

Post Covid-19 and the Role of Public Administration in the Delivery of Good Governance in Lagos State

By

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Introduction

It is a great pleasure and honor to be here today and a rare privilege to address a gathering of retired but not tired public administrators in Lagos State. This occasion is extremely timely, first, as the state is battling with the aftermath of recent crisis that has led to colossal loss of properties in the State. Second, coming at a time when the world is still battling with the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic and national governments are designing policies on investing in understanding how to address what we have now tagged the “New Normal” on lives of citizens and finally, the social and economic effect of the pandemic which has amplified the inequalities within the economy, it has become imperative that all conscious governments should be addressing this topic. Hence, the need to discuss how public administration can deliver the needed good governance to address the present challenges in Lagos State. In the wake of all these developments, let me warn that whatever prognosis I have made here is not out of the power of clairvoyance and as such may not fit absolutely into developing scenarios in some respects. In addition, I am not an economist nor am I a forecaster so as to be able to comfortably predict eventuality in the next century. My consolation, however, lies in the fact that it could be a trigger for evolving the appropriate solution to the challenges that will be arising in the aftermath.

The challenges confronting the Lagos economy in the 21st Century are diverse and enormous. The unacceptable state of the economy is most galling given the States’ enormous endowments of natural and human resources. According to the United Nations, Nigeria, currently the 7th most populated country in the world with **206,139,589** is projected to hit **262,977,337** by 2030, a growth of 2.42% and **401,315,000** by 2050 thereby making Nigeria the 3rd largest country in the world.

The rapid population growth especially its urban population which is growing much faster than its rural population has magnified the current infrastructure deficit challenge and access levels in a State like Lagos and will continue to lag behind average levels since there is no direct or indirect restriction on the rural-urban drift. On its current development trajectory, it is unlikely that Lagos will meet universal access for health services, environment, improved sanitation and electricity, as envisioned in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), given the current state of available resources.

Although, the topic of my paper as suggested by the organizers is “**Lagos 21st Century Economy in Post Covid-19 Pandemic**”, I have decided to tinker with the topic in order to address the emerging challenges and the unfolding issues while maintaining the immediate contours of the theme of the program. To this end, I have re-focused the topic for a more meaningful engagement with our current reality and for a more productive discussion and, therefore, re-titled it as “**Post Covid-19 and the Role of Public Administration in the Delivery of Good Governance in Lagos State**”. For a proper appreciation of the theme, I deem it fit to preliminarily espouse the various key concepts in the theme.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION.

Good Governance

This does not yield itself to easy interpretation like other social concepts. The meaning depends on who defines it. However, there are certain yardsticks that can be used to measure performance of good governance: accountability, transparency and rule of law, alleviation of poverty, and justice.

Good Governance is a very wide concept that entails running the affairs of the government in a manner that is optimally beneficial to the people.¹ ‘Good governance

¹ Michael Johnston (Colgate University): Good Governance: Rule of Law, Transparency, and Accountability https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267974525_Good_Governance_Rule_of_Law_Transparency_and_Accountability last visited November 24, 2020

has several characteristics which includes accountability, public participation and transparency, rule of law, equity and inclusiveness. Accountability is a good governance.

Significantly however, as rightly captured by the United Nations, “Nonetheless, while the idea of good governance is an encumbered concept requiring due consideration,² it is intertwined with the challenges of public administration toward improving governance. Perhaps for good governance and public sector transformation to be achieved, public administration and public sector entities need to have an applied strategy to achieve results and outcomes.³ Public administration therefore is a major catalyst of good governance. The threshold of good governance is the happiness of the people as rightly observed by Sheik Maktoum in his Book, ‘Flashes of thought’ to the effect that , “We could think of happiness as the foundation for many of our ideas and policies. Indeed some international institutions have even adopted citizens’ happiness and satisfaction as scientific indicators of development”.

Public Administration

Public administration has no generally accepted definition. This is because the scope of the subject is so great and so debatable that it is easier to explain than define. Public administration, technically, is a field of study, that is, a discipline and an occupation. Public administration, therefore, by extension, involves the putting together of human and material resources in order to achieve the objectives of public policy.⁴ Administrative activities can take place in a variety of settings, provided the crucial elements are present such as the cooperation of human beings to perform tasks that have been mutually accepted as worthy of the joint effort.⁵

The institutional framework in which administration occurs may be as diverse as business firms, labour unions, churches, educational institutions or governmental units.

