

ESSENTIALS OF  
**Public**  
**Administration**

Iyabo OLOJEDE  

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Banji FAJONYOMI

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Iyabo Olojede  
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## CHAPTER ONE

# THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

JACOB FATILE

### INTRODUCTION

**P**ublic Administration is a feature of all nations, whatever their system of government. Within nations, Public Administration is practiced at the central, intermediate and local levels. Indeed, the relationships between different levels of government within a single nation constitute a growing problem of Public Administration. Public administration is therefore constantly in the news. Chandler (2000) observed that it features in the debates on the advantages and disadvantages of privatization, the extent of corruption or dedicated altruism among public servants, the degree to which local government values a sense of community or whether we are increasingly being dominated by faceless administrators in the state.

As a practice, the discipline has existed as long as political system has been functioning and trying to achieve programme objectives set by the political decision makers (Heady, 1979:21). Public Administration as a field of action refers to the mechanics and structures through which government policies are implemented (Onuoha, 1999:262). It can also be described as a field of systematic study although this is a recent development. As a field of knowledge, it studies the

mechanics and structures through which government implements its programmes. In a democratic society, it is not enough to adopt laws in response to public opinion. An efficient and supportive bureaucracy must discharge its responsibilities. Otherwise, the objectives of the leaders of government as reflected in the laws enacted and policies adopted may not be realized.

The seminar article of the American scholar and former president, Woodrow Wilson in 1887 titled, "The Study of Administration" which called for science of administration is widely regarded as marking the beginning of the academic study of the subject. Edigin (1996) noted that since that time of Wilson, Public Administration has become a well-recognized area of specialized academic and practical interest that has elicited much scrutiny. However, Public Administration as an academic study has not developed with anything like the rapidity of other social science disciplines.

### **What is Administration?**

Administration has Latin root. The word is derived from two Latin words "Minor" and "Ministrare" meaning to "Serve" and "to govern." Webster's *Dictionary* defines administration as "the act or art of managing, the conducting or supervising of something as a business especially the executive function of planning, organizing, co-ordinating, directing, controlling and supervising any industrial or business project or activity with responsibility of results; judicious use of means to accomplish an end". In the same vein, the *Oxford Dictionary* defines administration as "an art of administering," "To manage the affair of" or "to direct or superintend the execution, use or conduct of". Also, Adams (1913) perceives administration as the capacity to co-ordinate many and often conflicting, social energies in a single organisation in an orderly manner such that they can operate in unity. According Brech (1957) administration is that part of

management which is concerned with the installation and carrying out of the procedures by which programmes of the organisation is laid down and communicated to the sub-systems within the organisation and the progress of the activities are regulated and checked against the plan.

In Hughes (1998) opinion, administration includes activities connected with keeping records and information processing; paper work and activities concerned with applying rules, procedures and policies determined by others. While Ola and Oyibo (2000:30) conceives administration as that special arm of the executive concerned with all the powers and duties of government both general and local, which cannot be specifically designated legislative or judicial. It involves the interpreting and executing of details of legislation and also it is concerned with formulating and carrying out of policies. Thus, administration, whether in public or private has to do with getting things done. It deals with the accomplishment of objectives. Most efforts to define administration in general terms do add the element of cooperation among two or more individuals and it is described as an organized efforts that is directed towards the accomplishment of a specified objective. No wonder Heady (1979) argued that the essence of administration is a determined action in pursuit of conscious purpose while Gullick (1937) claimed that administration has to do with getting things done; with accomplishment of defined objective. Administration is therefore a process involving human beings jointly engaged in working towards common goals. This shows that administration must exist in any organisation set up for a defined purpose or objective. Since the chief element of administration is co-operation, it follows therefore that people who are engaged in co-operation with one another has the objective of reaching a goal. This explains why Simon et. al (1950) argued that when two men co-operate to roll a stone that neither

could move alone, the rudiments of administration have appeared. The term administration can also be viewed from another perspective. That is administration can also refer to senior personnel in the executive branch of government (Onuoha, 1999: 263). This is why we talk of Obasanjo's administration, Buhari's administration, Balewa's administration, Bush's administration, Blair's administration, Gaddafi's administration, Eyedema's administration etc. What is important at this point is that in whatever sense the term is used, administration has a long history and it dates back to the beginning of human race. Administration is an arm of management, although the term is sometimes used interchangeably with management but mostly used for public institutions.

