

Bureaucracy and National Development in Nigeria: A Content Analysis

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Abstract

This work moves to clarify conflicting issues bordering on the role of bureaucracy in the development of the state. It identifies the contemporary use of the word 'development' in this context based on social advancement and economic growth which is considered the most recent factor of judgement but not undermining other outstanding indices acting as paths to development. Bureaucracy which seems to be the driving force to the actualization of policies has been analyzed by scholars to either enhance or retard development. This paper however, adopts a descriptive analytical approach to the study and concludes that available knowledge is inadequate to assess the performance of state bureaucracies vis a vis their developmental strides as it has variations between the developed and underdeveloped countries of the world with particular attention to how they operate or are allowed to operate in their different political environments

Keywords: *Bureaucracy, Development, National Development, Socio-Economic Development*

DOI: [URL:https://doi.org/10.36758/ijdds/v5n1.2021/05](https://doi.org/10.36758/ijdds/v5n1.2021/05)

INTRODUCTION

The role of bureaucracy in the development of states has long aroused some level of curiosity among scholars. It is in this regard that we sought to know if the expansion of the role of the state means the growth of the bureaucratic monster or if bureaucracy will swallow democracy, or if there is a means to reconcile these two institutions, or better still, if democracies or states can survive without bureaucracy and if not; how they can be reconciled. These are pertinent issues that will continue to confront human development. Most scholars have seen the democratic institutions being gulped by the inevitable process of bureaucracy, while some others do not have the intention to back out but would rather be firm to fight contending issues.

Developing states have more complications as the democratic institutions are weak thereby giving way to bureaucracy to take the upper hand. This is so because bureaucracy is the only apparatus used by the state to transform policies and programmes to development. It is logical to state that bureaucracy remains the only inevitable means of changing traditional societies to modern ones. If this assertion is true, what quickly comes to mind is to know the capability of the bureaucratic system to undertake this responsibility and to also know if the system (bureaucracy) has the needed values and character to deliver in this particular responsibility. The outcome will then lead us to know the differences between bureaucratic values and developmental values.

In the foregoing, we shall consider the conventional meanings of Bureaucracy and Development where national development, indices to development and paths to development will come in. Considerations will also be given to Economic Growth as a determinant factor in development,

modern indexes to development as well as the role of bureaucracy in national development, not undermining some theoretical foundations of development.

CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS OF SOME VARIABLES

Bureaucracy: Bureaucracy as a concept has no one popular definition. This is as a result of its complex nature and diverse explanations attributed to it by as many authors and scholars that have written on it at different levels, time and contexts. Whatever shape it takes, however, the attributes which describes bureaucracy remain unchanged. It is on this premise that Ikeji (1999) describes bureaucracy as an “organisational framework designed to accomplish large-scale administrative task by way of systematic coordination of the work of many people with a view to achieving set or prescribed objectives”. This definition places more weight upon ‘*task*’ and ‘*objectives*’ believing them to be the end product of bureaucracy.

According to the Academics dictionary of Political Science (2006), bureaucracy is viewed popularly as an epithet of verbiage and ‘red tape’ and literally, the rule of officials. The complex of public organisations carrying out administrative functions and responsibilities in the name of the state, in effect, the engine room of the state. To Duru (2001), bureaucracy is characteristic of every large organization such as the University, Army, Church, etc.

Thejemaizu (2003) resolved that the fully developed bureaucracy has the advantage of speed, precision, unambiguity, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination and reduction of friction and of materials and personal costs. He considered that its specific nature develops more perfectly the more it is dehumanized. That is, the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business, all purely personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculations; the rational orientation towards tasks which are conducive of efficient administration.

Also, Tyagi (2004) identified bureaucracy as can be used in two technical senses. He explains the broader sense as a term “used to describe any personnel system where the employers are classified in a system of administration composed of a hierarchy of sections, divisions, bureaus, departments and the like”. His definition in this aspect teaches that every large-scale establishment is managed by a system which must be well organized in structure and stratification. Each structure or stratum being manned by a hierarchy of officials.

In the second sense of it, he described bureaucracy as used in restricted and specific sense as “a body of public servants organized in a hierarchical system which stands outside the spheres of effective public control”. Judging from this definition, one may have to describe it as a phenomenon arising from the need for technical skills. Bringing together definitions from several authors and scholars, it is clear there is an interface among them. This midpoint is what portrays bureaucracy by its proponents.

