike in the advanced countries where the pressure on government was for more social services for societies already at an advanced stage of development in which most of their members possessed and enjoyed the basic necessities for a decent life, in the new nations, those basic necessities were either minimal or non-existent, for vast majority of the population (Anyebe, 2001:9). Moreover, the task of development was an urgent one since upon it depended on the very survival of the nation itself. The immediate task before these new nations therefore, was to bring about accelerated socio-economic transformation and nation-building through planned change.

Meanwhile, the masses had been led to expect that independence would bring about an immediate improvement in their living conditions. The non-realisation of these expectations would in turn breed a mood of impatience. Unless, improvement could be effected as speedily as possible, this mood of impatience might explode into violent reactions which would endanger, if not destroy the state itself. It was therefore, felt that the traditional model of public administration would be inadequate in providing guidelines for building a nation-state out of the traditional society.

After World War II some scholars especially from the United States began to show interest in the developing nations and their political and administrative systems for certain reasons. Many development schemes were undertaken with the assistance of the United Nations and the United States foreign aid economic and technical assistance programmes in the developing countries in the 1950s and 1960s. However, these schemes failed to produce the expected results and this explains the increased interest demonstrated by the American scholars in the administrative systems of the developing nations.

Development administration was not considered in theoretical terms until the 1960s. During this period, the members of the Comparative Public Administrative Group (CAG) of the American Society for Public Administration undertook some studies in the administrative systems of the new nations. The major findings of the research revealed that the western development models and concepts of public administration might not be appropriate for the developing nations. These studies also showed that in order to handle the foreign technical assistance programmes the administrative systems and practices of the developing nations need alteration. Thus, a system of administration termed development administration; a specialty within the broader field of public administration was adopted in the new nations to modernise their economies, accelerating development to be equivalent, eventually, to the advanced countries of the West.

It was reasoned that a technocratic bureaucracy following rational-legal principles as set out by Max Weber would be all that was needed to overcome tribal authority and superstition, combined with the application of technical expertise to agriculture and industries. It was therefore, felt that government was the only organised agent capable of employing its machinery to induce, promote, and manage socio-economic development. Thus, government became the dominant player on the

economic scene, controlling the commanding heights of the economy. It became the prime agent of socio-economic development, providing infrastructure, and producing goods and services, often provided through the mechanism of public enterprise. This led to a rapid development of the public enterprise sector and by the early 1980s a huge sector was firmly established in most of the countries.

Because of these factors, development administration has grown to become a dominant issue and has acquired huge importance in the developing nations. For example, Tanzania's 400 state-owned enterprises accounted for 38% of gross fixed capital formation, and a similar level in Ethiopia (Jorgensen, 1990:62). From the late 1960s, the public enterprise sector in Zambia constituted about 80% of all economic activity with the private sector accounting for the remaining 20% (Kaunga, 1993). The sector was structured with one enterprise, ZIMCO, a holding company, controlling the other enterprises and with the government in turn, particularly the Zambian president controlling ZIMCO. This meant the government, particularly the president, could control the overwhelming proportion of the economic activity, as well as political activity (Anyebe, 2001). At a time in which public utilities in European countries were in public hands, allied with the expectation that public enterprise could be used to advance the cause of socialism, it was natural that Tanzania or Bangladesh would develop a large public enterprise sector (Anyebe, 2012). Indonesia even gave public enterprise a protected role in its Constitution. India saw industrialisation as the key to reducing poverty and state ownership of industry as the means of controlling the industry.

Nigeria had an estimated 50 public enterprises at independence and about 200 by 1970. When the country embarked upon an economic reform Programme in 1987, the number had risen to about 1,500. The factors that account for the phenomenal increase include the evolution of the federal administrative structure (from three units in the 1950s to four in 1963, twelve in 1967, nineteen in 1976, twenty one in 1987, thirty in 1991, and thirty six in 1996), the oil windfall, and successive governments' commitment to making public enterprises as an instrument of state economic intervention in the 1970s. The extent of control was such that by 1987 the estimated, 50 public enterprises (PEs) at independence which had risen to about 1,500 spanned such sectors as telecommunications, electricity, petroleum, fertilizer, machine tools, gas, solid minerals, steel and aluminum, media, hospitality industry, banks and insurance companies, transportation including aviation, paper mills, cement, sugar companies, agro-allied industries, trucks and motor vehicle assembly plants, river basin development authorities etcetera. It is estimated that successive Nigeria governments have invested up to ₦800 billion in public enterprises (Anyebe, 2012). The sector attracted the majority of government capital expenditure, with more than 80% in 1980 and it accounted for more than one-third of the modern sector employment (Laye, 2002).

