

## Navigating Uncertainty: Applying Administrative Theories to Nigeria's Path Towards Modernization

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### Abstract

This paper investigates how a hybrid theoretical framework, combining multiple administrative theories, can diagnose Nigeria's persistent governance uncertainties and inform its modernization efforts to achieve sustainable development. The study employs a multi-theoretical analysis and literature review, utilizing empirical evidence from studies across Weberian Bureaucracy, New Public Management, Public Choice Theory, the Prismatic Model, and Contingency Theory to construct a contextualized governance framework. The analysis is national in scope, focusing on systemic administrative failures within the Nigerian public sector, while drawing comparative lessons from successful reforms in countries like Georgia and India. Nigeria's administrative uncertainty is not mere incompetence but a systemic failure driven by the rational choice of elites and the constant clash between formal Weberian rules and informal neo-patrimonial (Prismatic) realities. Reform efforts fail because they disregard the Contingency principle, imposing uniform solutions on a heterogeneous state. This study provides a comprehensive diagnostic tool, synthesizing disparate theories to explain the

administrative bottleneck hindering development and prescribing specific, technology-backed, and adaptive institutional solutions for Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Administrative Uncertainty, Hybrid Governance, Prismatic Model, Public Choice, Contingency Theory, Modernization, Nigeria.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The World Bank recently reported that despite economic projections of a global recession in 2024, “*the global economy is finally showing signs of stabilizing*” after experiencing several shocks over the past few years (World Bank, 2024). The sad reality, however, is that developing countries are not benefiting from this recovery as much as advanced countries are (World Bank, 2024). While the global economy is growing steadily, developing nations (which account for over 80% of the world population) are growing more stagnantly (World Bank, 2024).

Poverty, economic inequality, and environmental degradation have now become recurring themes in such nations as Nigeria. In consequence, the country, which is the most populous in Africa and has the most abundant natural resources, has continued to face major development crises. These include a halt in human development, high unemployment, and stunted economic growth. Research has shown these issues do not just come from economic deficits but from poor administration and weak governance. Hence, Nigeria must address these systemic problems in order to catch up to global development standards.

The need to adapt is urgent because the world is constantly modernizing. Modernization is a process of evolution, including, but not limited to, setting up efficient institutions, legislative bodies, and strong administrative structures (Bhuyan, 2020). It is often defined by industrial growth, technological leaps, and efficiency. However, Nigeria’s progress is frequently slowed by administrative barriers caused by poor institutional quality. This is why the nation’s many reform efforts, ranging from economic adjustments in the 1980s to modern digital governance plans, have only had mixed results.

While experts agree that modernization requires sound administrative frameworks, the solution must be both flexible and responsive. When a government’s structure is uncertain or unstable, it becomes hard to implement policies effectively. Strategies must be constantly revised and adapted to deal with fast-paced industrialization and city growth (Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008). Meanwhile, the Nigerian bureaucracy exhibits what is often termed bureau-pathology, where the supposed instruments of efficiency, that is, the rules, hierarchy, and specialization, become ends in themselves. This creates a dysfunction in the public service and a resistance to change. When change is being stifled by corruption, incompetence, and lack of accountability, it will be difficult to fully adopt the system of modernization. Furthermore, Nigeria’s diverse cultures and decentralized system of government make it even harder to apply standard administrative theories, as a solution that works well in one place may fail entirely in another. Despite extensive research on administrative theories and governance, there is a notable gap in applying these theories specifically to Nigeria’s context. Most of these administrative theories are developed in Western contexts and may not fully capture the socio-political and economic realities of Nigeria. Consequently, Nigeria’s modernization challenges are too complex to be

resolved by applying a single administrative theory. While individual theories provide valuable insights, each has limitations when applied in isolation. This paper aims to fill this gap by adopting a multi-theoretical approach that combines several administrative theories to create a comprehensive framework for modernization under conditions of uncertainty. By discussing, in detail, the relevance of administrative theories to development, this paper provides a framework for innovation and sustained development in Nigeria.

The foundational administrative theory in this regard is the Weberian Bureaucracy, which provides the basic rules for the civil service. Strengthening professionalism and accountability, based on Weber's ideas, is crucial for building the fair institutions and predictable rules needed for economic growth. Next, New Public Management (NPM) (Hood, 1991) focuses on efficiency, privatization, and performance goals. NPM reforms are vital for cutting down on state inefficiency and improving service delivery in key sectors like power and telecommunications.

