An Overview of Politico-Bureaucratic Values and Public Accountability in Nigeria

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Abstract

Government has become ultimately inseparable from the day today life of the 'citizens. This is because government is now involved in the overall socio economic development as against its traditional role of maintaining law and order. The government is responsible for providing varieties of services to its citizens including education, health and social welfare through the state. To accomplish this, government requires the bureaucratic system that is designed to execute or implement the decisions or policies of the political class. The paper relied heavily on an array of both published and unpublished materials to provide critical and analytical details on the phenomenon under study-However, ethics and accountability remain among the major challenges confronting the Nigerian civil service. Rules and regulations are no longer observed in the civil and public sennce as well. There is also lack of political will on the part of the govenvnent, slow judicial process, playing the ethnic card and indifference of the masses. It is against this backdrop that this paper X-rays the entire architecture of bureaucratic and systemic impediments to public accountability in Nigeria. The paper argued that in order to address bureaucratic values, political interest and public accountability in Nigeria, it is pertinent for political elite and bureaucrats to interrelate in an effective manner so as to bring out the possible best in Nigeria. Credible politicians and state officers should be diligent and sincere enough to enable them discharge their duties by putting the national interest first in all their endeavors

Keywords: Bureaucracy, bureaucratic values, public accountability, Publicl accountability, and Citizenship accountability.

Introduction

The idea of a 'state of nature' is the idea of life without government, without a state orlaws. To imagine a state of nature, we imagine away government, law, police, and seewhat we are left with. The idea has a long history in political philosophy, because it canhelp us answer the question – why do we, or why should we, live under the rule of law?In everyday life, we take it for granted that we do – that there are things we are notallowed to do, laws we should not break, that if we do, we will be punished, and thatthese matters are decided by other people. Why accept this? If we want to see what livingunder a state does for us, it is helpful to imagine being without it.

In imagining what it would be like to be without a state, we also imagine what it wouldtake for us to create a state. Philosophers have used the idea of a state of nature to arguethat the state is based on an agreementbetween people to live together under laws. So the idea of a state of nature helps answer another question – it tells us a story about how agroup of individuals who are free become obligated to obey the laws of a state.The story, however, is not meant to be factual. Perhaps, human beings have never lived without group rules and submission to someone who has the power to enforce them. In light of this, the preamble of the Nigeria constitution says" we the people of federal government of Nigeria, having firmly and solemnly resolved to live in unity under God dedicated to the promoting of inter- African Solidarity to international operation and understanding and to provide for a constitution for the purpose of promoting the good governance and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of freedom, equality and justice for the purpose of consolidating the unity of our people. Thus the purpose of government is to protect the individual right of its citizens since right can be assaulted by both within or outside the country. The government must deal with the assault of this threat.

Nevertheless, we can come to understand what justifiesthis situation-why it is a goodthing (if it is) and why we should accept it (if we should) – by imagining what it would be like to live without the state.

However, some philosophers object that it cannot answer these questions, because weare not just imagining something false, but something that goes to human nature. Wenaturallylive together under laws, or something like them. Social and political organization is natural for us. To imagine living without it will not tell us anything helpfulabout ourselves or why we have the state. Furthermore, we don't need to justify the state we haven't 'given up' natural freedom for obedience. In his analysis of what he refers to as a predatory society, which aptly reflects the Nigerian society, Diamond (2001:12) averts that

The most fundamental problem of Nigeria today- and the biggest threat

> To its survival both as a federation and a democracy- is that is an extremely predatory society. Infact Nigeria remains one of the most predatory societies in the world. Predation-corruption, exploitation, opportunism, lawlessness- are deeply embedded in the culture of the country. But culture is not destiny, and the culture corruption and predation in Nigeria today does not stem from any traditional roots. It has been shaped by institutional deficits and distortions, and it can be transformed by institutional innovations to promote transparency and the rule of law.

