

Woodrow Wilson's 1887 Essay on Administration and the Challenges before 21st Century Scholars

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Abstract

Woodrow Wilson in his epoch making essay, “The Study of Administration” in 1887 said: “it is getting to be harder to ran a constitution (government) than to frame one” (politics). Wilson's argument on the job of government being harder than politics has remained as relevant in today's world as at when it was first propounded. Regrettably, the variables that continue to make the task of running the government harder are yet to be clearly identified and articulated with solutions provided. This article x-rayed contemporary factors that makes the task of running the government (public administration) difficult and provides an impetus for a deliberate, intentional, constructive and systematic approach to solve the problems. Using the historical and qualitative research approach, the paper offered useful findings and conclusions and recommended that the time for scholars in the field to arise to the present challenge and come up with new empirical solutions to the problems encountered in running the government is NOW. The challenges should be clearly articulated and pragmatic solutions offered just as the father of the discipline, Wilson did in 1887.

Keywords: Public Administration, Challenges, founding father, Governance, Citizen Services.

Introduction

The first generation of Greek Philosophers, Aristotle and Plato made strong and conscious attempts for the organization of public administration. Articles in Wikipedia show that the subject of governance and administration got a formal attention as far back as about 375 B.C through intellectual dialogues organized by the great Socrates which were recorded by his student, Plato in “The Republic”. Thereafter, the Roman (Italian) Philosopher, Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) joined the discuss. Machiavelli in his writings stated that “just princes should rule by law why tyrants rule by their hearts. Politics he says, reflects the law of the jungle (Bowe and Arneson, 2020). Indeed, in its early form, Political Scientists and Scholars were more concerned with the broad concepts of government as “politics” as well as ideals, values, social problems and the instruments for solving them.

The second generation of political philosophers preoccupied themselves with theories, types, structures and powers of government. For example, the French scholar, Baron de Montesquieu in his 1748 book, *The Spirit of Laws*, in response to the monarchical, autocratic and theocratic types of government which were prevalent in his days propounded a theory or principle of “separation of powers”. Other scholars such as Lord Acton of Britain and Jean Bodin would later expand the theory. Karl Marx propounded socialism as a type of government while Adam Smith, the Scottish author of the book, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) is generally regarded as the founder of capitalism as a system of government. Karl Marx and Friedrich Angels founded communism in their book, *The Communist Manifesto*.

The search for ideal, types, forms and structures of government having come to an end, there arose another hunger and taste for knowledge; this time focusing on how government can run the public business more efficiently and effectively. Then Woodrow Wilson, a scholar in History and Political Science rose like a colossus and an academic juggernaut with a 25-page essay that filled the gap. The essay, which he titled “The Study of Administration” was published in Political Science Quarterly, Volume 2, Number 2, June 1887. Wilson would later become the President of the United States of America from 1913-1921.

More than anything else, it was this very essay that gave birth to the study of Public Administration as an academic discipline. Many of the issues raised in the essay have been addressed. But there are some thorny ones which have either been glossed over or seem so complex and hydra-headed that scholars appear not keen to address. One of them is what Wilson calls the 'difficult task of running the government by the executive after election'. The second unsolved challenge in Wilson's paper is the consistent neglect of the "art of perfecting executive methods". He accused political science scholars of continually focusing on "curbing executive powers to the constant neglect of the art of perfecting executive methods". True, there are so many laws, regulations and administrative procedures in place that 'curb' executive powers - delineating what the executive should be doing with its powers. The question of "how" remains largely untouched. The third principal challenge in Wilson's essay yet to be fully addressed is the systematic study and adjustment of the complex tasks of running a government to what he calls "carefully tested standards". For Wilson, this is a pivotal reason for the study of the science of public administration. The systematic, scholarly study and adjustment to "carefully tested standards" has to be a continuous process. Wilson based his argument on the increasing complexities of government tasks and participants.

The question now is this: has anything changed in Wilson's 1887 statement above? Two, is the task of running a government now less complex? Three, are the politicians and elected public office holders finding it easy to govern? Four, are public administration scholars now fully abreast of the challenges? If they do, have they provided the tools to navigate, manage and solve the complex tasks? There still remains today, as it was in 1887 using the phraseology of Wilson, "larger administrative knowledge" to explore and study.