### **Meaning of Public Administration**

Public Administration consists of two words—"Public" and "Administration". The word public is an adjective qualifying "administration." Augustus Adebayo (2000) asserts that when 'administration' is qualified by the word 'public', it simply means the practice of administration in a particular segment of society; that of the public sector. Many attempts have been made to define Public Administration by eminent scholars in the field. Although public administration is a practice that continually affects our lives, whether we realize it or not, it is a subject that is difficult to frame concisely as a subject area. In fact, there are many definitions of the concept. Public Administration traditionally defined, denotes the implementation of government policies. Today public administration is often regarded as including also some responsibility for determining the policies and programmes of government. Specifically, it is the planning, organizing, directing, co-ordinating and controlling of government operations. Thus, Public Administration can be defined as "... decision making, planning the work to be done formulating objectives and goals ... Establishing

and reviewing organisations, directing and supervising employees... exercising controls and other functions performed by government executives and supervisors. It is the action part of government; the mean by which the purposes and goals of government are realized (Corson, 1963). We can therefore describe public administration as basically the administrative side of government as opposed to the legislative and judicial sides. To Edigin (1996), public administration is that aspect of the generic term- administration-found in political setting and is concerned primarily with the carrying out of public policy decisions made by the authoritative decision makers. He stated further that the field of Public Administration, personnel practices and procedures essential to effective performance of the civil functions assigned to the executive branch of government. As an academic subject, Public Administration is the study of the development and maintenance of policy by members of governments, public agencies and public sector employees and the practice of implementing the authoritative decisions they have made. Public Administration concerns itself more with how politicians in government and non-elected public sector employees devise policy, sustain the machinery of government and ensure policies are put into practice. It is therefore concerned with how senior members of public make decisions and how their intentions translate to practice (Chandler, 2000).

Nnoli (2000:45) in an attempt to explain the concept of Public Administration provides a comprehensive, overarching definition, putting within Public Administration every conceivable part of the public sector. According to him:

*Public Administration is the machinery as well as the integral process through which the government perform its functions. It is a network of human relationships and*

*associated activities extending from the government to the lowest paid and powerless individual charged with keeping in daily touch with all resources, natural and human, and all the aspects of the life of the society with which the government is concerned. It is a system of roles and role relationships which defines in as clear and practicable terms as possible and in as much detail as possible the intentions and programmes of government; the means available internally and externally to accomplish them; where, when and how they are to be accomplished; who is to benefit from them; and, finally, it is a system that causes these intentions and programmes to be realized in real life. It is a pattern of routinized activities, involving decision making, planning, advising, co-ordination, negotiation, conciliation, arbitration, command and data gathering, through which the government carries out its responsibilities.*

There are other scholars who have attempted to define the concept for instance, Rosenbloom (1986) argues that Public Administration is the use of managerial political and legal theories and process to fulfill legislative, executive and judicial governmental mandates for the provision of regulatory and service functions for the society as a whole or for some segments of it. This is another detailed and comprehensive definition of the subject matter.

In addition, Dwight Waldo (1972) claims that the process of Public Administration consists of the actions involved in effecting the intent or desire, of a government. It is thus the continually active, "business" part of government, concerned with carrying out the law, as made by legislative bodies (or other authoritative agents) and interpreted by courts, through the processes of organisation and

management. Historically and conventionally, Public Administration has been primarily concerned with problems of how to apply or effect law faithfully, honestly, economically and efficiently. More recently, Public Administration has been concerned with the processes by which public administrators participate in creating and interpreting laws-with how such creating and interpreting can be done "correctly", "wisely" or in the public interest.

From the various definitions given by eminent scholars on the concept of Public Administration, the following can be deduced:

- i. It is a function assigned to the executive branch of government;
- ii. It is concerned with the formulation and implementation of public policy;
- iii. The involvement in a considerable range of problems concerning human behaviour and co-operative effort;
- iv. A field that can be differentiated in several ways from a private administration (Ologbenla, 1998: 116).

From the foregoing it is appropriate to conclude that Public Administration deals with the study of how the administration of a state is organised and its functions are carried out. Given its role as a channel through which government policies are executed, the study must engender the most efficient ways of organizing the executive branch of government, as well as its institutions and procedures.