² Ajayi, C. (2008) *A country on the brink of collapse?* London: the Academy Press.

³ Ayeni, V. (Ed.). (2002). *Public Sector in Developing Countries – A Handbook of Commonwealth Experience*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

⁴ Eme, O. I., & Ede, P. (2007). Bureaucracy and Development in the Third World: A Case Study of Nigeria – Agenda for Effective Public Service Delivery. *Nigeria Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(4), 228–239.

⁵ Ibid.

In the context of our discussion today, public administration is that sector of administration found in a political setting, concerned primarily with the implementation of public policy. According to P. Evans, public administration consists of all operations which has as its purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of public policy.⁶ This explains why Mark Grindle asserts that public administration is the activities that involve the executive branch of government.⁷ Other experts see public administration as the area of study and practice where law and policy are recommended and carried out. Therefore, public administration refers to both the activities concerned with the management of government business as well as the study of those activities. Those actors that are involved in this regard are the public administrators that may include the civil servants and the political heads. Because the basic role of public administrators is service delivery, I am compelled to briefly delve into the meaning of public service delivery as a segment in this paper.

Public Service Delivery:

Service delivery is a comprehensive concept. In the context of governance, public service delivery is the result of the intentions, decision of government and government institutions, actions undertaken and decision made by people employed in government institutions. Service delivery has an impact on human development directly if it is delivered to people in the form of basic services such as education, health, water and sanitation which contribute to promoting human development.

According to Nash and Nash, effective service delivery entails provision of basic social services and amenities to the citizenry in such a way that their expectations are met or exceeded while, at the same time, the business of governance remains viable. Effective service delivery, therefore, is rendering services that correspond to the citizen's desires, needs and expectations. This conception emanates from the perceived

⁶ Evans, P. (1995). *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁷ Grindle, M. (2004). Good Enough Governance: Poverty Reduction and Reform in Developing Countries. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions*, 17(4), 525–548.

need to treat members of the public that require government services like a private-sector entrepreneur would treat his/her customers.

At the risk of emphasis, it includes the provision of public goods, social, economic, and/or infrastructural services such as education, health, grants, water and electricity etc., to the citizens who need them or have demand for them. Improving public service delivery is one of the biggest challenges worldwide, particularly in the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Covid-19 Pandemic

Corona virus is a novel virus that afflicts human beings in a manner that is yet incapable of precision. This implies that the mode of transmission is still largely intractable. The exponential manner in which it has affected the world qualifies it as a pandemic. It is a multi-systemic disease, in the sense that it is capable of affecting any organ of the body. It is very important to know that the symptoms of this virus is not limited to respiratory symptoms such as cough, sore throat, catarrh, difficulty in breathing, loss of taste and smell. It can manifest in so many other ways such as diarrhea, muscle pain, abdominal pain and so on.

The manifestation of corona virus differs in individuals ranging from mild to severe. Due to the above reality, it has become compelling to, as much as possible, isolate people from each other by way of social distancing. We have been told that part of the preventive measures includes regular washing of hands, prevention of contact of hands with the eyes, nose, mouth, avoidance of contact with public surfaces such as tables, stair rails and so on, frequent use of hand sanitizer, healthy lifestyle that helps to boost the immune system.

The emergence of the virus has caused several countries to shut down in one form or the other. The effect of the various lockdowns of businesses and economies have been devastating on countries and states. It has resulted in serious inequality between the rich and the poor, as most poor people belong to the daily earners. In view of the consequences arising from the pandemic, the United Nations warns that “The COVID-

19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis: it is affecting societies and economies at their core. While the impact of the pandemic will vary from country to country, it will most likely increase poverty and inequalities at a global scale, making achievement of SDGs even more urgent. Assessing the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on societies, economies and vulnerable groups is fundamental to inform and tailor the responses of governments and partners to recover from the crisis and ensure that no one is left behind in this effort.

Without urgent socio-economic responses, global suffering will escalate, jeopardizing lives and livelihoods for years to come. Immediate development responses in this crisis must be undertaken with an eye to the future. Development trajectories in the longterm will be affected by the choices countries make now and the support they receive.” This probably explains and justifies the theme of today’s discussion. Kudos therefore to the organizers who are men and women of great foresight in this regard. It is not in our character to be this proactive in the past. I am sure you can see the reason I said the organizers are not tired.

