

## **CONTRADICTIONS AND IMPEDIMENTS IN THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT: PERISCOPING THE CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD**

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**Abstract:** This article examines the contradictions and limitations that hinder the Nigerian public sector management from being the driving force of national development. Drawing on the political economy theory, the authors explore the power dynamics and domination mechanisms that characterize the Nigerian public sector, explaining how economic sub-structures create impediments to effective public sector management. The Nigerian state is perceived as being co-terminus with the dominant social classes, and lacking autonomy to mediate class struggles over wealth and power. The article highlights the need for a reconstitution of the Nigerian public sector management, to make it more humane and less vulnerable to political class hijack. Using a qualitative descriptive and exploratory approach, the research provides an insight into the nature and characteristics of the Nigerian public sector management. Historical backdrops of public sector reforms in Nigeria are explored, with an emphasis on recent reforms under the Jonathan and Buhari administrations. The article focuses on the challenges and contradictions of public sector management, highlighting issues that hinder efficient and effective service delivery. The article outlines certain imperatives for the Nigerian public sector management to ensure a successful implementation of public policies. These include the need to reduce over-bloated bureaucracy, enhance transparency and accountability, enforce fiscal discipline, increase revenue, and reduce leakages. The article concludes with the need to review the provisions of the 1999 Constitution as amended, discourage ministerial nominees from each state of the federation, and to prioritize power, oil and gas, agriculture, solid minerals, maritime, and financial matters to achieve economic diversification, reduce government liability, and stabilize the polity.

**Keywords:** Nigerian public sector management, political economy, public sector reforms, challenges, efficiency, effectiveness, reconstitution, implementation, imperatives.

### **Introduction**

All over the world, no government can carry out its statutory job without an effective and efficient public sector in place. A good public sector management is vital for public policy enactment, implementation and monitoring. Nigeria got her independence in 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960, and as is in most developing countries, the expanded roles of the government have imposed new demand and challenges on public sector management. The Nigerian civil service has also been challenged to increase service delivery and play its developmental role (Dibie 2014:337) <sup>[8]</sup>.

A number of the problems Nigerian public administration encountered were as a result of lack of effort by the colonial powers to prepare the country for self-government (Dibie 2015:22). The aftermath effect of this development is conflict among ethnic groups, underdevelopment and the inability of the public sector to provide the much-needed efficient service delivery. The succeeding post-colonial state has continued to share

this attribute. This post-colonial government relied heavily on the oil sector for revenue to sustain the machinery of government. Government hardly created the milieu for economic activities to take place (Olaitan 1995) <sup>[16]</sup>. The reliance on crude oil created a rentier mentality in the sense that the state actors are pre-occupied with rent collection on oil exploration activities with the least inclination for non-oil production activities. The post-colonial government is rooted in the global economic order amid its integration as a peripheral state. The peripheral nature of the post-colonial government explains its lack of autonomy, dependent and neocolonial status. For example, Algeria, Benin, Gabon, Ghanaian, Kenyan, Malawian, Malian, Nigerian, Sudanese, South African, Tanzanian Zimbabwean bureaucratic cadres still retain a high degree legitimacy inherited from colonial times (Adamolekun in Dibia 2014:338) <sup>[18]</sup>. The Nigerian state consists of several social classes. However, the social groups that seek to control the public sector are weak, underdeveloped, and lack the basis to develop independently. There is no hegemonic class in Nigeria because the economy is under the control of foreign interests amid the intense struggles of fractions of the local dominant class to access and control state structures and institutions.

Government is over bearing and it is perceived by the exploited and dominated social groups as alienating and malevolent. It is a contested terrain where the similar and dissimilar interests of the social classes are articulated, canvassed, and pursued. The post-colonial government, therefore, represents itself since it turns out to be the means of acquiring political and economic power for private accumulative purpose. This presupposes that the state is not differentiated from the dominant social classes and its interests are co-terminus with those of the exploiters. The foregoing analyses provide the backdrop with which to explain the Nigerian public sector in terms of nature and character. The Nigerian state evolved to serve the interests of the exploiter class and lacks autonomy in the absence of a hegemonic class to mediate the intra and inter social class struggles over its wealth and power.