#### **Administration versus Public Administration**

As stated before, administration has to do with getting things done. It is the process by which decision and policies are executed. Public Administration consists of the actions involved in effecting the intent or desire of a government. It is concerned primarily with enforcing

laws, making and enforcing rules and regulation as well as implementing public policy. It is important to state that unlike in the public sector, administration in the private sector is concerned primarily with such element as sales, profits and productivity. In government, administration is largely the function of the executive arm, although the two other arms of government can also perform legislative and judicial functions. Chandler and Plano, (1982:1) asserts that Public Administration is both an art and a science, with the goals of managing public affairs and carrying out assigned responsibilities. The field of public administration is made up of three major components, which include organisation, personnel and finance. As an academic discipline, it aims at improving problem solving in the above stated areas. The significance of administration in a modern state can be appreciated when one realises the fact that the quality of life for millions of people is largely dependent on the skills, efficiency and dedication with which modern bureaucratic structures discharge their administrative duties. In fact, just as life becomes more complex, so also is the operation of government most especially as they seek to cope with and manage diverse problems. The consequence of this is that new administrative organisations with large numbers of employees, spending huge amounts of money are fast becoming a common feature of most developed societies. As a result, just like in developed societies, new departments and agencies are being created in developing societies to cater for new challenges. For instance in Nigeria, there is the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) which was created specifically to manage the increasing urban environmental problem in the country. In addition, Chandler and Plano (1982:2) further observes that administrative units increasingly make, administer, enforce and adjudicate law. Administrative law that relates to regulating and promoting private enterprises has become the fast growing type of law. The view that administration is separate

from policy making has been altered by actual performance wherein bureaucrats at all levels of government engage regularly in both activities. The ultimate goal of Public Administration, both in theory and in practice, is to develop sound techniques and procedures which make it possible to combine efficiency of operation with democratic responsibility and accountability.

### ***The Scope of Public Administration***

The scope of Public Administration has been continuously expanding over the years in developing and developed countries of the world, so much that Public Administration pervades all aspects of human activities. Rodee *et al* (1983) claimed that the average citizen is likely to think Public Administration in terms of government regulation of individual and group conduct, overlooking the varied forms of protection, assistance and service that government provides.

The scope of public administration in the modern state no doubt, covers a wide variety of activities. Government in most countries of the world, developed as well as developing have ceased being a mere "law and order" affair and grew into being real big businesses. Whereas the law and order state had emphasized compliance and had employed to a great extent repressive machineries such as the courts, police and tax officers; in the new social welfare state that evolved, government attention is now concentrated on a variety of subjects that affected the masses (Ola, 1981).

Thus, the responsibility of government for social and economic development has assumed great magnitude. For instance in Nigeria, the major reason, which accounted for the increase in the number of government organizations in the last four decades was due to the restructuring of the Nigerian federation. At independence in 1960, there were only four governments, i.e., the federal government and



three regions which became five in 1963 following the creation of the Mid-Western region. In 1967, with the restructuring of the federation into twelve states, the number of governments in Nigeria increased to thirteen (13) and the creation of additional seven states in 1975 brought the number of government in the country to twenty (i.e., the federal government and nineteen states). Again, in 1989, two additional states were created which brought the number of states in Nigeria to twenty-one and consequently there were twenty-two government in Nigeria at this time. By 1990, the Babangida's administration again created nine additional states. Today, Nigeria is a federation of 36 states following the creation of six states in 1996, thus, bringing the number of governments in the country to thirty-seven including federal capital territory. It is important to state that currently there are various groups in the national confab agitating for the creation of their own states and if these demands are granted eventually, then we can look forward to more than fifty (50) governments in Nigeria.

There is no doubt that in Nigeria today, the activities of governments are many and varied. They range from the provision of water to the production of steel. In fact, Nigeria government as Ola (1995) argues, are involved either directly or indirectly in every sphere of human activity. The scope of Public Administration can also be considered by looking at the functions of an administrator. Scholars like Lyndal Urwick, Henri Fayol, Mooney, Luther Gulick and others in what is now popularly referred to as POSDCORB advanced this opinion. This school of thought believes that the scope of the subject matter is represented in an acronym POSDCORB that means: Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting. Tonwe (1998:46) identifies two main points of view from which the scope of public administration can be considered. These are the subject matter and central concern points of views.

According to him, scholarly writings and courses in Public Administration outside the United States have concentrated on the service content of administration though not to the total neglect of the managerial aspects, which POSDCORB represents. The core of the scope of the subject matter according to the proponents of this point of view consists of the various line functions of services which government is required to provide for the people. These include defence, law and order, education, health, communication, agriculture, justice, etc.

