
A WEBERIAN BUREAUCRATIC THEMATIC COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

There is the perception that the public administrations of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) and the United States of America (USA) were bureaucratically similarly in many ways, yet the administrative outcomes from these systems were different. While the USA had routinized their administration, Nigeria continues to struggle in deploying her administrative set up to address everyday governance challenges. Using Max Weber's bureaucratic model/approach as a tool of comparative analysis, this paper seeks to determine whether there are actual similarities in the administrative set-up of Nigeria and USA. Also, it intends to address the differences in the administrative outcomes of the two countries. The work relies on qualitative method to dissect the thematic postulations inherent in Weberian bureaucratic model to identify the similarities and differences that exist in the two countries' public administration system. Through this method, factors such as the role of politics, adherence to meritocracy and management of ethnicity among others were isolated as causing the difference leading administrative outcomes despite institutional and thematic similarities between Nigeria and USA. The paper concluded by recommending that Nigeria being less developed, should borrow, adopt and adapt bureaucratic practices that have been tested and proven to be effective and efficient in the USA in her quest to address her public administration challenges.

Keywords: Bureaucracy, Comparison, Administrative outcomes, Public administration.

Introduction:

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) and the United States of America (USA) are independent former colonies of the British Empire, today they are sovereign and self-governing political entities within the United Nations system. The two countries are governed by through the constitutional instrumentality of their separate “grundnorms” which stipulate democratically elected executive presidential system, a federal bi-cameral legislative arrangement, a federally structured jurisdictional allocation of power with a principle that advocate separation of powers, an independent judiciary and wide range of freedom of expression and the press. These states similarly share the existence of nationalities and ethnicities that are diverse and a relatively large/vast land mass. There also exist a substantially high population of human resources and a huge oil mineral deposits across their territories. Coupled with the above is the challenge of migration and its attendant challenges.

However, in spite of these similarities these two countries have exhibited varying degrees of responses in their administrative outlook and outcomes in addressing the problems mitigating against policy end-goals and objectives. The USA have shown far more-resilience in attending to challenges and in attaining public policy end-goals and objectives than Nigeria, and it is on this basis that this paper seeks to compare the public administrative characteristics of these states using the Weberian bureaucratic model as the tool of analysis. Comparative public administration can be said to consist of systematically contrasting two or more characteristics of the operations/ activity of government aimed at ensuring the fulfillment of public policy understanding of how these characteristics work and interplay in the public broadest sense it can be viewed as the totality of the work involved in the actual conduct of government affairs while in its narrowest forms, it denotes the operations of the administrative branch of government only.

Comparative public administration is essentially a cross cultural and cross national settings relying on the body of factual data existing in the public administrative entities being compared. Comparative public administration is that facet of academic study that concerns itself with making rigorous cross-cultural comparisons of the structures and processes involved in the activity of administering public affairs (Kellinikos, 2004).

Considering the significance of this knowledge, comparative public administration has been seen as an approach and as a field of study. As an approach, it is considered as a method in political science and public administration using the tools of the behaviouralist postulations to extract, collect and analyse data on various aspects of administrative system so as to establish a pattern which can be adopted for generalization and identification of deviations. And this is why Wilson (1887) cited in Lalor (2014) assert that so long as we know only ourselves, we know nothing. Therefore, this work seeks to highlight the similarities and differences between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the United States of America by analyzing the public administration characteristics of these two countries.

This comparison is intended to assist the isolation of data that can lead to the establishment of principles of generalization that is indispensable for the understanding of the workings of these countries; thereby allowing for the adoption of an administrative system to aid in addressing the challenges of underdevelopment in another. It has been noted that struggling political system can benefit from the solutions obtained for similar political system in the same or similar situation. The basic intent in this regard is to provide practical ways of solving public policies, challenges through the transfer of knowledge and the borrowing of experience from elsewhere.

Definition of terms

To begin, the concept or term called public administration just as other socio-political concepts cannot be defined in a straight-forward manner/way. This position is corroborated by Waldo (1967) as agreed to by Beluchi and Inienger (2020) that, the immediate effect of all one sentence or one paragraph definition of public administration is a mental paralysis rather than (an exercise in) enlightenment and stimulation. This makes Arora (1985) to conclude that when definitions are properly done they ensure that subjects fix their boundaries and allow for the core character and essence of the subject-matter to be identified. To this end, in order to mitigate the difficulty of identity that definition may generate, it is important to explore definitions from more than one scholar.

