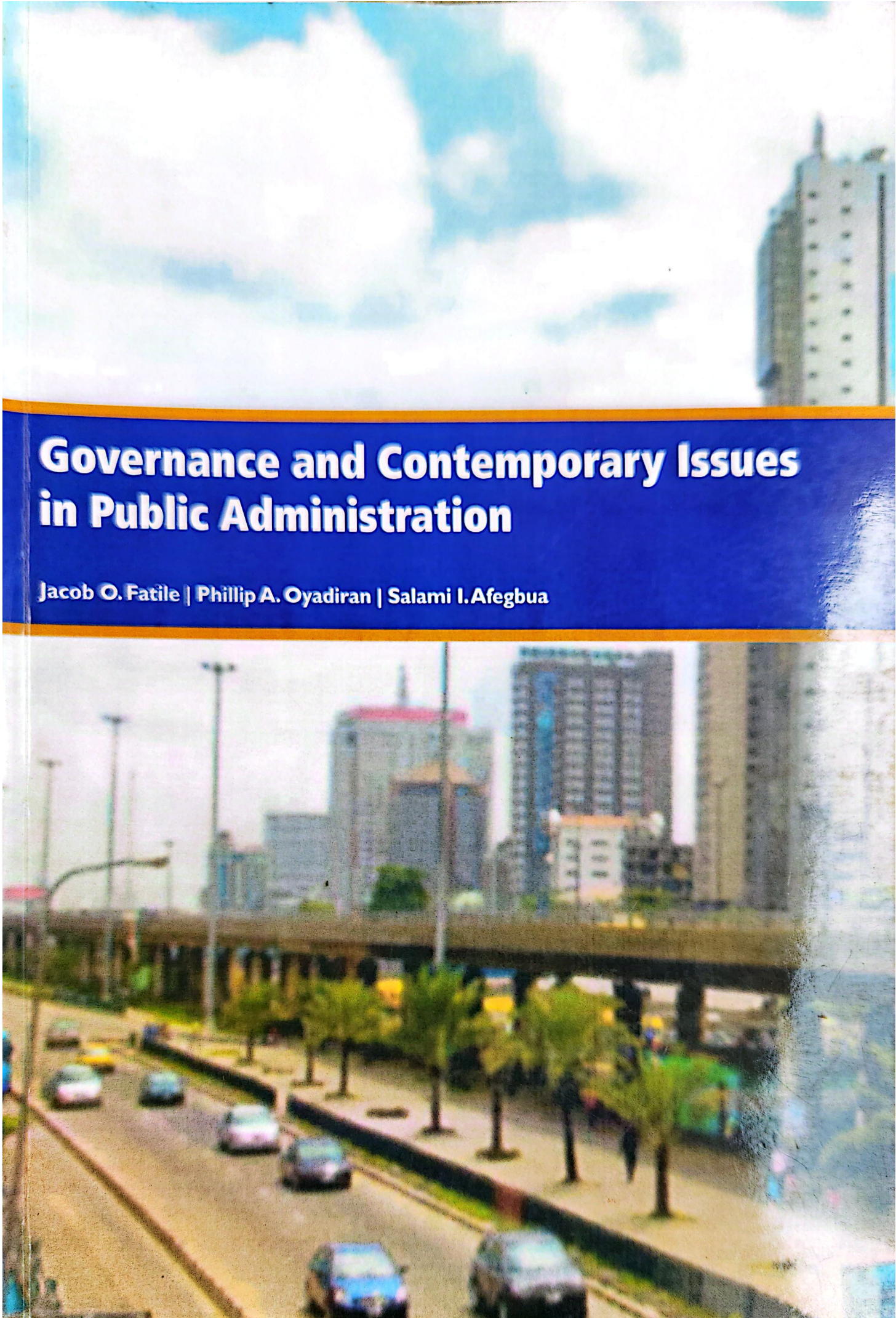




Governance and Contemporary Issues in Public Administration

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The Centrality of Governance and Public Administration in Modern Society

Fatile, Jacob Olufemi, Akindede, Iyiola Tomilayo & Ejalonibu, Ganiu Layi

Introduction

In the last decades, governance has been a prominent subject in public administration. The critical importance of governance and well-performing public institutions has come to the forefront since the emergent of welfare state.

Governance responsiveness and accountability will be central factors in reaching sustainable development outcomes. Responsive and accountable governance engages the people in the processes of decision- and policymaking, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It focuses plans and action of public leadership and government on the needs of the people and involves them in identifying those needs. Effective governance develops institutions, structures, systems and practices that promote and support the involvement and participation of the people and ensure equal access to services by all. The concept of governance became a current issue with discussions of change and transformation in public administration. The need to improve governance and public administration and to enhance the State's capacity to carry out new functions and roles is now widely recognized.