In the light of this, Rodee et. al (1983) argued that Public Administration activities falls into four categories viz: protection of the society; promotional and proprietary activities as well as regulation of particular businesses or activities. To discharge the responsibility of protecting the society effectively, the government have specialized agencies like the police who are in charge of maintaining law and order, and the hospitals are responsible for health care. Thus, we can hear of loans given to farmers to assist them during planting season, special homes for the aged and care for the unemployed etc (Edigin and Otoighile, 1994:6). Also, proprietary activities is another main category covered by Public Administration. In this case, the government is actively involved in the running of an enterprise serving the public either as sole owner or with some private hands in the provision of certain amenities to the public (Edigin and Otoighile, 1994:6). Examples of these include the Postal Service, Port facilities, Water Corporation, Electric Power Department etc. Finally, as regards the regulation of particular businesses or activities, the government has the responsibility of regulating the activities of private companies which are allowed to operate in the economy. In Nigeria, for instance, regulating bodies such as Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC), Security and Exchange Commission (SEC), National Food, Drug

Administration and Control (NAFDAC) etc are set up to carry out regulatory functions.

The central concern point of view on the other hand covers those issues, which are of central concern to all students of Public Administration and in all Administrative Studies. These issues include the characteristics and behaviour of public administrators, the institutional arrangements for the conduct of government administration and the environmental factors as they affect the relationship of the administrative branch of government with its political branch and the society in general. It is instructive to state here that modern Public Administration has been characterized by concern in diverse areas. Areas that hitherto were the exclusive concerns of the private sector have now become the concerns of the public service and with the growth of sphere of influence, expectations from governments have increased a great deal.

#### ***Public versus Private Administration: A Distinction***

Administration is a universal phenomenon. It is a fact of life in all modern societies. The centrality of administration is even more evident in developing countries like Nigeria and Ghana which are at the cross roads of their development. Undoubtedly, one of the major problems that confront such countries is that of administration which essentially hinges on how to deploy available human and material resources in order to accomplish the goals and objectives of their societies. The boundaries of what is public and private are never clear-cut; they fade imperceptibly into one another because both sectors are necessarily closely entangled in the complex network of relationships that form a social system (Chandler, 2000:1). However, a distinction is sometimes made between the two.

Private administration refers to the administration of non-governmental organisations and agencies. Example of these in Nigeria include: Unilever Plc., Nigerian Breweries Plc, Dangote Group of Companies, Honeywell, Total, Texaco, Cadbury etc. while public administration refers to the administration of government and quasi government organisations such as the public services (ministries), state boards, corporations and agencies. Ola (1995) notes that Public Administration is concerned with the co-ordination and carrying out of public policy. It operates strictly within the legal framework since its action emanates from parliament and executive and express-delegated legislations. Thus, Public Administration is applicable in societies where government is responsible for managing all activities. Examples of countries that fall under this category are socialist countries like Cuba, Russia, China, defunct Soviet Union to mention but a few. Nigeria is a country that can be categorised among those that maintains a distinction between public and private administration. It should be pointed that these are two opposing schools of thought as regards the relationship between public and private administration. Tonwe (1998) claims that there is a school of thought, which contends that administration is one with the some fundamental characteristics and as such the question of separating public from private administration for the purposes of study should not arise at all. Among the proponents of this idea are Henri Fayol, Mary Follet and Lyndal Urwick. On the other hand, there is another school of thought, which believes that there are differences between the two and it is important to separate them for the purposes of study. The protagonists of this idea include scholars like Herbert Simon, Josiah Stamp and Paul Appleby.

Although Public Administration has the same essence with private administration, which makes them to be similar in fundamental terms, nevertheless public and private administrations differ concretely in a

number of respects. Here attempt will be made to consider first their differences and later similarities.

### **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ADMINISTRATIONS**

According to Fesler (1980), Public Administration is the administration of governmental affairs whereas the objective of most business corporations is to make profit, an objective that is simple and clear. Few government and bureaus have profit as objective, and their objective is usually plural. This shows that, the goals which both public and private administrations are expected to serve are different and their activities are guided by the nature of these goals, the nature and organisational framework of these activities are bound to differ. In fact, organisations whether public or private are established to achieve set objectives. Usually, the two principal goals of organisations are either the provision of essential services in the case of public organisations and profit making or profit maximization in case of private organisations. Clearly, the maximization of profit is the overriding goal of private administration (Nnoli, 2000:55). No private or non-public organisation will attempt to undertake a project if such will not yield profit in the short and long run. Public organisations on the other hand are usually, set up by governments (federal, state and local governments) with the aim of providing essential services at subsidized rates to her citizens. These services include the provision of housing, electricity, medicare, water, roads and communication, markets, parks, schools and abattoir. In addition, Ola and Oyibo (2000) argued that the private sector could advertise its commodity in whatever way that is considered profitable whereas the public sector may have budgetary limitations.