This paper provides justification/rationale to take the study and practice of Public Administration to the next level in a way that addresses the outstanding challenges in Wilson's 1887 paper as highlighted above.

Literature Review – the Concept of Administration and Public Administration

The English Language has millions of words that originated from foreign languages. There is, therefore, no better place to begin the literature review than to trace its origin and meaning. According to Online Etymology Dictionary (etymonline.com), the word, Administration was introduced into the English Language in the middle of the 14th Century from the Latin word '*administrare or administrato which literarily means to* "aid, help, assist, manage, control, guide, superintend, rule, direct, serve or wait upon" In terms of usage, it relates to servants or assistants who minister to a superior".

For Public, the same Online Etymology Dictionary asserts that the word also originated from a Latin word, *publicus* which means anything pertaining to the people or the state or done for the state or anything of common, general or belonging to the people at large; therefore, it is a "public property". The word became one of the lexicons in the English language in the 15th Century. The Latin meaning of the two key words, Public Administration lays a very strong foundation and gives us a vivid insight into how scholars view and define the word.

Viewed from the etymology of the words, public administration is as old as man because from time immemorial, men have learned to help, assist, manage, control, guide, superintend, rule, direct, serve and differentiate between private and public property. However, unlike Music, Philosophy, Poetry and Politics, which had writers as early as about 2250 BC, writings on public administration as an academic discipline didn't exist in organized form until 1887. According to Shafritz & Hyde (2007), it is possible to find texts relating to administration, leadership and management in the works of early writers of the pre-medieval and medieval period. However, relating to the specific mention of the study of public administration as an academic discipline and occupation, its root is to be found on U.S soil. Why "US soil"? The answer is to be found in the

multiplicity of books and academic articles who claim that Woodrow Wilson, a U.S citizen is the father of public administration as an academic discipline which was birthed via his 1887 essay, “The Study of Administration” (p. 2). The next generation of writers that further developed the essay into a practical field of study such as Fredrick Taylor, Fred Riggs etc. are also US nationals. Henry (2010) believes that good government rests on three pillars: namely; honesty, democracy and competency. For him these three pillars cannot stand without public administration (p.3).

Shafritz & Hyde (2007) referring to the work of Frank Goodnow in 1900, note that government performs two functions: one is political and the other is administration. Politics, he noted, has to do with “policies or expressions of the state will” while “administration has to do with the execution of these policies” (p. 28). Here again, the superiority of public administration in the art of governance is stressed. No matter how excellent we theorize and formulate policies, their success and failure is determined at the point of execution. In this case, it is easy to find that the success of politics and the executive largely depends on the execution provided by the administrators. Stating the central place and significance of the study of public administration, Vigoda-Gadot & Kisner (2015) put it even stronger stating that, “the study of public administration is an umbrella study under which the partial understandings of the various social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences, in as far as they contribute to knowledge about government in society, can be subsumed” (p. 5-6).

Another important distinction to make is that unlike business administration which focuses on the affairs of private individuals and institutions, Public Administration focuses on the affairs of the state. It is the organization, direction and coordination of men and materials to accomplish purposes of the State, what Shafritz & Hyde (2007) call “execution of the public business”. Administration is the management of the citizen's business (p. 51). Public refers to the things that are open as opposed to being private. In political science, administrative and economic terms, it refers to the things that belong to the citizens of the State. Administration on the other hand relates to general coordination, direction, management and control of people and resources. Public Administration can therefore, be defined as the coordination, direction, management and control of public resources – human and materials for the benefit of the citizens. All public administration activities must have the objective of public good rather than private good often referred to as the “profit motive” in business administration.

Used in a loosed term, administration is the process for managing an organization. It is similar to the word management. However, in the administrative science, administration is simply the process for running governmental affairs. Inclusion of the word “government” is what differentiates it from “management”, which is the process for running business organizations. Public administration then becomes the gamut of processes and activities of governments in running the affairs of its citizens.