Public administration is the implementation of government policies, including also some responsibility for determining the policies and programmes of government, specifically highlighting the planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling of government operations (Page and Chapman, 2023). It has also been viewed as the formal procedural and organizational arrangements that allow for public servants to participate in government, ensure implementation of policies, give advice on policy issues and harness resources for socio-economic and political development. It covers all structures and relationships public affairs include civil service, internal organizational arrangements, and organizational behaviours (Johnston, 2015).

Garba (2004), sees public administration as public leadership of public affairs directly responsible for executive action. In a democracy, it has to do with such leadership and executive action in terms that respect and contribute to the dignity, the worth and the potentials of the citizens. It is the detailed and systemic application of law. Lalor (2014) describes public administration as the public provision of public goods in which the demand function is satisfied more or less effectively by tax payers contributions.

Weber (1947) cited in Rockman (n.d.) defines it as the implementation of government policy and also an academic discipline that studies this implementation and prepares civil employees for working in the public service focusing on advancing management and policies so that government can function.

Bureaucracy

This can be said to be a specific form of organization defined by complexity, division of labour, permanence, professional management, and hierarchical coordination (Rockman, (n.d)). Similarly, it is a system for controlling or managing a country, company, or organization that is organized by a large number of officials employed to follow rules carefully (Cambridge Business English Dictionary, 2023). Merriam-Webster says it is an administrative policy making group, just as it is a government characterized by specialization (Merriam-Webster, (n.d)). It has also been described as...organization that is composed of multiple departments, each with policy-and decision-making authority (Langley, 2023).

Bureaucracy is the systematic delineation and division of hitherto complex organizational tasks into smaller manageable and less complicated units so that each individual task when carried out would enhance the efficient and effective performance of these tasks thereby allowing the organization to achieve its set objective in a cost-efficient manner while also enhancing quality service delivery to its target populace (Beluchi and Inienger, 2020).

Consequent upon this, it can be concluded that public administration is grounded in comprehending the operations and purposes of agencies, organs and institutions for the

fulfillment of the objectives of providing basic needs of a body of politically organized group of people who live within a clearly delineated/demarcated boundary having a government that have perpetual existence and sovereignty to enforce its rules both within and without (Egunjobi, 2006). Public administration is the chief instrument for pursuing the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy. It is the tool for the implementation of government policies and its focus includes everything that has to do with planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling of government operations. Stated in another form, public administration as to do with the execution, oversight, and management of public affairs. In fact, it is generally refers to as the bureaucratic structures in the public sector.

In our contemporary world, public administration is most times regarded as comprising some responsibility for determining the policies and programmes of governments focusing majorly on planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling of government operations. No modern state can exist and function without public administration, this means that public administration is a critical feature of all states; whether developed, developing or underdeveloped (Pierre, 1995). Without prejudice to the system and structure of government, public administration is practiced at the central, intermediate and local levels of government (Rosile, 2020). By this, we can conveniently averred that public administration is deployed as a multi-layer/multi-strata tool to address challenges of governing society (Kallinikos, 2004). While each layer pursue its primary goal, the layers often engage themselves in a web of relationship known as intergovernmental relations.

There are various theoretical approaches to the study of public administration. These approaches includes behavioural, systems, structural-functional, development administration, ecological theory, and of course , the bureaucratic theory, which shall form the basis of this comparative analysis.

Comparison

This is the process of examining the similarities and differences between two or more things...(LanGeak Dictionary, 2023). It can also be said to be the act of examining resemblances by determining relation based on similarities and differences. Comparison is the placing together or juxtaposing of two or more items to ascertain, bring into relief, or establish their similarities and differences. It goes further, however, to contend that items can only be contrast. It closed by arguing that in order to compare two things or experiences they must be regarded in some sense as members of [a] class or subjects of an encompassing set. Therefore, it is believed that comparison is made on the basis of some relevant properties of the set/class/group which are common to both the items, objects and experiences being compared.

Administrative Outcomes

These are the ends and objectives that are projected as the benefits that would emerge as a result of the efforts put into attaining the fundamental objectives and directive principles of a politically organized body of people, organization or unit. Administrative outcomes are specific, measurable statements and standards codified to describe the desired end-result and quality of the key functions and services of an administrative set-up/unit. Some of the co-efficiencies that impart on administrative outcome are: timeliness, accuracy, responsive, frequency, expertise, information/data (Langley, 2023).

Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory at A Glance

The origin of the term “bureaucracy” appears to be vague with some tracing it origin to the French word “Burokrate”. However, what is not in contention is that as a scholastic subject, it is a term primarily associated with the German social scientist, Max Weber. The concept became widely acceptable because it addressed many needs of the industrial age because it increased the effectiveness of hierarchy by reducing some of the worst abuses of power and by providing a rational way to manage tasks too complex for anyone person to undertake (Visitchaiam, 2004).

Though this early work of Weber has been critique by many schools of thought because they view the work as not meeting the contemporary needs of human society since the world no longer needs the machine-like organization that Weber envisioned. In spite of this criticism, there is consensus among social scientists that the efficiency and effectiveness needed to administer a modern state structure can largely be attained through the bureaucratic approach and such there it is taken that the following characteristics of bureaucracy are all parts of Weber's original description (Akter and Islam, 2021). Hierarchical chain of command, specialization by function, uniform written rules and policies, standard procedures defining each job, career based on promotion for technical competence; and impersonal relations are central to bureaucratic theory.

Some of the sub-themes listed above would be deployed to compare and contrast the bureaucratic administrative set-ups of Nigeria and United States of America (U.S.A).

Bureaucratic comparison of Nigeria and United States of America

To start with it be noted that Nigeria's bureaucratic outlook had its foundation in the British system. This is not far-fetched because of the fact that Nigeria was a former colony of Britain. It must also be stated that the United States of America before 1776 was under some form of colonization of the British Empire, but the manner of the US breakaway from Britain and the series of events that led to the formation of American Republican system ensured that America freed itself from the vestiges of British idiosyncracies. Apart from the similarity of colonial beginnings there are other affinities in the formation of state structure in the two countries. For instance, they both operate federal system of government, have presidential democracy, embrace bi-cameral legislature, existence of heterogeneous nationality, ethnic identity issues, fairly expansive territories, oil mineral deposit, and immigration challenges.

However, despite these similarities the bureaucratic set-ups of these two countries have tended to produce varying degrees of results in addressing the challenges of governance emanating from the socio-political, economic and cultural issues confronting them (Akinrolabu and Joseph, 2023). The bureaucratic administration in U.S.A seems to be well positioned to address development challenges than its Nigerian counterpart. Though each country is bedevilled with continuing issue of immigration crisis, challenge of insecurity, especially acts of terrorism, socio-economic/welfare concerns (since the aftermath of COVID-19) and the bureaucratic apparatuses of these countries have acted to mitigate these challenges each producing varying results. The USA seems to be achieving better result than Nigeria despite the similarities of the administrative set-up of these two countries (Abdulahi and Ozden, 2021). It is on this note that it has become imperative to critically appraise the workings of the Weberian bureaucratic theoretical approach vis-à-vis the administration of these countries. The works of Rao (1978), Eneanya (2010), Raji, Garuba, and Letswa (2018) shall form the bedrock of this comparison.

- i. **Political System:** Nigerian political system have been influenced by myriads of events and phenomena leading to culture of militarized-civil disposition to politics

resulting in the moderation of participation and pluralistic engagement (role of military). There is also a nostalgic romanticization of the country's traditional pass which has led to some form of fixations in addressing development challenges in the country. The fused/prismatic nature of the society is a point in question. The non-congruence of the political culture and the structure of administration has led to visible instability and legitimacy crisis in the country. The United States of America on the other hand has political culture that is modern, civil, participatory and pluralistic which ensure a more stable democratic political system with its attendant implication for public administration. Though the two countries operate presidential system of government, the haphazard nature of the emergence of Nigeria as a colonial construct with all the trappings of neo-colonialism, traditionalism makes public administration to be more ascription-oriented despite the existence of procedure for rules and regulation. Public administration in USA is achievement-oriented despite the revolutionary and rapid emergence of state structure. Bureaucracy in America's public administration promotes merits over ethnicity and class interest.