Thus, the important fact about Public Administration in most countries is that the activities of the government are usually directed

to serve public interest. Even when government ventures into such commercial enterprises as Airways, Railways, Shipping and Breweries, the primary consideration are invariably service to the public. Also, when profit is part of the hierarchy of the objectives, it takes a secondary place to service. Besides, a typical government agency is expected to provide services that are not sold on the market, since they are financed by general governmental revenues. Thus, there is generally no comparison between government agency's costs and the value of its service to the public. On the other hand, with the exception of a few private organisations such as Red Cross and the Churches, most private organisations are operated to optimize profit. In fact, a private corporation's performance is easily measurable in terms of profit or loss, and internally a private corporation can judge its individual products, divisions and employees by cost-effectiveness standards. It is generally agreed that the success or failure of most private organisations is measured in terms of their annual balance sheet, their annual production turnovers and capital outlays.

Another major area of distinction between Public Administration and private is in the area of efficiency. In the science of administration, whether public or private, the basic good is efficiency. The fundamental objective of the science of administration is least expenditure of manpower and materials. Efficiency is thus axiom number one in the value scale of administration (Gulick, 1973). However, in interpreting efficiency in Public Administration, Barber (1972) asserts that cost yardsticks are not always available nor are they always appropriate. Whereas in the private sector, profit making is sometimes used as a measure of efficiency. In the private organisations, reverse is the case. In fact, private administration is seen by some to be synonymous with efficiency. Tonwe (1998) asserts that the clamour for a "business man's government" or the commercialization and privatization of the whole machinery of

government drives home the point that in the thinking of many people, the level of efficiency in private administration is superior to that of public administration.

Moreover, the nature of environment in which public and private administrations operates differ. The Public Administrative system responds to a complex set of demands articulated through the political system to an extent that has no parallel in private administration. Public administration operates in an essentially political environment. Not only is it subject (at least in theory) to political control, but decisions by non-political administrators themselves involve both human judgement and a "political" element, although this political element does not take the form of "partisanship" (Barber, 1972:2). Private organisations on the other hand, especially the large ones, must be sensitive to political influences and pressures such as, for example custom duties, government policy on expatriate quota or on Nigerianization, such political influences affect private administration only marginally. Thus private organisations are not directly integrated with the political system in the way that all public organisations are (Adebayo, 2001).

In addition, recruitment and selection is more objectively and fairly done in private organisation than in the public sector. Quite unlike the public, recruitment into positions in private organisations is purely based on merit-that is on technical ability. The private employer is primarily concerned with hiring a competent and qualified workforce irrespective of one's state of origin and religion. This means that qualification and experience are strictly the criteria for selection of employees and their subsequent placement and deployment into offices. Instead of rigid adherence to burgeoning rules and regulations, private organisations adopt an approach to facilitate taking quick and prompt advantage of business opportunities for

survival. A situational approach to management problems is adopted with wide powers of discretion to the manager. In the public sector, Banjoko (1996:17) observes that the situation is not same. He claims that political and ethnic considerations sometimes outweigh merit consideration. There is a deliberate policy of ethnic balance in public sector recruitment. Moreover, unlike public organisations, private organisations strongly believe in retention, as unnecessary turnover of staff affects the business and therefore productivity. In the same vein, private organisations pay higher to attract and retain the best calibre of personnel. Also, the private sector spends much money for staff development in terms of training and retention of staff while the public sector almost always regard training and additional or higher qualification as a personal affair. As a result, public sector employees struggle on their own to earn higher qualifications and on attainment opt out for greener pastures.

Another distinction can also be made in the area of public responsibility. Unlike administrators in private administration, civil servants are accountable to the public for every aspect of their official activities (Nnoli, 2000:56). For example, decision-making in Public Administration is not an autonomous isolated function, which can be imposed on consumers, but is acted upon by forces transcending the individual context of the interaction of social forces. In fact, the Federal Government in Nigeria has a large estimated numbering public- 120 million. This large public are supplies of tax revenue as well as beneficiaries of government services. As such in public administration, decision-making is a product of noncommercial factors, and is constantly exposed to public criticism and review. This Public Administrators are expected to act in accordance with the wishes of the people expressed through their representatives and are also responsible to the people or their representatives. Pfiffner and Presthus (1967) supports this view

when they argue that Public Administration is subject to the criticism of the public as well as that of the legislature. Not only that, the principle of public responsibility compels public administrators to keep detailed records of every administrative occurrence or decision no matter how trivial (Tonwe, 1998). This shows that Public Administration is open to the public for scrutiny and review and not a closed affair of those who carry it out. Whereas private administration is not so vulnerable. In terms of decision making, the private corporation has a limited public, which is perceived almost entirely in economic terms. The private corporation does not need to concern itself with anyone's welfare but its own. It is far less open to public criticism and investigation and where such criticisms arise, they will not probably be areas where it has transactions with a public agency.