It is therefore the responsibility of the state to provide for the general wellbeing in order to meet the expectation of the state. State are responsible for delivering a variety of services to their populations including education, health and social welfare services, the provision of these services is essential to the production of human right such as the right to housing, health, education and food. Human right principles dictate that public services should be available, accessible and culturally acceptable in order to secure the right of the poorest and most marginalized. Good governance contributes to this goal by approaching individuals as actors in and not just beneficiaries of economic and social development.(Opeyemi, Omilusi and Ayeni 2015).

In 2011, Nigeria was ranked 143th out of 182 countries surveyed by the TransparencyInternational in its corruption perception index indicating the level of corruption in the country as compared to other countries. Although this came as an improvement from the previous years, itdid not result from an improved

system of governance; rather it was due to an increase in thenumber of countries that participated in the survey. Between 2010 and 2011, Nigeria's rankactually decreased by 9 spots, showing an increase in corruption despite the efforts of the Government to rid the nation of corruption. This survey shows lack of accountability fromPublic officials and a lax system of governance in the country. As a result corruptible acts are notharshly penalized and easier to get away with within the country's public sector. It is important to highlight the public sector in Nigeria because it plays a key role in the implementation of public services that is vital to the economic growth of the country. It coordinates the federal ministries, advises political officials, formulates and implements government's policies, gathers and supplies data for policymakers, ensures continuity of servicesand public relations services. These roles are important in running the country efficiently becausethe public sector can either make or ruin any administration.(Akosile 2011; Okekeocha, 2013).The purpose of this study is to critically review political interest, bureaucratic value and public accountability in Nigeria. It is in light of this that, we would review the concept of political interest, public bureaucracy, bureaucraticand public accountability in Nigeria. However, the paper would rely heavily on an array of both published and unpublished materials to provide critical and analytical details on the phenomenon under study such as books, journals and online materials.

Conceptual clarification

The concept of bureaucracy.

"The term bureaucracy", in the words ofMarx , " which was first used in the French from 'bureaucratic by a French minister of commerce in the eighteenth century refers to the government in the operation, spread to Germany during the nineteenth century as 'Burokratic' and has since found its way into English and many other languages". Carlyle described the spread of the term as 'the continental nuisance.'

Bureaucracy refers to all State organizations engaged in formulating and implementing policy as well as in regulating and delivering services. According to Goran et al. (2003); bureaucratic governance are not constitutive of development

per se, they are seen as crucial determinants of the degree to which a country makes social and economic progress or fail to do so. The role and the important position bureaucracy has occupied is central among academics and in the practicing world of administration since the advent of Max Weber some hundreds of years ago. (Adeyemo andOsunyikanmi, 2009)

Michel(1949) in his book political parties propounded the concept of Iron Law of Oligarchy. According to this concept; large organizations have a tendency to develop a bureaucratic structure (OligarchSystem).in other words, it states that in big organization power is concentrated in the hands of few (Oligarchs).This phenomenon rules out the possibility of internal democracy in large scale organizations due to elite domination. As rightly observed by (Anise, 1984, Okafor, 2005, Enahoro,2016) the political leaders make policies, the public bureaucracy implements it. Ifbureaucracy lacks the capacity to implement the policies of the political leadership, those policies, however well-intentioned will not be executed in an effective manner. It is one thing to promise, development and it is quiteanother to achieve it, viewed from this strand, the role of bureaucracy in the process ofeconomic, social and political development looms large indeed. According to Okafor.

(2005), the role of bureaucracy is critical to all areas of development process. InNigeria, public bureaucracy is a very vital element of the development process.Bureaucracy capacity is not sufficient condition for development, but it is most assuredly necessary condition.

However, it is Max Weber who holds a unique position in the galaxy of administrative - political Thinkers who made an attempt to explain the concept of bureaucracy. In fact, the first scientific treatment of bureaucracy came from his writings. Thus, his name became synonymous with bureaucracy. As rightly observed by Meheswarithe credit for systemic formulation of bureaucratic theory goes to Max Weber (1864 – 1920), for he founded the modern sociological study of bureaucracy, freed the term from pejorative connotations, and emphasized the indispensability of bureaucracy for the rational attainment of the goals of an organization.(Laxmikankanth,2011).