Empirical Review

Contrary to the popular opinion which often blame the civil servants for the failures and difficulties in the provision of citizen services, empirical data shows the contrary. Relying on data from surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center and the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) between 1999-2006 in the US, (Henry, 2010) reveals the following:

About seven out of every ten Americans have a favourable view of government employees; only 6% of Americans blame government employees for 'what is wrong with government'. The majority hold the view that “elected office holders are responsible for government failures”; and in terms of service delivery, civil servants performs creditably well when compared to the private sector employees scoring as much as 72% while their private sector counterparts scores 74% (p. 12-23).

Also, ACSI report for 2021 shows that American civil service scored 63.4% for Federal Government services in 2021 (Businesswire, 2022). It is believed the score could have been higher but for the negative impact of COVID-19 and the 2020 general elections.

In view of the above findings, the blame of government failures on the civil service is, therefore, unfounded and baseless. That is not to say that we no longer have challenges with the civil service which is described by some analysts as the 'engine room' of government. We do have. However, they are minor as they pale out into insignificance when compared to those we have with the executive. In addition, the challenges with the bureaucracy have long received answers except that some refuse to apply the answers. One of such problems identified is truancy and sloppiness. The answer is in technology and time clocking devices. Failure to apply the answers cannot be viewed as a challenge. The challenges highlighted in this article are therefore those emanating from the executive and in a few cases, the legislature.

Theoretical Framework

This research paper is based on two theories - the scientific management theory written by Fredrick Winslow Taylor and the "The Change Masters" written by Rosabeth Moss Kanter.

The Scientific Management Theory by Fredrick Taylor

Taylor in his book written in 1909 and published commercially in 1911 under the title; "Principles of Scientific Management" posited that whereas in the past, management priorities had been on "man", in the future, priority would shift to "systems". Here is how he puts it: "in the past the man has been the first; in the future the system must be the first". Taylor's insistence on systems first, before man gives credence to the legal maxim that 'you cannot put something on nothing and expect it to stand'. The scientific management theory advocates that sustainable systems must be put in place first for management, in our case, the executive, to carry out its functions.

Taylor posited that for most of the time, management scholars and consultants have no trouble getting the workmen to do their job. He insisted that 9/10 of the 'trouble' they encounter is bringing management (executive and legislature) "to do their fair share of the work" while the remaining one per cent comes from the workforce (Shafriz and Hyde, 2007:37). Here, Taylor absolves followers from the difficulties encountered in governance and puts the blame squarely on leadership. Taylor's conclusion correlates with Ferrel Heady's position that "public bureaucrats have obediently and even subserviently responded to whatever political leaders (executive and legislature) have gained from power" (Henry, 2010:357).

Woodrow in his pioneer essay on "the study of administration" had argued that with the increase in the number of participants and complexities in government business, the need has risen for deliberate research and studies on how to deliver government services. He calls it the 'how methods'. When we think of methods, we think of science. Here Taylor had a common ground with Woodrow.

Taylor's scientific management theory argues that with scientific approach to administration, there would be consistent and guaranteed results which are not based on the whims and caprices of management (elected and appointed government officials) but on established principles, structures and processes. The continual changes to the nature and functions of government were also echoed by Basu (1994). Sharma, Sadana and Kaur (2011) attribute these changes and growing 'complexities' in the functions of government to growing industrialization and urbanization while, Atakpa (2015), affirms that the Scientific Management Theory is relevant to the study of these issues in modern day public administration.

Administration is a "system", and with Taylor's emphasis that attention be shifted from "man" to "systems", we are better able to study, organize, direct, control and manage the executive and

legislative “systems” in government to achieve more efficiency, effectiveness and productivity. Taylor argued that his scientific management theory represents the modern way - a way that is not based on opinion but on tested and empirical methods (see Atakpa, 2015). In science, technology and the academic world, the search for new knowledge and innovation is a continuous one, thus Taylor concluded that scientific management entails establishment of standards; what Wilson calls “stable principle”. This is the bedrock for the exposition on the challenges facing 21st century scholars of public administration and the innovative solutions propounded in this paper which represent new knowledge, methods and standards for exploration and deployment.