### **Methodology**

This paper adopts the qualitative descriptive and exploratory approach to gain an insight into the nature and character of the Nigerian government and public sector management. From a descriptive research perspective, the researcher has observed events long enough regarding the public sector management in Nigeria. It is in this context that the researcher periscopes the impediments while exploring the imperatives.

At this juncture, it is imperative to conceptually situate the public sector and the next sub-heading examines: the conceptual and theoretical construct, an overview of the Nigerian public sector, the structure and functions of the public sector, historical backdrops the Nigerian public sector reforms, public sector reforms in Nigeria, the contradictions and impediments to public sector management in Nigeria, the way forward for the Nigerian state and public sector management, and lastly the conclusion.

### **Conceptual and theoretical construct**

Concepts and theories in social and management sciences are embarked upon to clarify, illustrate and provide a road map for navigating the contour of social phenomena. In this section of the article, we shall attempt to explore this endeavour. However, for full understanding of public sector, it will be most appropriate to first conceptualise the word public and later link it with the word sector. Public as used here is an adjective qualifying sector, 'public sector'. It distinguishes the public sector which is the main concern of this section from that which is strictly private sector. In other words, which public or what constitutes the public sector that provides public service? Here, the focus is on the organized public sector of the economy i.e. services provided by Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in contrast to the private sector, who in position of authority from position of legitimacy act in their position in accordance with the laid down rules and regulations e.g. public servants, legislators, President (Igbokwe-Ibeto 2016:28) <sup>[10]</sup>. Public sector as a concept is not easy to define for laps due to areas covered by it or rather still, salient's embedded in it. The Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 Constitution as amended defines the public service as:

Service of the federation in civil capacity as staff of the office of the President, the Vice President, Ministry or Department of the Government of the Federation assigned with the responsibility for any business of the Government of the Federation (FRN, 1999:67).

Management may refer to the process of using human and material resources efficiently and effectively to achieve organizational goals or objectives. Emphasis here is on and effective and efficient use of resource to achieve goals. Batenan and Snell (2009:34) <sup>[6]</sup> opine that management is the process of getting things done through other people. Organization of people/workers is needed to get things done. Henry Fayol came up with 14 principle of management. Gulick and Urwick reduced these principles into the popular POSDCORB (Dibie 2014:64) <sup>[8]</sup>. POSDCORB represent: Planning, Organization, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting.

Public sector management has in recent time gained prominence in public-private sector discourse. The essence of this endeavour is to bring back the principle of management in running the public sector in particular. As Cox, Buck and Morgan (2011:81) <sup>[7]</sup>; and Starling (2011:96) <sup>[18]</sup> argued that customer-oriented public administration as coming down towards the citizen rather than upwards the politician or elected official Dibie (2014:70-71) <sup>[8]</sup> refers to public sector management as a government that is smaller, with less red tape and a learning organization based on flexibility and teamwork. It is a logical in thought system of management based on ideas borrowed from the private sector to enhance public service delivery. Ayee (2008:48) <sup>[5]</sup> notes that public sector management is characterized by concepts such as: reengineering, down sizing, right sizing etc. Adoption and operation of these perspectives in developing economies has come with challenges. This will become clearer in the subsequent sections of the discourse. For this article, the political-economy theory is most valuable. The political-economy perspective to analyzing social phenomena gives primacy to the economic mode of production and relations of production as the major drivers of the entire polity, As Ake (1981:108) <sup>[2]</sup> puts it, and this method gives primacy to material conditions, particularly economic factors, in the explanation of social life. Therefore, once we understand what the material assets and constraints of the society are, how the society produces goods to meet its material needs, as the goods are distributed and what types of social relations exist from the means of production, we have come a long way to understanding the culture of that society, its law, its rigorous system, its political system and even its mode of thoughts (Obo & Coker 2014:529) <sup>[14]</sup>. However, we cannot possibly talk about unclear determinism because the economic system is also conditioned by political structure in a society and visvisa.