To understand the deeper problems, this paper uses the Prismatic-Sala Model (Riggs, 1970) and Public Choice Theory (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). The Prismatic Model helps explain why policies fail: formal rules are sabotaged by informal practices like favoritism and ethnic politics. Complementing this, Public Choice Theory views public workers as self-interested, rational actors. This explains why elite corruption and rent-seeking divert national wealth away from development projects. These theories combined offer a realistic way to design systems that limit corruption and ensure transparency.

Finally, Contingency Theory (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967) emphasizes flexibility. It argues that governance must be adapted to fit specific circumstances, making it essential for managing Nigeria's diverse cultures and regional differences. The overall goal is guided by Modernization Theory (Rostow, 1960), which pushes Nigeria to prioritize training its people, growing its industries in cities, and adopting new technology.

From this multi-theoretical framework, we are able to diagnose the administrative failure evident in Nigeria's bureaucracy and then prescribe viable, contextual solutions for Nigeria's modernization aspirations. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to explore how the above-listed administrative theories can be adapted and contextualized to the complexities and uncertainties that Nigeria faces in its journey towards modernization.

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How can administrative theories inform Nigeria/s modernization efforts?
2. What are the key administrative challenges hindering Nigeria's development?
3. What strategies can be employed to promote good governance and accountability in Nigeria's public sector?

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the field of development administration by exploring Nigeria's modernization within multiple administrative theories. This is achieved through a robust literature review on the subject matter. By appraising the broad body of empirical knowledge on this issue and leveraging the findings of diverse studies, this study suggests that for Nigeria to achieve sustainable modernization, governance must evolve beyond

rigid bureaucratic structures. Policymakers must aim to incorporate learning-based, participatory, and decentralized governance models.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Perspective of Administrative Development

The growth of modern organizations has brought many problems and uncertainties to the field of public administration. Traditional government structures are too simple to manage the complex needs of modern societies (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004). To handle this high level of uncertainty, administrators must use evidence-based decision-making and work with different groups, including government agencies, civil society, and the private sector (Olowu and Wunsch, 2004). This requires constant investment in training public workers and promoting ethical leaders to build flexible government systems capable of modernization (Egwu and Ohajianya, 2021). The challenge is not unique to government; even global corporations must balance financial goals with stakeholder demands for sustainability.

### 2.2 Overview of Administrative Theories and Their Applicability

#### *Weberian Bureaucracy*

Max Weber's model of bureaucracy is the fundamental theory for understanding modern administration. Sager and Rosser (2021) explain that this model is an "ideal type," that is, a perfect concept used to measure real government structures, not a guide for practice. The theory posits that a professional government staff that is hired based on merit, follows strict rules, and operates free from political influence, with the goal of establishing legal-rational authority (Yılmaz and Telsaç, 2021). Its real value lies in creating certainty and stability in the environment, which, according to Kettl (2022), is crucial for economic activity and business growth.

However, critics have pointed out the limited applicability of the Weberian model. For instance, Kettl (2022), in a study on the role of Weberian democracy in contemporary governance, observes that governments worldwide are now "distinctly less Weberian," yet the public still expects Weberian ideals. Supporting this, Langer (2022) noted that focusing too much on formal rationality (just following the rules) often causes governments to fail at substantive rationality (getting real social results). This focus on rigid rules over genuine development is a key challenge for any modernizing state.

Furthermore, Mensah et al. (2025) conducted a quantitative analysis of firms listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange. They concluded that fixed, strategic investments, such as in green technology (operating leverage), have a significant positive effect on sustainable performance. This finding reinforces the Weberian idea that there have to be stable, non-corrupt institutions for a state to be able to manage long-term resource allocation rationally.

#### *New Public Management (NPM)*

New Public Management (NPM) emerged as a way to fix the inefficiency of traditional bureaucracy. It advocates that governments should adopt market-style management and prioritize efficiency, cost-savings, and competition (Dazie et al., 2021). In a review of NPM in developing countries, Dazie et al. (2021) argued that the model's implementation remains

modest due to underlying issues like corruption and weak capacity. In the study, these challenges were identified as ones the model often fails to address directly.

The Nigerian context confirms this limitation. Nwosu and Ananti (2024) used a survey design with public sector employees to assess the role of NPM in public service delivery. They determined that the potential for efficiency and flexibility is consistently nullified by excessive red tape and deep-seated institutional weakness. Similarly, Hayati and Aviana (2021) found that the mere adoption of NPM practices does not automatically translate into improved performance; its success hinges on factors like organizational culture and managerial competence. Ndema (2022) found that public service delivery in Nigeria remains poor and has constantly failed to meet citizens' needs despite several reforms. The theory is valuable for its goals, but it is not a "blanket solution" for all administrative challenges (Nwosu and Ananti, 2024). In essence, NPM principles cannot function effectively until a capable, merit-based bureaucratic foundation is established. For this reason, despite NPM being widely promoted in developing countries to boost service delivery, its success is limited by structural differences.