There were therefore, justifications for this large-scale use of public enterprise to accelerate the rate of development by the new nations. The exigencies of national sovereignty, national independence and national pride made the governments of these countries foreclose the option of opening up their economies to competition, given the chronic shortage of capital and capital markets. Private ownership under this circumstance would necessarily mean foreign ownership. The justification can also be traced to the management of the consequences of World War 1, especially the economic crisis of the 1930s. The experience of the great depression had, apart from other things, one major effect. The faith in laissez-faire state, a fence sitting state not actively intervening in the economic life to control the functioning of the market, was shaken. One lesson learnt was that economic development could not be left wholly to the private enterprise based on the free market and the state had a role to play in it. The spread of Keynesian interventionist ideas further promoted a rapid development of the public enterprise sector. United Kingdom and France exhibited high levels of statism in the 1950s and 1960s and perhaps, the developing countries thought that by emulating administration apparently successful in the countries of the former colonial powers they could imitate their economic success. Finally, the emergence of the CAG and the interest shown by its members in the new nations and their administrative systems contributed to the growth of this concept. This

paper therefore, attempted to reflect on whether the field is still a relevant system of action in meeting the exigencies of development in the developing countries.

## 2. Scholarly Views on Development Administration

The concept of development administration was said to have been coined by an Indian scholar, Goswami in 1955 (Naidu, 2006:148). Development administration was not considered in theoretical terms until the 1960s. Conceptual thinking in this area is notably available in the writings of a group on comparative administration such as F.W. Riggs, E. Weidner, M. Fainsod, Montgomery etc. These writings have contributed to the laying of the intellectual foundations, formulation and growth of this relatively recent concept.

There is no dearth of definitions of development administration. Different writers have defined it in different ways. Development administration has been seen as a specialty within the broader field of public administration, which developing countries have adopted to 'modernise' their economies, to be equivalent, eventually, to the West. Abdulsalami (1998) views development administration as a system of administration, which focuses on the relations between administration and economic development. Beyond the concern for maintaining law and civil order, and the collection of revenue (the preoccupation of traditional model of public administration) this model of administration is particularly concerned with the array of functions assumed by developing countries embarking on the path of modernisation and industrialisation.

This way of conceptualizing development administration is in agreement with the view of Fainsod (an early writer on the subject) who emphasizes the innovating thrust of development administration by stating that:

Development administration is a carrier of innovating values. As the term is commonly used, it embraces the array of new functions assumed by developing countries embarking on the path of modernisation and industrialisation. Development administration ordinarily involves the establishment of machinery for planning economic growth and mobilising and allocating resources to expand national income. New administrative units, frequently called nation-building departments are set up to foster industrial development, manage new state economic enterprises, raise agricultural output, develop natural resources, improve transportation and communication network, reform the educational system and achieve other developmental goals (Fainsod, 1963:2).

Montgomery says development administration means carrying planned change in the economy or capital infrastructure or to the lesser extent in the social services especially health and administration (Naidu, 2006). Both Fainsod and Montgomery maintained that development administration usually connotes programme-oriented administration.

Weidner views development administration in government as the process of guiding an organisation toward the achievement of progressive political, economic, and social objectives that are authoritatively determined in one manner or another (Naidu, 2006). Although this definition is neither precise nor comprehensive, it does sketch the principal interest of development administration. The definition implies that development administration is concerned with bringing about planned change or intended change in the direction of modernity or nation-building and socio-economic progress.

Fred W. Riggs, who was a pioneer in the field of comparative public administration made some significant contribution to the field of development administration via his book, 'Frontiers of Development Administration'. 'The Idea of Development Administration' and 'Administration in Developing Countries' are some of his works which contain his views on development administration. As the long-serving chairman of the CAG, Riggs came to be regarded as the prime mover of academic interest in the field of development administration.

According to Riggs (1971:73) development administration refers to organised efforts to carry out programmes or projects thought by those involved to serve development objectives. The phrase arises by simple analogy with such expressions as agricultural administration, educational administration, and social welfare administration, each of which involves organised efforts to implement agricultural, educational, and social welfare programmes, respectively. He also said that development administration refers to the administration of development programmes, to the methods used by large-scale organisations, notably governments, to implement policies and plans designed to meet their development objectives. This administration includes organised efforts to carry out development programmes.

