



PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF NIGERIA'S FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE

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Abstract

This paper examines the challenges to public accountability with emphasis on the developmental roles of the Public Service in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It is common knowledge that no country can rise beyond the level of its public service delivered by the bureaucracy. Therefore, accountability, transparency, responsibility, and responsiveness as platforms for efficient public service delivery positions the federal public bureaucracy as instrumental purveyor of development. This quest for development underscored administrative reforms before and during this period of study, with the aim of strengthening accountability mechanisms. This study utilised secondary sources of data, anchored on the New Public Service as theoretical framework and textual analysis which informed the discussion of issues, findings, conclusion and recommendations that followed.

Keywords: Accountability; Challenges; Civil/Public Service; Development; Nigeria; Public

1. Introduction

"A body... holding themselves accountable to nobody ought not to be trusted by anybody" (Thomas Paine in Olaopa, 2016, p. 81).

There are prodigious debates and avalanche of scholarly interrogations by a galaxy of writers (Olu-Adeyemi and Obamuyi, 2010; Nwozor, 2011; Ibietan, 2013a; Sulu-Gambari, 2014; Olatunji, 2015; Umar, 2017; Gberevbie, Joshua, Excellence-Oluye and Oyeyemi, 2017) on the theme of accountability deficits in the Nigerian public bureaucracy. This underscores the above averment by Thomas Paine, and the strident proposition by Olaopa (2016) for the reformation of accountability mechanisms in the public service targeted at recalibrating professionalism for

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effective service delivery and bifurcating the sterile impinging nuances that have kept the civil service of the federation on its knees.

Adamolekun (2007, p. 96), in a study on Civil/Public Service Institutions affirms that Nigeria alongside some Sub-Sahara African countries have institutional instruments/bodies for enhancing accountability, transparency and ethical behaviour, but queries “the degree of autonomy of these bodies, the human, financial and material resources...available to them, ... ability of these bodies to forge strategic alliances...with a view to enhancing their effectiveness.” This calls for a re-invigoration of internal and external mechanisms and agencies saddled with upholding public accountability. Thus, ensuring transparency in public administration, reduction in corrupt tendencies and sustenance of ethical behaviour which ultimately guarantees that resources are utilised for public good and developmental purposes.

It is arguable that accountability operates at an intersection between public sector reforms and service delivery, and these are irreducible fundamentals for national development. However, Olu-Adeyemi and Obamuyi (2010, p. 123) contend that “the influence of the political appointees has made the civil servants to neglect the issue of accountability in the workplace”. This situation informed the age-old thesis on politics-administration binary anchored on Public Administration orthodoxy, with the founding fathers of the discipline suggesting a clear insulation of administration from politics.

To corroborate the position by the above authors, Ibietan (2013a) submits that there is elite complicity in the public accountability narrative in the Nigerian public sector, and with a further observation that the internal and external mechanisms for achieving public accountability appear ineffective, due to the omission that reinforce the fraud triangle of need, opportunity and weak sanctions (Ibietan, 2013a, p. 46) for sundry infractions. This is typified by civil/public servants and public office holders working against established accountability norms and public interest.

The existence of “structurally weak control mechanism” conjoined with “near total absence of the notion and ethics of accountability in the conduct of public affairs” (Olatunji, 2015, p. 56) tend to impede the effective management of the civil service in Nigeria and detracts from its expected role as an effective catalyst of development. The appropriate remedial measure to this shortcoming has been located in public accountability reforms, and there is unanimity in the documentation by Sulu-Gambari (2014, p. 84) and Ehiyamen (2017, pp. 44-46) that Nigeria instituted the following reform commissions: Udoji (1972); Dotun-Philips (1986); Extractive

Industry Transparency Initiative (2002); and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (2004). The extent to which these initiatives had risen to the challenges is suspect, taking into consideration the submission by Magbadelo (2020) on the dismal state of service delivery by the federal public bureaucracy.

Gberevbie (2017) raised a number of ethical issues with likely tendencies to circumscribe accountability in the bureaucracy thus: perverse values underlining unethical behaviour and corrupt practices. The implication of these state of affairs is that accountability mechanisms are either not firmly rooted or have not been applied as they ought to be. Umar (2017, p. 45) further illuminates our understanding in this regard while stating that “successive scholars have noted that the public service in Nigeria...lacks...transparency, accountability, rules and regulations... (and) that for development to (take place) ... accountability of public officials is inevitable...” The next section discusses method, main argument and structure of the paper.

2. Method, Main Argument and Structure of the Paper

This is a qualitative study that relied on secondary sources of data, such as books, journals, newspapers and internet. The strength of this paper lies in *Triangulation* of secondary data from the above sources, and the usefulness of this approach to the study is reinforced by White (2000, pp. 66-67) “that if the same method of data collection is from different sources...over different time...this is often termed data triangulation” and it is seen as “...complimentary, with the outcome resulting in a more thorough understanding of the problem under investigation”. The adoption of this method and New Public Service model as the framework for textual analyses informed the discussion, findings, conclusion and recommendations of the paper.