### ***Public Choice Theory (PCT)***

Public Choice Theory (PCT) uses economic principles to study political behavior. It starts from the assumption that individuals in the public sector, like those in the private sector, are rational actors primarily driven by their own self-interest (Oyakhire and Eghaghe, 2024). This framework is used to analyze political decisions, leadership failures, and government structures. Udentia et al. (2024) argued that persistent policy failures often constitute "political miscalculation," which is a deliberate choice by elites to prioritize private gain over public welfare. The most severe consequence of this self-interested behavior is systemic corruption and the siphoning of public funds, which destroys citizens' trust in the government (Oyakhire and Eghaghe, 2024). Corruption is not viewed here as a cultural pathology, but as a rational, intentional choice by elites (Udentia et al., 2024). The empirical evidence confirms that the political class extracts wealth at the expense of sustainable development, a process that is institutionally enabled by the Prismatic environment.

### ***Contingency Theory***

Contingency Theory fundamentally rejects the idea of a single "best way" to manage an organization (Amanawa, 2022). This theory posits that the optimal administrative style or management technique depends entirely on specific factors, such as the organization's size, its external environment, and the relationship between leaders and staff (Mark and Erude, 2023). The theory is highly relevant for administration in complex, diverse countries. It demands that managers stop using generic solutions and instead analyze their unique circumstances before acting (Mark and Erude, 2023). For a country like Nigeria with vast cultural differences and decentralized governance, Contingency Theory is essential because it supports the need for regional administrative solutions that adapt to local realities, rather than enforcing uniform policies that fail to address diverse regional development challenges.

### ***The Prismatic-Sala Model***

Fred Riggs initiated research seeking an authentic model for developing nations, resulting in the Prismatic-Sala Model (Basu, 2021). The model describes the "in-between" state, or the

prismatic society, where the modern, formal structures of government exist alongside powerful, traditional, and informal practices (Riggs, 1970). This theory is suited to explaining Nigeria's administrative failures, as the country still operates on neo-patrimonial tendencies – a system that blends formal institutions with informal, personal relationships, where power is exercised through personal whims, patronage, and the blurred line between public and private interests. Yeboah-Assiamah and Kundi (2025) utilized this model in a retrospective analysis of youth empowerment policies in ECOWAS member-states and found that implementation was blocked by the conflict between impartial criteria and political considerations. The study suggested that in Nigeria, administrative uncertainty is a result of two governance systems vying for dominance. These conflicting factors explain the disconnect between policy design and real-world execution.

### ***Modernization Theory***

Modernization Theory describes the shift from a traditional system to a modern one (Rostow, 1960). It guides policies that prioritize human capital development, rapid industrialization, and technological adoption as the key steps toward development. While it gives a clear goal, the classical version of Modernization Theory faces strong critiques for being too simplistic and deterministic (Kyianytsia, 2021). It often fails to account for the political and cultural resistance it encounters.

For instance, critics point out that internal factors like poor leadership and corruption are often the real roadblocks to African development, not just historical external factors. For instance, Minkov et al. (2021) conducted a hierarchical cluster analysis on Afrobarometer data from 85 ethnolinguistic groups across 25 African countries and empirically demonstrated that economic development and modernization diminish cultural differences within nations, confirming the theory's prediction that development leads toward greater cultural homogeneity. This reinforces the idea that economic growth is a prerequisite for broader social and political stability. Modern scholars now argue for an adaptive modernization approach, which focuses on fixing internal problems while still embracing the new world structure (Pogosyan, 2021).

### ***Corporate Governance and Systems Thinking***

While focusing on the private sector, the principles of corporate governance provide valuable insights into organizational stability and accountability, which are foundational to public administration. Mensah et al. (2025) highlight that strategic, fixed investments (operating leverage) in areas like green technology positively affect sustainable performance, demonstrating a necessary link between financial decisions and long-term societal goals. This research reinforces the Systems Theory demand for holistic, long-term thinking in governance. The finding suggests that public administration must adopt a long-term view that prioritizes fixed investments in social and green infrastructure, which are investments that require stable, non-corrupt institutions to manage. Just as Japan's Corporate Governance Code emphasizes transparency for corporate stability, public sector modernization requires stable governance to ensure strategic investments deliver long-term sustainable development, rather than being diverted by short-term political gains.