Like Edward Weidner, Riggs views development administration as a goal-oriented administration – an administration which is engaged in the task of achieving progressive, political, economic and social goals. This goal-orientation and change-orientation of an administrative system gives it the characteristics of development administration. In other words, the erudite scholar is saying that development administration does not only refer to a government's efforts to carry out programmes designed to reshape its physical, human, and cultural environment, but also to the struggle to enlarge a government's capacity to engage in such programmes for the purpose of nation-building. Consequently, Riggs distinguished two different but interrelated aspects of development administration: development administration and development of administration. The former involves a government's effort to initiate and manage development while the latter simply means those efforts made to build and sustain efficient and effective administrative machinery capable of playing its expected role in national development. It may be noted here that there is a similarity in Riggs' emphasis on administrative development and Taylor's stress on increasing effectiveness of administrative system in order to attain its prescribed goals.

It is clear that to Riggs, development administration refers both to administrative problems and government reforms. The problems relate to government tasks connected with agricultural, industrial, educational, and medical progress. Reforms of government organisations and bureaucratic procedures usually, have to go hand-in-hand with the administrative process connected with problem-solving.

The ecological approach to development administration is the central point of Riggs' analysis. It is on account of environmental influences that an administrative system in a prismatic society develops the characteristics of heterogeneity, formalism, and overlapping. These three, according to Riggs, are the important features of development administration.

Arora also sees development administration as having two important aspects – the administration of development programmes, and the development of capable administrative system. The first refers to public administration as an instrument of national development. The second refers to measures to strengthen the administrative capabilities to meet the continuing challenges posed by developmental activities. Any complete definition of development administration must include these dimensions (Arora, 1984). Similarly, Maheswari views development administration as the administration of development programmes designed to promote nation-building and socio-economic development and concomitant development of administrative practices and institutions necessary for the implementation of such programmes (Naidu, 2006)

For our purposes, we can say that development administration is a system of administration geared towards development and it is characterised by innovation and social engineering. It initiates and manages development-political, social, and economic changes.

### 3. Method of Data Collection

The data were obtained from the following sources: relevant text books, journals, national newspapers and internet materials.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Much of the reliance by the new nations on public enterprise for rapid socio-economic development was misplaced and the results were not what had been expected. Instead of serving as an agent of national development, many public enterprises served only the interests of their managers and workers. In 1991, public enterprises accounted for 23% of employment in Africa and only 3% in Asia, while the poorer the country the larger the relative size of the sector (Tuner and Hulme, 1997:176). Even if it could be argued that infrastructure needed to be provided through public hands, there seemed little justification for government ownership of jute factories in Bangladesh, mines in Africa or national airlines almost everywhere.

Following the bureaucratic approach to development, most developing countries adopted the principle of a strong state sector in the economy, in many cases allied with the prevailing ideas of socialism and Marxism then. There was the belief that the fastest way of attaining economic development was through government ownership of enterprise and intervention in the private economy and dominance by a bureaucratic technocracy. This also led to a padded bureaucracy which was characterised by inefficiency and ineffectiveness

While the motivations of the practitioners of development administration were high, there were problems as Dwivedi and Henderson argue:

Development administration was supposed to be based on professionally oriented, technically competent, politically and ideologically neutral bureaucratic machinery. The ostensible output was modernisation-induced and predictable social change following western perceptions preceded by institution- building and modernisation of indigenous bureaucratic machinery to undertake developmental tasks...But what was missing from the expected picture-perfect imitation in the Third World was the necessary set of conditions for bringing about a number of social, economic, cultural and political changes. These included an expanding economic base, a tax base, professionally trained manpower, political legitimacy, cultural secularization, universalism, a relatively open society and a strong political superstructure capable of governing (Dwivedi and Henderson, 1990:13-14).

Even the World Bank declared that in general, the strategy has failed. The Bank went further to argue that:

In a few countries things have indeed worked out more or less as the technocrats expected. But in many countries outcomes were very different. Governments embarked on fanciful schemes. Private investors/ lacking in confidence in public policies or in the steadfastness of leaders held back. Development fettered and poverty endured (Anyebe, 2003: 70-71)

Government became the dominant player on the economic scene, controlling the details of the economy in addition to its normal functions but did not have the standing to be successful.