Bureaucracy as an administrative system grew out of a modern movement of administration which places more recognition on technical expertise and objectivity in administration as a result of the growing size of public or governmental organizations. As a system, however, Tyagi describes it as a systematic arrangement of tasks and personnel into an organized set-up with the purpose of effectively achieving goals through collective efforts. It explains the lot of individuals, mechanisms and processes used by organizational hierarchy to accomplish a set goal. Max Webber (a German sociologist) who is its major proponent, specifies that bureaucracy should be practiced with a high level of division of labour, expertise and almost impersonal interactions between employees. We shall consider the attributes of bureaucracy as identified by Max Webber.

Task Specialization: Specialization is the main key of bureaucracy. It presupposes a skilled situation where personnel are trained to handle specific areas or units in an organization. These units may be administrative, finance, science, etc., but each must be manned by technically

qualified personnel. It places emphasis on division of labour so that specialization can be maintained. The purpose is to increase efficiency especially in organizations like the civil service where careers are of permanent bases.

Hierarchical Authority: A distinct feature of bureaucracy is the hierarchical placement of authority. Here, specialized personnel are placed in positions according to either qualification or technical ability or any other means of placement as prescribed by the organization. These personnel are classified under various segments and placed in a *chain of command*. Authority then flows from the top to the bottom of the chain. The chain also describes how communication and delegation of duties flow. The bottom stratum is usually subjected to a degree of supervision.

Legal Framework: Bureaucracy is also controlled by a legal structure whereby all activities move through a defined procedure and rules which are expected to be strictly maintained. This is done so that the issue of administrative accountability can be sustained and also that some positions will not be usurped. Thus, the legal framework describes the boundary between offices and positions as well as responsibilities attached to each. It makes the whole system predictable such that deviations are easily detected.

Impersonal Relationship: Bureaucracy recognizes personnel on formal or official basis. Employees' interpersonal relationships are guided by public rules and regulations. Personal interests are not allowed and official views are free from all sorts of personal bias. Decisions are taken based on rationality and devoid of individualistic or parochial interests.

Political Neutrality: Bureaucracy in public organizations like the civil service requires a reasonable level of political neutrality. Bureaucrats at this level are to resist any form of influence from any political authority who will definitely not stay to defend his directives when the time comes. This does not mean in any way that expert knowledge or ideas from the political class (which is usually the head) should be rejected. Bureaucrats' participation in elections is highly restricted to voting alone (even though we now have some level of compromise here and there). They also have rights to their opinions based on expertise and experience during policy formulations.

Webber concludes that bureaucracy is typified by a rational and effective organization that operates on the basis of; **rules** by which tasks are organized; a **division of labour** which produces specialization; **hierarchy** meaning superior – subordinate relationship; **decisions** by technical and legal standards; **administration** based on filing systems and institutional memory and **administration** as a vacation.

The application of these bureaucratic principles is essential to this work especially that it will provide the gateway for national development.

DEVELOPMENT

A lot of things come to the minds of different people when development is mentioned. The economist views it as *increase in economic structures*; the political scientist will term it *an improvement in political life of people*; the sociologist will always be concerned about *an improvement in his social lifestyle and environment*, etc. While we agree with all these, we still need to build an all-encompassing understanding of the word. Before this, it is imperative to know that measurement of development changes with time. At one point in history, development meant industrialization. At another point, it meant the wealth of a society or increase in Gross National Product (GNP). But today, it is concerned about the wellbeing of the people. It is based on this that Sen (1999:14) wrote, "*An adequate conception of development must go much beyond the accumulation of wealth and the growth of national product and other income related variables, without ignoring the importance of economic growth, we must look well beyond it*".

The measuring indices of development should, therefore, rally round the complete improvement it adds to people's life (Acuna-Alfaro, 2006).

Supporting this assertion brings us to the fact that indicators of development should consider all aspects of people's life, e.g. economic, social, environmental and political. The works of Mahbub ul Hag (1995) and Amartya Sen (1999) expose scholars to contemporary definition of development. These works veered the minds of scholars from the original definition of development centered solely on economic growth except that the capsules of economic growth promote the life of the people in terms of higher literacy rates, better health and nutrition, education, more equality, higher levels of social inter-connection, skills, etc. Van Der Gaag (2011).