Public administration is one of the necessary aspects of the state that has a great impact on the lives of its citizens. The system of public administration greatly evolved throughout the last decades, and its role in societies is only growing. There are many factors that contribute to such a state of things, from the development of science and technologies to climate change. Public administrators not only carry out the government's policies and projects, but they also create a system that allows every citizen of the state to meet all of their needs. Throughout history, the role of public administration in society greatly evolved.

Public administration is the connecting link between the state and the people. As such, it responds to public demands and is the incubator of public trust or mistrust in government. A well-functioning public administration is a prerequisite for transparent and effective democratic governance.

Public administration is indispensable to responsive and accountable governance and development in general. It serves as the bedrock of the rule of law and effective delivery of essential public services. How the public administration is structured, administered and operated, as well as what policies are pursued, has a great impact on people's well-being. There are new expectations in the field of public administration. These expectations are revealed by global dynamics that effected the administrations of the whole world and shook the foundations of traditional administration.

Public administration represents the authority system for government in action, which is the product of political dynamics. The public administration is instrumental in its operation, and is expected to carry out politically determined goals and values. Above all, public administration is part of

the web of governance, deriving its form and substance from public policy. Thus, the most important attribute of public administration is its place in the political system.

Many of the prevailing concepts and practices of public administration were developed and formulated around the centrality of the State and public administration in the process of national development. While the role of the State in national development continues to be important, consensus is shifting about the precise functions to be assigned to the State vis-a-vis other institutions and non-governmental organizations, and the appropriate modalities for discharging different national functions. Public administration is a fundamental function of governing, indeed, it is difficult to think of democratic government without a professional public administration. This chapter explains the centrality of governance and public administration in modern society.

Governance in Meaningful Context

The concept governance is though not a new; it is as old as human civilization. "Governance" is now fashionable, it is a very versatile concept with different meanings. It is simply used to refer to the way in which a government discharges its duties and obligations. Governance is seen as the process of steering state and society towards the realization of collective goals. It points to the dynamic but problematic and often times contradictory relationship between the state and society (Alcantara, 1998). The United Nations Development Programme (1997) views governance as:

the totality of the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs, comprising of the complex mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, and mediate their differences. It encompasses the political, economic, legal, judicial, social and administrative authority and therefore includes government, the private sector and the civil society.

Governance is the institutional capacity of public organizations to provide public and other goods demanded by a country's citizens or the representatives thereof in an effective, transparent, impartial, and accountable manner, subject to resource constraints. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2000), defines governance as a process of social engagement between the rulers and the ruled in a political community. Its component parts are rule making and standard setting, management of regime structures and outcome and results of the social pact. Generally speaking, governance has been in the human civilization since the time that the people learned how to live in one community or society through the process of making decisions and implementations of certain laws, rules and policies in order to live orderly and harmoniously in one environment.

Governance emphasizes on ameliorating public sector management systems to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and competitiveness in service delivery. Governance is the practice and exercise of power in decision making in all spheres of government. Governance can also be described as the use of authority and the exercise of control over society and the management of its resources for social and economic development. It is the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the distribution of a country's social and economic resources. The nature and manner of distribution is what makes governance good or bad one (Fatile, 2012). Governance involves different stakeholders in the public policy arena ranging from the ruling political elites, the private sector, and supranational organizations like the World Bank, IMF, the WTO and the UN. Governance, therefore, concerns not just the integrity, efficiency and economy of government but also its effectiveness in terms of the ends to which government organization and activity are directed.

Governance in the 21st Century

Although used as far back as the 14th century, the word "governance" has not been used frequently in social sciences until the late 1980s. During the last decades, however, "governance" has grown into a commonly used concept within administration and policy sciences.

Generally, governance is simply a synonym for “steering,” or what Pierre and Peters (2000) call “the process of governing.”

One of the main and perhaps the most important factor that separates a well-functioning and modern state from another one that would be labeled as a failed state is whether the principles of good governance are respected and deeply rooted in the legal system of that country. Governance is the manner in which authority, control or power of government is exercised in mobilizing a society's social and economic resources, to add the issues of public interest (Sharma et al, 2013:85).

Governance requires all hands to be on deck. It entails the sum total of the ways in which individuals and government institutions manage their common affairs for the good of the state and the citizens.

Since the early 1990s, the notion of “good governance” has gained widespread currency. Indeed, good governance became a conditionality for development assistance from donor agencies. The notion of good governance is similar to what Weber (1964:156) defines as “a modern state with a compulsory association with a territorial base claiming the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force” (Weber 1964:156).