The quantifiable return on the large volume of investment in the public enterprise sector in Nigeria, for example, was not seen as satisfactory in the light of the realities of the country's economy in the 1980s. Almost all the enterprises operated at sub-optimal levels. There were huge losses in many cases, and these losses were charged against public treasury. According to Obasanjo:

It is conservatively estimated that the nation may have lost about \$800 million due to unreliable power supply by National Electric Power Authority and another \$440

million through inadequate and inefficient fuel distribution. And the figures like this do not even tell the whole story. They cannot for example, capture the scope of human suffering and even loss of lives caused by shortage of petroleum products. That is not to mention the frustration and debilitation of the informal sector where business centres, repair workshops, hair dressing salons etcetera depend on steady supply of electricity to function (Obasanjo, 2000).

In some of these organisations, cases of large-scale mega corruption were rampant. Permanent officials colluded with political executives to engage in corrupt practices. Merit-based recruitment and promotion were usually replaced by appointments and promotions based on patronage and clientelism and other forms of favouritism which in most cases involve corrupt practices. Following the end of the cold war and a global turning away from statist and socialist ideas, Nigeria, like other sub-Saharan African countries started to adopt principles of free markets and participation in the world trade system. As part of these changes and under the direct encouragement of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Nigeria started adopting principles of market liberalisation, including scaling down the public sector and restructuring to conform to the principles of the new approach to the management of public affairs. Privatisation was one of the reforms undertaken to overcome defective capital structure, excessive bureaucratic control, inappropriate technology, incompetence, mismanagement and monumental corruption. This, it was expected, would enable government to concentrate resources on its core functions.

Certain reasons have been advanced for the inability of development administration to bring about the needed socio-economic development in the developing countries. First, it is said that development administration means increased state bureaucratic control over individual human beings. It contains implicit authoritarian assumptions which are inconsistent with the liberal democratic values. This authoritarian approach of the civil servants is not likely to motivate the public to actively participate in implementing public policies and programmes.

Second, development administration is generally believed to have failed to fulfill its promises of socio-economic progress and nation-building. A spirit of frustration and despair with development in general is found in developing countries (Naidu, 2006). Hunger, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, diseases and population explosion in the developing nations have remained on the high side. The gap between the rich and the poor has become a gulf and it is yawning. It has shown the inadequacy of administration for development in the developing societies.

Development administration has been found to be weak and inadequately equipped to face emerging challenges. Decision-making process and business methods pursued are dilatory and exasperating to those citizens affected by them. Corruption is acute and apparently defies solution. Political interference in administration is another factor inhibiting socio-economic development.

The process of development presupposes a system of bureaucracy that accepts development as its main goal however, bureaucracies in developing countries have a tendency to lay emphasis on non-productive orientation. They work for the realisation of goals other than the achievement of programme objectives. Loyalty to the organisation or its basic mission is not a powerful ethic among the bureaucrats. The behavior of civil servants entrusted with development tasks is said to have poor citizens-orientation and poorer commitment to work. The bureaucrats usually show insensitivity to the poor and their needs. They are also accused of being arrogant, harassing, ineffective, inefficient, as well as lacking the necessary skills and competence to execute development tasks (Anyebe, 2017).

The basic administrative structures in developing countries are not only elitist in orientation but also generally imitative rather than indigenous to the society. The borrowed western model of administration does not fit into the needs of development administration. There is a widespread between form and reality, wide gap between government proposals and their implementation. Most of the laws are either bypassed or not implemented at all. Bureaucracy enjoys an unusual degree of



operational autonomy (Naidu, 2006). Besides, there is the shortage of technically qualified and trained personnel capable of performing development tasks.

There is an undue concentration of authority at the senior executive levels in the ministries in the developing nations. Delegation of authority is limited as the senior executives want to control everything. Even the simplest administrative decisions have to be approved at the top and this concentration of authority at the top saps the initiative and the drive of the personnel working in the field.

There is rampant corruption which is usually institutionalised and out of control. Development funds are often siphoned off to hire friends or relatives and the funds may as well end up in private bank accounts. Corruption and inefficient administration go hand in hand. Development goals may not be fulfilled and the new socio-economic order may never be built unless corruption is checked or at least reduced to the lowest level.