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

Studying the concept of modernization in Nigeria requires a multi-theoretical approach. This is because the applicability of the administrative theories is only effective if they are collectively utilized. For instance, the formal structure promoted by Weberian bureaucracy addresses organizational corruption and inefficiency, but it fundamentally fails to capture the informal and neo-patrimonial dynamics accurately explained by Riggs' Prismatic Model (Yeboah-Assiamah and Kundi, 2025). Similarly, Modernization Theory emphasizes broad economic and cultural transformation but systematically overlooks the critical issue of self-interested elite capture, which is the central focus of Public Choice Theory (Udenta et al., 2024). Therefore, this paper argues for and utilizes a hybrid, contingent model that integrates the strengths of multiple administrative theories. This multi-theoretical approach is the only way to create a comprehensive framework for analyzing Nigeria's path to modernization under conditions of systemic uncertainty.

### 3. Nigeria's Modernization Challenges and Its Impact on Development Outcomes

Nigeria's public administration is rooted in the Weberian model of bureaucracy, and this system can be traced to colonial rule. Historically, a hierarchical administrative structure was enacted with the intention of maintaining order and extracting resources, not to foster participatory development. The system adopted the form of Weberian rationality: hierarchy, files, and career paths, but lacked its substance, namely, the sense of impartiality and meritocracy (Sager and Rosser, 2021). As earlier noted, this foundational flaw meant that the system was prone to rigidity and rule-following that often neglected substantive goals (Langer, 2022).

After independence, this formal structure was quickly absorbed into the informal, traditional social dynamics of the nascent state. This created the classic Prismatic-Sala Model scenario (Riggs, 1970), where the written, modern rules were consistently undermined by unwritten ethnic and personal loyalties (Yeboah-Assiamah and Kundi, 2025). The administration thus moved away from an ideal type toward a system driven by clientelism and patronage, prioritizing personal reward over institutional stability.

This study identifies six failures within Nigeria's administrative system that limit the country's ability to achieve the goals of Modernization Theory.

- ***Governance and Institutional Weakness***

One of the greatest impediments to Nigeria's modernization is weak governance. State institutions are often characterized by inefficiency, lack of accountability, and widespread corruption (Achebe, 1983; Aiyede, 2019). Public administration has been dominated by patronage networks that prioritize personal loyalty and ethnic affiliation over merit. Officials, acting as rational maximizers of self-interest, engage in rent-seeking and deliberately make flawed policy choices (or political miscalculation) to benefit their own groups (Udenta et al., 2024). The most severe outcome is the continuous diversion of public funds (Oyakhire and Eghaghe, 2024). This institutional weakness reduces the effectiveness of public service delivery and undermines citizens' trust in government.

- ***Policy Inconsistency and Implementation Gap***

Nigeria has a long history of development plans. However, many of these policies have failed due to inconsistency, lack of continuity between administrations, and poor implementation capacity (Obadan, 2010). This gap between policy design and execution has created uncertainty, making it difficult to achieve sustained modernization. Bureaucratic performance is consistently hampered by rigid adherence to outdated procedures and excessive centralization, which blocks the flexibility necessary for effective NPM reforms (Nwosu and Ananti, 2024). This inefficiency is compounded by a lack of “systems thinking,” where government agencies work in isolation. Policies and programs are often launched without coordinating with energy, infrastructure, or human capital plans, leading to fragmented efforts and inevitable failure.

- ***Overdependence on Oil and Economic Vulnerability:***

It is no news that Oil is the backbone of Nigeria’s economy. The oil sector accounts for over 80 percent of export earnings and about half of government revenue (World Bank, 2022). This dependence has created structural vulnerability, as fluctuations in global oil prices directly impact government spending and national development. Efforts to diversify into agriculture, manufacturing, and technology have been inconsistent, leaving the economy exposed to external shocks. As a result, massive public expenditures, intended to drive Modernization Theory objectives, do not translate into corresponding improvements in infrastructure, health, or education. This failure keeps Nigeria far behind other continents that were once at similar stages of development.