Also, the system of discipline in private organisation motivates workers into putting in their best at work. This implies the use of the "stick and carrot" approach where good or hard work is adequately rewarded and laziness or negligence attracts an instant punishment, which enhances productivity. Experience has shown that discipline is more effectively done in the private sector. The reason for this may not be unconnected with the size and structure and the corporate objectives of the public versus the private sector. Thus, discipline is harsher in private than in Public Administration.

We can also distinguish between public and private administration on the basis of their sources of funding. Private administration is funded through private sources. Private organisations are usually established and financed by individuals and groups. On the contrary, Public Administration is sustained through public funds and in order to safeguard the tax payers' fund, there are usually delays and paper work or what is popularly referred to as "Red tapism" in Public

Administration. "Red tapism" among other things involves the existence of a body of rules and procedures which retard rather than enhance quick service but which ensure proper record of events. These are rules that must be kept at all cost.

Furthermore, a distinction can also be made between both private and public administrations in terms of their complexity. Public Administration is more complex than private administration. Thus, the activity of the private enterprise as Nnoli (2000) argues is one of a narrow focus, of the concentration of attention and resources on one line of activity. Such activities are usually economic in character and concern only one specified or specific aspect of economic life. On the other hand, the scope of government activities usually pervades the entire economic and social structure of the society. This is even more so in developing countries such as Nigeria where the society looks increasingly upon the state and its agencies, to provide its economic and social needs. There is no doubt in the fact that Public Administration cuts across areas such as education, transport, marketing, power supply, agriculture and other related industries. The increased complexity of government activities therefore necessitates the employment of more varied skills and professions than most private organisations would require. No wonder Nnoli (2000) contends that the resultant diffuseness of attention adversely affects aspects of the implementation of public programmes and a clear definition of the programme themselves.

Yet another difference is the degree of publicity associated with administrative performance. Chandler and Plano (1980:25) opines that public administrators tend to live in goldfish bowl. They must appear before National Assembly's Committees and sub-committees, grant interviews, hold press conferences, receive interest group representatives, and endure attacks in newspaper

columns, editorial and magazine articles. Many decisions can only be made after public hearings. A public administrator's life is lived in bright light of publicity and in response to the public's right to know.

Adebayo (2001:7) has rightly observed that Public Administration departments are bureaucratic in organisational form, hierarchical and staffed largely by permanent and career officials. He explains that the officials are employed until retirement and are promoted largely by seniority and are remunerated at standard rates within fixed pay and promotion grades. The conditions of service in the public sector are not directly related to performance. Thus, an inefficient official may remain on a particular level until he retires. On the other hand, in the private sector an official may be sacked anytime his performance is considered inadequate. Also, compulsory retirements of personnel whose ages are far below the mandatory retirement age are commonplace in the public sector. Sometimes, this is done out of personal hatred, envy and jealousy or as a means of weeding out those who come from states that are over represented in public service. However, in the private sector, compulsory retirement is rarely done except as a punishment for some obvious wrongdoings.

In government, where laws provide the framework within which public servants operate, the departments and agencies may not go beyond prescribed legal limits. And, although private organisations are also subject to some regulations, government employees are held to strict standards of public accountability with respect to personal conduct, expenditures, and the means by which they discharge their duties.

On the whole, there is no denying the fact that, the private sector is more profit-oriented and more survival conscious than the public

sector. It therefore follows that in the public sector, the bureaucracy lacks the periodic profit-or-loss statement by which the success of a private organisation is measured, and its achievements are subject to the conflicting interpretations of partisans' commentators.