The major argument of this paper is that the poor accountability experience of the Nigerian Public Service and weak institutional control mechanisms circumscribe effective management of public bureaucracy and ultimately development can be redressed through the reform imperatives of the New Public Service model. The paper contends that the tenets of the theory anchored on qualitative service to citizens, value for people, acting democratically and the recognition that accountability is not simple implies the adoption of robust strategies to neutralise the dysfunctions and accountability shortcomings in the Public Service of the Federation. This aims at repositioning the public service for effective service delivery and national development. The relevance of this model to a study like this was reinforced thus “the New Public Service (NPS) approach is the most coherent...”

(Robinson, 2015:10), in explicating and illuminating our understanding on germane issues like these.

The paper is segmented as follows: Abstract; Introduction; Method, Main Argument and Structure of the Paper; Conceptual Discourse; Theoretical Framework; Discussion: Challenges of Public Accountability - Gaps in the Developmental Role of Public Service in Nigeria's Fourth Republic; Conclusion and Recommendations.

3. Literature Review

This section is devoted to explanations of concepts and issues on Public Accountability; Development/National Development and Civil/Public service. Worthy also of attention are problems or dysfunctions of public bureaucracy in Nigeria.

3.1 Public Accountability: Concept and Issues

There is unanimity of opinion among scholars, writers and thinkers (Minja, 2013; Igbeng Beredugo & Adu, 2015; Agbatogun, 2019; Kanpang & Nkin, 2019. Bello, 2021) on this subject that an official or person who has been assigned duties should be held responsible for actions and consequences emanating therefrom. It equally refers to an obligation that work has been conducted in accordance with agreed rules and standards, with the ultimate goal that performance have been fairly and accurately reported.

Building on Adegbite (2009), Ibietan (2013a) identified the indispensable roles of due process, transparency and feedback (in the above definition) in achieving accountability. The extent to which these three cardinal safeguards of public accountability has been upheld in the Nigerian public bureaucracy is a matter for debate. In a related discussion, Igbeng, Beredugo & Adu (2015) posit that the three crucial components of public accountability are: a clear definition of responsibility; reporting mechanism and review system; reward and sanctions. This implies that work must be clearly spelt out; feedback process must be very unambiguous to explain the work done; commendation and correction are stated or lessons learnt as the case may be (Olaoye and Alabadan, 2019). It therefore entails calling to account and holding to account for what has been done, undone or gone wrong.

An attempt at deepening our understanding and appreciation of public accountability beyond the above elementary remit, found expression in the dual

approach of answerability and enforceability. The former refers to the “obligation of government, its agencies and public officials to provide information about their decisions...actions and justify them to the public...institutions of accountability tasked with providing oversight”, while the latter “suggests that the public or ...institution responsible... can sanction the offending party or remedy the contravening behaviour” (Agbatogun, 2019:105). It is noteworthy that achieving complaint behaviour or securing information through FOI Act via legislative or administrative oversight have not been generally effective in the Nigerian public service largely due to bureau pathologies and sundry dysfunctions (Ajibade and Ibietan, 2016).

The above inadequacies have circumscribed public interest which ought to underscore public accountability that translates to operating in the interest of the populace or segment of the society concerned by the subject matter of account (Ibietan, 2013a). Public accountability must underscore prudent and effective public financial management. Sound principles of accountability demand that government at all levels and public bureaucracies ensure that public funds and resources are judiciously utilised and be backed with adequate and appropriate records. To corroborate, Igbeng et.al (2015) posit that government (and the entire public bureaucracy) can only be trusted when they are accountable, transparent and act in public interest, but concluded based on an empirical study of public accountability and tax culture in Nigeria that the central government is unaccountable of funds in its care.

Predicated on an earlier research (Olowu, 2002, p. 142), Ibietan (2013a) reinforced and highlighted the importance of accountability in the public sector, detailing the following strategies as pivotal to enforcing accountability: internal, external voice and exit options. Internal mechanisms are tools applied to enforce personnel compliance or conformity with organisational goals/objectives, and this include hierarchy reinforced by inspectorates, merit system of recruitment and promotion, rules/regulations, other operative functions of Human Resources Management and procedures for internal reviews/audits. External mechanism include executive-based compliance systems outside the public bureaucracy (ministerial responsibilities to the cabinet, parliament, electorates and political direction of Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government) and legislative controls.

Exit opportunities are more useful and applicable to agencies producing goods and services. Citizens utilise voice mechanisms to express dissatisfaction on poor service delivery or abuse of office by public officials, although this approach would need to

be invigorated in Nigeria. Research shows curiously and instructively notwithstanding these documented safety guards of public accountability “that the capacity to achieve full accountability has been and continues to be inadequate, partly because of the design of accountability itself...widening range of objectives and associated expectations...” (Premchand in Kankpang and Nkiri, 2019, p. 3).

Credence for the above is pivoted on the works of Minja (2013) with additional reinforcements by Bello (2021) that the Nigerian and many African Public Service/Sector are characterised by weak accountability practice due to a motley of bureau pathologies which stymie public service delivery and ultimately national development. It has emerged more poignantly that the modicum levels of accountability in existence are at the behest of domestic opposition groups and/or donor driven (Minja, 2013).