Finally, the officials in the developing countries do not show much interest in the actual administrative details necessary to accomplish development plans and programmes (Naidu, 2006). Much time of the bureaucrats is wasted on paper work, big and flamboyant staff meetings or field trips while the administration is characterised by red-tape and secrecy. Rules, regulations, and forms are given precedence over the substance.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The challenges faced by development administration make it difficult for the discipline to achieve development goals, socio-economic progress, and nation-building. Therefore, efforts should be made to improve the techniques and methodologies of development administration in the developing countries to serve as the instrument to implement development programmes. The efforts to improve administration relates to both qualitative and quantitative changes in bureaucratic policies, programmes, procedures, methods of work, organisational structures, staffing patterns, number and quality of development personnel of different types, and patterns of relation with clients of administration.

There must be proper man-power planning and management in order to ensure the supply of sufficient qualified and competent personnel to execute development programmes. Through proper training, the essentially status-based bureaucratic structure and behaviour can be changed into a change-oriented, client-oriented, and service-motivated bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy should be made to be more flexible and adaptable to meet quickly the exigencies of development. Organisational rules and procedures should not be allowed to get precedence over target achievements.

Authority should be decentralised to enable field units to take decisions on the spot as far as possible. This is necessary because most of the development activities take place at the field level far away from the administration headquarters. Also, the supremacy of the politician must be accepted and bureaucracy must work with the political class as a co-partner in development enterprises. Change in participation from elite to mass must as well be adopted as a way of doing things.

Bureaucracy should secure the co-operation and participation of the people in development activities. It must be understood that bureaucracy, however, capable it may be cannot take the entire responsibility and load of development. The people have to look after themselves and be primary actors in the development drama. It is in their interest not to be dependent on the administration but to be largely self-reliant. Popular participation in development activities is a resource hence bureaucracy must work very closely with the people under a general rubric of service ethic. If development is to have a meaningful content, defence expenditure has to be scaled down, population explosion curbed, employment opportunities created and expanded, and literacy level has to be improved substantially.

Thus, development administration is expected to continue to be relevant in meeting the exigencies of development in the developing countries as well as relevant as a system of action and as a field of study in these nations though the method of operation may change and this change may include tilting towards joint capital projects using public and private finance. However, the era of big size governments and concomitantly large bureaucratic structures is over while the idea of government-owned enterprises selling goods and services to the public has as well passed its heyday.

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## تقييم أهمية إدارة التنمية بوصفها نظاما للعمل في البلدان النامية

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### المخلص:

يشير مفهوم إدارة التنمية عادة إلى الجهود التي تقودها الحكومة مباشرة للتدخل في عملية التنمية الاجتماعية والاقتصادية لأمة مع التحديث والتنمية الاجتماعية والاقتصادية وبناء المؤسسات وإنشاء مجتمع سياسي متكامل بوصفه شاغلا رئيسيا لها. ويمكن القول أن هذا المجال بدأ في البلدان النامية بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية عندما بدأت بعض المستعمرات في آسيا وأمريكا اللاتينية وأفريقيا في الدعوة إلى الاستقلال. وظهرت العديد من هذه المستعمرات كدول مستقلة سياسياً عن تجربتها الاستعمارية المظلمة، ولكن مع تحديات ضخمة مثل الفقر والأمية وسوء المرافق الصحية وانخفاض التنمية الزراعية والصناعية فضلاً عن عدم الاستقرار الاجتماعي والسياسي. وخاصةً بالتالي أن نماذج التنمية الغربية ومفهوم الإدارة العامة قد لا تكون مناسبة لهذه الدول الجديدة. واعتمدت هذه الدول إدارة التنمية لتحديث اقتصاداتها، وتسريع التنمية لتكون مكافئة، في نهاية المطاف، إلى البلدان المتقدمة في الغرب. ولذلك حاولت هذه الورقة أن تناقش فيما إذا كان الميدان لا يزال نظام عمل ذي صلة لتلبية مقتضيات التنمية في البلدان النامية. وتعتمد الدراسة اعتماداً كبيراً على البيانات الثانوية لتحليلها. وتبين أن معظم الاعتماد على إدارة التنمية من أجل تحقيق التنمية اللازمة لم يكن في غير محله ولم تكن النتائج متوقعة. وبينما كانت دوافع ممارسي إدارة التنمية عالية، كانت هناك مشاكل من قبيل ارتفاع مستويات الفقر، والبطالة، فضلاً عن فجوة التفاؤل بين الأغنياء والفقراء. وتشمل المشاكل الأخرى الشكليات والفساد والنخبوية. ولذلك، هناك حاجة إلى إعادة تركيز الانضباط في الدول الجديدة مع نيجيريا بما في ذلك تلبية متطلبات التنمية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** إدارة التنمية، التنمية، بناء الأمة، الفقر، الفساد.