- ***Rural Underdevelopment and Youth Migration:***

Nigeria’s modernization is undermined by rural neglect, where poverty, poor infrastructure, and lack of opportunities drive massive rural-to-urban migration and international emigration—popularly referred to as the “Japa syndrome.” This migration drains rural areas of skilled and youthful labour, slowing agricultural productivity and worsening rural poverty (Okoli and Igwe, 2021). Consequently, the civil service suffers from low professionalization, inadequate training, and weak accountability mechanisms. This lack of robust capacity means that even well-designed policies cannot be successfully executed (Hayati and Aviana, 2021). The constant uncertainty and lack of meritocracy prevent the institutional stability required to attract and retain the highly skilled labor necessary for modern governance. A modern Nigerian economy requires balanced rural-urban development to prevent deepening inequality.

- ***Corruption and Rent-Seeking***

Nigeria low rank on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) reflects the nature of self-interested behavior evident in the country. This is the application of Public Choice Theory in practice, where officials make policy choices that prioritize personal wealth accumulation (Udenta et al., 2024). The self-serving behavior highlighted by Public Choice Theory leads to deep citizen distrust (Oyakhire and Eghaghe, 2024). This erosion of legitimacy contributes to political instability and hinders the public cooperation necessary for large-scale administrative reform, trapping the nation in a cycle of failed development and administrative uncertainty. The World Bank estimates that billions of dollars are lost annually to corruption. This directly confirms



that the state is characterized by neo-patrimonial tendencies where formal rules are subverted for private gain (Oyakhire and Eghaghe, 2024; Yeboah-Assiamah and Kundi, 2025).

- ***Insecurity and Political Instability:***

Modernization requires stability, yet Nigeria is plagued by multiple security crises: Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, farmer-herder conflicts in the middle belt, secessionist agitations in the southeast, and banditry in the northwest. These security threats disrupt economic activity, weaken state authority, and divert resources away from development into security spending (Aghedo and Eke, 2013). The lack of stable, non-corrupt institutions prevents the country from making long-term strategic investments in critical areas like green technology or robust public infrastructure. The principles of stable corporate governance, which link fixed investment to sustainable performance, are inverted in the public sector, where short-term political gains consistently derail long-term planning (Mensah et al., 2025).

#### **4. Applying Administrative Theories to Navigate Uncertainties**

##### **4.1 Analysis of its Applicability in Nigeria**

*Weber vs. Prismatic Model:* The failure to implement impartial allocation systems is a recurring theme. An example is the Ghanaian MASLOC scheme, analyzed by Yeboah-Assiamah and Kundi (2025). Here, the policy aimed for impartial, economic criteria (Weberian ideal), but its execution was derailed by neo-patrimonial or political considerations. In Nigeria, the distribution of federal resources and public contracts often mirrors this pattern, where established Public Procurement Act rules (Weberian formal structure) are subverted by political loyalties (Prismatic reality). This confirms that the implementation gap is fundamentally a clash between two competing governance systems.

*NPM vs. Contingency Theory:* Many NPM reforms, such as the introduction of the performance management framework in the Federal Civil Service, failed to deliver sustained improvements because they were implemented uniformly. This disregards the core tenet of Contingency Theory: that success depends on local conditions (Mark and Erude, 2023). A high-capacity ministry in Abuja requires a different reform strategy than a low-capacity local government agency in a rural setting. This uniform imposition ensures that the reform efforts are rarely suitable or effective outside of a few stable administrative centers.

Nigeria's modernization challenges are too complex to be resolved by applying a single administrative theory. While individual theoretical perspectives provide valuable insights into specific administrative problems, each is significantly limited when applied in isolation. For instance, while the administrative system possesses the formal rationality of hierarchy and rules (Nwosu and Ananti, 2024), it lacks the substantive rationality required to deliver results (Langer, 2022). This structural deficit makes the system vulnerable to the Prismatic Model, where written laws are overthrown by informal systems. This manifests in Nigeria's performance on the World Bank's "Ease of Doing Business Index", which is a direct measure of bureaucratic failure. Nigeria was ranked 131 out of 190 economies in the 2020 report (World Bank, 2020). This low ranking confirms that the administrative process takes precedence over output. The implementation gap, where vast budgets for power or infrastructure yield minimal

returns, is the functional outcome of neo-patrimonial tendencies consistently overriding technical standards (Yeboah-Assiamah and Kundi, 2025).