It is arguable that for any country to develop, its public bureaucracy must be capacitated for service delivery and infrastructural facilities, and as Ajibade and Ibietan (2016) posit, this must be premised on strong (effective and professionalised) public bureaucracies imbued with transparency, ethical values and integrity for improved performance. Factors explaining poor service delivery in Nigeria’s public bureaucracy include: inadequate financial resources and misappropriation of funds; poor human resources management styles/lack of staff motivation; technical incompetence; obsolete or outmoded technology; corruption, politicisation and incessant interference in purely administrative matters (Bello, 2021); wrong application of federal character principle; tardiness and lethargic attitude of bureaucrats to work among others.

Effective public accountability system holds robust promise for national development through efficient and better resources utilisation anchored on good indices and techniques of operation, plus frameworks for correcting deviations and sanctioning violations. Improving financial management, internal and external regulations, expenditure control, cash management, effective auditing and adequate financial records are credible planks for robust public accountability system (Minja, 2013; Nwankwo et.al, 2021), which enhances the legitimacy and integrity of public governance.

Other merits of accountability as documented by Ikechuckwu and Onwuka (2021) include performance improvement and democratic control. However, excessive or fastidious accountability control, mechanisms constrains agencies into rule-obsessed bureaucracies and unnecessarily rigid procedural organisations characterised by

perfunctoriness and sub-optimal performance, these call for moderation and balance in the application of public accountability strategies/tactics.

3.2 The Concept of Development/National Development

Development is a highly contested and confused concept. This emanates from the fact that it is prone to semantic distortion, synonymous orientation or interchangeable use with some terms in Economics. It is not uncommon to find terms like Economic Growth, Modernisation and Westernisation treated as having same or similar meanings with Development. Whereas, growth in economic theory refers to increase overtime in a country's real output per capita which translates to quantitative improvement in the wealth of the country, modernisation is a systemic process involving complimentary changes in the demographic, economic, political, communication and cultural sectors of a society which is typified by the application of inanimate sources of power or tools to multiply human efforts and comprises multiple processes (Ibietan, 2014).

Development is also not westernisation which refers to the adoption or application of Western values, cultures and lifestyles. The process can be dual because Western influences and interests are mixed minimally with those of the affected society, and ultimately through acculturation, the non-western society becomes or tilts more to western culture in industry, technology, law, politics, economics and diet to mention but a few. The most important character of development is its complexity, meaning that it comprises several interrelated aspects, and this character is often referred to as multi-dimensional. Several aspects of development include economic, political, socio-cultural and administrative. It is however not unusual to find the economic aspect emphasised over and above others, because the most generally used definition of the term is increase in Gross National Income or Product (GNP) (Obi and Nwanegbo, 2006, p. 3).

Another approach sees it as economic growth plus qualitative changes. The changes and growth must translate to socio-economic progress and societal transformation. This undue emphasis on economic aspect appears to be changing in favour of non-economic parameters as observed by Ibietan and Oghator (2013). The definition in recent times tends to be warehousing democratic imperatives of political governance and social indicators (Jhingan, 2007) which underscores Sen's (1999) characterisation of development from the prism of ends and means of freedoms. In other words, the

constitutive and instrumental roles of freedoms in the development process cannot be overemphasised.

National development has been defined as the “improvement of a country’s productive capacity through changes in social attitude, values...behaviour...towards social...political quality and eradication of poverty” (Nebo and Nnamani, 2015:3). It has been described to be people-oriented and its success must be evaluated by its ability to improve the living conditions of the populace, expressed in terms of high incomes, employment, better education, attention to cultural and human values, expansion of socio-economic choices and opportunities to the citizenry.

From the above explanation of national development, its intents and objectives are quite ambitious and omnibus. These underscore the need for strong or effective and professionalised bureaucratic institutions and personnel to play crucial roles (Ibietan, 2013b) in galvanizing national development through effective and robust service delivery, but as Magbadelo (2022, p. 55) submits, this shows a deficit “and this shortfall has been the subject of several reform initiatives in the past”. In attempting to present a balance sheet, the Federal Civil/Public Service collectively referred to as Federal Public bureaucracy has been credited with advising political office holders on policy formulation, apart from their policy implementation roles; sustaining the machinery of government or continuity of the state; provision of social services and playing dominant roles in socio-economic development, especially in formulating and implementing national development plans (Ibietan and Oghator, 2013; Nebo and Nnamani, 2015) among others.

Excellence-Oluye et.al (2019) in illuminating and deepening our understanding on national development posit that it is human-oriented and a collective enterprise, thus converging with Nebo and Nnamani (2015) that it involves the interaction of modern economic, political and social forces cum processes with transformative attributes. In situating the indispensable role of federal public bureaucracy in national development, the utilisation of governmental machinery to maintain order, “commanding loyalty, eliciting legitimacy, permitting mass participation, fostering integration and satisfying popular expectations and wants” (Excellence- Oluye et.al, 2019:1319) are irreducible minimum requirements. These authors submit that national development must adopt ‘all-inclusive’ approach, be multi-sectoral, permit progressive change, be sustainable, irreversible and promote advancement in living conditions of the populace. These are tangential to the position taken in a related discourse by Makinde and Adeoye (2020) that development must take a collective or societal perspective, be multi-faceted and sustainable.