- Good governance is a dynamic administration construct that embraces fast changing political, social and economic arrangements. It tries to transform the political, economic and social life of the citizens within the framework of parliamentary democracy. Sharma et al (2013:69) present the elements to include:
- **Participation:** They see participation as key to good governance. Citizens participate in the organs of government - executive, legislature, judiciary and regularly exercise their rights to franchise. Participation could be either direct or through the representatives.
- **Accountability:** The test of a vibrant democracy is the degree of success in ensuring accountability of those who rule, to those from whom they derive their authority.
- **Transparency:** A major premise of good governance is the citizens' access to information, and a good government must ensure free flow of information to citizens. In a parliamentary democracy, transparency in government becomes a necessity and this becomes possible by the basic doctrine of separation of power, and checks and balances among the executive, legislature, and judicial branches. Transparency requires that the decisions are taken and their enforcement is done in a manner that is in conformity with the rules and regulations.
- **Rule of law:** This is a framework that is enforced in an impartial manner for protecting human rights, securing social justice and checking abuse of power; it is a prerequisite for good governance.
- **Consensus oriented:** Good governance should aim at reaching broad consensus after mediating different interests in the society for the best interest of the community. It aims at sustainable human development and also to achieve the goals of such development.
- **Effectiveness and efficiency:** Good governance also rests upon the fact that the process and institutions should produce results to meet the needs of the society. It also entails proper utilization of resources at their disposal as well as in the government.
- **Responsiveness:** Good governance would be possible only when the institution and processes are responsive and serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time-frame.
- **Inclusiveness and Equity:** Good governance advocates that people should not be excluded from the mainstream of the society and the marginalized are able to avail opportunities.

Public Administration in Modern Society

Public Administration is to the state what a shadow is to the body. It is the front of the state. It is visible, standing manifestation of the state. Its importance depends on the stage of development of the society. As the society becomes complex and advanced, its public administration, too, becomes of crucial significance. It is centrally concerned with the organization of government policies and programme as well as the behavior of officials formally responsible for their conduct.

In the modern world one cannot think of a state without administration. The importance of administration can be seen as stabilizing force in society; instrument of social change, essential for preserving civilization, essential for social harmony; essential for successful planning; its importance in a welfare state etc. Public administration forms the core of modern society and touches people's lives on all levels. Such development is connected with the emergence of the welfare state. The significance of public administration is growing as different government institutions have become more numerous, and their tasks more complex and multiple (Wamsley et al., 2016). The critical role of public administration is expressed in the fact that it serves as the basis of government. Governments can exist without a legislature, or even without a judiciary, but that is impossible to build a government without administration (Henry, 2017).

In time past the State was a "police state," its principal function being maintenance of peace and security. Although a few welfare activities were also performed at that time; they were purely incidental or optionally undertaken. Today, Public administration lies at the heart of modern society and touches the lives of the people from "the womb to the tomb," which has witnessed the emergence of the "welfare state." The modern states are no longer confining themselves solely to the maintenance of law and order. The police state idea is substituted by the concept of a welfare state. The State became the guardian of the people and the attainment of good of the people became the ultimate goal of the state.

Emergence of a democratic welfare state has led to an increase in the activities of public administration. The state has to now serve all sections of people in the society and this notion enhanced responsibilities of public administration. The modern states are no longer confining themselves to maintenance of law and order alone providing security to the people. The police state concept was substituted by the concept of welfare state. The state became the guardian of the people and the attainment of good life of the people becomes the ultimate goal of the state. No doubt, the emergence of welfare and democratic state has led to an increase in the activities of public administration compared to that of the laissez-faire state. The state has to now serve all sections of people in the society. This amount to enhanced responsibilities of public administration. Public administration is also to regulate and control private economic enterprises to meet the objectives of the state. In the modern welfare state the role and importance of public administration have been growing as the government agencies have become more and more numerous and their activities more pervasive and complex.

The importance of the role of the public administration in the modern society is very clear from the fact that it affects the whole life of the people. Its importance and role has been steadily increasing with the expansion of the state activity in the modern states. Public administration is now an all-encompassing factor of the daily life of the individual as well as the community, an integral part of the society, which has seen the emergence of what has aptly been called the "Administrative State"

Modern public administration has usurped more and more functions within its scope. Besides maintaining law and order, revenue collection and security functions, it operationalizes a vast array of public laws, provides public services like transport facilities in cities and towns, and is the main instrument of socioeconomic transformation in modern societies.

The rapid increase in size of population of most nations; more specifically in the developing nations, has contributed to the growing importance of Public administration. The emergence of welfare state in modern times has also increased the activities and responsibilities of Public administration. The welfare state is a social service state. It is a positive state. Its motto is promotion of good life for the people.

Public administration represents the organizational arrangements, managerial practices, and institutionalized values which officials legislate in the chase of policy implementation and in the en-

dorsement of the will of governments (Henry, 1975). This statement echoes the one made Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his famous Social Contract: "the law is the expression of the general will."