The Change Masters by Rosabeth Moss Kanter

“The Change Masters” was written in 1983 by Rosabeth Moss Kanter. See (Natemeyer & Gilberg, 2011:358-365). This theory outlines the classic characteristics of change masters, three of which are relevant to this paper. They are summarized as follows:

Encourage a culture of pride. They are not ashamed to chat a new course. Wilson did this in a classy way. This paper aligns with his footstep.

Enlarge access to power tools for innovative problem solving. This paper proposes some new tools to increase the portfolio of solutions to the difficult challenges of public administration.

They reduce secretiveness. Wilson, the founding father of Public Administration was very open about his observations, some of which were a heavy criticism of the American civil service which he described as “rotten for full fifty years” and scholars whom he accused of “taking no very important part in the advancement of this science (public administration)”. The paper advocates not only the reduction in 'secretiveness' which is unproductive but also a reduction in silence.

According to Kanter, 'Change Masters' whether corporate or individuals see opportunities for change; they embrace it and stimulate other people beginning with the people in their circle of influence to take action. Wilson was the first to do this for the discipline known today as public administration, before other scholars like Frank Goodnow, Luther Gulick, Lyndal Urwick, Dwight Waldo etc. joined the race.

Methodology

This paper uses the historical and qualitative information gleaned from primary and secondary sources of information. Conclusions are reached based on the findings deduced after a review of various literature on the subject.

The Challenges

This essay focuses principally on the challenges that are yet to be addressed in Woodrow Wilson's 1887 article that gave birth to the study of public administration domiciled – chiefly within the executive and a little of the legislature. We now unfold them:

I. Who Governs: When we raise the question of who governs, we are not referring to the ubiquitous constitutional prescriptions on matters of age, educational qualification, citizenship and the likes, rather we are referring to psychological and personality traits which the constitution and the law is silent. If recent global events are anything to be reckoned with, then attention must now be paid to these factors. Late Saddam Hussein of Iraq and Idi Amin of Uganda, Donald Trump of America, Vladimir Putin of Russia, Bashir Assad of Syria, (the list is long) all met the general constitutional criteria to rule their nations. It can also be seen that some of these men act like despots and military dictators with Donald Trump as a typical example. It is a known fact that these men may not have not left their nations and the world a better place. This is not because the laws are not adequate, rather it is because of their personality trait, temperament and mind set. The constitution and body of laws for the most part doesn't cover issues of this nature.

The second category of challenges under the question of who governs, is that unlike the private

sector and in some cases, government services, where a “background check” is conducted by a professional on a potential employee before hiring, there is no background check conducted for electoral candidates before they stand election. The much we know about them is what they tell us and what their opponent tell us about them or what members of the public volunteer to us. For example, during the 2016 US presidential campaign, Donald Trump, the Republican Party candidate nicknamed Mrs. Hilary Clinton, the Democratic Party Candidate as “crooked Hilary” and “heartless Hilary” (Jamieson, 2016), while she described Donald Trump as “presumptuous nominee” and “loose cannon” (Kreutz, 2016). These are judgements none of them were qualified and competent to pass on each other. An Independent Government Commission who has done its thorough background check would be taken more seriously.

The issue of personality and personal philosophy is increasingly becoming a critical factor even under democratic dispensations whether in America, Europe, Asia or Africa. Policy decisions that make life difficult for many in Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari are largely driven not by facts on the ground but on a personal philosophy of pride and the ability to use the coercive power of State to get things done.

ii. Morality and Ethics: While addressing the issue of ethical public administration for the bureaucracy, (Henry, 2010) asked whether morals and ethics matter and whether people are more effective and successful because they are ethical. The answer is a categorical yes. According to him, “a low ethical climate associates with greater damage and injury to citizens and businesses, and more complaints from the public” (359). In the less developed and developing countries, morality shows more in financial conduct while in the developed countries, it shows more in the social behaviour. In May 2016, the then Prime Minister of Britain, David Cameron described Nigeria as “fantastically corrupt” (bbc.com 2016). David Cameron was also quoted as saying that 'if the amount of money stolen from Nigeria in the last 30 years [1986-2016] was stolen from the UK, the UK would cease to exist' (Africa Check, 2017). On the other hand, there were loud calls in January 2022 by British politicians and members of the public for the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson to resign for throwing parties at the Government House at a time he announced locked down including a ban on public gatherings and parties. Prime Minister Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May was one of those who took a swipe at him, noting that the members of the public expected their Prime Minister to lead by example, by following the rules he had set. Unfortunately, he failed to do so as he and his team at the Government House conducted themselves in a way that meant that the rules they set for the public didn't apply to them (Honeycombe-Foster, 2022).