3.3 The Concept of Public Service

There have been prodigious debates and arguments by a retinue of a scholars and writers on public organisations on the exact meaning of the term 'Public Service' and the controversy surrounding the blurring (in meaning) between Civil Service and Public Service, which is due in part to the confused use of the terms or lexical misinterpretation. This foundation was laid in Okoli and Onah (2002, p. 76) in jettisoning "the English use" of Public Service in a broader sense to include the "personnel of the central government agencies". These authors excluded "the Armed Forces, the quasi-governmental corporations and statutory bodies" in their definition of the term which is misleading and contradicts the provision of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

To buttress, Olaopa (2008) cautiously clarified that the constitutional provisions did not specify "the Nigerian Public Service", rather it stipulates "Public Service of the Federation at the Federal and State levels; the public service of the states of the federation including Local Government Councils". The public service of the federation consists of all officials of "government at the federal, states and local government levels, and in the ministries, parastatals, extra-ministerial departments and the para-military organisations" (Olaopa, 2008, pp. 35-42).

Ibietan (2013b, pp. 55-56) observes that the constitutional definition of the term 'public service' appear broader and more meaningful than those advanced by some scholars (Okoli and Onah, 2002). Section 318 of the 1999 Nigerian constitution defines it as "the service of the government of Federation in any capacity that includes the following:

- (a) Clerk or other staff of the National Assembly or of each House of the National Assembly.
- (b) Member of staff of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, the Federal High Court, the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, the Sharia Court of Appeal of FCT, the Customary Court of Appeal of FCT or other Courts established for the Federation by this constitution and by Act of the National Assembly;
- (c) Member or staff of any commission or authority established for the Federation by this constitution or by an Act of the National Assembly;
- (d) Staff of any area Council;
- (e) Staff of any statutory corporation established by an Act of the National Assembly;

(f) Staff of any educational institution established or financed principally by the Government of the Federation;

(g) Staff of any company or enterprises in which the Government of the Federation or its agency owns controlling shares or interests; and

(h) Members or officers of the armed forces of the Federation or the Nigeria Police Force or other government security agencies established by law.

Ekpe (2021, p. 84) corroborates the above and furthers that the Nigeria public service as a “service delivery institution is a catalyst for national development”. The veracity or extent to which this averment holds would be unraveled in the section of bureau pathology and public service in Nigeria. The term “civil service” is also usually confused with public service. Not only has it been wrongly defined, its portrayal has been quite misleading on some occasions. For instance, building on an earlier source, Nebo and Nnamani (2015, p. 3) submit that “civil service consists of people employed by the State to run public institution of a country”. Earlier, these scholars posit that “civil service is an institution bequeathed to mankind in the process of revolutionising an efficient way of organising large human organisation”. If these averments are completely true, one wonders why a country like Nigeria is still at its current level of development, and the imperative of a continuous search for improved public service productivity manifesting in civil/public service reforms from the 1934 Hunt Committee to the 2012 Oronsaye Review Panel (Ibietan and Oni, 2013).

With the benefit of robust scholarship and experience, Adamolekun (2002, pp. 17-18) clarified the meaning of these confused terms, stressing that civil service is often used synonymously with government, thus “it refers to the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the political executive in formulating and implementing government policies.” It also refers to ministries and departments within which specific aspects of governmental activities are carried out. According to this scholar, public service “usually indicates a wider scope than the civil service (and)...means the totality of services that are organised under public (government) authority”. It covers ministries, departments, agencies of central government, its field administration, local government, the military, other security forces and the judiciary. This appears more explicit, broader in definition, approximating the constitutional elucidating and makes the difference clearer to the layman.

The two terms taken together has been referred to as Nigeria public bureaucracy (Ibietan, 2013b) which is an offshoot of the British colonial public service with its structure transplanted. Its functions were pivoted on the doctrine of “Night

watchman" (Adamolekun, 1983), implying the provision of law and order, but expanded exponentially to serve the purposes (or whims and caprices) of the colonialists, and currently comprises: formulation of government policies and programmes; planning and implementation of public policies, social services provision; preparation of annual budgets and development plans; revenue collection; executing bye-laws, regulations/orders of the legislature, judicial/quasi-judicial functions; documentation, education and public enlightenment functions (Oladipo, 2007; Nwankwo et.al, 2020).