Enahoro (2016) studied the role of bureaucracy in governance in Nigeria. He stated that there are two main contending views on the study Bureaucracy; namely the Weberian and Marxian. According to the Weberianstandpoint, bureaucracy is viewed as a large- scale, complex, hierarchical and specialized Organization designed to attain rational objectives in the most efficient and effective manner. The realization of such rational goals and objectives are maximized through the bureaucratic qualities of formalism and impersonality in the application of rules and regulations in the operation and management of Organizations. The classical bureaucracy Weber is seen as a very superior Organization mainly because of the qualities such as hierarchy, division of labour anchored specialization, policy of promotion and recruitment based on merit, impersonality in the conduct of official duties, security of tenure and strict observance of rules and regulations amongst others (Weber, 1964). The Marxian view bureaucracy as an instrument of oppression, exploitation and damnation in the hands of the dominant class who control and manipulate the state and its apparatus in the society, according to Marx, bureaucracy is most specifically conceived as instrument usually employed by the ruling class to accumulate wealth and maintain their domination and control of the state. To a very large extent, the future and interest of bureaucracy are closely interlinked with those of the ruling class and the state. In support of Marxian view on bureaucracy are scholars like Waldo (1982), who analyzes bureaucracy with this remark "few things have a worst reputation than bureaucracy (Adamolekun, 1986).

According to (Olumuyiwa 2015), bureaucracy refers to acomplex, specialized organization (especially a governmental organization) composed of non- elected, highly trained professional administrators, clerks hired on a full – time basis to perform administrative service and task. Therefore, we view public bureaucracy as an institutional machinery of government that brings or translate the policy of political class into policy reality or action.

After fifty-seven (57) years of independence, Nigerian public service ought to havecome of age where accountability should be institutionalized in the polity. Unfortunately,accountability in the public service is still a mirage. In spite of the gloomy picture, thereis still a ray of hope if the citizenry would have the moral courage to fight this politicalmonster that seems to have held Nigerians hostage

for over five decades. As a result,the public sector is not accountable to the people, it seems like there is a dividebetween what actually goes on in government and what is being reported to thecitizens. There is no accountable and transparent system where the public is allowed toparticipate in policy formation and have a say in how these policies should beimplemented. Nigeria has a large amount of natural resources but lacks properaccountability measures (Okekeocha, 2013:19).

The bureaucratic values

It is imperative in this study to look at the bureaucratic values as it relate to public accountability

- **Impartiality**- According toWeber, bureaucracy is a system of administration characterized by expertness and impartiality and the absence of humanity. They are impartial; they treat citizens equal to equal and unequal to unequal.
- **Permanency**- The bureaucrats are permanent in service in the public sector. They are expected to be in the civil service for 65yrs of age and 35yrs in service. While in the private sector, they can be hired and fired at any time.
- **Neutrality** - The bureaucrats are expected to be neutrali.e. they don't belong to any political party or card carriers of any political party.
- **Merit** - they are specialist. They are in service base on qualification.
- **Anonymity** - they can only be seen not heard.

Political Interest

The Political Elites/Executive in Nigeria emerges from the two regime type of western democracies of the British Parliamentary System and the United States of America's Presidential System of governments. In the British system, the political elites or executive emerges from the party that succeeds in winning the largest number of parliamentary seats that forms the government (i.e. the elected representatives of the people) and thus exercises sovereign power on behalf of the people through the members of the cabinet called Ministers, who are directly responsible to the parliament for the activities of the government. (Adamolekun, 2004).

The concept of political class means those who draw their livelihood not from the market but from the state. The political class is the parasitic class that acquires its livelihoodvia the political means throughcornification, taxation and other forms of coercion. Their victim through productive class is those who make their living through peaceful and honest means of any sort visionless leaders at all level especially at the centre (Ekundayo, 2012:18 in Opeyemi, Omilusi 2015).