### **An overview of the Nigerian public sector**

The origin of the Public Sector in Nigeria is traceable to the colonial epoch when the Governor General, Fredrick Lugard, created a unified service. To give the colonial regime some legitimacy, the traditional institution and rulers were co-opted at the lower level of the colonial political structure and administration. The indirect rule system thrived on the role of traditional elite in local administration especially in the Western and Northern regions where spiritual and political powers were vested in the traditional authorities. The advent of regional political structures in

1954 provided the impetus for three regional civil services that co-existed with the federal public service. The public service became more visible and active in the policy formulation and implementation at independence. The military intervention in politics and its lack of expertise in administration fostered the increased influence of bureaucrats in the process of governance. The design and implementation of development plans in the military era further enhanced the status and influence of the bureaucrats in the country's power. It saw the emergence of Super

Permanent Secretaries in Gowon's tenure.

With the petrol dollars as a result of oil boom in the 1970s and the successful prosecution of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970, spurred greater commitment to the growth in the economy, which eventually led to the creation of states to replace regions numbering 12 states in 1967, 19 in 1976, 21 in 1987, 30 in 1991, and currently 36 in 1996 plus the federal capital territory FCT). Both the federal and the state civil service have also increasingly witnessed unprecedented growth to confront the increasing social and economic demand of citizens and non citizens alike. The Nigerianisation or indigenization policy of 1972 was designed and enacted to control the commanding heights of the economy and accelerate the growth of the public service.

### Structure and functions of the public sector

It would appear, the privately owned urban and community based organizations have emerged to fill the social service gaps in the housing, educational, waste management and health sectors. The state adoption of the public- privatepartnership has narrowed the boundary between the market and non-market; the state and market merger of resources for either social provision or capital formation. In this sense, the state shifts from its regulatory role to co-exist with the market in the provision of public goods.

The state elsewhere supervises the market thereby assuming a distinguishing role in social relations. The privatization of publicly owned enterprises became pervasive in developing countries after the embrace of IMF and World Bank adjustment policies. The privatization of public enterprises reduced the size of the state, deepened the private domain, and by extension the market; and narrowed the distinction between the market and non-market. The borderline between the public and private sectors became blurred with the growing use of market mechanisms by government and private sector provision of public services. The functions of the public sector assist in its classification (Ikeayibe 2015:564; IMF 2009) <sup>[11, 12]</sup>.

It is therefore, imperative to identify the functions of the public sector and how these assist to differentiate it from the private sector. The public sector performs social service delivery role, price stabilisation, and the democratisation of social delivery. The World Bank (2012) <sup>[19]</sup> internationally – agreed functional approach is used in the grouping of government functions. The problem, however, with the functional approach is that the spending functions performed by the public sector are also performed by the private sector. A typical example is the provision of services in the education, health, social and environmental protection, is shared between the public and private sectors. It is difficult to differentiate the public and private sectors solely on financial premise, since virtually all functions of government are equally exercised by the private sector.

### Historical context of public sector reforms in Nigeria

The process of reform is ubiquitous and resonates in virtually every state, but it seems more imperative in Africa for its several administrative challenges and political undertones. Reform is a commonly used concept similar to democracy and citizenship; and it demands that a state should be responsible for the welfare of the citizens to sustain its claims to democratic society. Meanwhile, the democratic form of government is predicated on the assumption that democracy has the capacity to get things done in such a way that would make the populace live decently. The core of this reform is the administrative system the state provides to deliver the public goods and services to the citizens. The administrative system is constantly challenged by global ideas on reforms, innovation and best practices to respond to expectations on what should be done to deliver public goods efficiently. Public service reform in Nigeria is analysed in this article for certain reasons. First, the Nigerian public service typifies the African situation. The administrative system in Nigeria is emblematic of what obtains in several African countries. Secondly, the Nigerian reform profile points ostensibly at a progressive attempt by the government to improve its reform framework and shift from reform hesitancy to somewhat advance status. Thirdly, the reform efforts provide stupendous lessons and templates for successive administrations to shape the reform space in Nigeria. Yet, the history of public sector reform is linked to the possibility of redeeming Nigeria from its post-colonial deficits. The real nationwide reform issues started in 1971 with the Adebo Commission (Ikeayibe 2015:568; Anazodo, Okoy & Chukwuemaka 2012:22) <sup>[11, 1]</sup>. The Adebo Commission was designed to respond to some of the intended and unintended implications of the Nigerianisation policy, particularly the wage issue. The commission was confronted with the reality of the first military coup and the decline of the civil service structure and organisation. The military in government pursued policy measures that apparently reduced the capacity of the civil service for governance. The Adebo Commission probed the wage and recruitment issues of the service, but it became confronted with organisational and structural problems.