In the same vein, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has created the Human Development Index (HDI) giving a more acceptable and all-encompassing meaning to development, it sees human development as a means of widening people's choices. "*The most critical ones are to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights, and self-respect*" (UNDP, 1990:10). Still others assumed that development has taken place when the rates of poverty, unemployment, and income inequality are reduced

The transitory nature of development has made it very interesting especially in modern times. The moves from decade to decade have actually exposed scholars to more research as to get a perfect definition for the concept of development. Today, however, we are faced with a new view of development. Todaro (1997) who is the major proponent portrays development in a multidimensional perspective taking cognizance of "major structural changes in social attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the evaluation of poverty. Simply stated, development refers to the process of improving the quality of life of all human lives" (Sumaya *et al.*, 2015). Moms' (1979) postulation agrees with this as he introduces the Physical Quality of Life (PQLI) index which was based on life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy rates. Against this background, measuring development should take a holistic dimension, recognizing economic, social, political, environmental and technological growth.

Development takes a process and each stage has its peculiar characteristics. These characteristics are indicators if the process is moving forward or otherwise. Rostow (1960) identified stages of economic growth which he considered the measurement index of development.

- i. **The Traditional Society:** The traditional society is one whose ability remains within a degree of contentment. The structure here is developed within some limited production functions and this production ability is based on available science and technology which Rostow described as "*Pre-Newtonian*". Such a society is usually agrarian with little or no modern technology, but will welcome innovations or expansion as may come in such limited forms as trade, industry and agriculture. Productivity could rise as a result but there usually existed a ceiling on the degree of achievement and this ceiling is as a result of the fact that the possibilities which streams from modern technologies are either not present or are seldom or illogically introduced.

The influence of the political structure in such societies is high and tilt towards agriculture with little plans of improvement. Families, communities and clans played important functions in social mobilization. The value system was what Rostow described as Falalism, which he explained to mean "*the assumption that the range of possibilities open to one's grand children would be just about what it had been for one's grand parents*" (in Worsley, 1978).

- ii. **The Pre-conditions for take-off:** This stage introduces the construction of some developmental values from the traditional society. It maintains that economic progress is achievable and it is a necessary condition for development. This economic progress gives rise to education which increases the level of literacy, government as well as private individuals or groups' attempt going into enterprising, thereby taking some risks for the purpose of making profits. Banks and other financial institutions begin to sprout, opportunities of commerce both internal and external begin to expand; Investment escalates especially in areas like communication, transport and raw materials which may be needed in other regions, then general business activities are introduced as they witness interest from other nations willing to do business. To a large extent, these conditions become the actual basic conditions for take-off as witnessed by Western Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.
- iii. **The Take-off:** The take-off stage is often described as the great watershed in the life of modern societies (Worsley, 1979:143). It is the period where resistance from the old bloc in terms of accepting steady increase in the level of growth is defeated. This stage welcomes economic development which would in turn produce some reasonable expansion of modernity expected to dominate the economy. When this takes place, growth becomes common, and there comes a general development of the society. Re-investment is witnessed, small enterprises expand swiftly, the general life of the people begin to change, urban areas are developed, the mode of manufacturing and production moves towards modern and there is a new class of entrepreneurs which would in turn encourage the private sector. The emphasis on the revolutionary change in agricultural productivity is an important factor for a fruitful take-off.
- iv. **The Drive to Maturity:** After take-off, there is a period of fluctuation to actually balance the system where people learn to show some adaptability to the modern system and where technology strives to take over the production sector and levels out old industries. A percentage of the national income is steadily invested maintaining output above the increase in population. The economy joins the leagues of international economics and sometimes foreign goods are now produced locally, the rate of imports reduces and exportation of goods is encouraged.