### **Similarities between Public and Private Administrations**

In spite of the differences between public and private administrations, which have been enumerated in this section, the distinction between them is increasingly blurred by their growing similarities and problems. Thus, the contrast made should not lead one to hastily conclude that those differences constitute what Adebayo (2001:8) describes as sharp and irreconcilable point of divergence. It is pertinent to remind ourselves that one school of thought is of the opinion that there is no fundamental difference between public and private administrations. The proponent of this school uses the following point to buttress their argument. In the first place, administration and management can be regarded as synonymous and because of the similarity that public organisations share with business organisations in respect of the process of administration (where administration means management), it must be admitted that some fruits of management science will be useful to public organisations (Adamolekun, 1983:4)

Besides, in administrative organisations such as schools, civil service, commercial firms, labour unions, hospitals and political parties, the nature of its ownership notwithstanding the key to successful accomplishment of goals and objectives is the effective deployment and utilization of available human and material resources. Furthermore, there is always the need for both private and public organisations to relate the available resources to achievable goals. Both administrative systems have a hierarchy of objectives, which include profit, service, representativeness, survival and integration

with the task environment. Also, just like public organisation, as business organisation expand and grow in size, they become bureaucratic. This did not escape the attention of Adebayo (2001:8) when he wrote:

*As business organizations grow in size they tend to take on bureaucratic structure and process-impersonality, inflexibility, rigidity-coupled with consistency and conformity in relation to their employees and the general public.*

Although these are the usual characteristics of public organizations, they are also glaring features of big business organizations. Thus, as administration in business or private organization grow in size and complexity it is characterized by "administrative bottle necks," "red-tapism" and "officialdom" which are often synonymous with administration in the public sector. Both private and public organizations are open systems subject to constraints and contingencies arising from their task environment. Hence, they must learn from their past experiences and devise techniques and strategies in order to be adaptive- problem solving organizations.

In addition, to make the organization functional in both public and private sector, the personnel skills required in operations of both are the same. This explains why Tonwe (1998:71) observed that these skills might be clerical, accounting, managerial or technical skills and that there are instances when public administrators retire or resign in the public sector to take up jobs in private organizations. Moreover, successful private sector employees may be given contract employment in the public sector. The private sector in most countries had faced enormous change in recent years and global forces affect the public sector as the private sector. Thus, change in

the private sector do parallel those occurring in the public sector (Hughes, 1998:15). The moves towards privatization in its various forms contracting out, reducing government spending could be considered as shedding parts of governments that are no longer parts of its "core business". Porter (1990:617) also notes that emphasis is shifting from growth to performance in the public sector as government everywhere face more difficult times.

From the foregoing it is appropriate to argue at this point that the distinction that is drawn between public and private organization is no longer watertight because the activities of large and complex organizations such as United Africa Company (UAC), Unilever-Shell and other multinational organizations touch and affect positively or negatively the lives of several millions of people in Nigeria. In the country today, public organizations exist side by side private ones and there is no doubt that with proper planning and direction, both can help Nigeria accomplish the objective of national development.

In concluding the discussion on the distinction between public and private administrations, one can agree with Nnoli (2001:55) that both administrations are guided by the goals, which their employers seek to achieve. In the performance of their tasks, both are hierarchically organized and operate with clearly spell out procedures regarding command, obedience, promotions, discipline, and work ethics. They also perform similar functions of data gathering, provision of advice on alternative policy options, recruitment of personnel, resource management, the advertising of their activities, interest articulation and aggregation, and the negotiation, conciliation, arbitration and settlement of disputes.

### Functions of Public Administration

The role and functioning of Public Administration must be set in the context of the problems confronting government which Barber (1972:2) identified as follows:

- a. The reconciliation of liberty with the duty to govern. The government must be strong enough to command obedience and to administer effectively, whilst at the same time being controlled in order to establish responsibility to certain standards (i.e., the conflict between sovereign and responsibility).
- b. The need to balance achievement of the common good with the demands of vested interests.
- c. The balance of present necessities with future desirabilities.
- d. The need to balance traditional attitudes with scientific curiosity.

Thus, the functions which Public Administration performs are many and varied. Public administration has assumed an important role in the modern times and there is need to give it the attention it deserves most especially in any nation that is aspiring to greatness. Decision making is an important function of Public Administration. It is a process in which an administrator chooses a particular course of action from two or more alternatives that is open to him. To make a decision is simply to pass judgment or make up one's mind in handling a problem, which has alternative courses of action (Yalokwu, 1999:117). Indeed, it has been argued that the nature of the decision making process shapes the outcome of the decision itself, particularly when the process is dominated by powerful interest groups. Moreover, the willingness of the government to evaluate programmes and modify them if necessary affects the outcome. Decision making is a major function of Public Administration and it

pervades all administrative functions. It also provides an essential means for control and co-ordination of activities within a given organisation.