Similarly, (Arslan 2005-a; 2005-b) defined political elites as those who occupy position in the governmental machinery and how can effect daily life of society directly or indirectly by their personal decisions.

In the same vein (higley2008:3) described political elite as agroup of people, corporation ,political parties and/ or any kind of civil society organization who manage and organize government and all manifestation of political power. He further defined elites asa person who by virtue of their strategic location in large or otherwise pivotal organization and movement is able to affect political outcome regularly and substantially.

The term Political elite is a group of people, corporations, political parties and/or any kind of civil society organization who manage and organize government and all manifestation: of political power. Elites may be defined as person who, by virtue of their strategic location in a large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movement, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially.(Higley:2008).

According to (Odubajo and Alabi 2014) political elite constitutes the governing class in any modern society though with varying degree of acceptability due to human group and organizational flaws, the political class determines the political fate of other elites and indeed the non-elites.

Dogan and Higley (1998:15) define political elites as holders of strategic positions in powerful organizations and movements, including dissident ones who are able to affect national political outcomes regularly and significantly. The political elite can be defined as a small group and the most important part of the contents of the political class which the manager possesses and control authority

resources, is responsible for the decision made, possesses different type of privileges and has a huge political influence in society.Political elite can also be defined as a small social group and the most important part of the contents of the political class, which manages, possesses and controls authority resources, responsible for the decision made, possesses different types of privilege and has a huge political influence in the society.

Basedon this study, we define political interest as what has to do with behavioral aggregation of a group within a society or social order. This interest influences their basic needs and how it can be protected to better their lives.Interest groups are central to political representation and thus to the public agenda and public policy out to ascertain group influence, voice out their concerns in the media and lobby politicians and seek access to bureaucrats. Although complicated to ascertain group influence, it is indisputable that many interest groups have decisive political influence (Baumgartner et al, 2009: Dur 2007).
For us to understand the political elites or class, it is therefore imperative to look at the values of the political class which are as follows.

- Community– it connotes representative area where the government of the people, by the peoples and for the people are in meeting the yarning and aspirations .they are there to protect the interest of their community. Whateversatisfies them also satisfy their community whether at the detriment of the state.
- Loyalty–they give special submission to those who are obedient to them. This determine who gets what, when and how in the society.
- Pluralism– this means coming together of divergent people in the society, forming the government of the people, by the people and for the people towards ascertaining security; power and prestige.
- Passion –they are based on the manifestation of the political party
- Ideology– this means a specific believe and line of action by a political class in achieving societal goal and objectives. It also meansmachinery for controlling and directing the governance towards accelerated growth and development in the society.

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Concept of public accountability

Adegbite (2009:33) conceptualized accountability as "the obligation to demonstrate that work has been conducted in accordance with agreed rules and standards and the officer reports fairly and accurately onperformance results". Implied in the above definitions are the indispensable roles of due process, transparencyfeedback in achieving accountability. Some scholars insist that transparency is a corollary of accountability and both are essential planks upon which democratic governance and development anchor (Olowu, 2002: 139, Idemudia, 2008:502 and Ujah, 2010:77) In (Ibeitan, 2013).

Olowu (2002:140) cited in (Ibeitan, 2013) posited that "accountability refers to answerability for one's actions or behavior" He corroborated that it has three crucial components namely: a clear definition of responsibility, reporting mechanisms, and a system of review, rewards and sanctions. From the foregoing, it is deductible thatresponsibility, feedback and transparency underline accountability. What (then) is public accountability?Ujah (2010:78) operationalized it as "a system whereby public officers are made to give account of theirstewardship to members of the public". He progressed to explain the term "public" as referring to the generalityof the populace, the people or segment of the society particularly touched by the subject matter on which anaccount is demanded. It is important to note that public interest is supposed to be crucial to public accountability. Public accountability means government and its employees are accountable and their activities are open to the public. In essence, records of government activities should be open unless it involve security of the country (Bovens 2007:453).from this definition of public accountability, it is clear that public entities that utilize public resources have an obligation to account for the way these resources are allocated used and the results these spending have achieved.In other words, the main objectives of all public accountability

initiatives are to ensure that the public money is spent most economically and efficiently; that is to avoid wastages and theft.

