

# New Public Administration and Nigeria's Administrative Ecology: Analysis & Applications

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## Abstract

We analytically put the concept of New Public Administration into perspective in this paper. In the process, we traced its genealogy and its provisions as well as demonstration of its applicability in a country like Nigeria. Prominence was given to the structures and ecology of the Nigerians public administrative cycle. Within the same context, the issue of hierarchical authorities, representative bureaucracy as well as corruption impedes its process. Consequent on these, conclusively We argued that there is need for a re-orientation of the Nigeria citizenries most importantly, the public bureaucrats to imbibe the constructs of the new public administration vis-à-vis the "new thinking" through the pursuance of social equity.

**Keywords:** Public Administration, New Public Administration, Administrative Ecology.

## Introduction

The increasing complexities and responsibilities of government within most polities of the world, over the years have created, among others, intellectual excitement and attention about the study of governmental processes and structures. Thus, the study of public administration as a field of inquiry has homologically gained increasing attention in order to keep pace with the ever expanding administrative and policy functions of government and their accompanying demands on practical administration and practitioners. This in itself has necessitated the need to understand in both theoretical and practical sense the concept of public administration and new ideas (Akindele, 2002).

Obi (2002) noted that New Public Administration (NPA) was a product of the dis-enchantment of young public administration scholars in the United States with the focus on traditional public administration. The emphasis on the dis-enchantment was basically to usher in a paradigm shift in the obnoxious notions and practices in the field of public administration.

Several issues gave rise to the ideology of the New Public Administration. Writers such as Fredrickson (2007) in Obi (2012) have identified these issues as owing to the fact that the conventional or classical public administration raises questions such as;

- How can we offer more or letter services with available resources (efficiency)?
- How can we maintain our level of service while spending less money (Economy)?

Then, New Public Administration adds the third questions: dose these services enhance social equity? Obi (2012) observed that the New Public Administration seeks to change those policies and structures that systematically inhibit social equity.

Nevertheless, New public Administration as it were was a brain-child of numerous conference and publications prior to its emergence. These conferences were identified by Obi (2012) as follows:

- The Honey Report on Higher Education for public service, 1967, in the USA.
- The Philadelphia conference on the theory and practice of public Administration, 1967, in the USA.
- Publication of Dwight Waldo's Article "Public Administration in a time of Revolution in 1968.
- The Minnowbrook conference, 1968, in the USA.
- Publication of toward a New Public Administration: The Minnowbrook perspective, edited by Frank Marini, 1971.
- Publication of public administration in a time of Turbulence edited by Dwight Waldo, 1971.
- Public of George Fredrickson book New public administration in 1980.

Okoye (2004), observed that the minnowbrook conference of 1971 gave the ideology of the New Public Administration its strongest back-up due to Frank Marini's publication in a book titled "*Toward a New Public Administration*" in 1971. In the book, New Public Administration were meant to address pertinent issues such as:

- Relevance
- Values
- Social equity
- Change and
- Client focus

In the same vein, Obi (2012) noted that's the leaders of the minnowbrook conference, Dwight Waldo in the same year (1971), emphasized that the New Public Administration aims towards three perspectives. These are:

- Client-Oriented Bureaucracy
- Representative Bureaucracy
- People's participation in Administration.

However, in the light of the fore-going trends in administration and the obvious fact that though administration differs from country to country, but remains the same is the fact they work towards the optimum maximization of the individual country's public output. This paper however, attempts to inwardly study the Nigerians Public Administration and how they align with the current advocacies and dimensions in the New Public Administration ideologies. To underscore this, the paper would examine the nature of New Public Administration and Nigerian public administration as well as evaluate scholars view on NPA with the view to interrogating how applicable its propositions would be, to our domestic administration ecology.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

### Public Administration.

Within the disciplinary parameters of social sciences, the concept of public administration like others has not been free from definitional disputations. In fact, the discipline has undergone various metamorphoses in the quest for a definitional unanimity. This has been largely due in part, to the indispensability of the bureaucratic procedures and processes. In spite of these notions, here below are the notions of scholars on what public administration stands for.

Piriffer & Presthus (1967), describe public administration as a field mainly concerned with the means of implementing political values.

The above definition was given back up by Wilson's (1887) classical conceptualization of public administration as the most obvious part of government and as the government in action. This also explains why Presthus (1975), argued that public administration deals with the study of the institutional framework of government, its socio-economic and political environment and the bureaucratic machine.

Corson & Harris (1963) opined that public administration is the action part of government, the means by which the purposes and goals of government are realized.

Waldo & Gaius (1950) conceived public administration as a science that deals with government and how its work is being done.

