

Research Article

## The Nigerian State and Public Sector Management: A Political Economy Analysis

Igbokwe-Ibeto Chinyeaka Justine<sup>1</sup>, Nwobi Fidelia<sup>2</sup>, Nnaji, Ifeoma Loretho<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Public Management, Governance and Public Policy, University of Johannesburg

<sup>2</sup>Department of Public Administration, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam

<sup>3</sup>Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

**Abstract:** The colonial state emerged to serve the economic and political interests of the colonizing power. This state was created to formally organise the exploitation of the colonised territory in the interest of the metropolitan entity. Within the framework of political-economy theory, this article examined the Nigerian state and public sector management at the theoretical level with the aim of understanding the Nigerian state in terms of its integration into the global economy as a peripheral entity. The article relied on the political economy paradigm to explain the dynamics and shifts in the management of the public sector. The political economy approach is predicated on the primacy of material condition. The analysis of the economic sub-structure 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. It concludes that, the Nigerian state and its actors have been major impediments to the deepening of the public sector management. The Nigerian state requires reconstituting in the sense that would make it humane, benevolent and less vulnerable to hijack by the political class.

**Keywords:** Colonisation, Management, Marginalisation, Performance, Service Delivery

### Introduction

The colonial state emerged to serve the economic and political interests of the colonizing power. This state was created to formally organise the exploitation of the colonised territory in the interest of the metro pole. The colonial state was not based on consent or rooted in the indigenous people; it emerged through military conquest. The 1861 conquest of Lagos by the British forces buttressed the nature of colonial entry into Nigeria. The colonial state extracted income from the colonial people through taxation in order to sustain its structures. This state was repressive of the colonized people and became distanced from the populace (Olaitan, 1995). The colonial public service replicated the character of the colonial state in terms of repression and structures were ascertained outside Africa.

The succeeding post-colonial state share attributes of the colonial state in terms of its repressive and alienating nature. This post-colonial state relied heavily on the oil sector for revenue to sustain the machinery of government. The state hardly created the milieu for economic activities to take place (Olaitan, 1995). 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 state is rooted in the global economic order amid its integration as a peripheral state. The peripheral nature of the post-colonial state explains its lack of autonomy, dependent and neo-colonial status.

The Nigerian state is not an instrument of a single social class but several of them. However, the social groups that seek to

control the state are weak, underdeveloped, and lack the basis to develop independently. There is no hegemonic class in Nigeria since the economy is controlled by foreign interests amid the intense struggles of fractions of the local dominant class to access and control state structures and institutions. The state is repressive, authoritarian, and lack consensus on its core political and ideological interests. This state 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 state, 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.

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 of public sector reforms in Nigeria, public sector reforms in Nigeria since the fourth republic, 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 effectuate this endeavour.

The concept of the state does not lend itself to a generally agreed definition. However, a cursory look at some definition of the state will show that there is some common trend that binds them together. A peep into some of them is needful. Laski (1964) defines a state as the means by which people are organized for the purpose of social cohesion. Emphasis here is on ensuring that the people within a state leave in unity and togetherness. Marx Weber in (Almond & Coleman, 1960) describes the state as the human community that successfully claims the monopoly of legitimate use of social force within a given territory. Here the state is seen as not only housing the rent to use force; it claims monopoly of that force within its jurisdiction. According to Macher in (Anifowoshe, 1999), a state is a form of human association acting through law as formulated by a government endowed. To this end, with coercive power maintain within a community for binding demarcated the universal external conditions.....of social order. While there could be other human associations within a state, it is differentiated by certain features:

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 1999 Constitution as amended of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 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).*

Management may refer to the process of using human and material resources efficiently to achieve organizational goals or objectives. Emphasis here is on efficient use of resource to achieve goals. Batenan and Snell (2009) 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 (Utan, 2014). Gulick reduced these principles into the popular POSDCORB (Utan, 2014). 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 care principle of management in running the public sector in particular. As Ayee (2008) posits, public sector management is a body of managerial or logical thought system based on ideas borrowed from the private sector and imported into the public sector. Ayee (2008) notes that the New Public Management (NPM) is characterized by phrases such as: reinventing, government, reengineering, revitalization of public sector service

organization, transformation, total quality management, paradigm shift, result over process, down sizing and right sizing 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) puts it, 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 ---- 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 (Ake, 1981). However, we cannot possibly talk about unclear determinism. The economic system is also conditioned by political in a society and vis-visa.

### An Overview of the Nigerian Public Sector

The origin of the Nigerian Public Sector is traceable to the colonial epoch when the Governor General, Fredrick Lugard, created a unified service. The colonial public service was dominated by the Europeans. To give the colonial regime some legitimacy, traditional rulers were co-opted at the lower level of the colonial political structure. 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 civil service became more visible and active in the formulation and execution of development policies 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.