3.4 Bureau Pathology and Public Service in Nigeria

Public administrationists and writers on bureaucracy tend to construe bureau pathology as "negative administrative behaviour of professionals and experts... which thwart the achievement of public goals and delivery of quality public service..." which includes "...bureaucratic insensitivity, misuse of administrative power and discretion ...and misuse of monopoly in service delivery" (Peter in Awosika, 2014; 85). The foundations of this concept resonate from the seminal works of academic Giants on organisational studies like R.K. Merton (1949) and Victor Thompson (1961). Detailed discussions on these are contained in Imhanlahimi (2007) and Kowalewski (2012). Kowalewski (2012) illuminates our understanding of this term in a striking oxymoron manner thus "it seems irrational (that) pathology flows from organisations led and staffed by some of the world's best and brightest. Whereas the typical public organisation begins its life by claiming to operate in the public interest." It can therefore be extrapolated from the definition by Imhanlahimi (2007) which converges with that of Peter in Awosika (2014) that the claim by bureaucrats to operating on or upholding public interest is far from reality.

To corroborate the above, Imhanlahimi (2007, p. 58) avers that bureau pathologies "are the tendencies in organisation and behaviour of employees...which can frustrate the realisation of the goals towards which... organisation is supposed to be working". According to this scholar, pathologies take the following forms: inconsistency and unpredictability; informality and denials; unlimited or uncircumscribed flexibility; personalisation, laziness and goal displacement to mention but a few.

Ajibade and Ibieta (2016, p. 11) posit that bureau pathology is akin to a disease of the public service and that "this dysfunctional characteristic of bureaucracy manifests in the Nigerian factor". Ibieta (2019) furthers that this (Nigerian) factor

is an euphemism and subtle reference to public policies and implementation failures in Nigeria, while similar things (policies) work or succeed elsewhere. This underscores the attitudinal or behavioural underpinning in the definition of this term, and circumscribes government socio-economic and political programmes to the disadvantage of the populace, which ultimately stymies effective service delivery and abbreviates national development. These find expressions in uncompleted projects that dots the nation's landscape and defaces Nigeria's physical environment, poor quality execution of projects, fraudulent issuance of completion certificate for unexecuted or uncompleted public works/contracts (Makinde and Adeoye, 2020) among other bureau professionalism deficits.

The bureau-professionalism gap mentioned above constitute a dimension to the discussion on bureau pathology in the Nigerian public service. Ordinarily, bureau-professionalism should galvanise service delivery and make Ministries, Departments and Agencies(MDAs) of government more flexible, proactive and performance oriented, but it is mired by acute lack of competence, low capacity readiness and utilisation (Olaopa, 2016). These were upheld by Bello (2021) who listed other explanatory factors as: use of obsolete/outdated technology; unnecessary politicisation and government interference; corruption; nepotism; unbalanced application of federal character principle; defective human resources management practices as impediments to bureau efficiency which circumscribes national development.

To be sure, Magbadelo (2020:55) submits that "Nigeria's federal bureaucracy are not delivering services as expected of them and this shortfall has been the subject of several reform initiatives in the past". A catalogue of these reform panels with their focus and recommendations are documented in Ibietan (2019:95-98). Imhanlahimi (2007), Ajibade and Ibietan (2016) observe that some reform initiatives were meant to address bureau pathologies, but they turned out to worsen the situation through de-procedural termination of expertise or skilled employees' appointments from 1975 onwards, and the federal public bureaucracy has yet to recover from the monumental waste or loss.

Scholars like Adamolekun (2007); Ibietan and Oni (2013); Awosika (2014); Ibietan and Joshua (2015); Asaju and Ayeni (2020) have identified a gamut of issues constituting bureau pathologies as follows: corruption; unnecessary and unhelpful politicisation; tragic role of the military (and its unitary command structure) with its negative and reverberating effects on the public service as an institution, public administration and governance in Nigeria. Other issues underscoring pathology in Nigeria's federal bureaucracy include overstaffing, centralisation, apathy, red tape

and tardiness, which account for the conclusion by Asaju and Ayeni (2020) that “it also sabotages government socio-economic and political programmes to the disadvantage of constituents...with great consequences on effective service delivery and national development in Nigeria.”

Resulting from the foregoing (poor performance of the federal bureaucracy and dysfunctional state of affairs), Adamolekun (2007, p. 17) suggests a “redefinition of the mission and scope of the public services (and)... the critical importance of the value that should underpin a public administration system.” This averment was emphasised much later thus: “a fundamental rethinking of governance and ... public service is required – one that is targeted at rebuilding ... a merit based civil service with the ... key elements (of) a professional bureaucracy... committed to the public interest” (Adamolekun and Olowu, 2015, p. 109). To attain national development, the federal public bureaucracy must necessarily possess the aforementioned attributes, avoid state capture, ensure social embeddedness and be calibrated on the features of Weberian (ideal construct) orthodoxy.

4. Theoretical Framework: New Public Service

This paper has its theoretical base laid in the New Public Service (NPS). This theory is traceable to the robust intellectual efforts of Janet V. Denhardt and Robert B. Denhardt. It first appeared as a journal article in *Public Administration Review* in the year 2000, later in 2007 as a book, and the ideas were revisited in 2015 as an article again (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2015). The NPS according to these authors is an initiative predicated on works in democratic citizenship; community and civil society; organisational humanism and discourse theory. They posit that NPS describes a set of norms and practices that emphasise democracy and citizenship as pivot for public administration theory and practice.