Thus, at the global level, the following priority steps has been outlined: protecting health systems and services; ramping up social protection; protecting jobs, small and medium-sized businesses and informal sector workers; making macro-economic policies work for everyone; and promoting peace, good governance and trust to build social cohesion, as the immediate and future panacea to the unfolding challenges of the pandemic and the economy of nations and States. In recent times, the COVID-19 pandemic is exposing the quality of governance and competence of the world’s leaders. In times of crisis, most people instinctively turn to their governments for protection and assistance. Politicians and civil servants, in this instance, are tested in their various capacities to determine the appropriateness of the choices deployed for administering public good based on the quality of service the leadership has provided to ascertain the credibility of the projected supposed legitimate course. To date, many of the most able and agile responses to COVID-19 have come, not from national governments, but from municipal ones like Lagos State. Consequently, States in Nigeria must face the reality

that they are on their own in the response to the impacts of Covid-19 and similar public health challenges like it happened during the ravages of Ebola under Babatunde Raji Fashola, particularly in terms of the States' economic buffer. The pandemic has had an untoward effect on the revenue, infrastructure, health system of most societies, Lagos not being an exception. In fact, recently, the Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, says his administration envisages a N240bn revenue decline in the State as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The impact of Covid-19 on the State has been felt in all facets of the State's economy: the food chain has seriously been affected; the transport system and means of livelihood were halted. The comatose health system has further been stretched to a breaking point. The airline and hospitality industries were shutdown. Even the judiciary had to resort to virtual court sitting with a provision of observation for safety protocols in emergency cases. Every aspect of the economy has had to explore and create different forms of innovative ideas to cope with the social and economic effects different lockdowns experienced all over the world. Some of it came with great costs to the economy.

I have gone this far to demonstrate the fact that not only the international community is rattled by the pandemic but the local communities too. If that were so, what then is the fate of local communities particularly in the delivery of goods and services?

It is against this background that the theme of today is topical. It is instructive, before delving into the corpus of the paper that we introduce the State entity we are focusing on. It examines the demography of Lagos, its present reality and the present socio-economic and infrastructural challenges affecting the State. It also looks at the need for Lagos to achieve its aim of being the State of excellence .

Lagos State in a nutshell

Lagos is a coastal city of over 26 million people; nd overpopulated State surrounded by water and slums. The State exemplifies how social and economic challenges are upending Africa's megacities' growth, health and livelihoods. With over 82,684 hectares in landmass of a density of 209 people per hectare, economic inequalities have

consequences on access to health and health-seeking behavior. Over 60% of the residents of Lagos are poor and live in the over 100 slums and informal settlements scattered across the city. They lack water, good roads, hospitals, sanitation and other basic services. This makes them particularly more vulnerable during a health crisis, and for the present purpose, the Covid-19 pandemic. As at date, the land mass is 385.9 sq. mi, out of which 66.29sq. mi is water. Population density is around 6,871 residents per square mile. Vehicular density is about 400 to a kilometer. The current population, unofficial, is about 26 million people and it is growing at an average of 3.26 percent, meaning about 3500 people per annum. This is certainly a conservative projection that is definitely not realistic. My forecast, not based on any scientific parameter is that the population will be around thirty million by the turn of the next century.

Having exposed us to the picture of what the world is confronting, coupled with the expectation of the citizens, may I progress to briefly touch upon certain areas of interest to the State of Lagos in the discharge of good governance.

Health Care Delivery in Lagos

The challenges of healthcare delivery in Lagos State is no news to anyone in Nigeria and should not be, if we benchmark the demand for health services against the population of residents in the State. With Over 26 million in population, Lagos is projected and certainly expected to experience population boom since procreation is not controlled and the number of people entering Lagos to settle continues to increase. The import of the population explosion will continue to overstretch the capacity of the State's administration to provide the needed health services. Cramping alone, within the limited space, will generate a lot of ailments in the State. The implication simply is that the State will require more resources to cope with this demand. Regretably, the revenue source does not usually grow commensurably with the population of younger and more medically burdensome population. Hence, there must be more ingenious ways of addressing this challenge. In this wise, Lagos will have to come up with innovative ideas, financial resources geared towards development and training of health personnel in confronting the challenges of the 21st century. Remember that the State has had to use temporary isolation centers to bridge the infrastructural gap that confronted it in

the wake of the pandemic. This means that steps must be taken urgently to address infrastructural deficit which is capable of compounding the health challenges to confront the State in the nearest future.