The oil boom in the 1970s and the successful prosecution of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967 -1970, spurred greater commitment to the expansion of the economy, which eventually led to the creation of states to replace regions (12 in 1967, 19 in 1976, 21 in 1987, 30 in 1991, and 36 in 1996 plus FCT). The Federal Civil Service and its state counterparts have increasingly witnessed unprecedented growth to match their increasing social and economic responsibilities. The indigenization policy of 1972 as enacted in the Nigerian Enterprises promotion Decree was designed to control the commanding heights of the economy and accelerated the growth of the public service. Meanwhile, the civil service was conceived to formulate government policies, development

programmes, plans and implement same in such sector as social service, prepare annual budget and collect revenues in form of income taxes, fines and duties, make by-laws, regulations and orders within the aura of powers granted it by the parliament and other quasi-judicial functions.

### **A Construct of the Structure and Functions of the Public Sector**

The boundary problems within the public sector are theoretical and between the public and private sectors on the other are intricate. The problematic lies in the ambiguities of differentiating market and non-market activities; these are linked to the growing use of private sector techniques in the public sector. The increasing private sector role in the provision of public goods and the role of government in the provision of public goods through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) deepen the boundary problem (IMF, 2009). The receding role of the state in social provisioning and massive social service deficit creates governance gap between the state actors and the populace. The perception of the state as distanced from the people emerged in this context. 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-private-partnership has narrowed the boundary between the market and non-market; the state and market merger of resources for either social provisioning 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 boundary problem between the public and private became deeper when certain functions and monopolistic type roles previously exercised by the public sector; are either furnished by the private sector, though funded publicly, or have been transferred to the private sector, through partial or full disengagement of the state-owned enterprises from such activities (IMF, 2009). The privatization of publicly owned enterprises became pervasive in developing societies after the embrace of IMF and World Bank adjustment policies. The IMF and World Bank examples orthodoxy is predicated on neo-liberal ideology, which prescribes a receding role for the state and critical role for the market in capital formation and the allocation of resources. 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 by the state of market mechanisms and private sector provision of public services.

The functions of the public sector assist in its classification (IMF, 2009). It is therefore, imperative to identify the functions of the public sector and how this assist to differentiate it from the private sector. The public sector performs social service delivery role, price stabilisation, and the democratisation of social delivery. In the 2001 version of the International

Monetary Fund's government financial statistics manual, the classification of functions of government is used as an internationally agreed statistical grouping of government expenses. The problem, however, with the functional approach is that the spending functions performed by the public sector are also performed by the private sector. For instance, the provision of services in the health, education, 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.

The concept of ownership is seemingly crucial for defining the public and private sectors. In concrete terms, Ownership as used here relates to the possession of property, where the owner exercises right and control on the property. The private sector is owned by the non-state entities and its control is located outside the apparatuses of the state. The private sector is privately controlled by equity holders whose *raison d'être* is the maximisation of profit on the bases of private allocation of resources. The public sector is controlled by the state and managed on its behalf by state actors. This description suggests that the ownership of a public sector can be differentiated from the control. In developing states' institutions, the control of the public sector lies with the state actors who are expected to serve the people rather they divert and pillage its resources. The control of public sector by the state actors is often in the interest of the governing elite rather than the working people, urban and rural poor. The distinction between the public and private sectors is blurred in the developmental state where the state plays superintendent role over production activities. The ownership status conferred through private ownership will likely be mediated by the supervisory control exercised by the developmental state.

The World Bank (2012) locates the public sector in the upstream core ministries and central agencies and the downstream bodies including sector ministries, and non-executive institutions. The upstream organisations are core ministries and agencies at the centre of government; downstream bodies include sector ministries and agencies that deliver and fund services within the policy direction of government. The non-executive state institutions include: the judiciary and other legal institutions. The World Bank (2012) posits that the size and economic significance of the public sector defines its role as a critical contributor to growth and social welfare. The achievements of the public sector, it argues, emerge in the quality and nature of the services it provides, the infrastructure it finances, the quality of its social and economic regulation, and its sector policy objectives.

This section has dealt with the construct described as the public sector. The problem of differentiating the public and private sector is critical to conceptualise the public sector. This problem emerged within the context of the increasing discharge of social utilities by the private sector, increasing partnership between the public and private sectors in social service provisioning, and the privatization of public utilities. It is still possible, however, to construct the public sector in terms

of its size, quality and functions. The functional attributes of the public sector, ownership and control relations, are defining attributes of the public sector. The public sector is large in size, performs critical social functions, exercises regulatory or supervisory role within the economy, and its resources are managed by the state actors on behalf of the populace.

### Historical Backdrops 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.

The history of public service reform in Nigeria demands close scrutiny for certain reasons. First, the public service in Nigeria typifies the African situation. The administrative system in Nigeria is emblematic of what obtains in several African states. Secondly, the Nigerian reform profile points ostensibly at a progressive attempt by the state 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 (The Nation, 2015; Anazodo, 2012). 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 Nation, 2015).

