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Pedagogical Insights into the Teaching of Public Administration in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

The crux of this paper was to have a pedagogical insight in the teaching of Public Administration in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. It is a credo that the supra discipline Public Administration hold the sway for anchoring the policy and programmes of both federal, States and local government. It is in this breath, that curriculum planners included Public Administration as a course of study, either as elective or full discipline in our universities, polytechnics and colleges of education across the nation. The *raison d'être* for the latter sentence is based on the premise that Public Administration will provide the leeway for capacity building of graduates of the discipline, to enable them acquire both physical and intellectual skills (cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains) in order to be useful to the nation. For effective teaching of public administration, ingredients of pedagogical insights must be involved, utilized or adopted by lecturers/teachers, handling various courses in Public Administration. It is in this breath, that public administration can effectively provide the much desired linkages between tertiary institution, development and growth of the Nigeria economy. Consequently, this paper defined the concept of Public Administration. The paper is explicated with the aid of the system theory. It discussed the variegated strategies of teaching Public Administration. The attributes of Public Administration were orchestrated. Finally, the authors concluded that lecturers/teachers of Public Administration must adopt and utilize pedagogical insights in the process of teaching of the course. It is the desiderata for graduates of Public Administration to effectively acquire the skills necessary for them to contribute their quota to Nigeria development and growth.

Introduction

The issue of pedagogical insight into the teaching of Public Administration in Tertiary Institution across the nation has occupied the front burner in the discourse amongst scholars in the various discipline such as education, etc. (Okosun and Urhoghide, 2012). The aftermath of the foregoing, is that there are floodgates of studies in the use of pedagogical insight in the teaching of Public Administration in our higher institutions. In this vein, the graduates of Public Administration streaming out of the various universities and polytechnics in Nigeria will be adequately equipped with the intellectual and practical skill (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 12981).

However, recent research carried out by educationists have revealed that teachers/lecturers handling various courses in Public Administration relegate the use of pedagogy to the background. If it is utilized at all, they are not able to stimulate or arouse the interest of the students. The students merely read to pass examinations and acquired degree, which is necessary to getting a job (Okosun 2012). The net result of the latter sentence, is that the students of Public Administration are not adequately equipped with the relevant skills to be useful members of the society (Okosun 2012). Thus poor linkages have been provided by the Tertiary Institutions through the teaching of Public Administration, with a view of synergizing growth and development of the Nigerian economy. Given this background, the paper review the germane issue that are involved in the use of pedagogical insight as the main plank in teaching Public Administration. The paper is dichotomized into sections beginning with an introduction. The first section examines the concept of Public Administration. It also presents the theoretical framework. This paper is explicated in all ramifications with the aid of the system theory.

The second section examined the attributes and goal of Public Administration. In the third section, great emphasis will be laid on the variegated strategies for teaching Public Administration in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. This section includes policy prescriptions/recommendation made by the authors. This section ends with concluding remarks.

Conceptual Clarification

There are variegated definition of the concept Public Administration. In other words, there is not a single definition of the concept. Various scholars define the conceptual according to the perception which they view it.

According to Adebayo (2000), "Public Administration is that discipline which is concerned with the study of how a country administration is organized and how it functions." A macroscopic view of the above definition will bring to limelight that the discipline is mainly concerned with the formulation, agenda building, implementation of various policy and programmes of both the central and regional (states) government. The essence is to ameliorate or enhance the standard of living of the vast majority of Nigerians residing in both the urban and rural areas of Nigeria. Apart from this, Public Administration is concerned towards the efficient means of implementing policy decided by political actors and policy makers (Adebayo, 2006).

Iyoha (1998) postulated that the concept Public Administration can be defined as:

- a) The cooperative effort in a public
- b) Cover all the three branches executive, legislative and judiciary and their interpretations.
- c) Has an important role in the formulation of policy as they are part of the political processes
- d) It is different in significant ways and
- e) Is closely associated with the numerous groups in providing services to the community.

The above definition is lucid, and provides a broader perspective of Public Administration. Professor Iyoha laid bare the ingredients that constitute Public Administration. An extrapolation of the definition will reveal that Public Administration covers the three arms of government. It is concerned with the formulation and implementation of public policy. Also, there is a wall of difference between Public Administration and private Business Administration (Iyoha, 1998). The hallmark of Public Administration is the overall improvement of the quality of life of Nigerians.

Theoretical Framework

According to Issac, (1978), theories are the building blocks of social sciences such as Public Administration. The import of the above definition is that theories help to explain, convey understanding and predicting issues relating to the discipline Public Administration.

In all ramifications, the system theory is a concept of great significance to pedagogical insight in Public Administration. The system approach to Public Administration presupposes that Public Administration as a whole is influenced by a number of interactions with its environment or outside its environment boundaries. This makes Public Administration possess the attributes of ambience (Iyoha 1999). Ambience in the sense that Public Administration takes place in an environment. Thus, Public Administration is ecologically laden. (Iyoha, 1999).

An underdeveloped area or region state does not exist in a vacuum. It is mutually dependent on the environment. It is part of the larger system such as the national system, educational system as a whole.