The Udoji Commission mediated between the new managerialism (Management by Objectives, MBO) that impacted on the administrative system and the old Weberian tradition on which the civil service was created. The Udoji commission proposed new style public service populated by a new workforce led by professionals and specialists. It recommended increase in public sector wages, standardization of conditions of service, unified and integrated administrative structure, elimination of waste and the abolition of inefficient

departments (Anazodo et.al 2012:19) <sup>[1]</sup>. The Gowon administration however, missed the strategic import of the Udoji report (Ikeayibe 2015:567) <sup>[11]</sup>. This Udoji report became a slogan for abundant wage as against a framework for the recreation of Nigerian civil service. The Gowon administration chose to implement the wage aspect of the report and de-emphasised its structural components.

The 1988 civil service reforms based on the Dotun Phillips Commission report and the 1995 Ayida public service review panel are significant in the discourse on public sector reforms. The 1988 reform was designed to foster the professionalization of the civil service. The professionalization agendum, however, led to politicization of the workforce especially the office of the Permanent Secretary that became a political appointment. The 1988 reform held against the backdrops of the General Babangida administration's economic and political transition agenda. The Structural Adjustment Program, SAP, was implemented in 1986 as economic correlate of the political transition program (Momoh 1995:101) <sup>[13]</sup>. The SAP economic policy elicited social conflicts occasioned by the harsh social backlash of economic reforms. The political transition programme culminated in the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential elections (Adejumobi 1995:42; Olukoshi 1995:71; Momoh 1995:104) <sup>[3, 15, 13]</sup>. The 1988 reform has been critiqued as aspect of Babangida's self-succession agenda. Critics of the Babangida government especially, a section of the political class raised doubt on the genuineness of his political transition agenda. This fear became heightened with the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential elections, which had been described by local and international observers as the freest and fairest election in Nigeria's political history.

The Ayida panel was supposed to interrogate the proposals of the Phillips commission. But it eventually reinvented the pre-1988 civil service system and its deficit (Ikeayibe 2015:566) <sup>[11]</sup>. This panel did not have a concrete agenda of reinvention hence it led to regression to the status quo ante in terms of the politicization of the civil service especially the post of Permanent Secretary (Anazodo *et al* 2012:20) <sup>[1]</sup>. The Ayida panel unfortunately did not challenge the status quo, but it became the backdrop to appraise the Obasanjo Renewal Programme, the Yar'Adua Civil Service Reform Programme, the Jonathan Transformation Agenda and Buhari's Change Agenda (Igbokwe-Ibeto 2016) <sup>[10]</sup>. These reforms agenda are hinged on the notion that the country would not likely transform without a capable and efficient state and public service.

The 'efficient government question' is crucial to the country's development efforts. The state capability is holistic and reflects the gamut of social, economic, political and developmental issues. The degree of state capability differs among states. Hence, the challenge of raising the capability of the Nigerian state. Regrettably, the public service has not met the aspirations of the Nigerian people. The public service is still struggling to deliver the democratic dividends and mediate governance deficits in the country. There is pervasive poverty, social decay and recurring economic crisis occasioned by state policies that emphasised financial stability to the neglect of structural and developmental issues. The least human content of state policies result in the alienation of the exploited social groups such as: the urban poor, rural peasants, artisans, students, unemployed, underemployed and workers from the state thereby creating legitimacy crisis for state institutions.