Every form of corruption (whether financial or behavioural) by the executive makes the running of government difficult. They have to be dealt with.

iii. The Existence of “Special Interest”: 'Special Interest Groups' whilst well acknowledged as part of the American politics, is also a universal virus present in every nation across the world. But let's take a typical example in the US. Everyone in government and the common man on the street knows that the frequent killing of innocent citizens by gun touting men is unacceptable. Some tag it 'American Gun Violence Epidemic' (Deliso, 2021). They all agree something has to be done to change the law but no President or member of the legislature has had the boldness to propose a drastic bill or constitutional amendment that will either stop or make it extremely difficult for citizens to possess firearms. No thanks to the National Rifle Association (NRA) with an open track record for providing financial sponsorship to political candidates of the Republican Party many of them in the Senate and Congress. During the 2016 elections, it is estimated that the NRA spent a record \$54million to enable the Republican Party gain control of the White House and Congress, including at least \$30.3million to help elect Donald Trump (Gambino, 2018). In them, the saying is fulfilled: “he who pays the piper dictates the tune”. Data also shows that 5 out of every 18 members of the NRA lobbyists in 2020 have previously held government positions

(<https://www.opensecrets.org>).

Interest group liberalism turn the government into mere rubber stamp of decisions and positions taken by the special interest group (Muscato, 2018).

In Nigeria, successive governments have been unable to privatize the three State owned refineries due largely to the opposition mounted by the senior staff of the oil and gas industry operating under the name Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN).

iv. Media Complicity and Complications: The media as an active shaper of public opinion can and does make the task of running the government difficult. What the media chooses to publish, the headline it coins, the meaning and analysis it gives can either make the job of the government easy or difficult. If the media also chooses to be a tool in the hands of the executive and the legislature, then no one should expect quality leadership from that regime.

v. Expansionist Ambitions of Foreign Powers: Expansionist policies of foreign and regional powers also make the task of governance by national governments increasingly difficult. The role of the EU and NATO led by the US on the one hand and Russia on the other hand in Ukraine is a classical case in point.

Systematic Study and Adjustment of the Complex Tasks of Running a Government to “Carefully Tested Standards”

i. The Question of What Constitute the Public Interest: It is a common maxim that government exists to serve the public interest rather than private interest. But then, we also occasionally hear politicians, scholars and even the electorate say “politics is a game of self-interest”. How do we reconcile these two conflicting positions?

On the other hand, there is no agreement nor universal definition amongst scholars as to what constitute the public interest. What scholars have propounded are simply academic theories and approaches to arrive at a definition. In the end, they conclude that it depends on where you stand. This is not helpful and needs to be dealt with for a majority of the citizens may favour a military coup where, after forcefully taking over the reign of government, operators might even rule well, yet that doesn't make that regime a democratic government as it did not gain its authority through elections.

This paper therefore proposes a new typology known as public interest based decision defined as a decision taken by government that provides security and economic benefit to all the people.

The dictum, “politics is a game of self-interest” is very common in Nigeria amongst politicians and their followers. They use it to mean that politics is a game of self-survival. With this understanding, they see nothing wrong in jumping from one party to the other. So widely spread is this phenomenon that serving Governors with their State House of Assembly members move with ease from the political party that brought them to power to another party. In the Nigerian political system, it does not take any special study to see that the actions and decision making pattern of elected and appointed public office holders are based on self before the people. The game of self-interest is the reason why several state government projects that carry the names of their predecessors are hardly completed, continued or sustained by the incumbent. The game of self-interest is the reason federal law makers hardly do a thorough job on scrutinizing the budget from the executive. The game of self-interest is the reason some Judges in the Judiciary give questionable judgements. The 'Game of Self-Interest' has far reaching negative implication for governance in Nigeria ranging from financial and developmental waste, nepotism, financial corruption, loss of public revenue, inefficiency, transfer of wrong values etc.