Asaju and Ayeni (2020:75) assert that “NPS focuses on how to achieve citizens interest without jeopardising the interest of public bureaucracy” which assists “citizens articulate their diverse interests and ... meet their needs.” Earlier, Ibietan (2019:90) building on Denhardt and Denhardt (2007) averred that in the NPS conception, “the primary role of public servants is to help citizens articulate and meet their shared interests, rather than to control or steer society”. The foundations for the theoretical development of NPS inhere in the review of paradigmatic oscillation from the Traditional Public Administration (PA) to New Public Management (NPM). NPS therefore evolved as an explanation to critical normative

questions about Public Administration as a field and repudiation of NPM orientation with its business approach to managing bureaucracy and running government.

4.1 Tenets/Features of New Public service Theory

The major ideas or thrust of this theory are as follows:

(1) Serve citizens, Not Customers: Public interest should emphasise dialogue on shared values of citizens, not individual narrow interests. Public servants must build collaborative relationships and trust with citizens and groups. Service delivery must be effective and targeted at satisfying the populace, rather than treat them with business philosophy as customers based on NPM doctrines.

(2) Seek Public Interest: The objective here is to create shared interests and collective responsibility in which bureaucrats contribute to finding enduring solutions and making effective choices to attenuate societal problems.

(3) Value Citizenship over Entrepreneurship: The synergistic activities of citizens and public servants should advance the society and public interest robustly, as against Entrepreneurs deploying business tactics and strategies.

(4) Think Strategically, Act Democratically: Citizens and bureaucrats are expected to leverage opportunities for participation, collaboration and community efforts for programmes execution and policy(ies) implementation. There must be effective information sharing to entrench public discourse and create citizen involvement in government activities.

(5) Recognise that Accountability is not Simple: There are multiple issues and complex processes that Administrators confront in the discharge of their functions, and to ensure accountability goes beyond rudimentary measures of efficiency or market mechanisms as canvassed by NPM theorists. Furthermore, there are questions on the place or role of discretion in guiding or ascertaining responsible behaviour in public service and how objective this can be in measuring performance or service delivery. Additionally, the efficacy of politics/administration dichotomy could succumb to multiple or variegated and complex governance and bureaucratic functions. These have implications for what bureaucrats are responsible for; whom they are accountable to, and the means to achieving both accountability and responsibility (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2007)

(6) Serve rather than Steer: Public servants are enjoined to embrace shared, value-based and transformative leadership style to educate and harness citizens/public

interests, rather than the rigid traditional top-bottom approach that seeks to control or dictate societal needs and policy directions to follow. This leadership component and the emphasis on shared values underscored by the transformational approach are the strong points of NPS, which makes it positively result-oriented and quite appealing.

(7) Value People, Not Just Productivity: The emphasis here is on human resources management (HRM) that is pivoted on collaborative processes and shared leadership with respect for people or the human element in organisational settings. NPS arose as a rebuttal to the lapses in HRM practices of the classical/ structuralist theories including Weber's, Human Relations, Behavioural approaches and the NPM (business and market- oriented tactics) to underscore the pre-eminent role of people in public organisations and respect for public service ideals. The ingredients for these are democratic ethos, shared values, citizenship and public interest among others.

5.1 Discussion: Public Accountability and Federal Public Bureaucracy's Developmental Imperatives in Nigeria

This section presents the highlights of findings from literature review, and utilising the New Public Service theory as framework of analysis, it attempts a discussion based on the major themes and focus of the paper. This comprises public accountability; federal public service and its role in national development. It also examines the effect of bureau pathologies on public service delivery and ultimately, national development.

Accountability implies responsibility and answerability for actions and its consequences. It amounts to obligation that work has been done based on measurable performance and accurately reported. The fifth tenet of NPS underscores this as Administrators confront or grapple with complex processes in the execution of their duties. Accountability is therefore not particularly simple, as it transcends measuring efficiency. It questions discretionary powers and ascertains responsible behaviour of bureaucrats. Accountability also thrives on review systems, rewards and sanctions. It entails calling to account and holding to account on what is done, undone or gone wrong. The interplay of answerability and enforceability in public accountability process cannot be relegated and these have implications for legislative, administrative oversight and judicial reviews/remedies which have been poorly done over the years in Nigeria's federal public service. This

explains the preponderance of bureau pathologies which circumscribes effective public service delivery and national development. The seventh tenet that emphasise valuing people is applicable here. To ensure and enhance service delivery, human resources management that underscore motivation and anchored on human relation theories, collaboration and shared leadership must be emphasised in Nigeria's federal public bureaucracy.

In addition, the practice or system of public accountability in the Nigerian federal public bureaucracy does not uphold public interest. Self-serving, rapacious and graft behaviours of bureaucrats and governing elites attest to this. Public funds and resources are not prudently utilised (Igbeng et. al, 2015), which explains the country's dismal development position. Accountability enforcing mechanisms/strategies exist on paper, they are not effectively applied. It will amount to technical insanity to expect national development with practices like these in the public bureaucracy. To redress this narrative, the first and third tenets of NPS with emphasis on serving and valuing citizens predicated on public interest or satisfying the needs/interests of the populace must be the target. Effective public accountability system and processes should lead to performance improvement and democratic control. It is doubtful if this reflects the situation in Nigeria's federal public bureaucracy due to sundry issues explaining poor service delivery as documented in section 3.1 of this paper.