#### **Public sector reforms since the fourth republic**

This section interrogates public sector reforms in Nigeria with emphases on the Jonathan and Buhari administrations. The article focused on the two administrations because the governments are recent in Nigeria's political history and had constituted panels to intervene on major aspects of the public sector. The previous reports on public sector reforms suffered abandonment by successive governments. The political space has been inundated with various reforms meant to de-politicize the public sector, re-professionalize the public sector, enhance its efficiency and effectiveness, reduce the over bloated size of government, increase accountability and transparency in the public sector, and foster more efficient public governance. It is expected that the more recent Oronsanye and Joda interim committee reports would not suffer neglect. The highlights and implications of these reforms are discussed in the latter part of this article.

It imperative here to examine public sector reform, the philosophies that underline reforms, and the challenges of public sector reforms. Public sector reform is the art and science of making the public sector machinery work. It involves the deliberately changing and interlocking structural processes within the public sector that

define how financial and physical resources and people are deployed and accounted for. Public sector reforms are changes to the formal institutional and managerial arrangements in the centre of government and sector agencies. The reforms are often predicated on specific theoretical and ideological premises. These are intellectual guides to defining the meaning, purpose, rationale and ideals of specific reform measures. The philosophies are historic specific and reflect changing realities in the socio-economic and political milieu. The implementation of public sector reforms reflects the difference between theory and praxis and the limiting contexts to realize the envisaged objectives. The limiting contexts include the misplaced interpretation of the problem and the contests in the public space to reflect the interests of different tendencies in policy outcomes. The Obasanjo Renewal Programme, the Yar'Adua Civil Service Reform Programme, the Jonathan's Transformation

Agenda and President Buhari's Change Mantra are more recent reforms packages. These reforms are hinged on the principle of capable, efficient, and corruption –free public service. The corrupt nature of the civil service should be understood within the context of the character of the Nigerian state. The non-autonomous nature of Nigerian state and the character of politics as warfare exacerbate the struggle among factions and fractions of the dominant class to control state structures and or apparatus. The state, therefore, is a contested terrain amid norm-less struggle to privately appropriate state resources. Bureaucratic corruption thrives within the milieu of the predatory governing class and its disposition towards primitive accumulation of wealth. These reforms would not likely address the pervasive nature of bureaucratic corruption if the state remains in its present form.

### **Contradictions and impediments in Nigerian public sector management**

Efforts have long been made to redirect the public sector through policy reforms. Yet, the neo-liberal based policies have further impoverished, pauperised and alienated the populace from government. The crisis of neo-liberal policy thrust raises question on its sustainability as the toast of economic decision-making in Nigeria. This article argues for a relatively strong and superintendent state as opposed to the disappearing state to mediate the structural distortions and deeper underdevelopment that are re-in forced through the pursuit of market based economic reforms (Seteolu 2007:76) <sup>[17]</sup>.

The Jonathan administration perceived the public service as over bloated and redundant. Hence it constituted the Oronsanye- led Presidential Committee on the Rationalisation of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions and Agencies to advice government on the intended rationalization and restructuring of federal government ministries, parastatals and agencies. This committee prescribed the scrapping, merging and reversal of some parastatals, commissions and agencies to reduce public sector inefficiency and recurrent spending in the annual budget. The recurrent spending is about seventy five percent of the annual national budget. The organised labour envisaged job losses as a result of the proposed rationalization and merger plans. The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) pointed at the social backlash of downsizing and insisted that the plan signpost the implementation of shadowy IMF & World Bank policies. The argument of organised labour raises a challenge for state actors to reconcile public sector efficiency and social imperative. Would the state prefer public sector efficiency to the provision of jobs for its citizens? How would the state deal with the social import of large scale job losses in an economy characterized by massive unemployment? These issues are crucial to reconcile the demand of public sector efficiency and 'social interest'. Perhaps, it was as a result of this thinking that the Jonathan administration abandoned the idea of rationalization.

Yet, the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) are oversized and constitute drain pipes on the lean resources of the state. The recurrent or overhead constitute a huge chunk of public sector spending in a sense that limits spending on capital projects. The high cost of maintaining public service has greatly hindered economic growth amid estimated forty five thousand ghost workers on the payroll of two hundred and fiftyone MDAs. It became imperative to review the cost of government and pursue efficiency in public sector organizations. The development process including 'social interest' would likely be compromised through over bloated, inefficient and politicized bureaucracy.