Public accountability rest both on giving an account and on being held to account. Therefore, a public officer may not only be required to present his doctored account but may face the challenges of certain compelling expectable stewardship from the authorities whose office he manages, or enjoy.Public accountability, offers figures of trustworthy, dutifulness, justice, clarity and attempt for improving ethical qualification of public officers. Public accountability ensures that the society get values for its money and the public resources are not diverted to private use (Ejere, 2012:19).The notion of public accountability therefore is premised on the fact that public servants and office holders holdtheir positions and everything connected there to trust for the people (the true and general public) who areexpected to have their masters, and they must render proper accurate and timely accounts of successes or failures to thepublic .Transparency is therefore very cardinal to accountability and it stands to good reasoning that all forms of secrecyand shady dealings detract from effective and proper practice of accountability (Ibeitan ,2013).

In the same vein, Olowu (1995) agree that public accountability transcends individual interest and revolves around issues that can be considered as holistic in character and content. By any standard however, public accountability is synonymousto answerability for one's actions or behavior. Public Accountability is the hallmark of modern democratic governance. Democracy remains apaper procedure if those in power cannot be held accountable in the public for their acts andomissions, for their decisions, policies, and their expenditures. Public Accountability is the basictenet of democracy (Cook, 1998).Public accountability implies the rendering of account for matters of public interest, i.e. an accounting that is performed with a view for judgement to be passed by the citizens. In general, one could say that public accountability is accountability in and about the public domain. However, we therefore classify public accountability into 3 as follows:

Political accountability

Political accountability is the accountability of the government, civil servant and politicians to the public and the to the legislative bodies such as congress or the parliament.

Political accountability entails orderly andreliable systems of election, effective legislative oversight functions /control mechanisms, distinct and effective separation of powers that guarantees serving the public interest. (Ibeitan, 2013).Political accountability involves a mutual exchange of responsibilities and potential sanctions between citizens and rulers, made all the more complicated by the fact that in between the two areusually a varied and competitive set of representatives.

Bureaucratic accountability

Bureaucratic accountability is based on a hierarchic relationship between superiors and subordinates, rules and regulations and supervision (Mulgan, 2000; Goodin, 2003: 368 to 369; Harlow, 2002: 10). These kinds of hierarchic relationships and traditional mechanisms of accountabilitytend to be characteristic for a state bureaucracy (Goodin, 2003; Mulgan, 2003).Accountability, according to adherents of the "old public administration", focuses on ensuring that administrators adhere to standards and conform to rules and procedures established for them in carrying out their functions. It isnot a matter of using discretion appropriately andresponsibly, it is a matter of avoiding the use of discretionby closely adhering to the law, regulation, organizationalprocedures, and directives of the supervisor. In this view,direct responsiveness or accountability to the public was,implicitly at least, seen as unnecessary andinappropriate.Elected officials were seen as solely responsible andaccountable for translating the public will into policy. AsGoodnow presented it:"Politics has to do with the guiding or influencing ofgovernmental policy, while administration has to dowith the execution of that policy" (Goodnow, 1987:28).

Citizenship accountability – the citizen's accountability is important dimension of good governance. It is widely acknowledge that the citizens have a role to play

in delivering governance that work for the poor and enhances democracy in particular citizens capacity to express and exercise their views as the potentials to influence government priorities or governance process including a strong demand for transparency and accountability. However, citizens need effective voice inorder to convey their views and government or state that can be held accountable for their action or more likely to respond to needs and demand articulated by their population. (Menocal and Sharma,2008).

Political Interest, Bureaucratic value and Public Accountability in Nigeria: The Nexus

Government has become ultimately inseparable from the day today life of the citizens. This is because government is now involved in the overall socioeconomic development as against itstraditional role of maintaininglaw and order. The government is responsible for providing varieties of services to their citizens including education, health and social welfare through the state. To accomplish this, government requires the bureaucratic system that is designed to execute or implement the decisions or policies of the political class.