In addition, most system are subdivided into a number of distinct subsystems (Ancoff 1970). Each performing largely identifiable task (economic, political and social subsystems in a national entity e.g. Nigeria. A common attribute in the modus operandi of all subsystems is their interactions with themselves or outside environment (Issak, 1975). For instance, the various Tertiary Institutions established by both states and federal government interact with the environment and the officials of Federal Ministries of Education, the regulatory bodies such as National Board for Technical Education, National Universities Commission etc. These officials are “clothes with offices” (Oronsaye,1997). This interaction is a prerequisite for the efficient and effective development of the nation political, education system etc. Consequently, a set of rules and government policy that govern the interrelationship between the Tertiary Institutions owed by the different tier of government and the national subsystem lies in the developmental needs. Which efflorescence to the formulation of developmental policies and programmes to flow between the subsystems. For analyst/political actors or political decision makers to understand the various subsystems and their developmental need (Okosun and Urhoghide 2013). The system theory is critically applied below: -

The national/states structural framework includes the political actors and the bureaucrats at the apex, the regulatory bodies cum the Tertiary Institutions and the host communities. By definition and in line with the study, Public Administration in both the federal and state government provides the platform of behavioural pattern among developmental actors of a hierarchical structured level in a national development framework.

Within this framework, the education policy and programmes of teaching Public Administration Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria, seek to answer some fundamental questions among others namely:

- 1) What are the objectives of the teaching of public administration in tertiary institution in Nigeria?

- 2) What are the goals of the teaching of Public Administration in universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria?
- 3) What is the nature of the pedagogical insights adopted by the teacher/lecturers handling Public Administration courses?
- 4) Are the objectives of public administration curriculum conterminous with the goals of Nigeria development quest?
- 5) How will the use of pedagogical insight synergize the teaching of Public Administration in Tertiary Institution in Nigeria, thereby provide the desired linkages between Tertiary Institutions and the society?
- 6) Are the interactions between education policy makers in both federal and state government encouraging the teaching of Public Administration in the Tertiary Institution, as a pedestal for national growth and development?

In the modest sense, the objectives of the teaching of Public Administration through eclectic approach include:

- 1) To provide the graduates of Public Administration an opportunity to acquire practical and theoretical skills necessary for them to function effectively in the society (Federal Government of Nigeria 1981), thereby facilitating easy achievement of the national goals growth and development (Asaya et al 2006).
- 2) To enhance the production of graduates to meet the manpower needs of the nation. It is within this context, that interactions between the national, and states government, the Tertiary Institution and the host communities under the influence of policy makers and the production of Public Administration graduates that the nation sustainable development can be achieved.
- 3) Inculcating the right type of values and attitudes (Osakwe 1994). The essence of the latter paragraph is to produce graduates with high moral rectitude and good character. This will enable them to display respect for elders, senior colleagues at the workplace when they are eventually employed (Okosun, 2014).
- 4) The development of the individual's capacities to understand and appreciate their environment (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1981).

Enhancing Manpower Development through the Teaching of Public Administration

The authors of this paper harped on the above subheading despite the fact that it has been mentioned in section one. The reason can be seen in the fact that it will provide an insight to avoid reader to understand the essence and dynamics of the supra discipline Public Administration (Iyoha,1989).

The main fundamental goal of the national policy of education is the “inculcation of national consciousness and national unity and the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his society” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981). Through the teaching of Public Administration in Tertiary Institution in Nigeria, the students are exposed to various courses on the need to imbibe the values, ethos of national unity and consciousness. The students from various ethnic groups in the country are brought together in various classrooms, taught by lecturers, through this process, they interact with one another. Thereby, forgoing a common camaraderie which blossoms and efflorescence to national unity. The students are made to believe that though tribe and tongue differs, in brotherhood we stand (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1960).

A corollary to the above salient fact is through the teaching of Public Administration, the students acquire skills of different dimension. This will enable them to cope with the challenges and dynamic of life in a changing world (Aljef, 2004). The world has become a global village and because of this, students of Public Administration must be adequately exposed, equipped with the relevant concepts, methodologies etc. So that when they are employed in industries, educational institutions, multinational or transnational companies in Nigeria. They can bring their skills to bear through transfer of learning to cope with the job (Asaya et al, 2006).

Attributes of Public Administration Curriculum

The discipline Public Administration is eclectic. It is so referred because of the fact that it borrowed its curriculum from other disciplines such as economics, sociology, and geography, education etc.

Apart from the above mentioned paragraph, Public Administration also possess the attributes of ambience (Iyoha 1998). This is due to the fact that the

discipline is ecologically laden, in other words, Public Administration takes place in environment. The environment may either be state, local or nation. It is in this direction that we must adhere to the advice of Wright (1983) who opined that any discipline that possesses the attribute of ambience must take into consideration the need to give equal attention to topics drawn from the main course and those burrowed from other discipline.

Strategies of Teaching Public Administration in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

According to Osakwe (1994), and Asaya et al (2006), there are various strategies of teaching students in schools, colleges and Tertiary Institutions. These strategies include the following:

- 1) Questioning method
- 2) Demonstration method
- 3) Group method
- 4) Field trips/excursion
- 5) Use of instructional materials
- 6) Motivation
- 7) Industrial attachment/practicum

In order for the reader to grasp the import of the above strategies highlighted by the authors of this paper, we shall pause to examine each of them. This will help to convey proper understanding.