Tomori (1985) opined that public administration can be described as the apparatus of government, including personnel, equipment and the administration processes designed to assist governmental public policy formation and implementation.

Wilson (1887) stresses that the task of public administration is to strengthen the path of government, to make its business less un-business like, to strengthen and purify its organization and to crown its duties with dutifulness.

Summarily, there are lots of definitions in diverse opinions. The obvious facts are that public administration revolves around what the government does. The structures and manner in which countries carry out her own public service differs from environment to environment. Therefore, a description of the Nigerians public administration becomes pertinent.

### Nigeria's Administrative Ecology

Ecology is an essential science terminology, it is used in biology to refer dealing with the relations and interactions between organizations and their environment; thus, the concept is connotatively used here.

Administrative ecology has to do with the concept, definitions, principles, practices etc. of public administration within the Nigeria's ambit. This does not connote a total differentiation of the status quo of public administration all over the world. This was important going by the fact that administration, whether public or private cannot function outside the scope of her environment thus; it agrees with the fact that administration is a product of the ecology (environment) where it functions.

Obi & Obikeze (2004), also noted that, "...although administration all over the world may appear to be the same, it would not remove the fact that individual countries would always consider their environmental norms and practices before allowing a general administrative notion to function in its totality...". What this expressions means is that even in public administration, what work for 'A' may not work for 'B' and vice-versa and we should accept this facts.

Nigeria's public administrative ecology could be referred to as the structures and institutions in which public administration exist in Nigeria. This by implication has to do with the peoples behaviours' towards the government's attitudes, which has to do with the how the government carries her day to day activities.

It is concerned with the relations between people (ways and manners of political administration) and the environment on public administration.

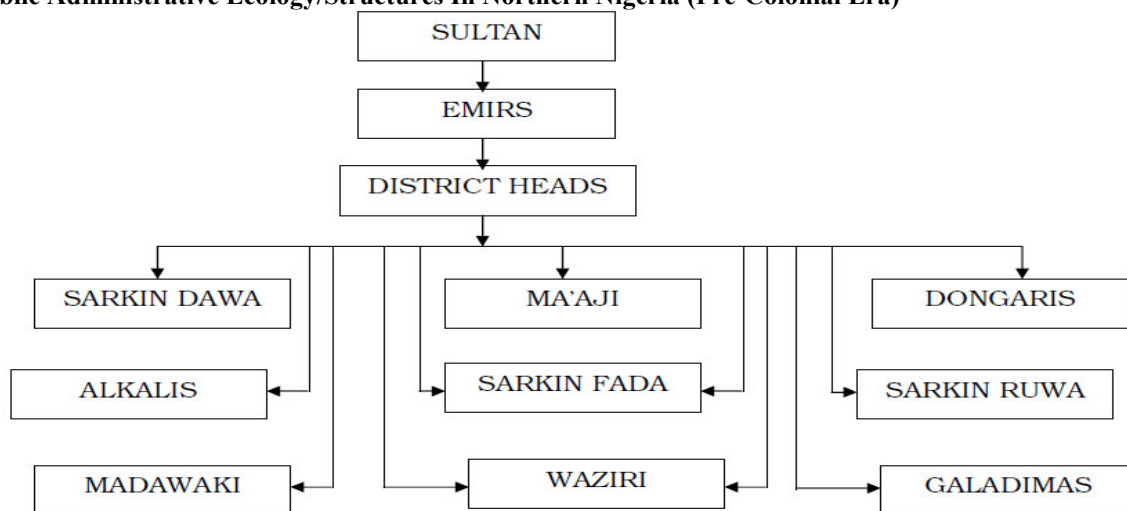
Obi & Obikeze (2004) noted that the ecology of public administration in Nigeria could be dated as back as 18<sup>th</sup> century, that public administration in Nigeria varies from region to region due to human interrelationships

and influence on the environment..

In Nigeria, the essential variables of public administration ecology are the diversity of the people, culture, customs and traditions which vary from one state to another. Each of the ethnic communities has their peculiar style of administration in relation with the influence of the environment. Furthermore, it is important to note that the religious practice of Islam in most Northern states in Nigerian has great influence on the ecology of public administration in Nigerian even up till today.

However, we would represent with the aid of diagrammes and brief explanations, these regional administrative structures for a clearer understanding.