The Oronsanye report proposed the elevation of the Code of Conduct Tribunal to Anti-Corruption Tribunal to adjudicate on graft cases thereby excluding the regular courts from corruption-related matters. The proposed

merger of Economic & Financial Crime Commission, Independent Corrupt Practice Commission and the Code of Conduct Bureau was a high point of the report. The report advised that extant anti-corruption laws should be repealed and substituted with new laws to reflect the consolidation of EFCC, ICPC, and the Code of Conduct Bureau. The proposed consolidation of the agencies was expected to reflect the gamut of prosecution, investigation, prevention (advocacy); and asset declaration/ forfeiture. Furthermore, the appointment of ministers on the basis of federal character helps to proliferate state structures and apparatus. The positions of ministers of state further deepen the crisis of heavy bureaucracy. This problematic assume more difficult dimension since there are constitutional provisions to support the appointment of ministers. The challenge is to review the provisions of the 1999 Constitution as amended to discourage ministerial nominees from each state of the federation. There is recurring pattern of discarding reports on the reforms of the public sector. The preceding Ayida, Joda and Fika reports are still gathered in dust in the Presidency. The Jonathan administration foot dragged on the implementation of the Oronsanye panel prescriptions despite a White Paper report. The Ahmed Joda transition committee set up within the context of the inaugural transfer of political power from ruling PDP to APC proposed reduction in wastage, discouraged malfeasance among state officials and offered options to raise the revenue profile of the central government. The Ahmed Joda committee enunciated a list of prompt, medium and long term decisions the Buhari administration must reach or authorize within thirty, forty five, sixty and ninety days of assuming office to create immediate impact, reduce government liability, increase revenue and stabilise the polity. These decisions include: reducing wastage and increasing revenue through the blockade of leakages, increasing budgetary and fiscal discipline, restructuring and refinancing existing debt. The committee was urged to give prompt attention to the diversification of the economy and revenue base; palliatives as part of subsidy removal; prioritization of power, oil and gas, agriculture, solid minerals, maritime, financial matters and the capital markets (Premium Times 2015). The substantive issues within the suggested priority decision areas includes building primary healthcare centres in each local government, creating Petroleum Industry Bill Technical Committee, supporting the farmers through the creation of a viable working capital credit scheme, reducing the costs of banking for consumers and encouraging increased financial inclusion, reducing lending costs to companies and adequate funding of public sector pension liabilities to secure retirement life for civil servants.

#### **The way forward for the Nigerian public sector management**

The Buhari administration in consonance with the proposals of the Joda committee on reducing waste and discouraging official misdemeanour among government officials has shown commitment to its anti-corruption campaign through the recovery of looted funds. The government published an interim report in May 2016 on recovered funds, but it failed to disclose the identities of alleged treasury looters and politicians who returned public funds. The government reneged on its earlier promise to place in the public domain the lists of looters, but it cited the probable legal backlash of public disclosure of the personalities involved. But it was not enough to recover looted funds; mechanisms should be put in place to avoid such occurrence.

The Buhari administration seems to emphasise anticorruption campaign over developmental issues. The challenge of diversifying the economy, addressing the poverty question and mass unemployment, infrastructure deficit, volatile exchange rate and inflation, security deficit are germane in the governance process today. The government should address the anti-corruption issue within the context of its broader developmental agenda. The anticorruption campaign ought to be subsumed in broader economic and political blueprints of the Buhari administration for Nigeria. The development question is political and economic in nature; the anti-corruption issue should be interrogated within the gamut of these frameworks.

In Nigeria, the annual budget allocation often falls below the United Nations minimum for developing countries. It is ironic that the future of reform measures and development agenda in Nigerian public sector depends on the quality of technical and formal education. The Nigerian state removed subsidy on education amid protest by the civil society. The IMF & World Bank led policies on the withdrawal of the state led to crises in the public sector including education. The neo-liberal policies of privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation expose the poor and vulnerable social groups in the country to the harsh realities and impacts of market based pricing. The vulnerable social categories have been out-priced through market based policy.