- ii. **Hierarchy:** Executive ministries embody the major administrative unit in Nigeria. These executive units are made up of core civil service, regulatory commissions, government corporations and agencies. The re-organisation or modification of Executive Ministries are influenced more by the President with the support of the National Assembly. In the United States of America, Executive branch units are known as Departments and are comprised of commissions, corporations and agencies as well. However, the Congress exercises the power to create or abolish executive departments but delegates limited power to the President to make his choice with congressional approval. In Nigeria, Ministers are political appointees of the President as head of the ministries, just as Secretaries who are similarly appointed by the President, are heads of Department in U.S.A. These political heads can be assisted by Minister of State (Junior Minister) in Nigeria or Under-Secretary in America.

In terms of bureaucratic operation, in America there exists a Senior Executive Service (SES) cadre similar to Nigeria's Administrative cadre. In Nigeria, senior civil servants known as Permanent Secretaries are obligated to serve a Minister and any government with the same level of neutrality. Despite the similarities noted in the set-up of the two countries' bureaucracy, the American bureaucrats have greater latitude to act without much interference from the political official than their Nigerian counterparts.

- iii. **Abstract Rules:** In Nigeria administrative bureaucratic system, the civil service is almost entirely controlled by the political executives' action and the civil service general guidelines and rules. The convention is that officials and ministers clearly understand and operate on the basis role dichotomy. The civil servant is a handmaiden to the political head. The bureaucratic is only to be seen and not to be heard, the bureaucrat is only on-tap and not on-top. The bureaucratic official is not to be held accountable for the actions of the ministry as he cannot be commended or condemned for the outcomes of policies and actions of the Ministry. The principle is that the bureaucratic official is impartial and anonymous as he is only expected to offer advice to the minister, who has all political responsibility. Therefore, the bureaucratic official is obligated to carry out his task with utmost loyalty to democratic official as he is obligated to carry out his task with utmost loyalty to government decisions. In USA, according to Eneanya (2010), the national civil servant does not enjoy statutory and constitutional protection since the bureaucratic officials just as the political officials

hold enormous responsibility and accountability to both the executive and legislative bodies of the country. Therefore, the loyalty of the bureaucratic official is to the people directly than their elected representative in the Congress.

- iv. **Role Specificity:** In the USA, the bureaucrats are expected to work under political direction, however, they are also expected to be active in policy formulation process. High-ranking bureaucratic officials play prominent roles in public policy-making; they are not hampered by behind-the-scene activity of anonymity and secrecy that is the order of the day for bureaucratic officials in Nigeria. American bureaucratic officials are expected to participate in policy-making with much more openness as they are expected to publicly face or address the consequences of their policy choices to the Congress. In Nigeria, however, bureaucrats are viewed as neutral agents of the political decision-makers. Though, high-ranking officials do initiate and choose among policy proposals but they do this most essentially in subjection to political ministerial discretion.
- v. **Specialization:** In the USA, public servants are better educated and can come from business and professional backgrounds at any age and grade. There is the possibility of mobility or interchange between governmental and non-governmental careers in America. In Nigeria, professionalism is de-emphasized at point of entry in bureaucracy. At point of recruitment of administrators, the emphasis is on degree attainment. Specialization only commences at certain point in the career of administrators. This situation is reflected in the polarization of the service into generalist and specialists; with generalists being more prominent in key bureaucratic positions.
- vi. **Recruitment Based on Merit:** Appointment in Nigeria bureaucratic system is based on starting career as from early age through a system of competitive examinations to a unified service with focus on clear distinction between intellectual and routine work. Promotion is also supposed to be based on merit rather than nepotism. However, evidence on ground suggest the opposite as there are allegations of unwholesome practices in recruitment and promotion. In Nigeria, emphasis is placed on career-staffing just as candidates' general mental ability are usually considered for fresh recruitment. Focus is placed on fresh and young university graduates or their equivalents, ensuring that assessment is based on variety of subjects, reflecting the courses of study offered in the universities. In the USA, recruitment into bureaucratic service is not age-bound. This is so as a person may be recruited into the service at the age of 50 and above. Recruitment is usually based on specialized and practical examinations on an open competitive criteria to those meeting prescribed minimum qualification.
- vii. **Impartiality:** In Nigeria, there is the tradition and convention of confidentiality and protected veil of anonymity and secrecy for bureaucratic officials. The bureaucratic officials are tools and instruments for aiding the political officials in the discharge of their responsibilities. However, in USA, bureaucratic officials are expected to play critical roles in public policy-making. They are not expected to be anonymous and unseen since the American populace inevitably demand explanation on policies and programmes from bureaucratic officials because there is no clear-cut demarcation between politics and bureaucratic officialdom in American public administration system.