As rightly observed by(Opeyemi 2012) the annalsof Nigeria shows that political office holders and the accounting officers may have relationship that may either be co-operative, confrontational and conspirational. The political office holders and the bureaucrats or the public officials can interrelate together in other to bring out the best in such institutions. These kinds of co-operative relationship will definitely rub-off the overall accomplishment of the organizational goal and objectives as well as the welfare of the citizenry. He further stated that, there is possibility thataccounting officers and political appointees could be the logger head over pecuniary consideration. On several occasions, the political elite sees the position they occupy as an avenue to clinch their own national cake. Once this happens, it is either the political officers strive to make the public office heed their order or directives in siphoning public funds or the bureaucrat facesthreat on his job.

In some instances, the political elite and the bureaucrats could also conspire to steal or siphon public fund for their personal enrichment .it is possible that either

the political elite or the career civil servant stand as a master planner of the nefarious deal or the both parties could conspire against the state as well as the welfare of the citizenry. The annals of governance in Nigeria reflect active conspiracy between the political elites and the career officers at all the three tiers of government. The scenario is such that the political elites and the bureaucrats embark on embezzling public fund through the use of accounting techniques to cover up their tracks.

Corruption is a serious phenomenon affecting the whole sphere of Nigeria while corruption is in the form of distortion of government expenditure, looting of the state assets and bribery is widespread in the higher level of public offices between political office holders and also accounting officials;the grand corruption in politics such as sale of party tickets, office posts and public contracts have been on the rise because politics has become the most remunerative career. Thus, a politician that succeeds at the poll sees his office as an avenue of re-cooping electoral expenses. Therefore in all circumstance, publicofficers use their position for private gains while public interest is sacrificed. Although corruption exists in every society, it is entrenched and systemic in Nigeria. An instance of corruption between the political appointees and the public bureaucrats is the corruption scam of Iyaboobasanjo (former chair-personof senate health committee)and Adenike Grange (former Minister of health), Arch Gabriel Aduku (former state minister ofhealth) and nine top officials of health. The former ministers and the top were charged with embezzling around 470million naira (4 million dollars) of public health which was shared out by top government officials as bonuses during President Yar'adua's administration. (Sahara Reporters,2008)

The most recent corruption scam between political class and the public bureaucrats is the 2016 budget padding scandal which also leads to the dismissal of some top officials. In all,184 civil servants were disciplined among which 22 top officials were dismissed along with the budget director.Describing those responsible for the distortionas entrenched interest, the president had said, since he had been holding public office, he had never heard about budget padding before the incidents.(Premium Times march, 2016).

In Nigeria, the value of the bureaucrats cannot be far-fetched because it is the other way round. Instead of the bureaucrats making the politicians, it is now vice versa. Policy undertaken is being influenced by the interest of the politicians in power.For example the appointment of the EFCCchairman (Ibrahim Magu) and comptroller General of custom (Rtd. Col Ibrahim Hameed Ali). The legislative feels some of the appointment may deter their share of the National cake and they will by any means not allow such people come their way.

Conclusion and Recommendations

After a careful review of different conceptsand issues relating to governance, it is obvious that the rate of adherence to the principles governing the public office is low, most of the political elites and bureaucrats are corrupt and failed to render account of their stewardship. The interest of the politicians has affected policy making bureaucrats of the nation which question their accountability, reliance and transparency in effective running of the administration. Thus public accountability is the ingredient of good governance the present procedure for public accountability in Nigeria need to be reviewed.

In order to address the issue of public accountability in Nigeria and strengthen its mechanism in combating corruption in the country, this paper recommends that;
The political elite and the bureaucrats should interrelate in an effective manner so as to bring out the possible best inNigeria. Credible politicians and state officers should be diligent and sincere enough to enable them discharge their duties by putting the national interest first in all their endeavors. These sorts of relationship will definitely rub-off on the overall accomplishment of the objectives of the institutions as well as the welfare of the citizenry.

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