Stretching further the above argument, it should be noted that although the fourth feature or tenet of NPS emphasises acting democratically, it is clear that democratic practice has not taken firm footing in Nigeria after over twenty years of re-emergence of civilian administration (Ibietan and Ajayi, 2015). Writing on a related subject, Soludo (2012, p. 1) leveraged on Thomas Jefferson's averment that " the two enemies of the people are criminals and government, so let us tie the second down with the chains of the constitution, so (that) the second will not become the legalised version of the first". Informed and verifiable observations on public sector governance and bureaucratic institutions in Nigeria tend to confirm the above statement made about 240 years ago by Jefferson. This state of affairs has been put more pungently in a review of books written by a former top public servant in which he posited that " the civil (public) service and the political class are the problem of Nigeria" (Adamolekun, 2015, p. 2). Care and caution must therefore be taken in applying this fourth tenet of NPS to public bureaucracies in Nigeria due to the failings and foibles of democratic practice in its disguised form arising from constitutional abuses and several procedural infractions.

Professionalised and effective bureaucratic institutions cum personnel are minimum irreducible requirements for facilitating national development. Studies have shown that these are lacking in Nigeria (Ibietan, 2013b; Ajibade and Ibietan, 2016; Magbadelo, 2020) which makes successive civil public service reform initiatives inevitable. The balance sheet for these reforms spanning 1934 to 2012 is not the focus of this paper, but from the foregoing reviews, analyses and discussions, it is observable that the public bureaucracy is still “work in progress”. Professionalism impacts service delivery and this becomes robust when public servants embrace shared, value-based and transformative leadership as stressed by the sixth tenet of NPS. The ultimate effect of this result-oriented approach is a bifurcation of the impinging nuances of bureaucratic practice that leads to national development.

It has been documented that bureaucrats perform advisory functions to political executives in addition to their policy formulation inputs and implementation roles, which makes public service institutions’ catalyst for national development. However, policy outcomes in Nigeria reflect poor quality decisions, the formulations and implementation processes are still top-bottom or top-down, which in most cases do not accommodate public interest, preferences and choices. Any development effort that fails to make the common man or populace its focus misses the point (Offiong, 1980; Sen, 1999; Excellence-Oluye et al, 2019). Serving people rather than steering or controlling them, and valuing them through the application of bottom-top approach to development which reverses or de-emphasises the rigid traditional approach to decision-making as envisioned by the sixth and seventh tenets of NPS are major planks or strategies to remedy the bureaucratic deficits or dysfunctions and ultimately facilitate national development.

Numerous studies affirm that bureaucrats are hamstrung (Imhanlahimi, 2007; kowalewski, 2012; Awosika, 2014) by bureau pathologies which is a disease of the public service. This reifies the Nigerian factor and stymies national development as discussed in section 3.4 of this paper. The first and second tenets of NPS can rise to this challenge. In order to institute and entrench bureau professionalism and efficiency as antedotes to pathological behaviour of bureaucrats, many civil/public service reforms had been undertaken, but the results are still not impressive. To be sure, the 1975 mass purge and its successor actions have left the federal public bureaucracy prostrate and emasculated through a de-procedural service or tenure abbreviation of expertise and skilled public servants. The implications of this state of affairs for national development can be imagined. The fourth tenet of NPS pivoted on thinking strategically and acting democratically is apposite for addressing issues

like these in order to minimise unnecessary waste of productive manpower in the public bureaucracy.

5.2 Empirical Discourse

It is vital to reiterate that this paper argues that the reform instruments of the theoretical framework (NPS) adopted which is pivoted on qualitative service delivery to citizens, value for people, democratic and accountability imperatives imply that effective strategies to attenuate accountability and sundry dysfunctions in the public bureaucracy of the federation be deployed. The task before this section therefore is to relate the discussion in the preceding section (5.1) to previous studies.

In related studies that utilised the qualitative approach, it was identified that elite complicity occasioned by weak anti-graft institutions inhibit public accountability process and reinforce the corruption dilemma as major drawbacks to national development efforts and its actualisation. It is noteworthy that the omission or refusal to effectively utilise accountability mechanisms to sanction bureau-pathology behaviours (Ibietan, 2013a) underscore resource plunder and circumscribes national development. This may have informed the observation that “the initial objectives and instruments driving such bureaucracies have become grossly inadequate...” (Ibietan, 2013b:53), which necessitated the suggestion that structural barriers and other hindrances to the implementation of public sector reforms be addressed on a sustainable basis through the tenets of New Public Management paradigm.

Nebo and Nnamani (2015) prefaced their discourse on “Civil Service and National Development in Nigeria” with a review of six Public Service Reform (PSR) panels only, which are just a fraction of the details contained in Ibietan (2019). However, there is a noticeable convergence with Asaju and Ayeni (2020) on the challenges confronting the civil service institution as implementers or executors of public policies that could hallmark effective service delivery and national development. These explained the human resource management/motivation package or inclination of their recommendations.