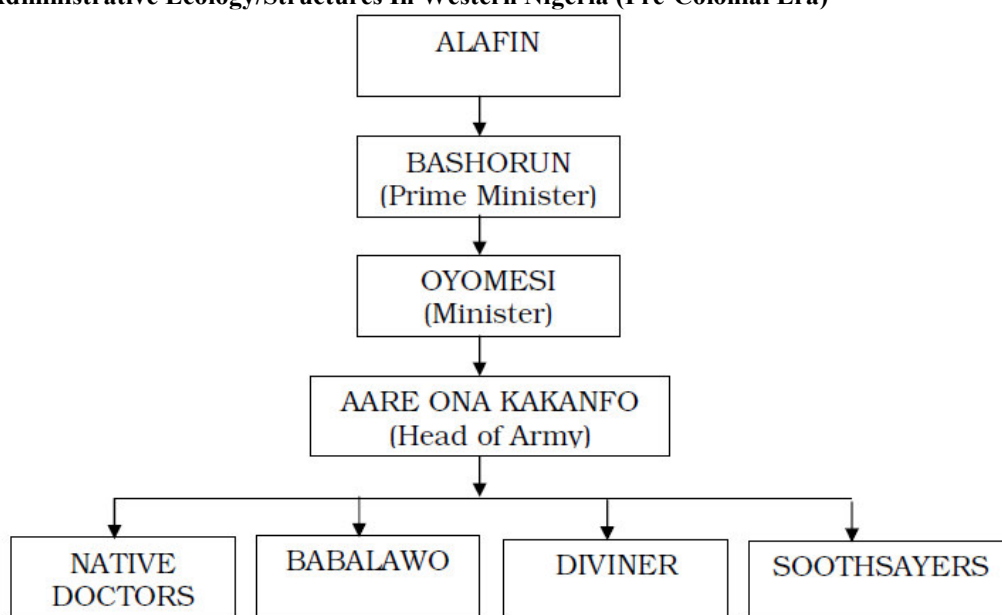
#### Public Administrative Ecology/Structures In Northern Nigeria (Pre-Colonial Era)



Source: (Bello and Ojodu, 2004)

From the above structures, the public administrative ecology are such that the legislative role is being played by the Sultan who makes law for the entire Hausa land, the executives are the Emirs while the Judicial arm are the roles of the Islamic lawyers who are scholars in Islamic teachings. The Sarkin Dawa's, Ma'agis', Dongari's etc. All has their roles which were adopted by General Lord- Lugard in the traditional administration.

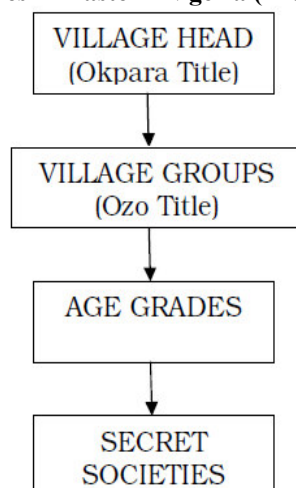
#### Public Administrative Ecology/Structures In Western Nigeria (Pre-Colonial Era)



Source: (Bello and Ojodu, 2004)

From the above structure, the ecology of public administration in the Western Nigeria. Though it was semi-centralized, this was due to the fact that in spite of the fact that the Alaafin has the final powers/authorities, some group of people were in charge of removing the Alaafin. In the words of Obi & Obikeze (2003), the Alaafin was so powerful that he was considered as "next to God".

### Public Administrative Ecology/Structures In Eastern Nigeria (Pre-Colonial Era)



Source: (Bello and Ojodu, 2004)

From the ecology of the administrative system in the eastern Nigerian which was described as being fragmented (Obi & Obikeze, 2003). What remained paramount is the fact that there is an administrative structure on which the British colonialists anchored upon.

However, the fore-going discussion reminds the fact that, the ecology of public administration in Nigeria is a brain child of our pre-colonial and colonial structures. What is important to note, is that starting from post-colonial era till date accompanied by globalization and technological innovations, scholars have been crusading for a need for a paradigm shift from old practices of public administration. The classical theorist such as Henry Fayol, Max Webber, Mc-Gregor etc. whom from their works gave life to the ancient practices of public administration viewed man as a tool for production rather than means of production.

Because of the above notion which scholars considered as being too classical and unfriendly to human beings. The exigencies to scout for a better way of relating as well as treating people at workplace which would still be in tandem with work ethics and at the same time promote optimum goal of the organization became inevitable. That consequently, ushered in the human relations era which was propounded by Elton Mayo in 1930's. Since then till now scholars are still pushing for a more better way of achieving organizational harmony owing to the complexities in human management and that has led to their agreements and disagreements over the propositions and the genuine applicability of the constructs of the new public administration to which we now turn to.

### New Public Administration (NPA)

The advices of scholars in the field of public administration and writers alike on the impact of new public administration in the study and practices of public administration have been diverse. While some see it as positive, others see it as negative Obi & Nwanegbo (2004).