- 1) **Questioning Method:** Questioning method otherwise known as Socratic Method is one of the fundamental strategy of teaching Public Administration in our Tertiary Institution. Questioning is an important means of teaching (Asaya 2006). Unfortunately, most lecturers/teachers of Public Administration used the method very badly (Asaya et al 2006). Questioning method has the merit of not only galvanizing the thought, of the students. It also stimulates them, to think possess the attribute of driving the students to action by arousing learning in them (Asaya 2006).
- 2) **Demonstration Method:** Demonstration method is a veritable method of teaching Public Administration. The method involves the teacher demonstrating either a computer graphic of the picture of a deem as he is teaching the topic (Asaya 2006). The main essence of the demonstration

method is that the students should be able to perform similar task or skill their own (Asaya 2006).

- 3) **Group Method:** A potent method of teaching Public Administration is the group method. This method should be utilized or adopted by teachers/lecturers particularly, in this era of large students' enrolment or high population in the department of Public Administration in federal and stated owned Tertiary Institutions. The group method is a teaching skill purely designed to deal with the problem of large classes by regrouping children into small sizes of small unit for the purpose of effective control and teaching (Asaya, Uduehi and Osagie. 2006). The merit of this method is that it helps the teacher to indentify the need or interest of the students, as well as affording the lecturer the opportunity to interact with the students from variegated background (Asaya, Uduehi S, & Osagie C. 2006).
- 4) **Field Trip/Excursion:** A veritable method of teaching Public Administration in Tertiary Institution is field trip/excursion method. This method involves the lecturers/teachers handling courses in the discipline organizes the students do proceed on field trip/excursion visiting places and organizations related to Public Administration. Before the students proceed on field trip, the head of department must have sought the approval of the relevant school authorities, as well as a letter approving the excursion trip from the visited organization. This method has been successful utilized by the Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies Kuru near Jos. The students undertook a comprehensive field trip to various states of the federation. The purpose is to widen the mental horizon of the students. Secondly, since the students are going to be involved in policy making/agenda building for the nation/states after graduation. They would have gotten a firsthand information of the problems (Okosun, 2014).
- 5) **Use of Instructional Material:** According to Asaya, Uduehi and Osagie, (2006), instructional materials are set of tools ranging from a while range of elementary and homemade devices to the highly modern complex electronic devices or machines that help the teacher to cope with specific teacher requirement, needs and situation. Instructional materials help to concretize academic, theoretical and abstract concepts in students' minds. Difficult task and topics are make simple to the students through the use of instructional materials (Asaya, Uduehi and Osagie, 2006). This method is

well utilized by lecturers in industrialized and advanced nations Tertiary Institutions such as the Temple University, Philadelphia, United State of America, and Oxford, Cambridge Universities in Great Britain.

- 6) **Practicum:** Practicum refers to the process whereby students of Public Administration in Tertiary Institutions are made to undergo some months of practical experience aside the school environment (Asaya, Uduehi and Osagie 2006). Practicum has been incorporated in the curriculum of Public Administration in polytechnics and universities. This programme is coordinated by the ITF (Industrial Training Fund), an agency of the federal government. However, it is sad to note that the practicum programme in Public Administration is benighted by avalanche of problems. These problems include; the students not reporting to the organization the polytechnics or universities posted them to. corruption, truancy etc. Be it as it may, practicum must be reinvigorated as an essential pedagogy of teaching Public Administration.
- 7) **Lecture Method:** Lecture method is one of the traditional methods of teaching Public Administration. This method involves the teacher, talk more or less continuously to the class (Asaya, Uduehi, and Osagie 2006). The class duty is to listen with rapt attention, jotting down notes as the teacher lectures. In this method, the students do not converse with the lecturer. At the end of the lectures, the teacher informs the students to ask questions which the lecturer must provide suitable answers to. Recent researchers have reveal that an unserious lecturer who wasn't prepare for the lectures can be caught off guard by intelligent questions from students. Rather than answer the question, the teacher resorts to exhibit some act of bravado or parrying the question with unnecessary jokes. What a disaster for the student? This is because the student goes home with his/her question unanswered by the lecturer (Okosun 2013). Nonetheless, lecture method has the merit of enabling the lecturer to cover the course outline with minimum delay. The technique trains the students in the act of listening to lecturers with rapt attention.

Conclusion

From the outset of the paper, the authors have demonstrated and remonstrated that pedagogical insights of various dimensions should not only be an integral part of in Public Administration curriculum, in various

polytechnics and universities in Nigeria. The lecturers/teachers of the discipline (Public Administration should endeavour to utilize, adopt the skills in teaching the course to students. It must be a *va-de me cum* for both the lecturers and student. It has the merit of efflorescing, synergizing the teaching and learning of Public Administration in our educational institutions. Put simply, pedagogical insight is a *sin qua non* to the teaching of Public Administration in Tertiary Institution in Nigeria.

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