Moreover, the country's consistently poor performance on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) quantifies this elite capture (Oyakhire and Eghaghe, 2024). A CPI closer to 0 suggests very high corruption, while a rank closer to 100 suggests that the country is "corruption clean." Nigeria is regarded as a highly corrupt state, with a score of 26 on the 2024 CPI, averaging 21.64 Points from 1996 until 2024. Corruption directly sabotages the long-term, fixed investments that empirical studies show are necessary for sustainable performance, thereby indirectly blocking the goals of Modernization Theory (Mensah et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the failure of NPM reforms (Nwosu and Ananti, 2024; Hayati and Aviana, 2021) clearly demonstrates the limitations of imposing uniform, top-down solutions. Modernization is not a monolithic process, as confirmed by the findings of Minkov et al. (2021). The key intellectual contribution of this framework is the mandate for Contingency. The Nigerian administrative challenge is fundamentally heterogeneous. Mark and Erude (2023) demand that strategies must be tailored to local contexts; hence, any viable reform must be founded on a Systems Thinking approach that recognizes that administrative solutions must be flexible, localized, and capable of adapting to the specific capacity levels and cultural dynamics of Nigeria's diverse regions. This adaptive approach moves the discourse away from simply importing models toward generating context-specific solutions.

#### **4.2 Lessons for Nigeria's Modernization Journey**

Successful administrative reforms, whether domestic or international, share a common theme: they strategically deploy formal rigidity (Weberian/Systems) to restrain self-interested behavior (Public Choice/Prismatic) and are tailored to local contexts (Contingency). These cases offer direct, actionable lessons for Nigeria's modernization journey.

##### **A. Domestic Success**

**Introduction of the Treasury Single Account (TSA):** The TSA mandated the consolidation of all government accounts, essentially using a Systems and Weberian principle (centralized control) to defeat Public Choice behavior. By closing thousands of potential avenues for diversion, the TSA did not require a cultural change; it simply made corruption through diversion structurally difficult. This proves that well-designed institutional rules can be effective even within a hostile environment.

**Sector-Specific Professionalization:** Agencies like the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) have achieved relative success by enforcing Weberian meritocracy and insulation from political interference. Their ability to attract technical talent and maintain regulatory autonomy, unlike the general civil service, confirms that institutional sequencing and protecting core agencies are viable strategies for modernization.

##### **B. International Lessons**

While Nigeria has attained some leverage over certain administrative methodologies, comparative examples from other transitional economies offer more advanced theoretical models for how the country can utilize digital technology to bypass bureaucratic bottlenecks.

### *Georgia*

Post-Soviet Georgia suffered from pervasive petty corruption, particularly within the police force and licensing services. To curb this, Georgia implemented radical reforms, primarily by creating the Public Service Halls (PSH). These centralized, one-stop-shop service centers digitized and unified over 400 government services. They replaced human-to-human interaction with a transparent, digitized interface for obtaining documents and licenses. The Georgian model proves that technology can be used to bypass, not reform, a corrupt bureaucracy. This approach is highly relevant for Nigeria's state and local government services (e.g., permits, licensing), demonstrating how a Contingent and targeted Systems redesign can constrain corrupt behavior and rebuild public trust at the point of service delivery.

### *India*

India faced massive leakage in welfare schemes and subsidies, primarily due to ghost beneficiaries and identity fraud. The Aadhaar digital identity system provided a unique, biometric-linked identification number to citizens. This infrastructure allowed the government to directly link welfare payments and subsidies to verified individuals, eliminating millions of fraudulent or ghost accounts. The Aadhaar system is a strong example of using technology to enforce a core Weberian principle: universalistic and impartial application of the rule. It provides a mechanism to ensure that public funds, which are currently vulnerable to diversion, can be delivered directly to the intended beneficiaries, significantly reducing the leakage predicted by the Prismatic Model.

In essence, these domestic and international cases underscore the central strategic lesson for Nigeria: Effective reform is institutional, not merely behavioral. It relies on building rigid, technology-backed systems that make corrupt, self-interested choices difficult and inefficient.

## **5. Strategies for Effective Administrative Reform**

To navigate the uncertainties and implementation gaps identified in the Nigerian administrative system, this paper proposes a reform strategy based on the integration of the hybrid theoretical framework. The core principle is that reforms must be simultaneously top-down (institutional design) and bottom-up (capacity and culture).

### **5.1 Institutional Capacity Building and Professionalization**

The foundational step is rebuilding the core integrity of the civil service to establish a truly Weberian system, which is a necessary prerequisite for any subsequent NPM reform.

*Enforce Autonomy:* Nigeria must fully insulate the recruitment, promotion, and discipline of senior civil servants from political influence. This requires strictly enforcing rules of the federal character without sacrificing competence, ensuring that hiring is based strictly on merit (Weberian ideal). Successful, autonomous agencies like the NCC demonstrate that professionalism can be built when political interference is minimized (Section 4.2).