Fredrickson in his article "*Toward a New Public Administration*" in Albert et al (2007), acknowledged that

*"...to affix the label "new" to anything is risky business. The risk is doubled when newness is attributed to ideas, thoughts, concepts, paradigms, theories...." Those who claim new thinking tend to regard previous thoughts as old or jejune or both. In response, the authors of the previous thoughts are defensive and argued that "...aside from having packaged earlier thinking in a new vocabulary there is little that is really new in so-called new thinking..."*

The above arguments have really opened up the areas of agreements and disagreements over the old and the new thinking. Herbert Kaufman (1971) in Albert et al (2007), was quick to add that "*....the threads of the public administration fabric are well known, that newness is in the way the fabric is woven, not necessarily in the threads that are used...*"

Araro (1984) in Obi et al (2012), has listed the important contributions of New Public Administration thus:

- i. Strengthened the policy science perspective.
- ii. Struck a coup de grace to politics administration dichotomy
- iii. Intensified the public administration, activism and commitment.
- iv. Pushed the discipline towards greater relevance
- v. Brought the academic field and the profession of public administration closer.
- vi. Strengthened client-orientation in administration
- vii. Supported the movement of democratic humanism in public organizations.

viii. Produced greater awareness for internal democracy through genuine participation in public systems.

On the other hand, Sapru (2008) in Obikeze et al (2012) believes that a short coming of the New public administration is that if parted to develop a coherent intellectual framework that could gather widespread support on the issue of advancing equity, which is a core motive of New public administration.

Golembiewski (1977) describes New Public Administration as a revolution or radicalism on words and at best status-quo in skills or technologies, and at best a partial success and perhaps only a cruel reminder of the gap in the field between aspiration and performance. More sarcastically, he considers it a temporary or transitional phenomenon and thought that wisdom to further fade away.

Conclusively, Obi (2012) affirmed that New Public Administration since its emergence has raised a genuine questions for values, ethics and social equity in our temporary public administrative system. The question pertinent therefore is how practicable are the notions of these thoughts? This we would suggest these below;

### **Applicability of the New Public Administration Constructs on Public Administration in Nigeria.**

The New Public Administration presented a radical new philosophy for a tumultuous time.

Okoye (1997), acknowledged that undoubtedly, the administrative apparatus inherited at the time of independence by our colonialist remains an “important article”. This observation no doubt leaves us with the reality of the fact that our administration is purely a product of the colonial constructs and thoughts. The question is, are we ready to change with change? Considering the intents of the new thinking, how are we going to imbibe the thoughts of newness into our administrative practices?

The structures of the Nigeria’s public administrative system at present is still highly bureaucratic which is against the concerns of the New Public Administration vis-a vise the “New thinking’ that welcomes neo-classical thoughts and projects “social equity” as a sin-quo-non to the bureaucratic emancipation. To us, bureaucracy is good, its characteristics and principles are marvelous but we say that, the dividends would be better appreciated in a country or system where its optimally observed. With the level of sycophancy and corruption in Nigeria’s public administrative system today, pretence has taken over and that is why we should internalize the advocacies of the New Public Administration.

New Public Administration thoughts should be made to function in our government agencies, parastatals, Ministries etc. This is because of its emphases on equitable distribution of government services without sentiment which would however make our system more efficient and better the economy in the long-run.

Fredrickson (2007) noted that authority hierarchies are the primary means by which the work of persons in publicly administered organizations is coordinated. However, the counterproductive characteristics of hierarchies are well known. New Public Administration is best understood as advocating modified hierarchic systems. Several means both in theory and practice are utilized to modify traditional hierarchies hence the old thoughts.

He explained that there are steps to modify these traditional hierarchies and the first of it is the “Project” or “Matrix” technique (PT or MT). The project is by definition; temporal. The project manager and his staff are a team which attempts to utilize the services of regularly established hierarchies in an ongoing organization. For the duration of the project, the manager must get his technical services from the technical hierarchy of the organization, his personal services from the personal agency, his budgeting services from the personnel department and so forth.

Other ways of modification, of traditional hierarchies as enumerated by Frederickson (1971) which we itemized as;

- i. group-decision-making model
- ii. link pin function
- iii. dialectical organization and
- iv. true decentralization

We therefore suggest that the adoption of these tenets would greatly enhance our domestic administrative system.

### **Recommendations**

The issues presented by the provisions of the New Public Administration and its applicability are one that gives a great concern. This is due to the fact that the new thinking is endowed with what could be simple be described as “new generation administration”. To that effect, we recommend thus, that;

There is a need to re-orientate the Nigeria’s public bureaucrats on the basic tenets of the “new thinking” which would enable them imbibe relevance, values, social equity, change and most importantly client oriented as its major working tool in the day to day activities which would no doubt help make the public administrative practices better off.

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