It must be stated categorically that good health, as people know from their own experience, is a crucial part of well-being and by extension, productivity, hence the continuous economic justification for investment in health services. Improved health contributes to economic growth by reducing production losses caused by worker's illness; permitting the use of natural resources that had been totally or nearly inaccessible because of disease; increasing the enrollment of children in school which makes them better able to learn; and freeing alternative use of resources that would otherwise have to be spent on treating illness. The economic gains are relatively greater for poor people, who are typically most handicapped by ill health and who stand to gain the most from the development of underutilized natural resources.

Resulting also from the pandemic, and in view of the social distancing required, some measure of ingenuity will also be required by personnel for the treatment of several diseases. The state will need to deploy innovative technologies to confront the challenges, for instance, as currently deployed, tele-Medicine, verbal treatment, social media options, prescriptive medicine to cope with the several challenges. This approach will align with the options developed during the pandemic for the reduction of interface between medical professionals and patients to the barest minimum. This will assist in reducing the tendency for the pandemic to spread most particularly to affect health workers in the frontline of combatting the disease.

Except massive growth of revenue base of government is adequately improved, it might be almost impracticable for the government to offer medical free services for important health challenges of citizens. The net implication, therefore, is that the State will be required to impose user fees and charges for several health services depending on the financial ability and capacity of an average user. Hitherto, the State operates a policy

where health services are free for indigenes from certain age brackets. In order to be able to meet the expected health investments in the century,

alliance with the private sector in investment, promotion, capacity building, infrastructural and human development is a must. Of crucial application is the promotion of enrolment into the various health insurance schemes. As remarked earlier, there is no way the State will be able to shoulder the complete health requirements of the citizens. Currently the percentage of enrolment is still unencouraging and needs to be improved upon. Hence, there is need for adequate sensitization of the masses on the use of health insurance. At the verge of completing this piece, I read that the Senate of Nigeria just passed a bill rendering compulsory the subscription to National health insurance. Though I am yet to read the content, it seems to me to be a step in the right direction.

Equally of value in addressing the challenge of that century will be promotion, harmonization and standardization of alternative medicine. There must be a proper framework for such alternative medicine to the extent that it will become attractive for investment. This will engender confidence in alternative medicine and lessen pressure on orthodox medicine that is much more expensive to sustain, and it will provide more comfort to the citizens, particularly those in the rural setting.

Collaboration with health institutions in other continents can also be of added value. Donor agencies can also be approached but the success in this regard will largely depend on the accountability and transparency on the part of governments and their officials.

Environmental Challenges in Lagos State

The path towards sustainable development has many challenges that still lie ahead. Many developing countries are struggling with issues such as food security and the effects of environmental degradation due to developmental activities, which is manifested through industrial carbon emissions, electronic wastes, over-population and so on. It is still difficult for the State to cope with challenge of waste

management. This includes electronic, vegetal, medical and other wastes. Apart from the above is also air and water, noise and industrial pollutions.

A recent 2018 World Bank study estimates air pollution cost losses of \$2.1 Billion representing 2.1% of the State GDP and causing an estimated 11, 200 premature deaths, the highest in West Africa.⁸ Children under five, who are at a higher risk of respiratory infections were the most affected, accounting for 60% of deaths in 2018. This is an issue the government must prepare to combat as a result of the anticipated congestion of our settlements.

In a 21st Century world, there is a need for physical restructuring of the State in terms of environmental planning. There is absolute need for spatial distribution by way of development of the hinterland. There must be a conscious effort on the part of the government to disperse and encourage people to migrate from the centers of concentration. This is achievable through re ordering of the State's master plan in a manner that will promote neighbourhood-mixed developments. This will involve the location of activity points in the current 'docile' areas by way of provision of modern infrastructure and facilities, that will warrant multiplier activities.

This in effect will reduce the over-concentration of residents in particular areas of the State. The State must also develop Zero Tolerance for waste. It must evolve the policy and practice of Reduce, Re-Use and Recycle in recognition of the lack of capacity to manage waste in the State. It must properly and actively promote recycling in line with global best practices. Recycled materials must also be promoted for use by the manufacturers. The use of non-biodegradable materials must be discouraged. This is another potent way of combating the menace of waste in the new century. To address the problem of carbon emission which is likely to multiply, the stepping up of the tree planting program and schemes is inevitable. As we all know, apart from the aesthetic value of trees, it also serves as a carbon sequestrator.