The journey of a country to its ideal form will be followed by a change in the role and scope of its public administration activities. However, in every development of state configuration, the practice of public administration must be directed to respond to the demands of the times. This means that at a stage in a particular state form, the scope of public administration is so narrow and very simple, but in the form and stage of other countries, the role that must be played by public administration is so broad and very complex. Especially today, where the state has become a modern organization, the necessity of public administration is essential for the survival of a country (Uhaib & Djan, 2018).

Former US President Woodrow Wilson states that public administration is the most evident part of government; it is government in action; it is the executive, the operational and the most obvious side of government. In other words, public administration is concerned with politics and policy making; it inclines to be concentrated in the executive branch of the government where the means by which the purposes and goals of government are implemented (Marume, 2016). The critical role of public administration is governing the society. It has been argued that a government can exist without a legislature, even without a judiciary but never without administration. The government will become as dysfunctional as a lame horse in a derby race.

In the modern state, the role and scope of public administration is ever expanding and all encompassing. We are way past the *laissez-faire* state which was responsible for maintaining law and order only. According to Gladden (2012:3), there are three characteristics of an efficient public administration:

- It needs to meet the functional aims for which it has been created
- It must be able to meet the long term needs which might arise due to change in administrative techniques or the changes in social environment which are more important and influential
- It needs to conform to a centralized plan but also accommodate the specific and special demand of particular department units

The modern state which expects government to provide much more has seen the role of public administration change dramatically, since those times. As explained by Felix A Negro, the real core of administration is the basic service which is performed for the public. It is the administration which ensures the security and protection of life and property of the members of the society by maintaining proper law and order.

In today's modern state and in developing countries functions and role of public administration is very important. The role of public administration are as follows.

- It is the basis of government.
- It is the instrument of change in the society.
- It plays vital role in the life of the people.
- It is an instrument for executing laws, policies, programmes of the state.
- It is a stabilizing force in the society as it provides continuity.
- It is instrument of national integration in the developing countries which are facing class wars.

Public administration and the whole public sector are going through a radical change of their position in relation to economy while the elimination of ineffective and bureaucratically burdensome methods of direct interventions in the economic sphere from the totalitarian era does not mean any liquidation of the economic regulatory function of the State and the related tasks of public administration.

Governance and Public Administration: Supplementing or Supplanting

The concepts of governance and public administration have received unprecedented attention in contemporary literature. Governance and public administration are two key issues, which can be described as two sides of a coin. These two concepts are intertwined.

Governance is the process of regulation of relations inside the country by means of distribution of spheres of influence between the major branches of government and territorial levels. Public administration is about public enthusiasm, aimed at preserving the unity of the country, its main institutions, the support qualitative properties and standard of living of its people (Buley, Bondaletov, Malushkin, Bondaletova & Kozyrev, 2016).

Governance and public administration are as old as human civilization. It was Harlan Cleveland who first used the word "governance" as an alternative to the phrase public administration. In the mid-70s, one of the themes in Cleveland's particularly thoughtful and provocative speeches, papers and books went something like this: "What the people want is less government and more governance." Rhodes (2000) finds seven applications of governance in the field of public administration: the new public management or managerialism; good governance, as in efficiency, transparency, meritocracy and equity; international and interjurisdictional interdependence; non-government driven forms of socio-cybernetic systems of governance; the new political economy, including shifting from state service provision to the state as regulator; and networks.

Conclusion

It is clear that all societies need governance of the most basic form. Although most governments can provide some level of governance, if not always good governance, they may not be capable of providing governance in the meaning of the extensive involvement of social actors in making and implementing policy. In the absence of the social and/or political conditions necessary to involve social actors, governance in these settings remains top-down, relying more on authority or even coercion in order to make its programs effective.

The modern state cannot confine its field of activities to only maintenance of law and order, dispensation of justice, collection of revenue and taxes. The modern state is expected to provide more and more services and amenities to the people. This results in tremendous growth both in the governmental responsibilities as well as in the administrative machinery of the state. Naturally the scope of public administration is increased.

In the modern state, the role and scope of public administration is ever expanding and all encompassing. We are way past the laissez-faire state which was responsible for maintaining law and order only. The modern state which expects government to provide much more has seen the role of public administration change dramatically, since those times. Public administration is also an effective stabilizing factor in society. Law and order continue to exist with a minimum of effort and risk due to the public administration. Public administration aims to carry on the existing order rather than try innovative paths. It secures the tradition and stabilizes society. Every society develops conflicts and tension throughout its existence, and public administration is meant to resolve those conflicts and settle social harmony. While governments can change, public administration continues to exist as a system and provide stability to society. Public administration does not only play a significant role in modern society, but its importance is also increasing in rapid terms.

To sum up, public administration is a key element that ensures the proper function of any state. Public administrators are in charge of any functional aspect, from public transportation to accessible health care for every citizen. The more the states are developing, the more is being dependent on the public administration systems.

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