I. Executive Dominance and Arrogance: Executive dominance is a political science term

which originated from British politics, to describe a situation whereby parliament which ought to be a check on the executive becomes unduly subservient to the executive as it passes virtually all bills originating from the executive for reasons such as party discipline (Wikipedia.org). Eminue (2009) calls it “executive-centredness in which the effectiveness of government depends substantially upon executive leadership both in policy formulation and in policy implementation” (p. 152). Executive dominance has gone beyond British politics. It is now a worldwide phenomenon in politics. Earlier attempts at solving the problem could be seen in large scale decentralization, creation of independent commissions, legislative oversight laws and the rule of law managed by the judiciary. All of these measures have not been able to curb the overbearing attitude of the executive which shows even in the US politics that is thought to be the most advanced democracy in the world. When the legislature feels the executive is arrogant and overbearing, it will likely stand in the way of its policies.

In Nigeria, any student of politics and public administration can easily see the dominance of the legislature by the executive at all levels of government whether at the federal, state or local government council as the executive - President, Governor and Chairman respectively, are actively involved in determining who leads the legislative council. At the Federal level in particular, this has been the trend since the return of democratic governance in 1999 with the exception of the 8th Assembly in 2015 where the Senate and House of Representatives elected their own leaders in the persons of Olusola Saraki as the Senate President and Yakubu Dogara as Speaker of the House without the influence of the executive (Jimoh and Abu, 2019).

The question now is, if the all-powerful parliament is dominated by the executive, who then is the over obedient civil servant to resist?

- ii. **Intergovernmental and Interagency Rivalry:** This often leads to hoarding of information, duplication of functions and security lapses. Rivalry between members of the same chamber in parliament but belonging to different political parties; rivalry between federating states in a federal government and between autonomous regions and the central government, are all too common. There is also rivalry between members of a coalition government who are obviously strange bed fellows. We have noticed all these challenges in the government of Israel, France, the United States and the United Kingdom and numerous nations across the world.
- iii. **Executive Overload:** Aside from the increased number of people now involved in governance due to the advent of democracy, government is also now involved in a wide variety of too many undertakings for an ever increasing population. Privatization has not helped. The question now is what should the State be involved in and what should be left for the private sector? This is an ongoing debate with no consensus. The executive branch is also fond of hiring many aides for the President, Ministers and other top appointees. It is to be noted that one of the issues raised in Woodrow Wilson's essay was the omnibus nature of government which created an environment for inefficiency, corruption and sloppiness in the delivery of government services.
- iv. **Secrecy in Government:** There is hardly any document emanating from government office you will not find stamped, “secret” or “confidential”. Wilson in his 1887 essay described excessive secret in government business as “crooked secrets of state administration” that create a “poisonous atmosphere” of “confusion, sinecurism, and corruption”.

Neglect of the “Art of Perfecting Executive Methods” for Delivering of Government Services

In early times government responsibility to her citizens was primarily restricted to maintenance of internal security, law and order and defence of the citizens against external aggression. But as population and knowledge increased, its responsibilities increased astronomically such that there is hardly anything citizens do not look up to the government to provide in modern times.

There is a variety of methods available to the government to provide the required services, some constitutional and some by convention. These methods include appointment of boards and heads of service organizations, issuing of executive orders, policy formulation, direct involvement, privatization of public corporations, and lately Public-Private Partnership (PPP). Each of these methods has its own advantages and disadvantages. The intention of this paper is to signpost the negative effect the application of any of these methods will have on governance in situations where it is either vaguely stated in the body of laws of the State or misapplied or abused by the executive. The use of Executive Orders as a case study, is hereby discussed.

An Executive Order is a constitutional provision in a Federal System of Government allowing the President to issue a formal directive to a particular organ or organs of government to take a specific and clearly defined action on a particular issue. In many cases, the Order is usually with “immediate effect”. While an executive order is hailed as a tool to get things done quickly, it has also been heavily criticized for being excessively used by the President to bypass the legislature thereby preventing them from carrying out their constitutional mandate of scrutinizing executive policies before implementation. Worse still, instances abound where executive orders have been nullified by the Court. For example, the Supreme Court of Nigeria on February 11, 2022, nullified Executive Order 10 of President Muhammadu Buhari through which he had sought financial autonomy for the State Judiciary and Legislature by directing the Accountant General of the Federation to commence direct remittance of funds from the Federation Account to those organs of government rather than through the State Government as had been practiced for years.