Since the failure of neo-liberal regime to mediate social crisis in Nigeria, there is need for a developmental state, which would concretely intervene in the structural and development questions confronting the political economy. The proposed free education at the primary and junior secondary levels points at the imperative of involving the government in the critical social sectors with a view to imbuing it with social purpose. However, the malfeasance of state actors and decline in national earnings raises question on the likely sustenance of this pro-people policy.

The Buhari administration should articulate in more succinct and concise terms the economic and political direction of the state. For instance, it should articulate its policy attitude to neo-liberalism that externalizes decision making in Nigeria, impoverish the populace and upset social relations. The neo-liberal agenda assumed state policy with the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme in 1986. The Babangida's SAP policy sought to promote private sector led growth, correct balance of payment disequilibrium, reduce public sector expenditure and achieve financial stability. These aims were not achieved. Will Buhari's administration be different? The Buhari administration is working at the diversification of the economy through the growth of the agricultural sector in a sense that reduces food imports. The country's food import bills on rice, wheat, sugar, sorghum, etc are huge and constitute drains on the lean state foreign exchange earnings. Yet, the plan to diversify the economy is a recurring chorus among the governing class. The state officials often propagandize on their capacities to restructure the economy to gain mileage in the public space.

Unfortunately, over three years in office, the blueprint of the Buhari administration to diversify the economy is yet to be placed in the public domain for scrutiny and inputs of the civil society. This would have provided the needed fund to support a vibrant and robust public sector that is efficient and effective.

Also, the central government plans to improve the tax based earnings of the government as aspect of its diversification strategy is a welcome development. The oil windfall in the 1970s led to shift from tax earnings to oil earnings as the bases of financing the public sector. The logic of tax payment by individuals and corporate bodies spurred inquisitive sense in the public space. The shift to oil based earnings altered the state and citizenship relations in the sense that the populace became less critical of public spending. However, the shift to taxation would likely restore active and engaging public sphere that would insist on greater accountability, transparency and openness in the expropriation and distribution of public resources.

It is noteworthy that the federal government has approved the resuscitation of an implementation committee on Oronsanye's report and the government white paper. This action is expected to be a radical departure from the era of indecision on crucial issues as restructuring and rationalization of public service, which the Jonathan administration epitomized (Aregbesola 2015) <sup>[4]</sup>. Regrettably, Buhari's administration is almost winding up its tenure without implementing Oronsanye's report. However, the paper still admonish the implementation of this report should be done with any eye to its backlash which may throw the country more into crisis

## Conclusion

This article analysed the Nigerian public sector management at the theoretical level and it posited that the public sector in Nigerian should be understood in terms of its integration into the global economy as a peripheral entity. The work relied on the political economy theory to explain the dynamics and shifts in the reforms of the public sector. The political economy approach is predicated on the primacy of material condition. The analysis of the economic substructure assists to account for, and explain the power politics behind the public sector management. This approach also elucidates on the character of the state, nature of its governing class and the mechanisms of domination.

The public sector reforms do not fundamentally challenge the status quo. Nonetheless, the public sector reforms have emphasized the imperative of efficient and functional public service. Ironically, the contradictions in the public sector have constrained its capacity to mediate the trajectories of development crisis in Nigeria. The public sector has been involved in the crisis of development, and therefore, lack the capacity to constitute the linchpin of development. The challenge is to address the contradictions that limit the capacity of the public sector to perform. The contradictions emanate from the nature of the state. The Nigerian state did not emanate from the people and similarly the resultant public service emerged outside the polity. As



a result, the public sector became hijacked by the local governing class to ventilate class interests and aspirations.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the state and its actors have been major impediments to the deepening of the public sector management. The character of politics is a mindless pursuit of power and relative advantage to the detriment of developmental issues. The deepening of the public service is a development imperative that needs a people conscious and ideologically clear governing class. Regrettably, the state is led by a predatory class that thrives on 'politics of stomach infrastructure' and 'patron-client relations'. The state requires reconstituting in the sense that would make it humane, benevolent and less vulnerable to hijack by the political class. The task for researchers is to probe the options for reconstituting the country.

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