The Udoji Commission mediated between the new managerialism that impacted on the civil service 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, standardisation of conditions of service, unified and integrated administrative structure, elimination of waste and the abolition of inefficient departments (The Nation, 2015; Anazodo, 2012). The Gowon administration however, missed the strategic

import of the Udoji report (The Nation, 2015). This Udoji report became a slogan for abundant wage as against a template for the recreation of the civil service in Nigeria. 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). 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; Olukoshi, 1995; Momoh, 1995). 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 re-invented the pre-1988 civil service system and its deficit (The Nation on Sunday, 29 November 2015). 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, 2012). 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 (The Nation, 2015). 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 state 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 results in the alienation of the exploited social groups such as: the urban poor, rural peasants, artisans,

students, unemployed 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. We 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 transparency and accountability 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 is imperative to give meaning to 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 Transformation Agenda of the Jonathan administration, and President Buhari's Change Agenda 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. 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. These reforms would not likely address the pervasive nature of bureaucratic corruption if the state remains in its present form.

### **The State and Public Sector Management: Contradictions and Impediments**

Without doubt, efforts have long been made to redirect the public sector through the state reforms. Yet, the neo-liberal based policies have further impoverished, pauperised and alienated the populace from state institutions. 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).

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 per cent 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 a result 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 fifty-one MDAs (Gong News, April 2015). 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 gather in dust in the Presidency. The Jonathan administration foot dragged on the implementation of the Oronsanye panel prescriptions despite a White Paper report.

The Buhari administration assumed power on the premise of the change mantra. The pre-election campaigns of the All Peoples Congress, APC, were laced with the promises to effectuate changes in the different sectors of Nigeria's political economy. The Ahmed Joda transition committee was set up within the context of the inaugural transfer of political power to the political opposition to give meaning to the promises of change. The committee 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 prompts, 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, July 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 state 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 state 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 anti-corruption 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 anti-corruption 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 state 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, et cetera 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. The blueprint of the Buhari administration to diversify the economy should be placed in the public domain for scrutiny and inputs of the civil society. This will provide 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 state 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 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 (National Mirror, 5 April 2016). But this should be done with any eye to its backlash which may throw the country more into crisis

## Conclusion

This article analysed the state at the theoretical level and it posited that the Nigerian state should be understood in terms of its integration into the global economy as a peripheral entity. The analyses on state provided the backdrop to discuss the reforms of the public sector in Nigeria. The work relied on the political economy paradigm 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 sub-structure assists to account for, and explain, the power politics behind the public sector reforms. 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, but largely seek reforms within the context of existing neo-colonial structures. Nonetheless, the public sector reforms have emphasized the imperative of efficient and functional public service that would lead the process peripheral capitalist development. 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 state requires reconstituting in the sense that would make it humane, benevolent and less vulnerable to hijack by the political class. 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 Nigerian state as presently should be reconstituted to achieve concrete development in all facets of the national life. The task for researchers is to probe the options for reconstituting the state and the likely consequences for the country's political economy.

## References

1. Anazodo, R. (2012), Civil service reforms in Nigeria: The journey so far in-service delivery, *The American Journal of Social and Management Sciences* 3 (1).
2. Ake, C. (1981), *A political economy of Africa*, London: Longman Group Limited
3. Anifowoshe, R. (1999), State, society and nation, in R. Anifowoshe and F. Ememuo (Eds.), *Elements of Politics*, Lagos: Malt House Press
4. Adejumbi, S. (1995), Adjustment reform and its impact on the economy and society, in Abubakar Momoh and Said Adejumbi (Eds.), *The Political Economy of Nigeria under Military Rule: 1984-1993*, Harare: Sapes Books
5. Almond, G and Coleman, I (1960), *The politics of developing areas*, Princeton University Press
6. Aye, J.K (2005), *Reforming the African public sector: Retrospect and prospects*, Dakar: CODESRIA Green Book
7. Batman, T.S. and Snell, S.A (2009), *Management: Leading and collaborating in competitive world*, New York: McGraw Hills Companies
8. Federal government of Nigeria (FGN)(1999), *The 1999 constitution*, Abuja: Federal Government Press
9. International Money Fund (IMF)(2009), Where does the public sector end and the private sector begin?, Ian Lienert, IMF Working Paper.
10. Laski, H. (1967), *Government of politics*, London: Allen and Urwin
11. Momoh, A. (1995), 'The political economy of the transition to civil rule, in Abubakar Momoh and Said

Adejumobi (Eds.), *The Political Economy of Nigeria under Military Rule: 1984-1993*, Harare: Sapes Books

12. Olukoshi, A. (1995), 'The political economy of the structural adjustment programme, in Abubakar Momoh and Said Adejumobi (eds). *The Political Economy of Nigeria under Military Rule: 1984-1993*, Harare: Sapes Books
13. Olaitan, A. (1995), 'The state and economy, in Abubakar Momoh and Said Adejumobi (Eds.), *The Political Economy of Nigeria under Military Rule: 1984-1993*, Harare: Sapes Books
14. Seteolu, D. (2007), Political and economic globalization, the privatization question in Nigeria and the challenge of developmental state, Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 33(2)
15. The Nation, 2015, Sunday, November 29, p.18
16. World Bank (2012), World bank approach to public sector management 2011-2020: Better results from public sector institutions, public sector and governance board, poverty reduction and economic management.
17. Premium Times, 2015, 25 July
18. Gong News 17 April 2015
19. National Mirror 2016, Tuesday April 5, p.