In his four-year term, various courts in the U.S ruled against executive orders of Donald Trump at least 70 times (Barbash, et al, 2019). More worrisome is the fact that some of the executive orders end being overturned by the next President because he is constitutionally empowered to do so. This usually results in public policy inconsistency. There is also the issue of indiscriminate use of the power. Records at the Federal Register of the US National Archives show that the former Presidents of the US Donald Trump is said to have issued a total of 220 executive orders between 2017 and 2021 (55 on yearly average), while his predecessor, Barrack Obama issued 276 between 2009 and 2017 (69 on yearly average).

How, when and for what should executive orders be applied are questions not adequately defined by national constitutions.

Conclusions

Since Wilson's paper in 1887, Public Administration has evolved through different stages to what it is today. It is still evolving and it would ultimately arrive at its destination at the point where the three outstanding challenges handed over to us by the founding father are fully unmasked and practical solutions provided. Although Henry (2010:3) describes the discipline and career as one of the most exciting and rewarding in the world, it should be noted that this was not the case in the beginning as it had oppositions and struggles in its early stages but some bold and courageous scholars, like the founding father fought and overcame them. 21st Century scholars must follow the footsteps of the founding father, Woodrow Wilson to overcome the challenges he predicted which are now present in government more than ever before. The recommendations may by no means be exhaustive however, they do serve as a springboard to rally the fathers and umbrella bodies of the profession around the globe to come together to make the big and courageous decision for the systematic implementation of required changes to address and overcome the remaining challenges.

Recommendations

In making the recommendations below, the paper is guided by the maxim of the “State as the conscience of administration” and the cry of the founding father in 1887 that “a science of administration (must) seek to straighten the paths of government, to strengthen and purify its organization, and to crown its duties with dutifulness:

As suggested by Henry (2010), there should be morality, ethical and personality development training for persons serving in the public. The training should be of about two weeks for confirmed party nominees before elections. Those nominated by the executive before legislative confirmation should help such potential public officials acquire the much needed “moral compass” for public office holding (ps.364-365). Other objectives of the training should include: assisting potential government officials to identify their personality weaknesses and correct them; developing team work habits with persons from various backgrounds; inculcating best practices in personality and leadership styles expected of persons holding public office; and improving inter-governmental relations.

The following courses are recommended: Public Revenue and Expenditure Management - to expose them to the complexities of public finance, debt management, budgeting etc.; National & International Trade - to expose them to the complexities of the domestic stock exchange market and international trade; Organizational and Decision Making Process in the Public Sector; Principles of accountability, auditing and transparency; Logic/philosophy/human existence.

A comprehensive definition of 'public interest' based on values and actions that are universally acceptable and understood in clear ordinary language, should be passed into law. This will remove the doubt and confusion surrounding the concept and ensure it is served in truth and in practice. The public interest must be verifiable and measurable with key indices.

There should be the rationalization of executive and legislative aides and appointments. That is because in public administration, excess and redundant capacity is a sin. Elected executive and legislative officials have all manners of aides which limits or numbers in many cases are not regulated by law but by convention. Rationalization of executive aides backed up by law will result in cost efficiency and effective utilization of available human resources.

Media debate for political candidates and legislative confirmation process for executive appointments should be redesigned to deliberately ask questions that probe personality and character.

There should be systematic openness in government in line with Jean-Francois Methot's (2003) opinion of “transparency and free communication of information in accessible language as a fundamental condition of democracy”. Access of the citizens to information on government business needs to be structured and improved beyond what is obtainable in US and UK who are presently blazing the trail while countries on the African continent, Middle East and the bulk of Asia who are lagging far behind should be upgraded.

There should be the publication of annual independent scorecards by non-state actors such as research institutions, civil societies and the opposition. This will put the executive on notice that they are being watched and knowing that the report will influence public perception and elections, they are likely to be more circumspect in their actions.

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