Public Administration also has the responsibility of providing social and welfare services to the citizenry. These services include the provision of electricity, portable water, healthcare delivery, public transportation, road construction, educational facilities and so on. Moreover, a well-functioning public administration and public sector provide conditions for prosperity of private enterprise by creating an optimum and rational infrastructure by means of modernizing communication networks, systems of information services for citizens and businesses. Besides, public administration influences directly the standard of living and lifestyle of the people by ensuring that there is good sanitation and drainage facilities, provision of housing, as well as payment of pension and other labour benefits. There is no doubt in the fact that the quality of life of the people is now inextricably linked with the quality of administration.

Another function of Public Administration is educating the populace about the programmes of government and the progress made so far to make them a reality. Lack of information on the part of the people may engender conflict in the country. Nnoli (2000) again asserts that a complimentary function of Public Administration is that of informing government about the attitudes of the people including various groups in the society towards government policies and programmes. Such information is often necessary to enable the government to order or re-order its priorities and review its programmes.

Apart from educating the populace about the programmes of government, Public Administration also act as a stabilizing force in the governance of the society. Put differently, it ensures the continuity with minimum effort and risk. In any country, developed or developing, governments may come and go but the administration of



a country goes on forever. In Nigeria for instance, there have been series of changes in the government of the federation from civilian to military, however the pattern of administration has not been affected significantly.

Another significant function of Public Administration is to secure and strengthen democratic institutions and mechanisms. Two main directions of the development of political democracy can be mentioned here.

- a. Towards the strengthening of institutions and mechanisms of representative democracy; and also
- b. Towards the development of institutions and mechanisms of participative democracy, i.e., direct participation of citizens and their organisation in the Management and administration of the state.

Prevention of a possibility of the return to the totalitarian regime is linked with the consistent protection of basic rights and freedom. The social function of the state and Public Administration arises primarily from the duties of the state owed to its citizens, which correspond to their economic, social and cultural rights in accordance with the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Charter, etc.

Public Administration also serves as an instrument of social change and economic development. Tonwe (1998) elaborates on this by arguing that the well articulated plans, policies and programmes of government aimed at uplifting the social and economic standard of living would come to nothing if they are not properly enforced or executed. For instance, the budget has developed as a principal tool in planning future programmes, deciding priorities, managing current programmes, linking executive with legislature, and developing control and accountability. The budget is a principal

vehicle for legislative surveillance of administration, executive control of department and departmental control of subordinate programmes. In the same vein, Nnoli (2000:52) also emphasizes that it is the responsibility of Public Administration to plan the nation's economic life in both short and long term and to take care of the finances of the society most especially the balance between what it earns abroad and what it spends abroad, i.e., the balance of payment functions.

Public Administration also performs international relations function. Since there is no nation that is an island to itself, Public Administration must be carried out in such a way as to establish diplomatic relations with other nations. The foreign policy of a nation must be conducted in such a way as to increase the nation's friends and influence peoples and nations for the country. The current civilian administration in Nigeria had performed creditably well in this regard. Since the inception of the administration in 1999, various attempts have been made to launder the country's image among the comity of nations as well as negotiate, conciliate, arbitrate and settle disputes most especially in Africa and West African sub-region.

Administrative processes-strategic decision-making, the preparation of conceptions and programmes, regulatory activities, quasi-judicial decision-making, operative management, co-ordination, controlling process etc form the cross-sectoral functions which are contained to a certain extent in the activities of all administrative bodies or which are concentrated at certain levels or in special bodies in charge of these tasks.

Finally, public administration is also expected to preserve our civilization. No wonder W.B. Dunham quoted in Metha (1978:36) contends, "If our civilization fails, it will be mainly because of a breakdown of administration." This contention was also buttressed

by Tonwe (1998:49) when he claims that Public Administration is saddled with the onerous task of ensuring that what has been gained is not lost while at the same time striving to build on what has been gained in terms of civilization. Thus, in modern times Public Administration has an important role to play particularly in the preservation of the society's civilization.

It must be emphasized that public administration has increasingly been perceived as the administration of planned change in societies that themselves have undergone rapid change, not all of it planned. Government has no longer been merely the keeper of the peace and the provider of basic services: it has become a principal innovator, a determinant of social and economic priorities and an entrepreneur on a major scale. On virtually every significant problem or challenge—from unemployment to clean air—people have looked to the government for solutions or assistance. The tasks of planning, organising, co-ordinating, managing, and evaluating, modern government have likewise become awesome in both dimensions and importance.

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