*Invest in Continuous Human Capital Development:* Capacity constraints must be addressed through continuous professional training focused on specialization, ethics, and contemporary governance tools. Public servants should be trained not only in rules but also in substantive rationality, linking their actions to real-world development outcomes (Langer, 2022).

*Performance-Based Remuneration:* While salary increases alone do not solve corruption, tying remuneration and career advancement to objective performance metrics, aligned with the goals of NPM, can boost morale and accountability. This must be coupled with strict enforcement of anti-corruption laws to counter Public Choice Theory incentives.

## **5.2 Promoting Good Governance and Accountability**

*Systemic Transparency via Technology:* Nigeria must replicate successful technological reforms (like the TSA), while drawing lessons from countries like Georgia and India to enhance transparency system-wide. Implementing mandatory, open-source e-procurement and e-governance platforms across all ministries reduces the human interface in resource allocation. This limits the discretionary space for officials to engage in rent-seeking and neo-patrimonial practices (Yeboah-Assiamah and Kundi, 2025).

*Strengthening Audit and Enforcement:* The efficacy of anti-corruption bodies depends entirely on their autonomy. Audit mechanisms must be fully independent and adequately funded to enforce compliance with the Public Procurement Act. The failure to punish corrupt actors reinforces the message that self-interest is rational and acceptable (Oyakhire and Eghaghe, 2024).

*Mandating Stakeholder Consultation:* Policy formulation must include mandatory consultation with civil society and the private sector. This external pressure enhances transparency, provides valuable feedback for Systems Thinking, and makes it more difficult for elites to formulate policies based on political miscalculation that serve only private interests (Udenta et al., 2024).

## **5.3 Leveraging Technology for Administrative Efficiency**

*Unified Digital Infrastructure:* Implementing an integrated digital infrastructure across government agencies ensures data sharing and coordination. This directly combats policy fragmentation (Systems Theory) and allows decision-makers to view the state holistically, ensuring that projects in one sector (e.g., healthcare) are supported by plans in another (e.g., digital identification).

*Digital Service Delivery:* Focusing technology on citizen-facing services (e.g., permits, licenses, and social services) improves efficiency, reduces service cost (NPM), and minimizes opportunities for low-level corruption that occurs through physical interactions.

## **5.4 Human Resource Development and Management**

*Contingent HR Strategies:* The system must abandon uniform training and deployment mandates. Training, recruitment, and incentive structures should be adapted to the specific needs and challenges of different tiers of government (federal, state, and local). This is essential because administrative capacity and local cultural demands vary widely across Nigeria (Mark and Erude, 2023).

*Leadership Development Focused on Ethics and Adaptability:* Leadership training must emphasize ethical governance and the ability to operate effectively under uncertainty (Egwu

and Ohajianya, 2021). Leaders must be trained to recognize and mitigate the pressures of the Prismatic environment, ensuring that substantive rationality guides their decisions.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Summary of Key Findings**

This study utilized a contingent theoretical framework to analyze the profound administrative uncertainties hindering Nigeria's modernization journey. The investigation found that the nation's systemic implementation gap is due to the predictable outcome of an administrative system constantly being pulled between competing ideologies.

Nigeria is trapped in a conflict between the formal Weberian structure (rules) and the operational reality of the Prismatic-Sala Model and Public Choice Theory (informality and self-interest). This conflict manifests as neo-patrimonial tendencies that sabotage formal policy implementation, creating chronic administrative uncertainty (Yeboah-Assiamah and Kundi, 2025; Udentia et al., 2024). The civil service adopted the form of Weberian bureaucracy but failed to establish the substance of meritocracy. This structural flaw renders subsequent NPM efficiency reforms ineffective, as they cannot take root in an institutionally weak environment (Nwosu and Ananti, 2024). Furthermore, reforms fail because they are not Contingent upon the specific capacities and cultural realities of different regions, ensuring uniform failure (Mark and Erude, 2023).

### **6.2 Policy Recommendations for Nigeria's Administrative Development**

Based on the synthesis of these theoretical and empirical findings, effective administrative reform requires a strategy that is holistic, politically realistic, and focuses on building institutional integrity through systemic design, rather than merely attempting to change individual behavior.

Firstly, Nigeria must make a concerted effort to rebuild foundational institutional integrity. This implies that the core principle of a truly professional service be enforced by insulating the recruitment, promotion, and discipline of all civil servants from political interference, thereby fulfilling the substantive ideal of the Weberian model. Furthermore, accountability must shift away from strictly following formal rules toward demanding outcome-based management, where public servants are held responsible for achieving measurable development goals, ensuring that resource allocation is rational and targeted towards long-term sustainable performance (Mensah et al., 2025).