⁸ [Blogs.worldbank.org/african/air-pollution-silent-killer-Lagos](https://blogs.worldbank.org/african/air-pollution-silent-killer-lagos) (September 3, 2020) Last visited November 24, 2020.

We must also not forget the channelization of the State in view of the pressure on land that will result from over population and bloated developments, leading to the difficulty of stormwater percolation. The same applies to sewage management that is lying prostrate even now. The sewage network is still less than five percent coverage. This has several implications including medical effect for the emerging population in the century. The management of medical, electronic and medical wastes still lingers and certainly will increase in the next century. All these must be prepared for, and one of the viable ways is through the public, private partnership.

Due to growing industrialization and existing energy challenges in the country, power supply problem might still be very much around. The net effect is that carbon emission remains a major challenge for the State with over 70 percent of the industry located in the city of Lagos, the impact of this on air pollution is better imagined in the next century. The State must, therefore, prepare for great use of green energy in the century.

It is important that primacy be given to environmental issues as researches have established that the more we cater for the environment, the less the State expenditure on clinical medicine. This is part of the strategy the State must adopt and be proactive about in order to deliver effective governance in the 21st century.

Entertainment Industry in Nigeria

Nigeria is renowned for its creative talents. The country is home to a huge number of highly talented musicians, actors and sportsmen whose works are widely enjoyed by diverse audiences all over the world. Lagos has performed relatively well in the entertainment sector and still the leading city in the promotion and actualization of the dreams of most entertainers. This derives, not only from her population, but the cosmopolitan nature of the State. The industry is, however, confronted by a number of challenges, key of which is lack of support investment by government and widespread piracy of intellectual works. The situation might be worse in the next century especially

if unemployment and poverty are not arrested. This nefarious activity of pirates has jeopardized the returns on investments, thereby undermining the economic interests of the entertainers and constituting a disincentive to prospective investors in the sector. Against the next century, therefore, effective and efficient enforcement of the intellectual property laws is imperative.

The non-standardization, poor infrastructure and lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework that presently hampers excellent delivery in the industry needs to be addressed. As indicated above, the propensity of the challenges in the next century is a great possibility.

To address the challenge of standardization identified above, there might be the need for huge investment in the sector in forms of specialized vocational schools for the development of capacity and sharpening of talents of some desirable citizens. These initiatives, if well-articulated, guided and implemented, can be a revenue generating sector which the State can utilize to meet other financial and public good obligations.

Tourism

Tourism is a vital sector to every nation in the world. It is important because it has the capacity to boost a nation's GDP. There are lots of tourist centres in Nigeria and they possess immense potentials for developing the economy if their resources are harnessed well. Lagos is also a tremendous gateway to tourism and cultural spots in Nigeria. Unfortunately, till date, there is yet to be an acceptable tourism "MASTER PLAN" in Lagos. Hence, the inability of the State to reap the benefits of tourism. Futuristically, therefore, there is the compelling need for a master plan that will be a product of all the stakeholders in the sector. This will enable the State identify the various tourist sites and actualize the improvements required on such tourist sites to make them more attractive to visitors and generate more revenue and job opportunities.

For tourism to bring the potential benefit, major investments at the initial stage, must include but not limited to development of waterways, efficient transportation system,

cleaning of waterways and adequate security of lives and property in the State. Presently, nobody is deluded that there is insecurity in our State and by extension, the Country. This, therefore, demands extensive investment in the area of security ahead of the next century.

Furthermore, for tourism to thrive in the State, **adequate infrastructure** such as airports , road, energy supply must be guaranteed. Until these infrastructures are improved, tourism in the next century might remain a mirage. The State must also promote linkages to attract tourists into the State.

Conclusion

It is certain that what guarantees development is good governance. We have realized that no nation develops in the absence of good governance. It is public administration that deals with allocation of resources and reliance on the relatively successful elements in society in provision of philanthropy cannot be a substitute to the role of public administration in good governance. The government must wake up to its responsibilities and must encourage the citizenry towards actualizing the realities of good governance in a society that is plagued with myriads of challenges like ours.