Ajibade and Ibietan (2016) employed the qualitative approach also, to the discussion on “Public Bureaucracy and Service Delivery in Nigeria”, through the Neo-Weberian explanation. The study made a case for strong, professionalised bureaucracies and institutions of governance committed to reducing the incidence of bureau-pathology as an impediment to public service delivery, thus galvanising national development. Writing on a related theme, a re-discovery of public service

values that are anchored on the tenets of Neo-Weberian State model (that includes Co-production with other stakeholders as an imperative) was seriously canvassed (Ibietan, 2019).

In “The Problematic of Service Delivery in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service”, the emphasis by Magbadelo (2020) was on service delivery with special focus on Service Compact (SERVICOM) – an aspect of former President Obasanjo’s PSR initiatives. The paper presented a catalogue of hindrances to positive outcomes of this initiative, and ultimately national development, and its approach is akin to those of Nebo and Nnamani (2015); Asaju and Ayeni (2020); and Ekpe (2021). However, this research on “Public Accountability and National Development: The Role of Nigeria’s Federal Public Service” with its focus and analytical framework pivoted on NPS which Robinson (2015:10) describes as “the most coherent” among the new paradigms appears more encompassing and robust in discussion and policy implications, based on the foregoing presentations and the conclusion/recommendations in section 6 below.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper examined issues bothering on accountability deficits arising from weak institutional mechanisms in Nigeria’s federal public bureaucracy which constitutes serious impediments to its developmental roles, with noticeable impact on public service delivery. It is also observable that unbridled and unhelpful politicisation in public service by political/governing elites circumscribe effective accountability practice. Reviews and analyses show that constitutionalism and other institutional safeguards of democracy are nearly redundant and have no effective bite in Nigeria.

Predicated on earlier studies, the paper notes that the omission underpinning the Fraud Triangle account partly for bureau pathology which emasculates normative accountability behaviour and the public interest is relegated by public servants and office holders. The cumulative effect of these is a public sector that underperforms and national development takes flight or is arrested. It is disturbing that the half-hearted or ‘hesitant’ attempts at public service reforms have not been able to redress this state of affairs. This paper therefore submits that a careful and informed application of the New Public Service theory anchored on its tenets can redress the dysfunctions and accountability gaps in Nigeria’s federal public service, translating to improved public service delivery and national development ultimately.

Inference from the empirical discourse above shows that the leadership of reforms and political commitment are important contributory factors to national development. In addition, the culture and values of inclusive institutions cannot be overemphasised. Acemoglu and Robinson (2013) affirm these with emphasis on the role of such institutions as instrumental purveyors of development. Developmental state is also attainable through a professionalised and efficient public bureaucracy imbued with adherence to the tenets of NPS model, such as serving citizens, upholding public interest and acting democratically. It is pertinent to note that public service ethos such as effective public financial management; global best accountability mechanisms/practices; prudent resource utilisation; and adequate record keeping constitute efficient institutional guards and bulwark against sundry bureau dysfunctions that can abbreviate or halt national development.

Based on the foregoing reviews and discussions, this paper recommends (as policy guide) the following:

Accountability mechanisms and designs should project clear objectives, outcomes and expectations. These would improve capacity and service delivery in the public sector, with the ultimate goal of redressing bureau pathologies and sundry dysfunctions. Also, voice mechanism for reporting dissatisfaction on poor public service delivery should be strengthened and encouraged in order to accelerate or facilitate development in Nigeria.

Continuous training, re-training and ethical re-orientation are strongly canvassed to proactively recalibrate bureau-professionalism for national development. As a corollary, the deployment of effective and current technology in the bureaucratic process/procedure cannot be overemphasised. In addition, unhelpful and debilitating political interference in purely administrative issues should be jettisoned in order to entrench techno-bureaucratic model that can galvanise development in Nigeria.

A re-discovery of the philosophy, intents and purposes of the anti-graft agencies (EFCC; ICPC; CCB) and committed political will/support by the Central/Federal government leading personnel and governing elites to invigorate or rejuvenate the activities and officials/staff in curbing graft behaviours and tendencies are of vital importance. Corruption as a manifestation of weak accountability mechanism or system must be frontally fought, devoid of Regime or Administration's sloganeering.

There is an urgent need for improved and effective HRM practices with emphasis on robust review/appraisal metrics, competitive reward system (which

demonstrates value for people as the seventh tenet of NPS emphasises) and sanctions as deterrent for unethical behaviours and sundry bureau pathologies in Nigeria's public bureaucracy. These can redress the phenomenon of low productivity, poor service delivery, which leads to national development.

Deliberate and sustained efforts at entrenching democratic culture and values in Nigeria are strongly recommended to stem the current manifestation of predatory and cavalier tendencies of the political class/ governing and bureaucratic elites. The National Orientation Agency and institutions of allied or similar mandates should give fillip to their activities in this direction.

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