Maturity is attained when "the economy, focused during the take-off around a relatively narrow complex of industry and technology, has extended its range into more refined and technologically often more complex processes; for example, there may be a shift in focus from coal, iron and heavy engineering industries of the railway phase to machine tools, chemicals and electrical equipment" (Rostow, 1960). The cases of the transition of Germany, France, Britain and the United States at the end of the nineteenth century are good examples.
- v. **The Age of High Mass Consumption:** This is the stage on quality and durability. It is the era of sustainable fulfilment where the struggle for basic amenities of life like food, shelter and clothing have become history. Urbanization becomes natural and public awareness becomes a way of life. People are now sure of the quality of goods they consume, the quality of healthcare they receive as well as the quality of education. Policies are shifted towards providing excellent social welfare and security. A society that has attained the level of a welfare state has gone beyond technical maturity even though the level witnesses mass production of durable goods and services especially where there is consumer's sovereignty.

Conclusively, development is about improving the well being of the people which is often measured in terms of providing facilities and services that could give them a chance for a better life. (Sapru, 1997:269). Improving the standard of living, education, health, and opening up new and equal opportunity for richer and varied life are all important ingredients of development. The primary goal of development is to improve man and his environment.

BUREAUCRACY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Bureaucracy is a powerful terminology in governance and administration. It is so because the roles of bureaucrats at all levels in modern times have gone beyond the traditional duties as they were, to include interpreting laws, making policies, and enforcing decisions, as well as other activities that have direct effect on citizen's life (Eme and Eme, 2012).

Agreeing to this, Applebaum and Chamblis (1995) contend that bureaucracy begins from birth in the form health bureaucracy, to family life and developments in the form of social welfare to school in the guise of educational bureaucracy, to work as civil servants, military personnel, commercial or business men and industrial workers, and then worship and death in the form of religion. Indeed, bureaucracy controls the existence of man.

In virtually every country of the world, policy implementation is the duty of career officials or bureaucrats working in government establishments. These career officials are responsible for coordinating, monitoring and enforcing activities surrounding the implementation of policies. Ikelegbe (1996:95) maintained strongly that the capabilities of government bureaucracies in terms of expertise, skill orientation and experience determine the success or failure of policy implementation. Where necessary skills, experience and disposition exist, policies tend to be successfully implemented. The reverse is always the case if these features are absent. Also of great importance are the interests and values of bureaucrats who might influence or mar policy implementation. The original goals or targets of a policy may be deviated or negated at the implementation stage by bureaucrats through selfishly motivated modifications and pervasion of standards and methods. (Ezeani, 2006)

As a major function, bureaucracy has been fashioned to implement the resolutions or decisions of political leadership. "Political leaders make policy; the public bureaucracy executes it. If bureaucracy lacks the capacity to implement the policies of the political leadership, those policies, however well mentioned, will not be implemented in an effective manner" (Eme and Eme, 2012). This is a strong indication that the responsibilities of public bureaucracy in the process of social, political and economic development cannot be disregarded. Bureaucracy is the driver of development especially in developing countries like Nigeria. The ability of bureaucracy is a determinant factor of what, when and how things will get done. It is obvious, however, that the bureaucracy with high vigour and capability to execute social, political and economic development plans is sure of credible potentials for development.

Abdusalam's (2006) position is in tandem with this as he explains that we exist in an "executive centered era" where the efficiency of government lies wholly on the executive particularly in formulating and executing policies. However, bureaucracy as the mainstream of the executive organ of government is expected to play some roles vis (Agboola, 2016).

- **Recommending Policy:** Policy issues in modern governmental machinery requires some complex technical handling which can only be managed by some expert knowledge. The civil service, which is the nucleus of bureaucracy, is embedded with such technical capabilities because of the training and experience they command. From the initiation of policies by the executive and the consideration stage by the legislature, the roles of the civil servant become imperative as they are expected to offer some guidance and provide policy alternatives where necessary. It is also very important to emphasize that the civil service plays a vital role in articulation and aggregation of public interest. This they do by weighing competing interests in the society and espousing the popular interest rationale to support one policy against another in the instance of making policy choices.