Secondly, the government must prioritize the implementation of systemic anti-corruption technologies to defeat the logic of Public Choice. The success of the Treasury Single Account (TSA) demonstrates the power of using centralized, rigid systems to constrain fund diversion. This approach must be expanded through mandatory e-procurement and unified digital systems across all tiers of government. Drawing lessons from Georgia, these technological solutions must be strategically deployed to reduce the discretionary human interface in service delivery, effectively bypassing, rather than trying to culturally reform, a hostile bureaucracy. This creates structural transparency that makes corrupt choices difficult and inefficient.

Finally, the state must adopt contingent and adaptive governance strategies. The lesson from the failure of uniform NPM policies is clear: solutions must be flexible. Nigeria should abandon blanket national solutions and implement policy tailoring where administrative strategies, capacity building, and incentive structures are adapted to the unique institutional and socio-cultural environment of each state and local government (Mark and Erude, 2023). Furthermore, to combat policy fragmentation, the government should institute mandatory cross-sectoral planning and audits for all major development initiatives. This applies the Systems principle to ensure that projects are coordinated, reducing waste and strengthening the overall administrative system.

### **Suggested Implementation Roadmap for Nigeria's Administrative Development**

#### **Short-term (0-1 year):**

- **Institutional Integrity Foundations:**
  - Establish a task force to develop policies that insulate recruitment, promotion, and discipline processes from political interference.
  - Initiate reforms to enforce the core principles of a professional civil service aligned with the Weberian model.
  - Launch awareness campaigns to promote outcome-based management and accountability focusing on measurable development goals.
- **Technology Deployment:**
  - Expand the use of existing centralized financial systems such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA).
  - Begin pilot projects for mandatory e-procurement systems in select government agencies or states.
- **Policy Coordination & Planning:**
  - Initiate cross-sectoral planning meetings and establish baseline audits of ongoing major development initiatives.
  - Develop a framework for adaptive and contingent governance strategies tailored to different states and local governments.

#### **Medium-term (1-3 years):**

- **Institutional Integrity & Accountability:**
  - Institutionalize independent oversight bodies to monitor recruitment, promotions, and disciplinary actions.
  - Transition toward outcome-oriented performance management systems across all tiers of government.
- **Scaling Technological Solutions:**
  - Mandate the adoption of unified digital systems for procurement, financial management, and service delivery across all government levels.
  - Deploy anti-corruption technologies modeled after successful implementations like Georgia's digital transparency tools.
- **Adaptive Governance & Policy Tailoring:**

- Implement tailored administrative strategies, capacity-building programs, and incentive structures specific to each state and local context.
- Conduct mandatory cross-sectoral audits for all major development projects to improve coordination and reduce fragmentation.
- **Capacity Building & Institutional Strengthening:**
  - Enhance training programs for civil servants on outcome-based management, digital tools, and anti-corruption measures.

**Long-term (3-10 years):**

- **Institutionalization & Sustainability:**
  - Fully embed insulations for recruitment, promotion, and discipline processes into the civil service culture.
  - Institutionalize outcome-based accountability frameworks and ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation.
- **Technology & Structural Transparency:**
  - Achieve nationwide deployment of integrated digital systems that ensure transparency and reduce discretionary human interfaces.
  - Maintain and upgrade anti-corruption technologies to adapt to emerging challenges.
- **Policy Maturity & Systemic Integration:**
  - Fully implement tailored governance strategies across all states, ensuring flexibility and contextual relevance.
  - Institutionalize cross-sectoral planning and audits as standard procedures for all major projects.
- **Continuous Improvement & Innovation:**
  - Foster a culture of innovation within the civil service to adapt to evolving socio-political environments.
  - Regularly review and update policies to sustain institutional integrity, transparency, and efficiency.

**6.3 Future Research Directions**

Future scholarly work should focus on empirically testing the efficacy of these proposed hybrid solutions. Specific research is needed for the quantitative analysis of the Prismatic-Formal Conflict, aiming to precisely measure the financial and developmental cost of the conflict between formal administrative rules and informal, neo-patrimonial practices across various Nigerian states. Additionally, research should empirically test the effectiveness of contingent administrative solutions versus uniform national mandates in key public service areas, such as local tax collection and service delivery. Finally, longitudinal studies are necessary to track the digital governance impact to determine whether technology-based transparency reforms lead to sustained reductions in corruption or merely shift the point of elite capture to new, unregulated areas of the system.

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