viii. Career Development: In Nigeria, appointment and promotion are on career basis at an early age through a system of competitive process or examination and satisfactory establishment record in a unified service which draw a clear distinction between intellectual (Administrators/Generalists) and routine work (Specialists) structures. There is more stability, predictability and security of tenure of office in Nigeria. In the USA, the channels for career advancement for higher level Administrators are less planned and somewhat (sometime) haphazard, this is so because bureaucrats tend to leave civil service far more frequently especially when high-ranking officials disagree with policy decisions with their political heads. Similarly, the recruitment process is elastic and accommodate new entrants even from private or business sector into the civil service despite, in some cases, advancement in age of such new entrants. This is not the situation in Nigeria.

Conclusion

To this end, therefore this paper has been able to establish that though Nigeria and United States of America operate similar forms and systems of governments, yet the bureaucratic outlook of the two countries are different in terms of their orientation and performance. Democratic participation as seen through citizens' involvement based on consolidated democratic practice through elections ensure their participation in policy formulation and implementation and this deeply impacted the activities of the American bureaucracy than its Nigerian counterpart since Nigeria is just trying to stabilize its democratic experiment.

In practice, the impact of colonialism and primordia consideration of tradition still greatly reflect in Nigeria's bureaucratic set-up as it is grounded in attachment to sectional sentiments as ethnicity, clanishness, religion etc. as against the idea of duality of roles expected of civil service officials. Though, the Nigeria bureaucracy tries to ensure recruitment and promotion based on merit as contained in the general service order and guideline but the national maladies of nepotism, ethnicity, religion and overpolitization is threatening these ideals.

Despite the variations noticed between the two countries, in terms of their bureaucratic set-up, this work is able to establish that the two countries (one in developing world and the other in a developed world) have institutionalized the bureaucratic system in one form or the other. This is so because no modern state can adequately function without a bureaucratic apparatus.

Recommendation:

Following from the issues raised in terms of similarities and differences highlighted in this study, especially, with the United States of America having the productivity and bureaucratic outcomes to reflect more clearly the principles emphasized by Max Weber in his bureaucratic model, Nigeria can draw several elements from the U.S. system to improve its bureaucratic practices in the following ways:

- In the area of clear organizational hierarchy, the U.S system is far more well-defined in its hierarchical structure by spelling out authority and responsibility between and among officials. Nigeria stands a good chance of benefitting if it adopt a more rigidly defined hierarchy to streamline decision-making processes and accountability.
- Likewise, reliance on performance evaluation within the U.S bureaucratic system allows effective employee assessment and enhanced productivity. Therefore,

implementing regular and objective performance reviews in Nigerian could also lead to improved productivity and accountability.

- Again, Nigeria could address the problem of nepotism and favouritism in recruitment and promotion by adopting the procedure for hiring and promoting employees of the U.S system that is based on merit and competence hinged on transparency and open-assess to all qualified prospective applicants without prejudice to age and business or private sectoral background.
- Similarly, one could realise that Weber's emphasis on the importance of standardized procedures are consistent and well documented within the U.S system thereby allowing agencies and departments across government to stay focused thereby reducing inefficiency, corruption and waste, Nigeria could also benefit from this by developing and enforcing standardized procedures across its agencies like the police, road safety, vehicle inspection unit, fire service, etc.
- Nigeria can benefit from the U.S. system of allowing access to information. In the U.S. system there is greater transparency in decision-making process through the availability of information to the people which helps to build trust.
- The reliance on strong focus on professional training and development for bureaucrats in the U.S system ensure that they are well equipped to handle their roles effectively, Nigeria too should emphasise professionalism and training in its public administrative system.
- The development of effective accountability and oversight mechanism is key to attaining bureaucratic efficiency, this is clear within the U.S. system, as such, Nigeria should likewise deploy robust oversight institutions and audit mechanisms to hold bureaucratic officials accountable and address issues of corruption and inefficiency.

It must be noted that these recommendations are undertaken. Nigeria stands a better chance of aligning itself more to the bureaucratic model of Max Weber just as the United States of America thereby assisting Nigeria to be more effective and efficient in administering its public administration.

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