- **Implementation of Policies and Programmes:** The customary duty of bureaucrats is executing policies and programmes of the state. Because they play specialized functions, they are expected to display some discretionary powers expected to result in quality and pattern of policy outcomes.
- **Routine Tasks of Government:** The civil servants carry out the day to day activities of the state apparatus. As a result, they regulate other routine activities of the state machinery thereby maintaining law and order.
- **Custody Official Records:** Civil servants act as custodians of all government records and provide same when necessary. These records contain all official documents essential for the day to day running of the state. It is of great importance to also note that, policy ideas are usually introduced from existing records contained in official files. Information in these files often form the foundation for possible policy choices. "The quality of any policy proposals is as high as that of the information gathered and maintained by the civil service" (Agboola, 2016)

These roles of bureaucrats give us a clear knowledge of how useful they are in national development. Both career and appointed ones are found in various government ministries, departments, agencies and parastatals, studies have revealed that an administrator usually faces problems of choice in execution of his responsibilities. He tends to get confused either to treat policy issues on the basis of his own judgement or follow legislative wishes. In this dilemma, he has to weigh and consider conflicting demands and interest and proffer solutions to reconcile them. In the process, he makes consultations and tries to balance and synthesize conflicting demands. In the other way, he may be forced by circumstances to bow to the pressure of some forces. (Agbor (2015) maintained that administrators are becoming more involved in policy making process in developing nations due to some reasons viz:

- The issues of delegated legislation which makes legislative scrutiny difficult
- Political instability of the political system
- Lack of experience and low educational qualification of ministers thus, preventing them to attend to official duties
- Heads of political departments who are always preoccupied with politics

In spite of these wonderful roles enumerated earlier, some scholars still hold negative views about bureaucracy. Robert Merton, for instance, sees the characteristics of bureaucracy which Webber recognizes as the best for rationality and efficiency as expressing the relationship between irrationality and inefficiency. His analysis points to the fact that "bureaucracy is sowing the seeds of its destruction" (Danashfard and Aboelmaali, 2016).

In similar vein, Cook, 2004, expressed his position that even Webber himself feared that bureaucracy would become an instrument for unnecessary domination and hazard to democratic foundations. He maintained that several rules in organizations and establishments are not respected and if respected at all, it is not for the purpose of the rules and regulations but for the avoidance of punitive measures associated with it. Records of experiences and performance of the establishment often do not exist and career descriptions are either unavailable or obsolete.

In the state, however, Webber seemed not to have considered the social and political aspects of bureaucracy. Putting bureaucracy under political executive especially in Nigeria is an issue of concern. Underestimating the powers of elected representatives over bureaucracy is a faulty principle. This action may lead to:

- **Corruption:** The executive influence on bureaucracy is a point to note. This is especially in developing countries where political leaders are assumed to be swimming inside the pool of corruption. These leaders cannot have better subordinates as their directives to bureaucrats under

them are expected to be carried out. In such a situation, political leaders connive with career bureaucrats to loot treasuries and adjust records to sooth their intentions.

- **Lack of Proper Accountability:** Accountability in public offices have in recent times been judged with some level of mistrust. Political leaders who partner with senior bureaucrats have always exhibited the same lifestyle where asset declaration is even a problem. If political office holders fail to render proper accounts, how will they impress on others to do otherwise? You cannot control a system which you are participating in destroying. Bureaucrats help to inflate contract sums in the interest of their political bosses and would in turn receive some rewards in the forms of 'kick backs', juicy appointments, recognition, etc. Even the bureaucrats themselves keep facing allegations that "they tend to attend first to their own personal interest and those of their close allies at the expense of the public interest" (Omoleke, 2004).

- **Red Tapism:** The structure of bureaucracy is said to slow down governance as bills or demands will go through the hierarchies before receiving assent. Thus, the pace at which files move may make the bill become obsolete in time of approval. Political leaders also use this bureaucratic process or *red tapism* to delay a bill that is not of interest to them, thereby letting it remain and killed in the process.

In developing countries like Nigeria, the major instrument for development rallies round the administrative machinery which is bureaucracy in public administration. Applied to development, it is increasingly being reflected in public administration terminology as Development Administration. Through the application of this new concept, bureaucracy can implement policies and plans directed towards national development in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Development is necessary for every society. As much as developing nations thrive to attain the status of development, the developed ones are also struggling to maintain their position and prestige in the world order. However the achievements or failures in this regard, bureaucracy is involved. The process of planning to the execution stage are manned by bureaucrats. The pertinent question here is why do some succeed and others fail? This may be due to leadership, competence of the bureaucrats, time and environment. In either way, one would have to come to the realization and acceptance that present available knowledge is derisive of measuring the performance of bureaucracy in relation to the development of different nations.

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